

# The Christian as a Living Sacrifice

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 00 ] Would you open your Bibles, please, to Romans 12, and we will attempt to undertake an exposition, albeit rapidly moving one, of the 21 verses incorporated in this chapter.

This is, of course, a shorter Romans, and that simply means that at the conclusion of each verse-by-verse exposition of these chapters, we go back over the entire chapter and consolidate all of the several verses into just one teaching session.

That is what we are doing this morning with chapter 12. Next week, we'll be into the Christian and government, politics, and all that is involved in chapter 13. But for now, I would direct your attention to the first two verses of Romans 12 that provide the basis for all that is going to follow.

I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

[ 1 : 12 ] It is not an understatement, or an overstatement, rather, for me to say that these two verses of Scripture constitute the watershed for what is going to happen in the Christian life.

It is all summed up in these two verses. You are either going to take these two verses at face value and implement them by allowing the Spirit of God to apply the truth of them to your hearts, and you are going to go somewhere in Christ.

Or you're going to ignore them and wash out. Your Christian life will be very ho-hum, very mediocre. You cannot, you cannot enter into the abundant life that Christ promised in John 10, 10, if you ignore the impact and the demand of these two verses.

It goes without saying that these two, as well as the vast majority of the Bible, is directed to the believer in Jesus Christ. This book, this book was never intended for the population of humanity as a whole.

Now, I know some people may be offended at that, but that's the truth of the matter. It is because this book is really designed for a minority that it occupies a prominent place on millions and millions of coffee tables throughout the world and is admired at a distance, unread, and not understood.

[ 2 : 37 ] For the simple reason that it is not for most people. This book is God's design and God's blueprint for those who are related to him by faith.

It is not for mankind in general. Now, someone may say, I take exception to that. I think the Bible is for all of mankind. It is for all of humanity.

Well, it isn't. No matter what. It is all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be mature, thoroughly equipped, furnished unto every good work, not for people as a whole.

Now, I know as we look upon the vast majority of the world's population, we say things like, and it is my sentiment too, well, boy, they could really use the Bible. I mean, I know some people and they're live.

They're just, oh, boy, they're wild. Man, they need it. They ought to read it. They sure could use it. Oh, I don't dispute that at all. But to them, it is a closed book. For the natural man does not, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.

[ 4 : 02 ] You've got to have the right equipment if you're going to understand this book. And the right equipment is the Spirit of God dwelling in you who takes the Word of God and makes the things of God intelligible to you.

Otherwise, your experience with the Bible will be like my experience with the Bible when as a young man, about 19 or 20 years of age, I sat around a barrack in Fort Richardson, Alaska, a few miles outside of Anchorage, and we spent some long winter nights coming through the pages of the New Testament, pooling our ignorance, knowing nothing, and learning nothing, and everybody putting in their two cents worth, which was all based on ignorance, and we reached some pretty wild, weird conclusions.

As I look back on it now, I think, oh, my. You know, when I was in Alaska, now this is, well, let me tell you how long ago it was.

We got overseas paid for serving there. That's how long ago. Alaska wasn't a state then. It was kind of like back before the earth crossed hard, you know, a long time ago.

And we would get pretty low on cold winter nights, having either gone into town and blown our money that we got at the first of the month or drank it up or lost at gambling or whatever.

[ 5 : 28 ] I speak now as a non-Christian. You young people understand that. We would sit around in the barracks and we'd get all the guys. When we went in the army, we all got these little Gideon New Testaments, you know, carry them in our shirt pocket.

And most of us just kind of considered it like a good luck charm. We didn't take it all that serious. But sometimes when we'd get really bored, I mean really super bored, we'd get together, the guys out of the end of the barracks, and there'd be half a dozen Catholics and a half dozen Protestants and two or three Jews and half dozen of nothings.

And we would all get together and thumb through this book and compare notes. And guys would spout off about it, means this, means that, means six, none of us knew what we were talking about. And I was as woefully ignorant as all the rest of us.

There wasn't a Christian, to the best of my knowledge. There wasn't a Christian in the whole lot. There were just some people who were interested in religious things. And particularly, we were interested in the book of Revelation.

There probably was no worse place for us to be as a bunch of unregenerates looking through the Bible. But we'd get back there in Revelation and go into this beast with seven heads and ten horns.

[ 6 : 36 ] And we would flounder around in that and read about some of those things that are coming upon the earth. And like I said, just pool our ignorance. Because we were ignorant people, we did not have any spiritual equipment for approaching this book, for understanding it, for appreciating it.

We kind of admired it. And many of us, I think, even considered it a supernatural book. But as far as understanding it, so that it actually could work in your life, I mean, so that you could take the Bible seriously, never really entered on it.

And it doesn't really enter the minds of a lot of people today. But the book is written to those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

It might as well, for the average person who does not, it might as well be written in Chinese. It's just so much religious gobbledygook. A lot of signs and symbols signify nothing.

When Paul wrote this monumental twelfth chapter, he did so with the intent that it would be a Christian audience who would receive it. He is assuming that they have already traveled through those first 11 chapters that deal with the great theme of man's lostness before a holy God, his need for salvation, God's provision for salvation.

[ 7 : 57 ] He has appropriated by faith the finished work of Jesus Christ, which has been accomplished on his behalf. He has become a new creature in Christ. He has eternal life.

His eternal destiny is settled. It is established. It is done. It is already fixed. But until you get there, until you walk through those gates of pearl, what are you supposed to do in the meanwhile?

How are you supposed to live here? Where do you begin, assuming that you have become a Christian? Paul opens that chapter with therefore. I beseech you therefore, brethren.

The wherefore of the therefore is that Paul is drawing upon everything that he has said up to this point. All 11 chapters. And then he reaches this grand conclusion by saying, now, in light of everything that I have told you up to this point, all that God has done for you in Christ, in light of all of that, this is what you are to do.

Therefore, I beseech you, brethren. I beg of you, for your own good, that you present your body.

[ 9 : 17 ] All that you are. All that you are. All that you are. All that you are. All that you are. As a living sacrifice unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul is saying, in light of what God has done through Christ to accomplish your redemption, there is only one logical response. Only one thing you can do.

And that is gift wrap yourself. And place yourself on the altar to God as a living sacrifice.

At his disposal. Here I am. You bought me. You paid for me. I am not my own. I have been bought with a price. Therefore, I am yours.

For you to do with me as you see fit. You purchased me. You have the contract on this life. You own me. You are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver or gold.

[ 10 : 24 ] See the vain conversation from your father. Peter says, but you have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Lamb without spot or blemish.

That is the price that Jesus Christ paid to bring you unto himself. Now, what are you going to do in light of that? Only one thing we can do. That is, which is your reasonable, logical service.

And that is to say to this one who purchased our redemption, I owe you my life. I owe you everything. What does a drowning man say when he is going down for the third time and he is pulled out by his rescuer and dragged to the shore?

What can he say? Took you long enough to get here. I think you sprained my arm when you pulled me out. What can he say?

All he can say is, I owe you my life. I owe you everything. If it were not for you, I would be dead. If it were not for Jesus Christ, we would be condemned.

[ 11 : 35 ] One of Paul's other therefore is, there is therefore now no condemnation. Those who are in Christ.

No condemnation. Why? Because God doesn't have any condemnation left. He took your share of condemnation and judgment and wrath and he dumped it on Jesus Christ.

Who willingly took it in your place. For he who knew no sin was made sin for us. That we might be made the righteousness of God. The other therefore of Romans is, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is all wrapped up in Jesus Christ. He is the sum total of us. He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the one in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Life that does not begin and end with Christ is not a Christian life. Call it a religious life if you wish, but don't call it Christian. For he is the Alpha and Omega.

[ 12 : 38 ] He is everything in between. For to me, says Paul, to live with Christ. What is living to you? I can never resist doing this at funerals.

People are more vulnerable then and they are thinking more clearly about death and the purpose and meaning of life then than perhaps they are any other time. I always ask them to fill in the blank. I'll ask you the same thing.

You fill in the blank. For to me, to live is... What in? What in the blank? Security?

Money? Fame? Fortune? Popularity? What is it? Sport?

Athletic? What is the blank? For to me, to live is Christ. And to die is gain. Now, make sure whatever you put in the blank...

[ 13 : 53 ] will make it gain when you die. To me, to live is... money. Power. And to die is gain.

Oh, no, that doesn't work that way, does it? You leave it all behind. Someone says you've never seen a brink struck in a funeral procession. Did you hear...

Did you hear that old man so-and-so died last month? Is that right? How much did he leave? He left it all. Left it all.

For to me, to live... There isn't anything that you can put in the blank that will make dying gain except Jesus Christ. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

How is that? Because when you die, you're absent from the body and present with the Lord. You're with Jesus Christ. And that's gain. That's better than living here, living with him. That's the only thing you can put in the blank that makes dying gain.

[ 14 : 48 ] Interesting. For to me, to live, saw noted sports personality. Man that I admire very much insofar as his athletic prowess is concerned.

You just used to admire the guy. But he made a very sad, sad statement. I'm convinced it was a true statement. But it was so sad. He says, baseball is my life.

That's too bad. Because no matter how good a shape you stay in, no matter how well you try to keep your skills sharply honed, the time is going to come.

No club in the major league would pay \$5,000 for your contract. And if you make baseball your life, then your life is ebbing away with the passing years.

Because you slow down going around those bases. And the old batting average drops. And the injuries take longer to recuperate from. And all the rest of it. Paul says, for to me to live is Christ.

[ 15 : 59 ] And to die is gain. That's the thing that makes living worthwhile. That is why we are to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

The word that is used here in the original is a word from which we get the word logic. Paul's saying it's the only logical thing you can do. Sanity. Sanity requires you to do this. It's the only proper thing to do.

If you do not do that as a believer. Now, you do not have to do that because God still respects the human volition. He respects the will. God did a marvelous thing when he created creatures with a volition of their own who could tell the creator to get lost.

But he did that. He did that. God created the creature in such a way with a volition and a will that he could write the creator right out of his life if he chose to do so. And many people do.

Sad to say, some Christians even give you that impression. And I can promise you this. Those who do not and will not make their bodies a living sacrifice to God will do what verse 2 says we ought not to do.

[ 17 : 09 ] And that is, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. If you do not present your body as a living sacrifice to God, you will be conformed to this world.

You will. You will. You are in the process of being conformed to this world. Phillips translates this with the world squeezing you into its mold.

That is precisely what takes place. It is the automatic, natural, and predictable result of living here on planet Earth.

Everything is designed to conform the individual to his environment. That ought not to come as a surprise to anybody. Every environment, every environment labors intentionally or unintentionally to conform everything that is in it to itself.

It is being made into the mold of the world. And this world is at cross purposes with the plan and program of God.

[ 18 : 23 ] This world is not your friend. John said, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Paul talks about our Lord Jesus and he says he gave himself.

He gave himself that he might deliver us from this present evil world. Evil world? I look around me and I see beauty.

I see beautiful trees and meadows and oceans and mountains. It's a breathtaking, beautiful place to be. Don't deny that.

We might consider planet Earth as a beautiful, ugly domain. That's what it is. In many ways, it is beautiful.

[ 19 : 26 ] But it is hostile. It is Satan's domain. Jesus Christ talked about Satan as being the prince of this world.

Now, either he is or Christ is mistaken. You'll have to make up your own mind about that. This is his domain. The apostle said in 2 Corinthians 4, If our gospel be hid, our gospel, if our gospel be hid, undiscovered, it is hid, said Paul, to those whose minds the God of this world has blinded.

Yet, you ask these people, you even suggest that they may be spiritually blinded, they'd probably be highly resentful.

Nothing wrong with my eyes. The Bible says, The God of this world hath blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine unto them.

There is a barrier that is placed there. And it is part and parcel of this world and this world system. Because this world loves its own. And those who belong to God do not belong to this world.

[ 20 : 51 ] There is an automatic situation of hostility that is set up. that caused our Lord to say to his disciples, Marvel not! Hey, fellas, don't be surprised if the world hates you.

It hated me before it hated you. Hated me, it'll hate you also. The world loves its own just as God loves his own. Those who are in this world are more often than not unaware of the fact that the world is lulling them to sleep.

That is exactly the word that is used in 1 John when John says that the whole world lies in the lap of the evil.

Think of that. Think of that. The idea is that the world is coddling those who are unregenerate and those who are part and parcel of the world.

The world has embraced them as a mother with child and the world has these people right in its lap. And it just lulls them to sleep telling them everything is wonderful.

[ 22 : 07 ] And they just cozy up to the world and they love the world and they find their fulfillment in the world. They haven't a clue what's really.

This book is provided to tell us what's going on and what's wrong with the world. And this book also tells us Christians don't set your sights on changing the world or renovating the world system it isn't going to happen.

this world this planet earth is a gigantic globular titanic and it's going down.

We are not commissioned any place in scripture to save the world. God himself has given up on the world. Now some of you may not like this talk especially at the first of the year.

You have great hope for 1983. Well I believe in optimism too. but the clear teaching of scripture overrides any possibility of salvaging this world system it isn't going to happen.

[ 23 : 16 ] I'll tell you what we are commissioned to do. We are commissioned to rescuing from this globular titanic all the passengers who are on board that we can possibly save.

And that we do through the preaching of the gospel and so far as the rest of the world is concerned she's going under. Nothing could be clearer than what the Bible teaches about that.

We are going to experience a utopia. Things are going to get better. Things are going to be made right. And justice is going to prevail on the earth. But it won't be through the human political system.

It will be through Jesus Christ reigning with a rod of iron from Jerusalem. and the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover them. That's when things will be made right.

Meanwhile, we are simply to be at the task of loving one another with a pure heart fervently and of returning evil to no man for evil reaching those whom we can because this world is sunk.

[ 24 : 22 ] This is Satan's world and it's going the same way that he's going. And all we can do is salvage some of the passengers. Continuing on in Romans, Paul then begins to delineate some ideas about how we are to treat ourselves and how we are to treat one another.

He says in verse 3, through the grace given to me, I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment.

That's difficult. That is difficult. That means to have a realistic appraisal of yourself and who can do that? I guess one of the first things we can do is to recognize that we see ourselves with an intensely prejudiced eye.

We all do. The man who says I'm not biased and I'm not prejudiced is the man who is most biased and most prejudiced. We can recognize that we have a tendency to be prejudiced in our own favor and that will at least help us to compensate for it.

But what Paul is saying here is I want you to have a realistic appraisal of yourself, your abilities, and your limitations. Most of us tend to think we're more important than we really are, that we're more indispensable than we really are.

[ 25 : 37 ] Oh, there are some people who are wallowing around with a miserable negative self-image and all they do is put themselves down, berate themselves, belittle themselves, and that's wrong too.

It's just wrong in the other direction. In a certain sense, you are nothing and nobody. For our Lord Jesus said, without me, you can do nothing.

You're powerless. And in another real sense, you are somebody. You ought to act like it. You're a child of the king. You aren't just a nobody. You've been redeemed by the finished work of Jesus Christ and in him you are everything.

He has enriched you with all spiritual blessings and heavenly places. You have no call to be wallowing around in self-pity or with a low self-image or I can't do anything and I'm stupid and I can't do this and I can't do that.

That too is sin and it can even be a form of pride in reverse. A realistic appraisal of who you are will put you on the right track.

[ 26 : 42 ] You've got to avoid the Peter complex. The Peter complex is though everybody else forsakes you, I'll not forsake you. Boy, you can count on me. I don't know about these other guys.

These other apostles are weaklings. Lord, when the going gets rough, you know Peter will be right in there slugging it out with you and you can count on me when the chips are down. Yeah, Peter was the first one to turn tail and run.

deny the Lord on top of it. He didn't recognize his own limitations. Or you can go to the other extreme with the Moses complex. I am but a child.

I can't speak. I don't have this ability. I don't have that gift. I can't do anything. Somebody else can do it better than me. Here am I.

Send Aaron. That's wrong too. They're both wrong. We need to correctly assess our abilities and we are told that it is in accordance with the measure of faith that God has a lot of to eat.

[ 27 : 42 ] I really appreciate this for the simple reason that I arrived at an interpretation of this different from my commentators. I don't usually differ with them but sometimes I do.

and I really wrestled over that phrase and I have come to the conclusion based on the context that follows and Paul's expression about the body that what God the Holy Spirit means that God has allotted to each a measure of faith is this.

You have and I have as a believer in Christ just a measure of faith. That means a portion. A certain amount. We don't have all faith. Paul talks about that in his Corinthian epistle when he says if I had all faith and could move mountains hypothetically he didn't.

He doesn't have all faith. The only one who possesses faith and grace beyond measure and without measure is Jesus Christ. But we have a measure of faith and that's beautiful. That is absolutely beautiful.

It means that your measure of faith in the areas of your gift my measure of faith in the areas of my gift will work it out and we can do it together.

[ 28 : 54 ] It is a built-in intended deficiency wherein God has not given you everything you need but he has given you something that I need and he's given me something that you need and we put our measures of faith together and we get it together.

It is a built-in intended dependency that God has created in the body so that everybody in the body needs everybody else in the body. We all pool our measures of faith together and our gifts together and we come up with a functioning whole body that works efficiently.

God has not given any Christian everything but he has given every Christian something and your something is needed as much as everybody else's something.

As he goes on to say we have many members in one body and all members do not have the same function so we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members one of another.

That's beautiful. My arm my right arm has a lot of abilities and it has a lot of deficiencies. It can provide a lot of things but it has a lot of needs.

[ 30 : 16 ] My arm is dependent upon my legs and my feet to get it somewhere and my arm is dependent upon my eyes because when it reaches for something it needs what it sees in order to help it.

The arm is dependent upon other parts of the body in the same sense that every Christian is dependent upon every other member of the body all working together.

As Paul lays out the analogy of the body and the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 that no member no part of the body can say I don't have any need of you.

It would not be in the interest of my right arm to say who needs a stupid old foot anyway? I've got it all right here. I don't need a foot. But when the time comes that that arm needs to get from here to there it needs feet.

And when it gets from here to there the feet need something for the arms to do something for it. And everything is all tied together. And this is the way it is in the body of Christ. It is a built-in mutual dependency situation that God has established so that we all need each other.

[ 31 : 27 ] We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let each exercise them accordingly. If it is prophecy according to the proportion of his faith.

I think that means expend the energy that you have to function with the gift that God has given you. It is the idea of exercising diligence in it.

Service he who teaches in his teaching who who exhorts in his exhortation he who gives with liberality he who leads with diligence he who shows mercy with cheerfulness.

And then he talks about love and he says let love be without hypocrisy. We are told in the first Petrine epistle that we are to love one another with a pure heart fervently.

That means no mixed motives. It means no sham no phoniness no pretense no hypocrisy. It means that Christians are to deal one with another in an open above board relationship.

[ 32 : 26 ] None of this phony stuff. no putting on fronts and putting on airs and pretense to be this and pretense to be there is an openness a genuineness a transparency that is to exist between believers in Christ.

And it also involves being vulnerable and being what you really are rather than pretending to be something that you aren't. Let love be without hypocrisy.

Abhor what is evil. Some translators render that hate what is evil. Christians need to know how to hate. You know that? You're supposed to hate everything that God hates.

God hates every false way. God hates a lying tongue. God hates evil in every form. And we are to hate evil.

We are to cling to that which is good. And the word that is used here for cling is the same word that the Holy Spirit uses in connection with a man and a woman being joined together in matrimony. It is the idea. Actually, the actual original meaning of the word is to be glued to, to cling to, to be glued to.

[ 33 : 40 ] A husband and wife are supposed to be glued together. That's super glued before there wasn't. That's what it is. The idea is inseparable.

You just can't pull them apart. That's what the relationship is. That's the way we're supposed to be in connection with good. We refuse to be separated from that which is good. If there is money involved, it doesn't make any difference.



You can't be bought. If it involves convenience, prestige, power, whatever, you will not be separated from that which is right.

And whatever is at stake will just have to go its way because you are not going to sacrifice principle and integrity for anything. It's like a police officer that is incorruptible.

It's like a judge that can't be bought. Only you're dealing with a lot bigger sphere. You're dealing with the totality of life and you'll not sacrifice principles for anything. That's clinging to what is good.

[ 34 : 48 ] Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give preference to one another in honor. How do you do that? Well, you simply put other people ahead of yourself. That's what love is all about.

Love is not a feeling. It is an attitude. And anybody who thinks love is a feeling of emotion, of bubbly, of flashing lights, ringing bells, and all the rest of it, they have cheapened the biblical aspect of love.

And they have settled for something considerably less. love is not a feeling, but feelings may be a byproduct of love. And I'm not knocking feelings.

I think it's great to experience the feeling of love. But the feeling of love is not love. Love is an attitude, not an emotion. Let us not love, said John, in word or in deed.

Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And love that does not do something is not love. It's phony.

[ 35 : 56 ] Love, biblical love, always wants to give, loves to give, looks for an occasion to give. And the main thing that love gives is itself.

Don't reduce giving to money, that's the cheap way out. Exalt giving to yourself. That's the costly way.

How many parents tried to assuage a guilt conscience in husbands and wives by giving expensive gifts at Christmas in an effort to make up for all the deficiency in the relationship throughout the year?

Doesn't cut it, won't work, won't work. You can't patch up a deficient relationship 11 months out of the year by spending a bunch of bucks once a year.

Doesn't take the place of it. Love is always giving. Lust. Lust is always trying to obtain, to get, to secure, to hold, to conquer, to gain, more, more, more.

[ 37 : 02 ] Never, never, never has enough. Never has enough. If he gets a million dollars, well, a million dollars won't go as far as it used to. You got to have more, got to have more.

insatiable appetite. But love, love just gives, gives, gives.

Love does not give until it hurts. Love gives until it feels good. It just gives and gives. That's the nature of love.

You give. And you give of yourself. And you give of your money. And you give of your time. you spend and be spent for somebody else. God so loved the world and gave.

Gave. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gain himself.

[ 38 : 11 ] That's what love does. Love says, what can I do for you? How can I fulfill you? How can I complete you? How can I meet your needs? How can I make you happy?

You know where people really get hung up? They take all of that and they turn it all inwardly. And they say, what can I do for me? What do I get out of it? How can I make myself happy?

How can I meet my needs? How can I? How can I? How can I? And all the while they're doing it, and if they ever succeed in accomplishing it, they're utterly miserable.

Miserable. The most miserable people I've ever met in the world are the most selfish people I've ever met in the world. So are you. Can't you say that's true? Don't you think?

Can you not think of people right now you know to be intensely selfish people? I ask you, are they happy? Are they happy? Buy this gadget and this bobble and they do this and they do that and it's a frantic search for happiness, but they never quite arrive because the key for happiness is making somebody else happy.

[ 39 : 22 ] Boy, if we could just get a hold of that, it's a dynamic spiritual principle. Jesus said, he who would save his life, same shall lose the king.

But he who loses his life for my sake and the gospel, same shall find it. You want to be somebody?

You really want to be somebody? He who would be chiefest among you, let him be servant of all. Fantastic. just takes the human concept, reverses it.

Man says, get, get, get, obtain, push, drive, kick, claw, scratch, get to the top, get up there, get up there, get up there. All the while they're climbing, they're nursing their ulcer and their high blood pressure and this and that, and they're absolutely miserable people.

And everybody around them knows it. If you really want to know something about the abundant life that Jesus Christ is talking about, start with forgetting about yourself.

[ 40 : 29 ] Just forget about yourself. Lose yourself in the needs of other people. Husbands, start with your wives.

Wives, start with your husbands. 1983, never be the same. Fantastic. We are so busy looking out for number one that we fall far short of what God had intended by way of happiness.

All I can say is if happiness were achieved by self-serving, there sure ought to be a lot more happy people than there are. But it doesn't work.

Never has, never will. Rejoicing in hope. We looked at the word hope. It always means certainty and it always means future aspect.

Persevering in tribulation because that tests your mettle. Devoted to prayer because that recognizes an ongoing dependency. Contributing to the needs of the saints.

[ 41 : 45 ] Ah, that's a nice one. Not to the greens of the saints. You know saints can be greedy too. Sure, just because someone has become a Christian doesn't mean that greed has flown out the window.

They have a sanctified greed. But it's still greed nonetheless. And it's wrong. No one is to contribute to the greeds of the saints, but we are to contribute to the needs of the saints.

And you must keep in mind, of course, that when Paul wrote this, there were no social security programs, there were no welfare programs, there were no insurance programs such as we know today in many respects, and it was a much more viable thing then than it is now.

But the time may well come, and if things don't happen a little bit differently in 83 and 84, and we become more hard-pressed economically than we are, this may be a very present reality where there will be a lot more concentrated effort to contribute to the needs of the saints.

Practicing hospitality, bless those who persecute you and curse not. That is, again, just the opposite. It means we do not have the prerogative to call down the cursing of God even upon people who persecute us.

[ 42 : 59 ] All we can do is bless them. And included in that blessing is a prayer that God will open their eyes, because if these people who are persecuting you knew what they need to know, they wouldn't be persecuting you.

they would be one with you rather than persecuting you. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

And then the last few verses, Paul devotes to the subject of vengeance or obtaining revenge on those who have used you or mistreated you.

And he says we aren't to do that either. We are to make way for the wrath of God. And that means if someone has offended you or someone has done something to you that is deserving of retaliation, don't you do the retaliating.

Because vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord. You leave them to me. But you know the problem we have with that is that God doesn't collect all his debts when we want him to.

[ 44 : 06 ] And when someone wrongs us today, we want God to zap them tomorrow. And when he doesn't, we take offense at that and we say, boy, they're going to get away with that. Something should be done.

And sometimes we do not resist the temptation to get back at them ourselves and take the situation into our own hands. But we are told that we are not to do that. We are to give place to the wrath of God.

And if wrath is what they need, God will repay. It may be tomorrow, it may be next year, it may be in eternity. eternity. But God has a way of settling the score and he does it right in a way that is totally just, not in the way that we would do it.

The only thing you can do is make sure that you do not have any enemies. Now, you may be somebody's enemy. You have no control over that.

If someone wants to regard you as their enemy, you may not be able to help that. But just you make sure that they are not your enemy.

[ 45 : 09 ] Because that you can control. And if you have one who considers you an enemy, the extent of your involvement in their life is that you are to labor to convert an enemy to a friend.

If he is hungry, you feed him. If he is thirsty, you give him to drink. And in so doing, you will disarm your enemy. When he is convinced you have no intentions toward him except those that are good and honorable, he has a difficult time with that.

He has to then bring his own actions into life. Paul says it has the equivalent of heaping coals of fire on their head. And that doesn't mean if you really want to get even with your enemy, kill him with kindness because it will just burn him up.

And oh, it will make you feel so good. That isn't the idea at all. This is born out of their culture in that day when the family fireplace would go out and one in the home would take the fire pan and they would go off to a next door neighbor and they would ask the neighbor for coals of fire.

Somebody in the community always had a fire going and they carried virtually everything on their head. And this person would take their fire pan in and the neighbor would heap coals of fire into that fire pan.

[ 46 : 31 ] They would put it on their head and take it back to their home for their own heart. By the time they got there, they were warmed throughout from the heat of the fire pan. And the idea is you treat your enemy as a friend even though he regards you as an enemy.

It will have a disarming effect upon him and it will be like heaping coals of fire on his head. You will warm your enemy to yourself and to your cause. It has the idea of winning an enemy by making him a friend.

Lastly, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. How do you do that? There's a supernatural way that it is done, but it is a very human trigger device and the trigger is your will.

And when you decide that that's what you're going to do as an act of your will, then that unleashes the spirit of God to endue you with a supernatural ability to regard an enemy as a friend and honestly, truly wish no ill toward any of me.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, but I'll tell you this. If you want to walk in the flesh and you do not want Christ to strengthen you, you want to wreak your own vengeance on your enemies, you want to get even yourself, you want to live your own life, you want to call your own shots, Jesus Christ will not strengthen you.

[ 47 : 57 ] He will not strengthen you. He strengthens you to do what is right. He never strengthens you to do what's wrong.

And when you exercise that will and say this is the right thing to do, it isn't the easy thing to do. It isn't the least expensive thing to do. It isn't the most convenient thing to do, but it is the right thing to do.

Then you can call upon the strength of Jesus Christ and he will be there and he will enable you to do whatever. That's the way. the trigger device is your will.

You don't have to. You may. You should. It's your logical, reasonable service. Shall we bow for prayer?

Father, our Father, we are again confronted with the responsibility of deciding how we are going to receive what we have just heard.

[ 49 : 20 ] We pray that there will be none here who are your children that could consciously or intentionally reject these principles.

We know there is so much about what we've said that we don't even understand ourselves. We know we've missed a lot. But we do want to be obedient to what we do understand.

And we pray that each of us may have a submissive spirit before you so that as we contemplate the contents of this chapter for 1983 and beyond, we will determine as an act of our will that we're going to govern our lives according to the principles that you have set forth in Scripture, knowing that they are for our best good and for your glory.

May each and every believer who is here now make that vow deliberately within themselves that we are going to be guided and guarded by the right.

And you've set forth what is right. And Father, if there are those who are here this morning who have heavy hearts because they have not the Savior, we pray that you will communicate to them in this closing hour that the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the sin debt for them in their place and that he beckons them and welcomes them to come to him and receive life and life more abundantly.

[ 51 : 04 ] Give them, we pray, the ability right now to simply turn loose of themselves and their self-will and their own determination to do their own thing and submit themselves to you as the one who provided that life for them.

While we remain in an attitude of prayer, I want to address some comments and a very brief description of the plan of salvation. I feel that this is the time of year to do this.

So let's pause for just a moment in a prayerful attitude and let me briefly, for the benefit of any who may not be aware of it, maybe you've been here many, many times and maybe this is your first time here.

It makes no difference. Would you be honest with yourself right now and honest with God and acknowledge that you're just like all the rest of us?

We are all from the same lump of humanity and God hath concluded all under sin. That the promise by faith might be given to those who are in Christ Jesus.

[ 52 : 23 ] All are under sin. This means the people we consider good, the people we consider bad, the people we consider somewhere in between, compared to the righteousness and holiness of God, we're all sinners.

We all fall short of God's standard. Would you be honest enough to admit that? Now don't compare yourself with someone else, dear friend. Don't compare yourself with someone else.

Compare yourself with God's standard of perfection. When you do that, you know you don't measure up. And that's what God requires. But he has provided something for us whereby we can become perfect, acceptable in his sight.

And that is by appropriating what Jesus Christ did on our behalf on Calvary's cross 2000. Would you be willing to say, in admitting that you are a sinner, would you be willing to say to God that you know you cannot make yourself acceptable to God?

No amount of religiosity, no amount of do-goodism, no amount of giving money, none of those things will ever reveal. God cannot be bought off either. But God has paid a tremendous price.

[ 53 : 33 ] See, you can't pay a price to God, but God has already paid a price for you in the death of his son. And if you will, by faith, align yourself with Jesus Christ as being your substitute, Jesus took your death and he took your hell in his own person.

And if you will acknowledge that and claim him as your Lord and as your Savior, then God will save you. He'll make you a new creature in Christ.

And I still don't know how he does it, but I know he does. He'll call you unto himself. He'll clean you up his way. He'll make you his child. He'll give you eternal life. He'll give you the power for the abundant life.

It's being born again. It's a whole new life. Everything is starting all over again. Would you make that your decision this morning?

What a fantastic way to start a new life, a new year. I pray you'll do that right now. God isn't interested in fancy prayers.

[ 54 : 40 ] Don't worry about that. And you don't have to walk an aisle and you don't have to hold your hand up. God reads your heart. And if that is the intent of your heart, God knows that.

And God will respond to that. I trust you'll make that decision. Just completely surrender yourself to him as best as you know how, right now. And let him make you a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Thank you, Father, for this time we've been able to share this morning. Thank you for each and every person here. Thank you for the truth of your word that works in the lives and hearts of your people who are submissive and responsive to it.

In Jesus' name. Amen. We have three minutes. Are there a couple of questions? Dave? Dave? Dave? All right.

I made the statement that when someone is ongoing with a real negative self-image, it could actually stem from a sense of pride.

[ 55 : 56 ] It's a false pride. It's not a false pride. It's a real pride, but it's a disguised pride. In other words, someone may belittle themselves, may put themselves down before other people because they are, what shall I say, fishing for compliments?

They are making themselves out to be an especially bad person or an especially weak person or an especially incapable person because all the while they are doing that, they are berating themselves, they are waiting on their good friends to come to their rescue and tell them that none of those things are true.

And what they really want to hear is they really want to hear the response and the pumping up that they get from their friends. Case in point was like the fellow I used this illustration before, stuck in my mind so vividly.

This young man is extremely gifted at playing the piano. I mean, he could stand that thing on its ear and just beautiful pianist. And everywhere he'd go, he'd make it a practice to go around visiting churches.

And whenever people would find out that this particular man was there, they would always ask him to play the piano. He'd always deny that he could play. Oh, I can't. I'm no good. Oh, you're great.

[ 57 : 05 ] I heard you at such and such. Oh, you do. Oh, you're great. You're a rendition of this and that. And he'd just get a little bigger, a little bigger, his head swell a little more, a little more. And he'd go through this time and time and time again.

And he was putting himself down because he wanted others to lift him up. What was his problem? His problem was the problem of pride, at least in that area. He was proud of his accomplishment.

But he wouldn't walk into a place and say, all right, everybody, here I am. I'm going to play the piano for you. Of course, you can't do that. That's open pride. So you disguise your pride.

Oh, shucks. I can't play the piano. And then people prevail upon you to do so. And he gets mileage out of all the accolades and all the rest of it.

It's a very deceptive kind of thing. There is a... Humility is... Humility is the thing that when you think you've got it, you just lost it.

[ 58 : 04 ] It is tied in with the deception of the human heart, which Jeremiah says is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Another case in point was the lady who came up to Dr. Barnhouse.

I mentioned this, I think, some time ago, too. Dr. Barnhouse was a man of God who just had an absolutely uncanny way of opening the scriptures. He's probably my very favorite Bible teacher of all times, at least as far back as I care to go.

And he would teach a Bible class in New York City on Monday night. And there'd be upwards of 500 people in attendance. Every Monday night, he'd fly or drive from Philadelphia to New York to teach his Bible class.

One evening, a lady came up to him and said, Dr. Barnhouse, God has given you a marvelous gift for expounding the scriptures. And he said, yes, I know, and I thank him for it.

Her mouth dropped. Later, it was revealed that she expected him to deny it. He's supposed to say, oh, shucks, ma'am, I can't teach the Bible. I'm just a country boy.

[ 59 : 10 ] I can't teach the Bible. I don't know. What is that? Mock humility. She paid him a compliment, and it was true. There is nothing wrong with recognizing your ability.

Don't deny your ability, but give credit. If we have ability in these areas, it is because God has given these abilities. What do you have, says Paul?

What do you have that you have not received?