

96-07-26a

As we prepare to resume our study in Romans this evening, let's take a moment to clear our minds and go to the Lord in prayer, seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, and take the most advantage that we can of these things. Shall we pray? Father, we thank You again for the privilege that we have of studying Your Word together. We thank You for the fellowship we enjoy.

We thank You for the way that You have structured our lives and the ways that You have provided for us to fulfill Your purpose. We pray that our study this evening will further that goal. We pray that our lives will glorify our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We ask it in His name. Amen. We are in Romans chapter 8, and the section of this chapter that we have just studied has focused on two primary subjects.

Paul has talked about, as he has throughout the book, the Christian life and what the nature is of our mission, why it is that we are here. We know that we basically exist as believers to bear fruit to God. The question is, what is the nature of that fruit, and how do we go about producing it? Jesus spoke of it in John chapter 15.

He prayed about it to His Father in John chapter 17. The epistles of the New Testament are replete with instruction, exhortation, encouragement, admonishment, and straight theological doctrines, all designed to nourish us up, prepare us, and motivate us to bear this fruit. This is what Paul addresses specifically here in chapter 8. He talks about the difference between a mind that has itself set on the flesh and the mind that is set on the Spirit, because this is the first decision place that we reach in our daily life.

Are we going to pursue earthly goals or heavenly goals? Are we going to be looking after our own interests or those that God has in mind? After we have made the decision and we say, I really want my life to count in God's plan, I want to pursue God's purpose, bear that fruit that pleases God, one of the quickest ways that we, I believe, get off track and become neutralized in God's plan is by misunderstanding what God's purpose is. We've talked about this over the course of our lessons, not only here in Romans but also in Galatians and Colossians and throughout the New Testament. The common, and I'm sure you have heard this, I have heard this, I was reading a book this afternoon that mentions this, talking about the fruit that we bear.

The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, what is it to us? Paul mentions that here in chapter 8. And we know that the Spirit's ministry is necessary for us to bear fruit. And as you read along and someone says, well, one of the great passages that talks about how the Holy Spirit is going to help you bear fruit is Acts 1.8. And as you recall, in Acts 1.8, Jesus is speaking to the 11 remaining disciples. Judas has already hanged himself at this point.

And in Acts 1.8, Jesus says, but you shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, it says in the King James, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judea

and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And this one verse has been the basis for the majority of emphasis in the Christian life on the ministry of the Spirit in terms of bearing fruit because the fruit is defined as bringing others to Christ. This is a wonderful and worthy goal, and it is something that all of us look forward to doing, hope that we are prepared to do, hope that God will use us to do.

It's something that we watch for and that we have the opportunity from time to time to aggressively pursue. However, having said all that, I would just like to point something out to you here, and this is by way of reminder, we've reviewed this in recent lessons, but look at what Jesus says again here in Acts 1.8. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth or the uttermost parts of the earth. Now, quiz question.

To whom is he speaking? Who is actually in the listening audience as Jesus speaks the words of Acts 1.8? You can almost count them on the fingers of two hands, can't you? There are 11 men there. Now, if you go over to 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells us that Jesus made a number of post-resurrection appearances to believers. In 1 Corinthians 15, along about verse 8 or 9 in there, he says that he appeared to upwards of 500 believers at one time, right? Did Jesus speak these words to the 500? Did he speak them to the assembled company on the day that he ascended up on high? He didn't.

That's the answer to the question. The only people to whom Jesus spoke these words, you shall be witnesses to me, are the 11. Now, people say, well, that's a picky point there.

He said, go and teach others the same things that I've taught you. Haven't you read Matthew 28.19? Go and teach others everything that I've commanded you. So, if he commanded them to go out and be witnesses, he's commanding us to go out and be witnesses.

Turn with me back to John chapter 15. Somebody who hears this lesson either now or in the future is going to think, well, he's just down on witnessing. You shouldn't evangelize and so forth.

And I hope you understand that we're not saying that at all. All I'm trying to do is try to achieve some sense of balance because witnessing has been put forward as our reason for being. There's a French phrase for that that I can't pronounce, but it means reason for being.

And this is what is encouraged in churches. This is the way people are measured. And many of us have been made to feel bad because we haven't led anyone to the Lord in the recent past.

And people say they'll share the fact that they gave the gospel to someone in the recent past and then there's sort of this silence and they're waiting for you to tell somebody that you brought to the Lord or led to the Lord or witnessed to or whatever. And you kind of dig around in your mind and you're trying to think of the last time that that happened and maybe it's been a little while. And then you can start to feel a little bit unproductive or guilty or like you're not really doing your

part or you're not really a Christian in the truest and highest sense.

You're just kind of loafing along and you're not really fulfilling God's purpose. Well, if all of us from time to time have opportunities and we don't want to miss those and we don't want to avoid them, we don't want to be reluctant, we should be ready always to give an answer when the opportunity arises, especially when someone is asking and when someone seems receptive. But it's the most amazing thing.

I was reading a book about a man that I admire who's a singer and he was talking about how God will use you when it's your time almost in spite of yourself. He sings gospel music. It's Jake Hess.

He was the lead singer for the Statesman Quartet for many, many years. And in my personal opinion, he's the best that has ever been, is now, or ever will be in that field. He's a really admirable man off the field as well as when he's singing.

But he had been singing. He's much older. He's got a lot of health problems now.

He was flying back from a particularly taxing engagement and he was on the airplane. You know how you always hear these stories? You sit next to someone on a plane and the gospel gets shared. Well, there was a man that sat next to him up in first class and he introduced himself and he said, Well, who are you? He said, Well, I'm Jake Hess.

He said, Oh, well, what do you do? He said, Well, I'm a quartet man. I sing gospel music. And the man says, Oh, so you're probably going to try to get me saved then, aren't you? And Jake said, No, I'm not.

He said, I'm really tired and actually, if it's all the same to you, I'd just like to roll over here and get some sleep. But the man wouldn't leave him alone. He kept saying, Well, why don't you try to save me? Aren't you a Christian? And Jake said, You know, I'm a Christian, but I'm just a gospel singer.

I'm not an evangelist. And this guy said, You know, Billy Graham tried to save me and it didn't work. And some other great evangelist, he tried to save me and it didn't work.

So, you're not going to be able to save me. Jake said, You know, you're right. And really, the only one that can save you is the Lord.

And he said, What do you mean? And he just had to almost drag it out of old Jake because all he wanted to do was roll up and go to sleep. And he wound up, this man wound up accepting Christ. And Jake just sort of laughed to himself.

He thought, You know, if there was ever a less willing, tired or less articulate person to share the gospel, he couldn't imagine who it would have been. But this man came to Christ and he didn't think a whole lot more about it. But then several months later, he got a letter in the mail.

And this man had gone back and his wife and some more of the members of their family had gotten saved and they were all in church. And they wrote a letter back saying, Thank you for being used by the Lord to help our whole family come to Christ. And that's what God will do.

God knows the right place and the right time. And he will use us if we are at all willing. And if we know the essentials of the gospel.

And it's a wonderful thing. And there's nothing more gratifying than being used by God in that way. However, that's not the fruit of the Christian life.

That's not the measure. God isn't going to count the scalps on our belt or the silhouettes on our fuselage when we get up to the judgment seat of Christ. Well, how many did you bring into the kingdom, brother? And so forth.

What is it that he's talking about then when in Acts 1.8 he encourages the disciples who will become apostles. And he said, You shall be witnesses unto me, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost parts of the earth. Go and teach others to do what I've told you to do.

Great commission, etc., etc. Well, look in John chapter 15. First of all, who is the true witness to Jesus Christ? This is the question we're going to answer.

Now, the church today, Christianity today, religious radio, TV, books, and so forth, tell us that we are the witnesses. But in John 15, verse 26, Jesus said, When the Helper comes, that's God the Holy Spirit, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me. Just in this same context, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

That's his job. He doesn't miss anyone. He never gets tired.

He never fails to be eloquent. He never fails to be persuasive. He never fails to have the right words at the right time at the right point in a person's life.

God the Holy Spirit is the perfect, greatest witness to Jesus Christ. And that's his mission in life. That's the main thing that he does for the unbelieving world is convict of sin and righteousness and judgment.

He testifies of Jesus Christ. Now, are we involved in that process under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit from time to time? Yes, we are. But that's not our primary goal.

It's one of the effects that comes out of our life. But that's not our mission. That's the Holy Spirit's mission.

Look what he says in verse 27 of this same chapter. And again, he's talking to the disciples, the 11 in the upper room. He says, And you also will bear witness.

Well, now that sounds right. You believers, you're going to bear witness. But why are they going to bear witness in verse 27? Because why? Because you have been with me from the beginning.

Now, everybody that's been with Jesus from the beginning in this room, raise your hand. We don't qualify to be this kind of witness, do we? Remember over in Acts, I think it's in chapter 2 or 3 there, when they decided that Judas had hanged himself and fallen off the tree and had a real ugly scene there and they needed to replace him and they had an election to decide who was going to be the 12th disciple, the 12th apostle. If you read that closely, one of the criteria that they understood, now, I think they were messed up in trying to elect somebody that is gifted by God for that.

But they did understand one thing in that process. They said, we need to find somebody who has been with us and with him from the beginning. If you go back and read that, that was the reason they chose Matthias and the other guy and told God to choose between them and then they cast lots.

Well, it's going to be one guy or the other, whether God is in it or not. But the point there is the disciples understood that this particular witness needed to be someone who was with Christ from the beginning and Matthias, the fellow they elected, fit that criteria. So, this witness in John 15, the witness in Acts chapter 1 verse 8, is a special kind of witness.

This is the apostolic witness. These apostles are going to be writing inspired Scripture. They're going to be training the first generation of pastors.

They are going to fill in and coordinate the function of the new spiritual gifts and the temporary spiritual gifts of prophecy and healing and faith and some of the other things that are going to need oversight and need authoritative guidance in the first generation of the church. They are going to be witnesses and they are going to speak on Christ's behalf because they have been with him from the beginning and God the Holy Spirit is going to work in them and through them to accomplish that task. That, however, is not our task.

We are not apostles. There are no modern day apostles despite what it says up in prior when you drive past some of those churches and it says so-and-so apostle. People can advertise themselves as an apostle but the eleven apostles were with Christ from the beginning and they all died and none of them are alive today, not even John.

Some people think he's still alive somewhere because Jesus said, what is to you if he lived till I return? They're all dead. They're all gone. There are no apostles.

No one is currently fulfilling this particular aspect of the witness. Now, we are witnesses. We are nonverbal witnesses.

We can be verbal witnesses. My point, if I haven't stressed it strong enough, I'll stress it again.

That's not our mission.

That's not our first and highest goal. It's a function. It's a wonderful thing that we do.

But don't let anyone hit you over the head with Acts 1.8 or Matthew 28.19 or John 15 and say you need to be out there pounding the pavement, handing out tracts, knocking on doors, accosting people, invading their privacy, making them and you uncomfortable, picking the wrong time, the wrong place, the wrong words, alienating them, driving them away from Christ and making fools of ourselves. Oh, but didn't Paul say he's a fool for Christ? Well, we're not fools in that sense. It's only foolish if we misunderstand the role of the Holy Spirit and our role in God's plan.

And there is a foolishness that does not glorify God and that is it. So, having said all of that, we can get back to what Paul is teaching us in Romans, which is what our mission is, what our purpose is. Why are we here? Are we just keeping the house clean? Are we just getting the bills paid? Are we just getting the kids raised and keeping them out of jail? What is our mission in life? What will we be evaluated on at the judgment seat? That's what Paul has been telling us in Romans.

And here in chapter 8, we have a great summary of the principle that guides us in the right direction. We saw last time in verse 5, those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

So, again, we know what the things of the flesh are and it's not just all lust and evil, seductive, terrible, black, dark things. It can be selfish goals. It can be personal goals.

It can be things that pertain to this life that don't go beyond this life. I want security. I want acceptance.

I want peace of mind. I want happiness. I want this person to think a certain way about me.

I want people to stop talking this way about me. I want this or I want that to happen in this life. There are believers today who set their minds on the things of the flesh when they say, I want to evangelize this country on the map by the year 2000.

And, you know, you can rationalize, you can justify, well, God has a heart for the lost and I have a heart for the lost and so forth. But I will tell you this. God the Holy Spirit is the evangelist.

God the Holy Spirit is the witness. And some of us are called to be missionaries and to go to foreign lands and to witness. But you don't do it by taking a business sales approach and saying we're going to market this area and we're going to blanket cover them.

We're going to... I mean, there's no difference in that and somebody planning their marketing campaign during the Super Bowl or during the Olympics or during something else and saying,

Patty and I, I've told you before, we visited a church right here in the Metroplex that had a good recommendation from someone as being a teaching church and a church where people understood the plan of God. And we got there and the whole service was how they were going to telemarket their neighborhood and if you don't get a yes that they're coming in the first 20 seconds, just go ahead and hang up and go to the next number on your list and tell them about this film you're going to be showing. And if they sound like they're not interested, just hang up and go on.

Don't get into a discussion with them. And that's an exaggeration or an extreme example. But what's the point? Even in the name of the Lord you can set your mind on the things of the flesh.

You can say, I am going to pursue this ministry or this activity and do it to the extent that it injures your family or interrupts your relationship with your spouse or interrupts your ability to do your employment. You say, well, I'm going to go down and minister to the inner city urban orphans or something. And so you prepare lessons and you get all this ready and you do this and you pay no attention to your family, you are late for work and get on the phone while you're at work coordinating your urban ministry.

And you say, but I'm doing this all in the name of the Lord. It's wrong. You have your mind set on the things of the flesh because the Holy Spirit is never going to upset the priorities that God has established in His Word.

The priorities are clear. We are first and foremost oriented toward God. We are secondly oriented to those that God has put in our immediate periphery.

Husbands have a primary responsibility to their wives. They have a primary responsibility to their children. They have a primary responsibility to their parents to make sure that they honor their father and mother.

Those are primary. And anything else that you pick that's of a discretionary nature, some ministry, some church, or some other activity that interferes with those is wrong. And I can say that categorically from the Word of God because God never calls a missionary at the expense of his marriage or at the expense of his children or at the expense of his parents.

God is greater than that and more powerful than that and He doesn't need us to be mixing up our priorities. And God the Holy Spirit will not be in it if we mix our priorities. So those who live according to the flesh are going to be setting their minds on the things of the flesh.

And we've already seen from chapter 7 that the mind that is set on the things of the flesh is dead. It doesn't mean you've experienced physical death. It means your life is meaningless.

If you set your mind on the things of the flesh, you will look back on the day or the week or the month and say, what have I accomplished of eternal value? And there won't be anything. And

that time can't be gotten back. You can't, you know, they've got that song, that silver-haired daddy of mine, and if God would grant that I could turn back the pages of time and start all over again, I wouldn't turn dear old daddy's hair gray and so forth.

But, you know, if God would grant me the power to turn back the pages of time, I would do things different. Well, we can't turn back the pages of time. We get one run through this life and that's it.

And at the end of this day we can look back and say, was there any fruit? And we're not looking to see who we evangelized and we're not looking to see what human tasks we got accomplished. We're looking for the fruit that God is going to look for and that God is going to be measuring, that God commands us to have, and that's the fruit of the Spirit. We're going to be talking a little bit about the Spirit tonight.

But that's our calling, to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. Now, what are the things of the Spirit? Jesus said back there in John 15 and 16 and 17 that the Spirit doesn't cook up anything out of His own mind. I was reading another book back here.

I've got a whole collection of booklets that range from good to bizarre. This one is in the bizarre category. This one is titled, You Can Have What You Say.

It's one of these verbal confession type of things. If you speak it, you can have it. And they go to the verse where Jesus says, if you ask anything in My name, My Father will do it for you.

Unfortunately, they don't read the context that this is in the realm of God's plan and God's purpose and not I want a refrigerator or I want a new car. But in reading this little booklet, of course, there's a lot of talking about the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, is a new refrigerator a thing of the Spirit? Those who have their minds set on the Spirit are thinking about the things of the Spirit.

And the Spirit, as wonderful a gift as He is and as wonderful a plan as God has for us, it is humbling and helps us to be objective to realize that the primary purpose in God's plan is not our happiness. Our happiness is important to God and it's a great byproduct of God's plan. But just like evangelism in our lives, it's not the main thing.

God isn't sitting up there thinking, now how can I make Sam happy today? Maybe he does need a new refrigerator. That's not God's primary purpose. And it isn't proper to think of Christianity as God circling the universe around us.

Proper Christianity is finding our place in the orbit around God and His purpose and His plan. And that is what is meant by the things of the Spirit because that's what God the Holy Spirit does. Jesus said He's not going to think up anything on His own.

He's not going to come up with a new plan. He's not going to develop a Holy Spirit agenda. I heard the most awful song I've ever heard the other night.

Bar none. Worse than Led Zeppelin. Worse than Spinal Tap.

Worse than Hootie and the Blowout. Worse than anybody. Anything I've ever heard set to music was a song I heard the other night on Christian TV and it was a guy sitting there playing the piano singing a love song to the Holy Spirit and talking about the Holy Spirit's great plan and how much the Holy Spirit had done.

There wasn't a word about Jesus Christ. There wasn't a word about God the Father. You would think, I suspect this fellow, if he has a Bible at all, it's missing quite a few pages and books.

It was scary to hear him misunderstand the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit doesn't have His own agenda. He's operating on the agenda of the Father. And so when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit we will be squarely in the middle of the agenda that God the Father has.

And that's barren. It doesn't mean God is going to strike us dead. It means we are operationally fruitless.

We're like a fruit. And Jesus said in John 15, those branches get snapped off and thrown into the fire. And that's a picture of the judgment.

It doesn't mean we're snapped off and thrown into the fire. It means the fruit of our life, the product of our life, there's nothing there. We are saved yet so as by fire.

And God is going to be disappointed in us. And we are going to be mightily disappointed when we look back over our lives and realize how much time we wasted doing whatever it is that we did in lieu of setting our minds on the things of the Spirit. I am going to cringe when I find out how many hours of TV I have watched in my life because it's fruitless.

It's really hard to produce the fruit of the Spirit and to have your mind set on what God is up to watching Hawaii Five-0 or Perry Mason or whatever it might be. Not to say that we can't do these things in balance. It's good to relax.

It's good to unwind. It's good to be a member of American society, be aware of your culture, be able to carry on an intelligent conversation when someone says, did you see the American gymnastics team last night and so forth. But everything in balance.

And we can get out of balance in pursuing things that don't have anything to do with God's plan. To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. What do you think it is that people in this world are seeking today? What drives people to do what they do each and every day? Why are all these Olympic athletes out there knocking themselves out in their areas of endeavor? Why do we knock ourselves out in work or in our family environment or whatever it may be? What are we looking for? All of us want life.

We want a meaningful, satisfying, fulfilling life, don't we? It's natural. God built that into us. We're supposed to have that.

We're supposed to have a meaningful, fulfilling, satisfying life where you wake up in the morning and you say, you know, you take a deep breath and you say, it is just great to be alive on God's earth today and to have peace in our soul. Peace, like the song says, sweet peace is the gift of God's love. Jesus blessed us with his peace before he left this world and it's the heritage of every believer to have life and peace.

How does that come to us in a practical sense? God has made it available to us. Jesus has promised it for us. He died to give it to us.

How do we get it? It tells us right here in verse six, to be spiritually minded, to have our minds set on the things of the spirit. That is life and that is peace. And it's one of the, unfortunately, it's one of the best kept secrets in our life today.

So many believers don't have peace. So many believers don't have a life that they're enjoying where they just get up and say another. You can hear them calling into these shows on the radio.

You can hear them. You can see them. You find, and a lot of us, we know it because it's us.

And on those days, all of us have those phases we go through where we wake up and we don't have life and we don't have peace. Well, we can almost get a perverse satisfaction out of that. You know that, well, I am to be pitied because my life is a mess and I'm unhappy and I can list all of the things that are wrong.

But doing that and even gaining the sympathy of those around us does not bring life and it does not bring peace. There's only one thing that does, and that's the power of God. And as you may have heard me say before, the power of God comes into the life of the believer one way, and that's through the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

And to be spiritually minded is life and peace. To be spiritually minded is to be aware of who we are and why we're here, what God's plan is and what it calls for. And by simply thinking about those things... Now, you can think about a lot of things, can't you? I can.

I can think back on experiences I've had. I can think back to real bad experiences. I can think back to really good experiences.

I can think back to some of the best days of my life. I can think back to some of the worst days of my life. And that will change my mood in some cases if I'm kind of near the middle.

If I'm really depressed, thinking about all the best times I've ever had just makes me more depressed because it shows up the contrast with where I am now. And going back and saying, you know, the day I got married, the day Elizabeth was born, whatever it might be, the day I

graduated school after 16 grueling years and had the piece of paper in my hand and my cap went in the air. But when I am really down and really depressed and under a lot of pressure, thinking about that doesn't change anything.

If anything, it makes me more miserable. So when I'm down, I can think, well, I've had worse days. And, you know, you gain a margin of comfort from that.

But usually you just shake your head and say, well. And so thinking about those things, my point is there's no power in those memories. There's no power in those thoughts.

People can offer you psychological suggestions and say, well, here are some things to think about. Let's give you some facts. The reason you feel this way is because of something that happened in your childhood.

Or the reason you think this way is that you're codependent. Or the reason you think this way is your serotonin levels are down or your melatonin levels or your dopamine levels are off. And, you know, there's a biochemical reason for this.

Well, you can think all of those thoughts, but there's no power in those thoughts. The fascinating thing is there is something we can think about that does have power, and that's the Word of God. You remember I went off, I got on my soapbox here several weeks back about all truth is God's truth.

This is one of the distinguishing differences between the truth of the Word of God and other quote-unquote truth in the world. It can be true that you had a great experience. It can be true that you were dropped on your head as a child or whatever.

But those thoughts, even though they're true, don't have power. God's truth has power. The Word of God is alive.

It doesn't mean that it's got physical life any more than being carnally minded, being dead means that you're physically dead. Life and death in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament, is talking about are you productive in God's plan or not. The Word of God is alive.

The carnal mind is dead. The Word of God is powerful. It has got the power of God, the same power that created the universe, the same power that enables us to take our next breath, the binding force of the nucleus of every atom in the universe is God's power.

And that same power is contained in these truths, in what the Scripture communicates. If we really do want to have life and if we really do want to have peace, God has told us how to do it and it's to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. It takes a decision.

If it was automatic for believers, we wouldn't be commanded to do it. But we are told to do this. We are encouraged and exhorted and that means that we have a choice.

Now, why would somebody that had the opportunity not do this? Well, we can all ask ourselves that question because all of us from time to time don't do this. Some of us, a lot of the time, don't do this, not near as often as we should. But I would offer you this thought.

The wide way and the broad gate that lead to destruction is a reference to this carnal mind and most of Christianity today is on that road. Most believers, even if they're knocking themselves silly in ministry, pastors and evangelists and missionaries and people that are active in Christian service. I work with a lot of folks that are down helping children and working with adoptions and broken homes and all of this and there are people who are literally working themselves into an early grave, quote unquote, for the Lord because they have decided that that's the fruit and that that's the measure and that that's what God will reward them for.

And it is tragic. It is catastrophic that on the day that Jesus Christ judges the secrets of men, there's going to be very much of that that doesn't count because minds were set on the things of the flesh. It wasn't done in the power of the Spirit.

It wasn't done under the ministry of the Spirit. It wasn't done in accordance with what Scripture teaches. Those are the things of the Spirit.

We don't have any excuse. All of us in this room have had lots of exposure to the Word of God. We know who God is.

We know how the plan of God works. We know what the life of the believer is. We know what the calling of the believer is.

And we are without excuse. And unfortunately, because we know these things, we are going to be held accountable for that knowledge. And it's kind of like in our criminal justice system.

When you have a juvenile that breaks the law, we say, well, you know, he doesn't know as much, so we're going to be lenient. Somebody that's an adult, 30 or 40 years old, breaks the same law, we figure he's been around, he ought to know better, and we hold him to a higher standard. Now the question is, should we feel sorry for the 30 or 40 year old and say, boy, you know, I really feel sorry for you because the law is not going to be as lenient with you.

Well, we don't feel sorry because there's no good reason to be breaking the law anyway, right? And so this is not a hardship to be held to a higher standard if you have the knowledge and if you have the training. These Olympic, we had the Olympics on while we were painting the other night, and they had these girls and guys out doing gymnastics. Well, their coaches and the judges there hold them to a very high standard, and they're all up there getting a 9.625 and a 9.7 and all of this.

They're held to a very high standard. How do they feel about that? Do they say, why are these judges so tough? Why are they holding me to such a high standard? I mean, most of the people

in this stadium can't even walk out of here much less do a backflip and hit this pommel horse and do all the stuff I've done. Why are they holding me to such a high standard? They thrive on that standard.

It's the challenge. It's the opportunity that they have, and they go for that. They had Mary Lou Retton on this morning.

She's doing commentary on these things, and as you may know, earlier this week, one of these girl gymnasts needed to run and do another vault, and she had an injured ankle, and the next day there was a hue and cry that this coach who's known for his hard approach had driven, it was child abuse and so forth. Somebody wrote a book and said all this coaching in gymnastics is child abuse. So they asked Mary Lou Retton about that this morning, and the gal who was interviewing her had also been a gymnast and is also now a talking head on the TV.

And so Mary Lou Retton said, she said, this lady asked her and said, what do you think about this accusation? And she said, it infuriates me. She said, it is so absolutely false and untrue. And she talked to this gal who asked the question, and she said, you yourself know that we craved that.

We thrived on that. Nobody ever pressured us into anything. We wanted it so bad.

It was our passion. It was our life. We worked toward it for years.

And every day in the gym and all those hours of practice, that's what we lived for, to be judged by that standard and to be found worthy by that standard. It's the greatest thing in life. There's nothing that gives you more enthusiasm and passion and joy de vive than to have your calling and to enjoy it and to pursue it and to be held to that high standard.

And even when you fall short, like Theodore Roosevelt said, you have known the great enthusiasms and the great devotions in life. And it's life and it's peace to live that kind of life. That's what we're called to as believers.

We have that opportunity. And we can't look at it and say, well, my God is sure holding us to a high standard. I wish he'd take that away.

It's our calling. We're on the team. And we have the opportunity.

Nobody else in human history has had the opportunity that church age believers have to operate under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. We're going to see that tonight. We'll take our break and when we come back, we're going to look at the Old Testament ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

It's a study that I have never done before. I haven't had anybody else go through it the way that we're going to go through it. And I think when we conclude that, you'll see the contrast with what the ministry of God the Holy Spirit was in the Old Testament and what it is to us today.

And why it has changed is to equip us and enable us for this great calling and to be held to this great high standard and to recognize the opportunity and to have the enthusiasm for it and to pursue it and to not let ourselves be distracted, not let ourselves be dragged down, to lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us and to run with endurance that race that is set before us like it says in Hebrews. That is where life is. That's where peace is.

And that's what God the Holy Spirit is in us to perform. And that's what Paul is talking about here when he says to be carnally minded is death. You might as well be dead to live that life that doesn't pursue that goal because we are spiritual creatures and to live in the flesh you might as well be dead.

But to set our minds on the things of the Spirit is life and peace. Let's take our break and when we come back we're going to take a look at the Old Testament ministry of God the Holy Spirit.