

In Christ There is No Condemnation

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[0 : 00] As has been our custom upon the completion of a major portion of Scripture, we have attempted to go back over that in a review session and consolidate the entirety of the passage so that we can develop, I trust, a fresh and a different perspective.

That is what we intend to do this morning with the first 18 verses of Romans chapter 8. May I remind you that the 8th chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans is considered by a great many people to be the pinnacle of Scripture revelation.

I suppose that is debatable. I'm sure there are some who would take issue with it because just about everyone has their own favorite portion of Scripture. But a great many people have come to rest upon Romans chapter 8.

Someone said in the 17th century, if Holy Scripture were a ring and the epistle to the Romans a precious stone on that ring, chapter 8 would be the sparkling point of the jewel.

I am not prepared to dispute that. It is this same 8th chapter of Romans that is the conclusion to the question which was asked early on into the epistle, and that is, how can God save sinful people and remain just?

[1 : 19] Paul opens the great theme of justification by faith as the answer to the revelation of God's righteousness, and he presents a very sordid picture regarding man's sin and his being completely undone spiritually.

He is a moral bankrupt. What can he do about it? Nothing really. But he tries to do all kinds of things. He engages in all sorts of religious activities.

He develops all kinds of moral codes and principles, trying to lift himself by his own bootstraps, when all the time Scripture is crying out that man doesn't even possess any bootstraps.

He is condemned. He is brought to despair. He is under universal condemnation. That is the way man would be left if it were not for the fact that a gracious God has intervened and exacted the penalty or sin from one who was totally righteous, thus eligible to make such a sacrifice.

That person, of course, is the individual who has split all human history. He is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. Justification by faith and security of our union in Christ closes out this eighth chapter of Romans.

[2 : 32] It is a book or it is a chapter that opens with no condemnation in verse 1, and it closes with no separation in verses 38 and 39. As we will see when we move on through the epistle, chapters 9 through 11 answer the question, what about the Jews?

If God has done this with his people, known as the body of Christ, and justification by faith is the methodology by which God is working today, what about all of the Old Testament promises that he made to the children of Israel?

What about the Jews? So Paul devotes chapters 9 through 11 to let us know that God has not written off the Jews. There is a future for Israel, but it will not be concluded until he is finished with what he intends to do with the church.

Then as we come to Romans 12 through 16, we partake of an intensely practical portion of the epistle. It is there that he begins, in light of all that I have said, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.

Then he goes on and tells us how we who are in Christ are supposed to live on the basis of what he has told us in the preceding 11 chapters. We have noted that chapter 8 is in stark contrast to chapter 7.

[3 : 48] Chapter 7 is the chapter of the human ego in which the personal pronoun I is found 30 times, 30 times.

But when we come into chapter 8, we find the person of the Holy Spirit mentioned 20 times. In chapter 7, the theme is abject despair due to human sin and misery.

But in chapter 8, the picture changes dramatically, and it is glorification, release, liberty, exaltation, and freedom in the person of Jesus Christ.

And that leads Paul to the conclusion in 8.1. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. May I say, and I think without fear of being challenged, this is one of the most important verses in all of the word of God.

Romans chapter 8 and verse 1. It is absolutely packed. There is a whole course of theology within that one verse. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

[4 : 57] The therefore suggests a conclusion, and it also is a bridge or a continuation. He says, there is therefore now, there is therefore now, as opposed to previously.

Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What was their position before they were in Christ Jesus? They were under condemnation. Without God, without hope, without Christ in this present world.

And when he says no, it doesn't really jump out at us in the English, but in the Greek. It is a very emphatic negative. And if we were to render this most literally from the original language, it would read something like this.

There is therefore now not any of any kind whatsoever condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. It is as though the apostle is trying to rivet this thing home.

Will you get this? There is therefore now not any of any kind whatsoever condemnation. Under condemnation. Get the impression he is trying to be emphatic. You are right.

[6 : 03] And the Romans, to whom this epistle is addressed, would have gotten that emphasis. Whereas we, using the English, it escapes us, but it is there in the Greek. And he says those in Christ Jesus.

That means those who are not condemned are qualified. It isn't just everybody and anybody who is not under condemnation.

The only ones who are not under condemnation are those who are in Christ Jesus. Because their condemnation has been transferred from themselves and placed upon Christ.

And he has borne it away. What penalty is there then for you? There is none. Christ has taken it all. Our sins are forgiven in Christ.

Glorious, glorious prosper. Have you any idea how many people are wandering around today under an unbearable burden of guilt?

[7 : 05] They're just weighted down with it. There is no reason for a believer to ever be under that kind of anxiety because Jesus Christ died in your place to remove that burden from you.

There is therefore now no condemnation, not any of any kind whatsoever for those who are in Christ Jesus. It includes all who are in Christ Jesus.

It excludes all who are not in Christ Jesus. I don't know about you, but to me this causes two pertinent questions to automatically surface. Number one, what does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? And number two, how do you get there? How do you come to be in Christ Jesus? First of all, may I say that to be in Christ Jesus does not merely mean that you respect and admire Jesus Christ.

Almost everybody does that. Mahatma Gandhi did that. Never professed to be a Christian, but he had great respect and admiration for Jesus Christ.

[8 : 11] It goes much, much further than that. It doesn't even mean that you pray to Christ, and I've heard people say this, well, I know he's there, I pray to him and he helps me and so on. And you go on and inquire a little bit further as to what kind of theological perspective or relationship they really have, and they are totally oblivious to the finished work of Christ.

What they are drawing upon is just some old-fashioned sentiment, some little Sunday school something or other that they got years ago, or something that a godly aunt gave them, or something that they're hanging on to with no real definition, just vague general, oh yes, I know, I pray, and so on and so on.

It doesn't mean that. It doesn't even mean that you depend upon Christ and you look to him for guidance, although it includes that, but all of these definitions fall short. Now, what it means to be in Christ is this.

It means to be in union with Christ. It means to be united with Christ so that you are amalgamated into Christ.

You are intertwined in Christ. You are locked into him. You are fused into Christ. You are welded into Christ. You have become what he is. That's what it means to be in Christ.

[9 : 30] You're joined with him in union with Christ. The closest human analogy that we can give, and it's poor, great as it may be, it is a poor analogy because it breaks down in so many places, is the marriage relationship.

We say that we join a man and a woman in the bonds of holy matrimony. The problem is the bond can be broken.

The bond can be cut asunder. One can die and leave the other behind. The analogy breaks down in a number of places, but it's the best we can do, being as confined as we are to our humanity.

But the relationship that a believer enjoys with Jesus Christ is one which neither height nor depth nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things future nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

That's what Paul closes out his epistle with. So it goes much further than the human relationship. It transcends that immeasurably. It means that we are members of the body of Christ.

[10 : 41] He is the head and we are members of his body. John 14, 19 through 20 says, After a little while, Jesus was speaking to his disciples and said, After a little while, the world will behold me no more, but you will behold me.

Because I live, you shall live also. In that day, you shall know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you.

I don't understand that. I have no difficulty believing it. I have a great deal of difficulty understanding it because, again, I'm limited with my apparatus to enter into something like this.

This is a mystical union. It is a spiritual union. But it is no less real than if it were a physical union. It is a spiritual dynamic that is set in motion.

It is a provision which God has made for his people whereby they can be joined and united with Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1, 30 says, But by his doing. Did you get that?

[11 : 51] But by his doing. Not your doing. By his doing. You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

2 Corinthians 5, 17. Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things are become new.

Ephesians 2, 10. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

1 Thessalonians 4, 16. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Now, these are just a few. There are more. How many more, say you? Phrases that link the believer to being in Christ. I suspect in the New Testament, probably another hundred. But we'll not look at them.

[12 : 54] If you want to get a good concordance, you can go through and check it out yourself. It is a theme that recurs again and again and again. It is the most privileged position that any human being can ever enjoy.

Being a king seated upon a regal throne does not compare with this. Two terms in the White House. Two terms in the White House. Can't touch this. This is much greater.

In Christ, we possess all things. By far, I suspect, the best definition is in the first eleven verses of Romans chapter 6.

May I just jump in and start reading with verse 3. Paul says, We spent a considerable amount of time on that.

I think we adequately established that it is a dry-cleaning verse. There is no water here at all. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which unites us with Christ. You see, water baptism, for whatever motive it may be performed, water baptism really does nothing more than provide the participants with an outward ritual.

[14 : 19] It cannot place anyone into the body of Christ. There is nothing mystical or magical about the water that cleanses anyone's sins.

That which unites us with Christ is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That regenerates, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 12, 13. Paul says, There it is.

Now, this is the dynamic.

That enables the believer in Jesus Christ to live a life that is pleasing to his heavenly Father. It is by virtue of this union. It is through the power and dynamic that is provided by this union.

It gives you the spiritual equipment, the wherewithal, to live a life that is pleasing and acceptable to God. And when you do, it isn't your doing. It is your drawing upon this inner reservoir of power, which God has placed there at your disposal when you came to Jesus Christ.

[16:11] Therefore, there is no believer who can possibly justify an ungodly life. God has provided us with everything we need to live a life that is acceptable and pleasing to him.

I'm not talking about perfection. Back to our text, if we may, in the eighth chapter. And this next question is, if that's what it means to be in Christ, how then do we get there?

Well, this doesn't do the human ego any good because the human ego is always looking for some great work to perform. Many people resent it when you tell them there is virtually nothing they can do to make themselves acceptable to God.

They don't like that any more than Naaman did when he came to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. And old Elisha in 2 Kings 5 didn't even come out and greet him.

He sent his servant out and said, you want to be healed of your leprosy? Go down the Jordan River and dip seven times. I'll tell you, that's not very flattering for the ego of a Syrian general who pulls up in front of a prophet's house and tells him that he hears there's some kind of magical cure around here for leprosy.

[17:41] And here stands the man in his robes and regalia and probably decked all out with his medals. And then the prophet doesn't even come out. He sends out a servant and says, go dip yourself in the Jordan River seven times.

And Naaman says, well, it's the most stupid thing I ever heard. You think I'm going to go out there and insult and embarrass myself by dipping in his stinking, muddy old Jordan River? What's wrong with the rivers of Abana and Farpar back in Damascus, two of the cleanest rivers in the whole Mediterranean area?

Why can't I go there and dip? The servants finally talked him into doing it and he put his ego below it. That's what people need to do. We've got an ego that just won't quit.

That's part of our fallenness. Finally, when Naaman was coaxed into leaving his ego behind because he had everything to gain and nothing to lose, he went out and dipped in that old muddy Jordan River and his flesh came to him again like that of a baby.

Now, there was no magic in that water either. And I'm convinced that the leper that lived down the street could go out there and dunk himself in the Jordan River 70 times. It wouldn't heal his leprosy because that wasn't God's formula of obedience for him as it was for Naaman.

[18:49] Now, God's provision is Jesus Christ and the manner in which we get to be in Christ is not by engaging in religious activities and do-goodism and signing pledges and making vows and all that stuff.

It is nothing more than simply exercising your will and placing yourself at the disposal of the Savior who died in your place.

When you believe on Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you are taking hands off your own salvation or ever hoping to accomplish anything to affect it.

You are placing yourself completely in the care and person of Jesus Christ. And you do that by faith. You can't do it in person.

He isn't here. You can't walk up to him. You're Jesus. Well, I've been wanting to meet you. Stand there and shake hands and pass the time of day. No, we do that by faith. Thomas was able to see him and believe.

[19:49] In John 20, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. And what he was saying to Thomas is this. You never would have believed. You couldn't see.

In fact, Thomas had already said, Except I put my finger in the nails of his hands and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

I'm not so sure that we can blame him. After all, what's wrong with the little empirical evidence?

Thomas, how many other people do you know who came back from the dead?

So Jesus appeared to Thomas and said, Thomas, reach forth your hand. Examine me. Look at my body. Look at the wounds.

Thomas, as much as said, I don't have to, he fell at his feet and said, My Lord and my God. Jesus said, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.

[20 : 48] Blessed are they who have not seen me, and yet shall be seen. That includes you, and that includes me. We exercise faith, and we receive a gift.

That's somewhat humbling, too. You know, when we receive a gift from Jesus Christ, the gift of salvation, we do not exchange gifts.

We receive gifts. It isn't two things of like value, meeting one another. Have you not gone to some kind of a party?

Maybe a Christmas party, an office party, or something, where there's a little gift exchange, and everybody's supposed to bring a gift, and a \$2, or \$5 gift, or something. And for whatever reason, maybe you didn't get the word, or you didn't get a gift, or you forgot about it, and you go, and what's your immediate reaction when you arrive there without a gift, and everybody else has a gift?

How do you feel? Well, first of all, you feel about that high. You're kicking yourself all over the place. You're trying to think, well, how can I possibly, you know, how can I save face? But there's one thing you really will not do.

[22 : 00] You will not allow yourself to receive a gift from anybody else, because you don't have one to give. How embarrassing that would be, to receive a gift. Well, I don't have a gift exchange to give anybody, but I'll sure take one.

You're too gracious for that. You just can't do that. You feel very uncomfortable. It is a gift exchange. Now, there's a great exchange involved in what Jesus Christ gives us.

He gives us himself. He gives us his life. He gives us his joy. He gives us his peace. He gives us his position, his stature. And we give him, by way of exchange, our sin.

Pretty neat exchange, isn't it? Anything equal about that? That's the greatest lopsided transaction the world has ever known. And because man, due to his ego, has this insatiable desire to do something so he can get some credit, so he can have some place whereof to boast, he wants to get his finger in someone.

But you can't. You can't. God will have none of it. You must come to him totally bankrupt with nothing to commend yourself. Lots of people say.

[23 : 19] What you're saying is something I've been thinking about and I'm giving serious consideration to it and the only reason I haven't done it is because I've got a few things in my life that I want to get straightened out first and some things that I want to get cleaned up and some habits and whatnot.

I want to make myself... I'd be ashamed to come the way I am now. You know, I've got this problem, that problem. I wouldn't expect him to save me or to receive me the way I am now, but when I get my act cleaned up, then I'm going to come to Christ.

My dear friends, that is totally beside the whole point. That misses it all. What Scripture is saying is God would not approve of your house cleaning.

He doesn't like the way you clean up things. He wants to do it himself. So he insists that we come just as we are. With all our wretchedness, all our shortcomings, all our sin, anything that has a negative commendation, bring it all and just come as you are.

And the Savior delights in receiving sins and he will accept us with open arms. If words mean anything, these in Romans 8 are some of the most vital of all.

[24 : 35] Are you in Christ Jesus? Have you exercised faith and have you received this gift? If you have, you are not under condemnation.

If you have not, you are under condemnation. There is a tension that is set up in this whole passage of Scripture. We have a dualism all the way through.

The haves and the have-nots. There are those who have Christ. There are those who do not have Christ. They are contrasted throughout the entire portion. We'll see that in a bold kind of relief later. The beautiful thing about this condemnation that we are not under is the fact that we have not simply succeeded in avoiding it, but it has been exacted.

It isn't as though we were under condemnation and we escaped because then it may somehow catch up with you. It is like a man who is a criminal fleeing from justice who always has to be looking over his shoulder because the law may catch up with him.

It is the difference between that man and the man who has been caught, apprehended, tried, sentenced, and served his time. Now he's free. His debt is paid. That is the position of the Christian.

[25 : 50] That's why you are not under condemnation. Not now. Not forever in the future because condemnation has been exacted. Judgment has been satisfied.

The payment has been made. Therefore, you never have to look over your shoulder. There is never any fear that this condemnation will catch up with you because it has already caught up with Jesus Christ and he paid the sin debt in full and if you are in Christ, you are a partaker of the paid debt. Glorious, glorious, glorious. I suggest that knowing this is vital not only to your salvation but to your growth and spiritual development in Jesus Christ.

I do not think of, I do not think there is anything that retards spiritual growth more than a believer who does not really know where he stands with his Lord.

His salvation, his eternal destiny is just a big question mark. He doesn't know for sure. He wishes he did but he doesn't and he's not sure that he can and he's so aware of his sin and his shortcoming and he can't understand why God would ever want to save him.

[27 : 07] He knows he doesn't deserve it and sometimes when he does something that by Christian standards is especially bad, he takes an inward look and he says something like, who are you kidding, Joe?

No way you could be a Christian. You've just sold yourself a bill of goods and on and on and on and he lacks assurance and he'll never grow and never move out. He's got to get this settled.

No condemnation. Do you realize, dear friends, now you listen, those of you who are in Christ and who know you are in Christ, do you realize that God cannot condemn one single person who is in Christ without totally dismantling, utterly repudiating all that Jesus Christ accomplished on that cross in his death?

That's how locked in you are to Jesus Christ. For him to allow one believer in Christ to ultimately perish would neutralize the whole work of Christ on the cross.

It would be of none effect. Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish.

[28 : 33] They shall never perish. God We ought to realize that being in Christ does not relate to human performance but to divine provision and position.

You do not get to be in Christ because you deserve that position. Neither do you remain in Christ because you deserve that.

You didn't get in on your just deserts. You are not kept in on your just deserts. It is all of grace through faith. We are told in verse 2 that we are free.

We are no longer under bondage. Tie that in with 6.14 which says the believer is under law, under grace, not under law. Then he says what the law could not do.

Notice verse 3. What the law could not do. That is, the law did all it was designed to do but it did not do all that needed to be done.

[29 : 33] The law reveals sin. The law entices us to sin. The law convicts us of sin. The law condemns us for sin and the law brings us to despair. The law also can work to our good serving as a schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ.

But, the law and keeping it cannot justify us, it cannot impart righteousness, and it can provide us with no dynamics. So, Paul says, what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, that is, your flesh, your ability to perform, God did.

This is the only answer to human dilemma and weakness. Man can't, God did. Beautiful, beautiful contrast. Man can't, God did.

He condemned sin in the flesh, he did that through Christ's flesh in condemning Christ and if you are in Christ, you enjoy the same transaction and because that has been purposed upon us, we are free from it.

In order that, the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, not by us, but in us, and that is holiness and purity that is absolutely pleasing to God.

[30 : 47] Those who walk, this is not a Sunday display of piety, by the way, but it is a regular routine, it is a daily walk for those who walk according to the spirit and not according to the flesh.

We define the flesh as the Adamic disposition that is characterized by self-will and self-service. This is the old sin nature. Every Christian still has this flesh. This flesh is what makes it so easy for you to sin as a Christian.

It hasn't been improved, hasn't been scrubbed up, hasn't been cleaned. It is still just as rotten as it was before you became a Christian. But now, you have a spiritual dynamic in the person of the Holy Spirit within you to combat the flesh.

You would further define the flesh as material, temporal existence, material, temporal existence is everything to those who are living according to the flesh.

Those who are walking according to the flesh see this world as their only world and they have no interest in any other. This is their only sphere of activity. They may be good people and they usually are.

[31 : 57] Those who walk after the flesh may be good, moral people, respected in the community, hardworking, law-abiding, tax-paying. They may even be religious people and walk according to the flesh.

Paul says they are under condemnation because to walk after the flesh is death, is to live in the sphere of spiritual death.

And the opposite, of course, is being in Christ. Then we are told in verse 5 that those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the spirit the things of the spirit.

All this means is there is a dichotomy here. There are two different signals being given. People have two different kinds of listening devices. One is marching to one drumbeat, another is marching to another drumbeat.

And there is no way that they can be combined. Set their minds on is fixation with, zeroed in on, total occupation with.

[33 : 01] In other words, what Paul is saying is that those who are after the flesh are under condemnation and are living in spiritual death not so much because of what they think, but because of how they think.

They are in a totally different sphere, a totally different reference point. The death, of course, is present and future sphere of spiritual death that is mentioned in verse 6.

Furthermore, in verse 7, we are told that the mind is not set on the flesh out of choice but out of nature and necessity. For Paul says it does not subject that the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God for it does not subject itself to the law of God and it is not even able to do so.

Not able to do so. Let's not be too hard on these people and let us at the same time realize that every one of us who are in Christ at one time was in this position not able to do so.

Every believer, every child of God was at one time in the category of those who were under condemnation and not able to please God. Someone has said that what we have here is a problem of nature.

[34 : 20] A cow is not designated a cow because it grazes out in the pasture and gives milk and you make butter from it but it grazes out in a pasture and it gets milk and you can make butter from it because it is a cow.

That's its nature. And a Christian is able to please God not because he is able to do all the right things but because his nature has been changed.

He is in Christ. He has a capacity to please God whereas before he didn't. He has nothing to brag about because this isn't some renovation that he has undertaken. It isn't a result of some resolution that he has made.

It is what God has placed within him. So what do you have? What do you have that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast as though you have not received it?

This means there ought to never be any such thing as a boastful Christian. You do not have anything to brag about. Your being in Christ is not because you're smarter than everybody else.

[35 : 25] It's not because you're nicer than everybody else. It's not because God found you irresistible whereas he resisted somebody else. Of him, you are in Christ Jesus.

And there is no room for boasting on our part. It is not a change in notion but a change in nature that is needed. This dualism that is set up here is unmistakable and we very briefly run through it again.

Paul delineates the Christian from the non-Christian in the several verses that are given. In verse 1, there is no condemnation for the believer. The non-Christian is under condemnation.

Also in verse 1, the Christian is in Christ Jesus. The unbeliever is in their sin. In verse 2, we are freed from the law of sin and death. The non-Christian is in bondage to sin and death.

In verse 4, the Christian walks according to the spirit. The unbeliever walks according to the flesh.

In verse 5, the Christian's mind is on the spirit.

[36 : 27] He is zeroed in on spiritual things. The non-Christian's mind is on the flesh. The Christian's mind or the Christian lives in the sphere of life and peace.

In verse 6, the non-Christian's fear is death. In verse 7, the believer is subject to the law of God. God, the unbeliever is hostile toward God.

In verse 8, he is able to please God. The unbeliever is unable to please God. In verse 9, he is indwelt by the spirit. The unbeliever is devoid of the spirit.

In verse 14, the Christian is led by the spirit of God as a son of God and the non-Christian is not led. He is not a son.

That brings us then to the question, what does verse 14 mean when it says, as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

[37 : 22] And we discussed that there are two ways in which a Christian is led by God. He is led objectively through propositional form or scripture.

That is, in the Bible, we have certain statements of fact, certain propositional truths that are set forth that are objective revelations.

They are not really open for debate. They are just hard and fast statements. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. That is a propositional statement.

It sets forth an intelligible, understandable truth. It is communication of information that can be received and understood and acted upon. This is what the Bible really is.

It contains a series of propositional truths. It is based on written revelation, 2 Timothy 3, 14 through 17.

[38 : 21] It is binding upon all who are Christians. The foundation of God stands sure, Paul says, and let those who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

We have a reason to. We are in Christ. Thirdly, it involves built-in consequences for obedience or disobedience. Galatians 6, 7 through 10.

Or, it provides the necessary basis for intelligent, subjective, personal leading. In other words, we are led subjectively as well as objectively. The best guarantee for good understanding of the subjective leading of God is to get in step with the objective leading of God.

Now, what I mean to say is this. The two principal ways through which God leads his people is, first of all, through the Bible. That's objective revelation.

Subjectively, he may lead us through the Bible. He may lead us through circumstances. He may lead us to a course of action through the influence of some other person, a pastor, a parent, a friend, a neighbor.

[39 : 29] He may lead us through an employer, any number of different ways. But it isn't backed by a verse of scripture. There isn't a chapter and verse for everything that God wants to lead us to do.

Someone says, well, I think God is leading me to take a job in Amarillo, Texas. How can I be sure that God is leading me? Well, in the first place, I, as an additional party, am not able to give them any guarantees, but neither can I give them a chapter and verse.

There is no objective propositional truth that tells you you should move to Amarillo, Texas and take a job there. You can't find that in the Bible. Can you imagine the size of the book?

If it had that kind of information in it, you'd need a boxcar to carry it around, wouldn't you? Every Christian would have to have his own Bible. Nonsense. Objective propositional form in scripture necessitates the rightly dividing of the word, giving diligence to language, context, etc.

In other words, the Bible is designed to be a guidebook. The Bible is a road map for life, but you can't approach it haphazardly. You just cannot thumb open a few pages, plop your finger down with some kind of mystical attitude and say, I'm going to see what the will of God is, and flip her open, and there, I'm going to do whatever the verse says today.

[40 : 47] You can get into all kinds of trouble. You don't approach the Bible that way. So we are led by the Spirit of God objectively, and we are led through subjective personal revelation.

Now this, this requires great care. You need to learn to discern the will of God in these matters of subjective revelation.

I do not have to wrestle with the meaning of husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. That's very plain. That's very plain. Sometimes it's too plain. I don't have any difficulty understanding that.

I don't have to say, well, I wonder if maybe in my case there's no exception. That's the will of God across the board for husbands. That's objective. But when it comes to subjectivity, that's where we

may have some problems.

Subjectivity can easily mislead. That is, we have personal biases, we have strong personal desires, we have vested interests, we have prejudices, and we have to contend with these things.

[41 : 53] We have to recognize. You know, the natural tendency, the natural tendency is for God to lead you, quote, the way you want to be led. The natural tendency is for me to want to do what I want to do and then convince myself that that's also the will of God.

That's natural. I say it's natural because that's just the way we are as human beings. We have to make sure that we do not get in the way of the Lord's leading, that we do not conveniently find ourselves being led the way we want to be led.

But, we also ought to note that what we want to do and what our personal desires are might be the will of God.

Doesn't mean that God's will and your will are necessarily at loggerheads. If we delight ourselves in the Lord, Psalm 37, he will give us the desires of our heart.

I think what that verse means is, if you delight yourself in the person of Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ will dictate to you what your desires are to be, and you'll be sublimely happy with them.

[43 : 21] Personal leading must not conflict with objective propositional leading. Now, what we are saying is that the subjective leading must not conflict with the objective leading. God has already stated his position on things that really matter.

In the word of God, we are not to come to the word of God and say, I know this is what the Bible says, but this is what God is leading me to do. Oh, you mean God is leading you to go against what the Bible clearly says?

Yes, because the way I know he's doing this is I prayed about it, and I have peace. I say rubbish. Rubbish. Someone says, I know it is God's will that I divorce my wife and marry this other woman. Well, what do you do about Ephesians 5? Husbands love your wife. Well, I know that's true, usually, and that's the way it is. Now, if I was married to a woman that I really cared about, I wouldn't have any trouble obeying that verse, but you don't know this woman I'm married.

And I prayed, and not only that, but the woman I want to marry, you know, she's a Christian too, and she has also prayed, and she and I agree together that God is leading us to get married, so I'm going to have to divorce my wife.

[44 : 36] I say, get out of here, you're wasting my time. That's rubbish, that's nonsense. The subjective leading of God will never direct you to contradict what he has spoken in his word.

If it is wrong in the word of God, it is wrong for us to practice in our lives. There are no exceptions. Your personal leading is not a standard for others. Now, here's where a lot of people get into trouble.

God is leading me to do thus and so and thus and so. Therefore, that is what God wants you to do. Now, wait a minute, there's a problem. Have you ever heard of the conflict where one member of a marriage, the husband, says, God is leading me to the mission field, and the wife says, that's strange, he isn't leading me to the mission field.

What's the will of God? Oh, well, the mission field comes first. If one's led and one isn't, of course, they ought to divorce and the husband should be obedient to God and go off to the mission field. What a terrible way to solve the problem. Now, the problem is, it is God's will that this marriage remain intact. No question about that. Now, it's very difficult to maintain a marriage with one of them in Africa and one of them in the United States.

[45 : 57] Somebody is wrong, and they need to work the thing through and find out who it is that is not really reading the signals right. It might be the will of God for both of them to stay, it might be the will of God for both of them to go, but it isn't the will of God for one to go and one to stay.

Nonsense. Someone else's personal leading does not determine yours. Yours does not determine them, theirs doesn't determine. This is a highly personal thing, highly personal.

We do not have the right to impose our leading upon others, neither does anyone else have the right to impose their leading upon us. And don't buy this, don't buy this stuff.

Somebody comes to you and says, you know, I was praying yesterday and God spoke to me and he told me that you should thus and so and thus and so.

Friends, you don't need friends like that. These people may have your best interests at heart, they may be sincere, but don't fall for anything like that. Like this young girl came up to this girl and said, God told me that it is his will that you and I get married.

[47 : 07] And this poor girl says, well, how can you argue with that? Strange, God hasn't said anything to me about it. But if he's revealed this to him, I don't want to disobey God.

You remember the illustration we gave you about the craziest thing I ever heard? This fellow was courting this young girl and she wasn't very interested at all. And she was going to break the thing off and this guy was all upset and he went to his pastor.

Can you believe it? Went to his pastor and says, what can I do? What can I do? I'm about to lose my only true love. And the pastor says, what you've got to do is exercise faith.

You remember what Joshua did when they surrounded the city of Jericho? They marched around seven times and the walls came tumbling down? Yeah. Well, you've got to go and claim that girl by faith.

How do I do that? Next time you see her standing here in a room, you go and march around her seven times and claim her and the walls of her heart will fall down and she'll be yours. Can you believe that garbage? She fell for it.

[48 : 08] The walls of her heart didn't fall down, but she fell for that hokey baloney, and they got married and they ended up not too long later in a different pastor's office and when they started going over some of the problems and differences they had, the pastor said, I can't understand how in the world you two people ever got together.

You have absolutely nothing in common. And they proceeded to tell him how they discovered the will of God and ended up getting married. Poor man almost fainted, fell off his chair. Can you believe it?

Get that kind of counsel. Delighting yourself in the Lord, Psalm 37, 4, and the filling of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 5, 18, make your will and God's will coincide.

Now we've got the hurry here. That brings us to verses 17 and 18 and a discussion of the subject of suffering. And we define suffering as meaning to undergo pain or injury, to be afflicted physically or emotionally, to experience hardship, harm, or personal loss, to be engaged in distress or anxiety. We noted that there are variations of human suffering and various capacities for human suffering. And by the way, all of this material on suffering is available in print on the shelf where the bulletins are kept if you want them.

[49 : 22] The origin of suffering is that it is a natural, necessary consequence of sin, and I call it divine and human suffering because Jesus Christ has suffered as a result of sin also, not his but ours.

To deny the legitimacy and necessity of human suffering is to deny reality. The introduction of any will but God's will, which is what sin is, must result in spiritual chaos followed by chaos upon all that is related to it.

And four, God, however, in his sovereignty and wisdom has committed himself to the ultimate restoration of order from chaos and to glorify the subjected creation through suffering.

and that does, by the way, require a sovereign God and that is precisely what he is. Then you'll recall we discussed three reasons why Christians suffer. First, we suffer the consequences of wrong willful actions, the principle of sowing and reaping.

It works for a Christian just like it does a non-Christian. God does not suspend the law of sowing and reaping for Christians. If you as a Christian do something willful, something wrong, something stupid as we say, you are not going to escape the consequences just because you're a Christian.

[50 : 38] You touch a hot stove, your hand will burn just like anyone else's. You abuse your body, you put things into your body that ought not to be put into it. A cancer cell does not know the difference between a Christian lung and a non-Christian lung, and you'll suffer the same kind of consequences.

Secondly, we suffer merely as a member of a fallen humanity. There is a risk involved in being born, just in being born. We are told in Job 5, 7, that man is born for sorrow as the sparks fly upward.

That means it goes with the territory of being a human being. You are subject to suffering just because you're a member of the human race. You may be born with a genetic problem, you may be born with any kind of a host of, what's the word I'm looking for?

an inherited tendency that doesn't have anything to do with personal sin. You may be born a severe asthmatic, not because you were engaged in some particular sin, like the man in John 9 who was born blind, not as a result of sin, but just because he was a human being, just because of genetic

problems, and so on.

And then thirdly, we suffer as a member of the body of Christ that we may fill up his suffering, Colossians 1.24, and that opens up the vast area of suffering via persecution, and we do not have time to go into that, but as I said, the material is available and it is in print for those who are interested.

[52 : 10] Now, all of this brings us to the conclusion that there are fantastic benefits, there are exalted privileges that are in store for every believer who is in Jesus Christ, and the real crux of the matter is, are you or are you not in Jesus Christ?

If you are not in Christ, you may be included in him, the same way everybody else was. They exercise faith, they receive the gift, and that gift of course is the person of Jesus Christ. You don't receive a little package of salvation, you receive the person of Christ. You turn yourself over and submit yourself to his lordship and his rule and his authority in your life because you should, because it is the right thing to do, because you are the creature and he is the creator before whom all things consist and by whom all things consist.

So, let's have a word of prayer if we may, and if there are those who need to make that decision, there's no better time to make it than right now. Thank you, our Father, for what we have been reminded of once again and for the glorious provision and benefit that belongs to those of us who are in Christ.

We acknowledge once again that we know this is not of our doing, it is not of our intelligence, it is not of our position, but it is solely based upon your grace working toward us and for us that makes us glad recipients of your salvation.

[53 : 42] We rejoice in what we possess in Christ and because we enjoy the relationship so much, we want to share it with everyone. We pray that in this morning hour, if there are those who are here in our midst who have perhaps understood some things, maybe even for the first time this morning, that you will give them no spiritual peace nor rest until they make that all important commitment of their life to Jesus Christ.

We pray that in this closing moment you will speak to any who are weighing this issue. While we remain in an attitude of prayer, with our hearts and heads bow before the Lord, would you be willing to say this morning, if Jesus Christ died for me, if God is my creator and I am a creature, I want to assume my rightful position under his lordship and under his dominion.

I want to turn my life over to Jesus Christ, lock, stock, and barrel, because I should, because it's the right thing to do and I recognize that.

I believe that Jesus Christ died as my personal sacrifice for sin, and I'm right now releasing myself to him and to his authority as an act of my will.

Is that your prayer right now, dear friend? I trust that it is. You'll never, never, never regret that transaction. I made mine 25 years ago.

[55 : 19] It's gotten more wonderful every year since. It will for you also. Father, we pray that you will continue to work in the lives and hearts of any who are contemplating this decision, but who perhaps have not made it, and cause them to know that true fulfillment and true happiness and true joy are found only by being properly related to you.

Thank you for each and every person here. We commit them to you in Christ's name. Amen. We'll take just a couple of minutes for questions or comments. If you think you feel like you're out of breath, think of how I feel.

For the sake of our visitors, we covered more material this morning than what we usually do on most Sundays. That's why it was kind of hurried. Keith? He gives an illustration of the criminal death where he had tried and sentenced to surgery time, and then he freaks.

And I'd like to add one other thing to that. After this happens in our courts, and through our new system, he has a record. In our case, it was the Lord of the records he was much better.

Hey, great. What do they call that? That expunged, isn't it? The record is expunged. I like that. Good point. I have to give that to the late service.

[56 : 44] Good point. The record is wiped clean. There's nothing on the blotter besides it. Fantastic. Keith. There's nothing you'd be called in. Where's the thing? Right.

Okay. Thank you, Keith. Anybody else? It's an especially beautiful day.

Isn't the atmosphere nice? It's great. Don't have to use the air conditioner. Don't have to use the heater. We get away with this about one Sunday of the year and this is it. So enjoy it.

Yes, Anne? This is just a homely analogy, but I couldn't help thinking when you were talking about totally turning yourself over to the Lord and having faith that He will take care of us.

I remember so well taking swimming lessons and this was as an adult because I wouldn't believe anybody else ever through my life that if you lie on the water, you will float.

[57 : 45] And as an adult, I thought, well, maybe I should believe it. It's all time I'm turning my will over to the instructor instead of just believing it and thinking all the time and not getting anywhere.

So the minute I believed that and listened, then I get to the Lord and I'm going to