

Cooperating with God—A Farewell Sermon

A sermon delivered Sunday Morning, January 29, 2017
at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
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Romans 8:1-5

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

These last two months since announcing the end of my tenure as your pastor, I have attempted to impress upon you the highlights of the Gospel and the Christian life. It has been an exercise of putting you in remembrance of the essential things. As the Apostle Peter wrote to his beloved flock before his death,

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. (2 Peter 1:12-14)

In the same spirit, I have tried to “stir you up by reminding you” what I have taught you over the course of my 23 years here in this pulpit.

And now, as senior pastor, I bring you my final sermon. What would I have you to remember and not forget? In my last two messages, I have shown the strategic genius of God in making our bodies to have the power to carry out the will of the heart. You are a spiritual being but you're also a physical being and the human body is the material bridge to the material world He created us to live and have our being. He designed the body like a machine that can be programmed to do things repetitively. What a blessing that is. We can train the body so that the mind can divert its attention to something else and yet you can perform the task at hand perfectly.

Thoughts become embedded in the brain, and we think a certain way according to the thought patterns we develop. The body learns to carry out those thought patterns with actions, which become habitual in a short matter of time. We have illustrated this several different ways in the last several weeks. We've talked about learning to drive a vehicle. For those of us who are ex-

perienced, I doubt we spend a great deal of mental energy concentrating on driving the precise moment of doing it. But if you're a new driver all your mental capacities are applied to the act of driving. You're thinking about your hands at "10 and 2," making sure you have your turn signal on, you concentrate on staying between the white and yellow lines. But those of us who are experienced drivers, I doubt we even think about those things anymore, yet we do them, and we get from point A to point B while your mind is on something else.

Perhaps on the way to work you're thinking about the course of the day or something that you're meditating upon. How is that possible? Because the brain, which is a part of the body, has learned to do these things, without much thought because the body is trained to do them.

We talked last week about proficiently hitting a baseball. Friend, there is a whole lot more involved there than just the intellect. It's more muscle memory because that ball is hurled at you at 90-95 MPH that leaves you with two hundred and fifty thousandths of a second to make the decision about whether you're going to swing or not.

Even our social behaviors are even embedded into our bodies. When we meet new people, we do the same thing every time, that's why none of us remember anyone's name. You go through a certain ritual and it's automatic with you. You go, "Hmm, I wonder what they're thinking about me? I wonder what I think about them? How do I look? How do they look?" And you're oblivious to the name just spoken because of this habit. The brain and body just take over. You smile and stick out your hand, you do the same thing, but you're thinking about other things.

This isn't just true about social behaviors but also spiritual behaviors. The body has a great deal to do with this.

The problem that entered the human race when Adam and Eve rebelled was that the body became hijacked by the power of sin. The result was that the body that was meant to carry out God's will on earth became the vehicle to carry out sin's will. Our minds and bodies are conditioned by indwelling sin and environment to react to stimuli in certain ways. If someone irritates you, your tongue fires a volley of stinging projectiles called words that wound the souls of others. It seems almost automatic, and afterward you think, *Where did that come from?* or *Why did I react that way?* Sin has become engrained in the body and it acts.

Profanity is an example of this. Someone gets saved but the brain and tongue still work in sync to use language that is foul or vulgar or used the Lord's name in vain. Sin is not just a matter of the heart; it is also a matter of the body. Again, the body is not intrinsically evil. The body is not naturally evil but what we use it for is. The body is not sinful, but sin can reign in the body as the Apostle Paul commands Christians not to let happen in Romans 6:12, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." You see an attractive person and you, without thinking, instinctively look because it is the habit of the eyes to be on the lookout for someone attractive. Some of these sinful uses of the body can become so addictive, that even demonic activity is involved.

This is why the Apostle Paul speaks of God saving us by making our bodies ineffective in carrying out sin's desire in Romans 6:6-7, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."

Paul's meaning is that once a person stops trusting in themselves and puts their faith in Jesus Christ, the power of Jesus' death works in them to make their old sinful self a thing of the past. The person you once were in the past is dead and no longer exists. The person who follows Jesus is no longer the same person in that they have been set free from sin's enslavement and dominance. The "body of sin" that he speaks of in verse 6 is the human body of the new believer. Of course, he does not mean that our bodies are eliminated or removed but is stating that the Christian's body is no longer manipulated or empowered by sin. The believer's body is no longer a "body of sin." You can't call your body that anymore. Your body hasn't been rendered ineffective; it's been freed from the dominance of sin so you are not the same person so you can now use your body to glorify God where once you dishonored Him in disobedience. Every Christian's body has been set free from having to follow the sin patterns that the old self-trained the brain and its body to perform.

But being set free doesn't mean we automatically do everything right or we always and every time obey God. Let me make this clear. The Gospel holds out to you, dear friend, the possibility of a new beginning. You're here today and you have longed for this. It seems like a fantasy, a wish that cannot come true, for a new slate, a new chance. The Gospel says, "Oh yes, it's not fantastical, it's not imaginary, it's not a wishful dream, it's a great possibility because Christ has done something for us." He's delivered all who will trust in Him from the dominance of sin and the power to enslave you. But that doesn't mean obedience is automatic. The brain and body still work according to the old programming of the old self we once were. The devil tempts us by reintroducing the same stimuli, provocations, and temptations we experienced before regeneration and conversion, and what does the body do? It does all that it can do—what it is programmed to do. That's why Christians still sin after being saved. The brain and the body are simply doing what its been programmed to do. That's what Romans 6:6-7 is saying.

Don't think the body has a mind of its own and that it works independently of your mind and will. It doesn't, and that's the point. We are whole persons, body, soul, and spirit, and we act as one whole person. Your body is not acting contrary to your will but is only carrying out the will. However, the desires of the mind and the body and of the old person you once were are still there. They're lessened but not entirely removed and now they overwhelm the will, swamp it, flood it with those desires and the will can only do what it's motivated to choose. The will doesn't argue with itself and say, "You know, we ought not do that." The will just simply acts according to the motivations that are persuaded and argued by the mind and the body.

So very powerfully entrenched in us are these old things so that the will simply does as it's programmed, reinforcing the habits of the mind and body.

But the Apostle continues in the sixth chapter of Romans explaining the grand doctrine that what is true about Jesus is true about us. He shows them that they don't have to keep doing the same things because they can retrain the brain and body. You can retrain your brain and body to a new set of habits, godly habits. A lot of us are sitting here thinking, "That's not what I thought Christianity was all about. I thought God was going to make me a new creation?" He has. But He doesn't leave it all to Himself. He expects your participation. We'll learn more about that in just a few moments.

But now we are to offer our bodies and its individual parts as instruments of righteousness unto God.

*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.
(Romans 6:13)*

Let's think about this for a moment. Let's take you for example. Let us suppose you have just heard the Gospel for the very first time, and became convinced that you could not solve your sin problem. That's huge. Did you hear that? You became convinced that you could not solve your sin problem. Some of you have yet to be convinced because you think you can overcome your sin problem. But, in our illustration, you became convinced that you couldn't but Jesus could and He offers you a relationship with Him. So, you take Him at His word and believe unto repentance. Repentance means you start believing the truth about God and yourself. The Bible says that you believe in Jesus and are willing to live for Him because God does something internally to you—He gives you an overwhelming desire to love and serve Him. We call this grace. Grace is not like the force of *Star Wars*. Grace is God Himself acting on your behalf. Grace is God's undeserved activity doing what you cannot do for yourself, giving you the desire and the power to obey God.

Now you're saved and you have this desire to honor God, live for God, love God, obey God. So, what do you do? You do what you've always done. You set out to do your dead-level best to obey God. Isn't that what you did? It's what I did. But isn't it also true that you discovered along the way that there were some things you had trouble changing.

For example, when you were with someone of the opposite sex in an environment that was tempting, you found yourself and your body functioning the way before you fell in love with Jesus. Or, you found yourself having the same anger issues that you had before being saved. Someone disappointed you, and you reacted just like you always did, and in this regard, you discovered nothing had changed. Why did this happen if you are a new person and your body is no longer a body of sin?

Therefore, in attempt to yield our brain and body to obedience, the more we tried, the more we failed. The harder you determined you were not going to do the same thing, the harder you fell. You rededicated yourself to God promising Him you would do better and for a while it seemed you had gotten the better of your sin, only to fall again and there you were, even more discouraged. The change of behavior lasted a short time.

Well, friends, this is a problem every Christian eventually encounters. It is called the performance of the flesh to obey God. The Bible calls it the “works of the flesh,” or “living according to the flesh,” or “being under the Law.” All of these are synonyms, the Bible’s terminology to say the same thing: trying to live by my natural abilities to please God. That’s the reason that you have what Paul wrote in chapter seven of Romans following what he said in chapter six. Paul knew that Christians want to obey God because God has supernaturally deposited within them. But he knows they’re all going to do the same thing: the brain and the body will try to rely on the old programming and that is to do the best you can. Isn’t that what you’re trained to do from a child up? All of life is gauged by that one thing—your performance. Men and women judge you and you judge them by their behaviors and performances. Paul knows that so he immediately begins to address, in Romans 7, the place of the law in the life of a believer. It does not take long for us to see that the law, Paul says, does not help us to obey God.

The Law, says Paul, in Romans 5:20 and 7:13, was not added to help us to obey God but to help us see that we can’t obey God by exposing how exceedingly sinful sin is and that we, ourselves, are no better. The argument of the apostle in the seventh chapter is that the commandments of God, while they tell us what pleases God cannot save or sanctify us. His argument is that doing your best by your natural abilities cannot save you nor can it sanctify you. The more you fight the old programming of the body with rules, the more you will fail. You need a power greater than flesh. You need something more potent than your natural abilities.

Therefore, we come to the eighth chapter of Romans. How do we break the cycle of old man’s training of our brains and body? The answer is the mind and body have to be re-programmed. You have to learn to yield your body to obedience rather than disobedience. But that cannot be done without the power of God. This is not automatic. I’m sorry to disappoint, especially some of you new believers who thought once you gave your life to Christ it was a yellow brick road to heaven. But even Dorothy’s yellow brick road had a lot of obstacles and problems. Being godly there is a natural impulse for that but it’s not natural to do it until you’ve retrained and relearned how to do that. This cannot be done without the power of God. If anything grieves me for my brothers and sisters across this globe and right here locally, it’s this very thing, that we have believed the lie that strips the supernatural from the Christian faith. We know we can’t save ourselves, that it has to be God supernaturally working, but for some reason we have been duped to believe that somehow, now that we’re saved, our natural abilities and goodwill will carry the day. No, it won’t. The same supernatural power that saved me is needed to sanctify me. I need it to help me live today and to preach this message to you right now. Remember, it is God who saves and saves to the uttermost.

What is necessary to overcome the remaining corruption that is in us? Paul tells us. I’m going to summarize his statements in Romans 8:1-5 into three things you’ve got to believe. Why do I put it in the context of believing? I’m summarizing my preaching to you for these 23 years. It is the Gospel and without faith it is impossible to please God. The just shall live by faith.

One day, Jesus was asked, “What must we do to believe the works of God?” Jesus said, “Believe upon Him whom God has sent.” I am saved by grace through faith and I am still being saved by grace through faith. God’s requirement of you hasn’t changed simply because you’ve been born again. All He asks is to trust Him.

I. Believe the Gospel

Paul says for us to reprogram and stop the cycle of the old man and its training we’ve got to believe the Gospel.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. . .” (Romans 8:1)

In that one statement, Paul summarizes the previous seven chapters. He succinctly gives us the Gospel, that those who are in Christ Jesus are no longer under the penalty of the law, they’ve been delivered, pardoned, and set free from the holy justice of God because there is a Savior who has died under the penalty of the law. He has received the infliction of our sins. He has received the anger of a holy and just God against our unrighteousness and in doing so He fulfilled and completed the law of God.

A. The Way to God is No Longer Through the Law.

Why is there no condemnation for me? Because Jesus fulfilled and completed the law. Prior to Christ, the only way to God was by the law.

You say, “Pastor, but there’s grace in the Old Testament.” There is a lot more grace in the Old Testament than we give credit. “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Nevertheless, the law of God stood over all humanity. “The soul that sins, it shall surely die.” That’s the standard. God, in His goodness, revealed His holy character and nature in those 10 Commandments. He showed us what true love is like in those 10 Commandments. He showed us what *He* was like in those 10 Commandments and He simply said, “That’s what I require of you. I made you in My image. I made you to be My ambassador and representative on this earth and I haven’t changed just because your great-great-great-grandparents decided they had another agenda.”

Therefore, God said, “The soul that sins, shall it shall surely die.” What else can God do? If He’s holy, good, and right, He has to uphold all of those standards of His own nature. This is why salvation is impossible for man to accomplish. There is no way that a man should stand in a pulpit like this and simply say to you, “You know, the Gospel is so wonderful, grace is so good that you can just come on in and God will forgive you and it doesn’t matter how you live. If you just profess your faith and get baptized, it won’t matter how you live because you’re covered by grace.”

Let me tell you why that cannot hold Gospel water. It violates who God is and that’s an impossibility. “I am the Lord thy God and I change not.” “I am holy, be ye holy.” We are all condemned by the law. The way to God was through the law—perfect obedience—but none of us could do

so, so what did God do? He sent His Son, who obeyed His Father explicitly, perfectly, and at the cross satisfied all the demands of the law.

The Apostle said in Romans 6:10 that Jesus died to sin and the law. In Romans 7:4 he said that in Jesus the demands of the law have been removed as a hindrance to God. They don't stand in the way; I can come to God through Christ Jesus. Why is this so important? In Romans 7 you see that every Christian has this new desire and they set out to obey God by the law. That doesn't mean just getting the 10 Commandments out and trying to keep them. Anything can become a law. Any rule or regulation you live by that you're trusting in for one ounce of anything from God is the law.

We discovered in our conversations during our staff meeting this week that we can even turn the will of God into the law. We should obey the will of God, shouldn't we? We should submit to the will of God, but so many of us are doing so because we're only concerned about being right. We don't want to jeopardize God's disfavor, not because we love Him but because we love being right. So being right becomes the new standard, not Christ.

B. Unbelief in the Gospel Causes Self-Dependency.

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,” (Romans 8:3)

Flesh is the natural abilities along with the grossly enlarged desires of the body. The law's standard to be like God was too high, so the law could not save us because we, in our flesh, could not live up to it. But, “God did sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned it in the flesh.”

Every Christian in this room needs to believe the Gospel for himself or herself daily because that's what Satan is attacking. The desire of Satan is not to get you to sin. You've been misled, if you believe so. That's not His ultimate goal. Do you know what His ultimate objective is? That once you sin you will stay in unbelief. Sin is only the manifestation of believing a lie about God.

Satan could care less about your behavior and so could God. God cares less about your behavior than most of us in this room. He's not interested in your behavior. Not to the degree you think He is. God is interested in your faith, what you believe about Him and His Gospel. I said on day one—I went back and looked at my first sermon here at Oak Grove, as pastoral candidate—it was on Ephesians 2:8-9, “Salvation: An Act of God's Grace.” I said on that day, 23 years ago, that if God can get your heart right, He'll get everything else.

If He can get your heart believing, trusting in Him alone, the behavior will follow. But we don't believe that the only way to God is through Christ. We think Christ *and* my performance. Christ *and* my obedience. Christ *and* my study of Scripture. Christ *and* my prayers or service or missionary activity or witnessing. My dear friend, let all that be burned up because it will not amount to

anything when you stand before God. There will be men and women who will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, did we not cast out devils in Your name and do many wonderful works? We did it. We did all of those things." Jesus will say to them, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you."

Those folks were concerned about their behavior, thinking that's the way they get to God. No. Jesus is the only way to get to God. Jesus is the only way to get to God. You have to put all of your trust and reliance upon Him, not just for forgiveness of your sins, but for today and your obedience. Believe the Gospel. There is nothing standing between you and the Father because you are in Christ Jesus. Hold onto Him. Cling to Him.

II. Believe the Holy Spirit Has Been Given.

The belief that the Holy Spirit is given must be more than intellectual belief. We have learned that faith is more than an object we're trusting in. It's more than having knowledge and confidence in an object but it's also committing myself in action to what I believe. Faith is nothing more than acting as if something is real. That's the simplest definition of faith. That's all it is, acting like something is real. If you believe it, you will act like it. If we get the heart believing right, the actions will follow. You've got to believe that you have the very person of the Holy Spirit living and dwelling within you, granting unto you everything you need for life and godliness.

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."
(Romans 8:2)*

What does this mean?

A. A New Law Replaces an Old Law.

What's the old law? The law of sin and death. The law became sin's means of enslaving the human race. Thus, it became a law of sin unto death. Again, because the weakness of our flesh the law can't get us to God. Sin moved in and trained our bodies. Our bodies, including the mind, are engrained with sin and we reinforce the brain and body with all of these ungodly habits and ways of living. We have become conditioned within our bodies and minds and we'll keep doing the same thing unless a greater law comes in and supersedes and cancels the law of sin and death.

I gave an example a few years ago. I took my watch off and dropped it. It hit the pulpit. If I was to take my watch off and drop it right here, where's it going to land? It would hit the floor. Why? The law of gravity. That law controls what happens to that watch. But what happens if I release my watch and come in with the other hand and catch it and strap it on my arm where it is right now, what have I done? This arm, me and my power, has superseded the law of gravity and the law of gravity isn't going to affect that watch as long as it's on me.

Paul is saying to the believer, and, yes, to you sinners as well, the Gospel is better than just getting your sins forgiven and your name written in the Lamb's book of life. God is promising you that He will invade. I like that word, *invade*. It's a holy invasion. A spiritual invasion will come within and with that invasion will come a new spiritual law. The law of life—*life*—given you the power to obey God. This overrides this law of sin and *death*.

The Holy Spirit's activity in us acts with the regularity of a law or principle. He is there working. He is supplying what you need. That's what He promised. It's interesting in verse two the way Paul describes this. If you've been with us the past two Sundays, you would have discovered that up unto this point in chapters six and seven, Paul has said it's not the life of Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of sin and death, rather Paul says it is the death of Jesus.

B. Harmony with the Death of Christ and Freedom from the Law of Sin and Death.

“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” (Romans 6:6)

It's His death that does that.

“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.” (Romans 7:4)

The ability to be free from the power of sin is through the death of Christ. But what does he say in Romans 8:2 that it's attributed to? Life. Life in the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Why does He change from the death to the resurrection and now the presence of the Holy Spirit? It's simple.

In Christ we died to the control of sin but sin did not die to us. Sin is much alive in us. You died to it but it didn't die to you. I don't need to prove that, do I? You have enough testimony to prove that to be true. In fact, the very law of God worked with sin to put us in this problem.

But sin has not died to us or in us. There is still something unredeemed about you and me and that is our flesh. The flesh is our natural abilities along with the weakened, grossly enlarged desires of the mind and the body. Therefore, the Spirit of God is given to counteract the flesh and make it possible for our minds and bodies to be re-trained and used by God for His purposes.

I'm looking at vessels, temples, bodies filled with God Himself. You're looking at a body that the God of all creation inhabits. That's why Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Nothing is impossible to me because the God of all possibilities lives within me and if He says, “That's My will,” then the power will always be supplied. Do you believe that? Then why do you follow the cycle and the programming of the old man you once were?

You've got to believe that the power of the Spirit was given to you to break that. He has the power, not you, not your natural abilities, not all your good behavior and religious works.

That leads me to my third and final thing you have to believe in order to break the cycle.

III. Believe That You Must Cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

For those of us who are more reformed, that is we subscribe to the sovereign power of God, meaning that God has all authority, all control, over all things, nothing happens without His foreordination and permission, our problem is that we believe another lie about God. The devil is clever, isn't he? He'll take a good truth and cause you to believe a lie about it. Here's the lie: if God is in you and God is sovereign and if He wants you to be like Jesus, He'll do it. He'll get 'er done.' That's the lie Paul is addressing here. God will not get it done without your cooperation. He often does not work without our cooperation.

“that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:4)

Take that, easy believism! It's so sad when people come under a form of the Gospel that denies the power of the Gospel, that says God can cleanse you, forgive you, keep you until you die so that you go to heaven, and then we put the period there. The Gospel says that God does more than that. The Gospel proclaims that the Lord gives you the Holy Spirit, not just to give you the desire to obey God, but the power to do so. This is where we're all frustrated. We have the desire to obey God, we want to do His will because we love Him, but the more we try the more we seem to get further from His will. The reason this is the experience most of us lament is because we're relying on the power of our natural abilities, not on the power of the Holy Spirit that lives within us. If you would cooperate with the Holy Spirit, you would fulfill the righteous requirement of the law.

God didn't do away with the law. He can't do away with His good nature. He can't stop being who He is. But He can open up a way to Him apart from the law, through Jesus Christ. He can give you the Spirit to help you fulfill the same righteous requirement so that you can become holy like the Son in your behavior and practice. Look at verse five.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” (Romans 8:5)

This is Paul's unequivocal statement to say if you've really been justified, declared right by God, you will be sanctified by God too because that's part of the saving grace package. You don't get one without the whole package. It's a package deal. Do you know what that means to have your mind set on the things of the flesh? Most of us think it means drunkenness, fornication, adultery, all those “terrible” things we try to avoid and rightly should. But that's not what he's talking about.

He's writing to a bunch of Christians. He is saying, "Those of you sitting in the Roman church, if you try to please God by your natural abilities, you're going to perish in your sins because you're no different. There's been no supernatural work in you. Your mind is still on you and your abilities, your performance, what you can do and what you cannot do. It's about you and not about Christ. You've got to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:13)

Who puts to death the deeds of the body? You and me. It's by the power of the Spirit but this is cooperation. He's not going to do it for you but He will give you everything you need for this.

A mind set on the Spirit is set on the things of the Spirit, which means the Spirit's goal for you. What does He intend for you? He intends for you to be like Jesus. How does that happen? We've got to break the cycle of the old man and re-train the body and the brain. How do we do that? How do I cooperate with the Holy Spirit in doing that?

A. Keep Your Sins Confessed and Your Obedience Up to Date.

This is so minimized in Christian circles today; no wonder Christians can't keep a consistent walk with God. We're so casual and lazy about our sins. Brother, if you want to have a walk with God, you better not be lazy when it comes to sin. If you sin, you had better deal with it quickly, smartly, rightly, because if you don't, that sin is going to quench the power of the Holy Spirit who is in you. I don't wait for bedtime to say my prayers and confess the day's sins. I've got to deal with them quickly, not because God's going to be upset with me or He's going to punish me? No. It used to be my thinking because that's how the old man trained me to think, but that's so far from my thinking today because all I want is to walk with Him.

He's His own reward. Nothing is better than to commune with Him, walk with Him throughout the day, and I don't want my sin at this precise moment to grieve the Spirit and quench Him so the next moment I can't hear Him. I don't want any disruptions.

I can't remember the last time my wife and I had a fight where we actually were at odds with one another. I can't remember. One of the reasons we don't fight is because I've quit demanding my way and I've learned how to love her. Loving her says, "I don't want anything in our fellowship to come in between us." I can't stand it. I'm telling you. I cannot stand having something in between her and me. I'll chase her around like a little dog, nipping at her heels, "What's wrong, what's wrong, what's wrong? Let's talk, let's talk, let's talk. What did I say? What did I do?" Do you think I should wait and let her come to me? I'm not waiting for her to come to me because I care about our fellowship. And that's Christianity. That's it. That's what it's all about, fellowship with the risen Savior.

You've got to keep your sins confessed and your obedience up to date. You want more power but you haven't done what God's told you to do last year! It doesn't work that way. If we walk in the light as He's in the light, we have fellowship one with another. If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

B. Discover Your Idolatry.

If you want to stop the cycle of the old man and train the brain and the body to be cooperative with the Holy Spirit and to establish godly behaviors, you need to discover your idolatry. If obedience to the Lord is to become normal and automatic as your sins were, you've got to know your idols and deal with them.

How do you do this? By discovering what you believing about God that is a lie. You've got to do this. Idolatry and the sin that flows from it is all a matter of unbelief. Your problem is not what you believe you can and cannot do. Your problem is what you believe about God and what He can and cannot do.

For example, I had someone call me this week and ask, "How do I overcome this? How do I have victory in this?" I said, "Brother, you're asking the wrong question. The question you ought to be asking is what is it in your heart that you're believing about God that's not true about Him, about His goodness, His grace, His greatness, His gloriousness? What is it that you're not looking to Him but to this sin to satisfy?" You can change your behaviors but the heart is still not free yet. It's the lie that must be addressed and there's no deliverance until you deal with the lie because that's what repentance is.

Repentance is rethinking your thinking. It's to exchange the lie about God for the truth about God.

C. Commit Yourself to the Holy Spirit.

What does that look like? It's faith. Remember faith is acting like something is real. God's real. He lives within me. So, I'm going to cooperate with Him and that means I'm going to step out in faith, I'm committing myself to You.

Committing to the Holy Spirit means you act on the fact that He will help you. It is another way to say, *have faith in the Holy Spirit*. Let's say I'm struggling in a particular temptation and I keep finding defeat, so I say to the Holy Spirit, *You have promised to give me all that I need and I understand my problem is that I haven't been trusting You, I've been trusting me. I'm casting myself upon You*. And then you step out and act as if that is true. If you fail, you go back, confess it, and act again. And you do that over and over. Do you know what you're doing? You are establishing godly habits.

But the problem is you get frustrated every time you fail. When God is simply teaching and training you, reminding you of how to start thinking properly, you are frustrated about your failure.

Every one of those failures ought to be taken advantage of. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.” There is no condemnation but liberty, and the liberty is that Christ has fulfilled the law for us and the Spirit has been given to us. Therefore, while you’re crying because you failed, and we should have godly sorrow, but at the same time, I ought to understand that my failure is God’s way of training me, it’s practice. I’m practicing committing to the Holy Spirit. That is, if I quickly confess and recognize it and act.

You ask, is that all there is to it? Pretty much. *Isn’t there something theological I have to memorize? Shouldn’t I feel so guilty that I impose upon myself a penalty showing how sorrow I am?* No, not at all. There is nothing about faith in Christ in those things. The answer is a mere faith in the Holy Spirit. It’s like Peter stepping out of that boat, you’re not for sure how it’s going to work, you just believe He’ll do it and you act.

The only way to increase your confidence in God is by your experience with God. Remember the illustration of me wanting to jump out of a plane? By the way, I have no desire to jump out of a plane, it was just an illustration. But if I were going to jump out of a plane, what would I do?

I would want to find someone who was licensed and skilled in skydiving and I would want them to teach me all they could about skydiving and when he thought I was sufficient in my knowledge, he would take me up, strap me to him, and we’re going to jump out of that plane. What do you think my heart is doing at that moment? I’ve learned everything there is to know about it but I’m still nervous, I can feel it in my body, that fear is real. We do that week after week for about eight weeks and I’m having a ball. It’s so fun.

Then one day he says, “Okay, it’s time to go solo.” Well, there goes the heart again. There goes the anxiety level again. But what do I do? I put my confidence in everything he’s told me and I jump. Then what happens? The next week I don’t feel as nervous and the next week I’m not nervous at all. I’m having a wonderful time.

What increased my confidence? Not my head, not trying to believe real hard, but my experience. Brother, that’s what I mean by committing yourself to the Holy Spirit. You need to determine right here and now before you leave that you and God are partners and you’re going to partner and cooperate with Him. You demonstrate faith in God’s promise that He would give you an overcoming abundant life by acting that the promise is true.

The more we learn to act in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, the more we establish godly patterns in our minds and bodies. Thus, we break the cycle of the old man that trained the brain and body.

Here we begin to see the fulfillment of the God’s redemptive plan. Here we see the Gospel—God restored to man and man restored to God. Do you see it? Before man fell in the Garden, man and God worked in sync. Sin severed that relationship and cooperation. Can I say it this way? Sin severed the partnership. Man was employed to represent God. He had dominion over the earth. Sin severed that partnership.

If you think the Gospel is just getting your sins forgiven, then you don't understand God's plan. His plan is not just to forgive us our sins and cancel the debt that we owed Him, it's much more. He intends on bringing the partnership back into existence. God and you are co-laborers. You can't sanctify you but you can surely cooperate with the Holy Spirit who will sanctify you. This is the Gospel.

As I conclude, this has been the Gospel I've labored for 23 years to proclaim from this pulpit as faithfully as I knew how. There is more to the cross than just pardon. There's more to the cross than just the penalty paid. There is in the cross participation, partnership with Almighty God. This is what God is after. If you cannot tell me that you and God have a partnership, a relationship, a communion, a level of fellowship that works for the glory of God, then how do you know you even know Jesus? If God's goal of salvation is He and you working in cooperation together to dominate, first you, and then the world, but you're not experiencing that partnership, then how do you really know you are His? How do you really know? What are you putting your confidence in? What is your trust really in?

If it's not in Jesus, there's only one other thing you're trusting in. It's not your wife, it's not your husband, it's not your children, it's not your parents, it's you and your natural abilities. They will not stand you well in the day of judgment. So, I leave you with this Gospel today, the one true Gospel of the Scriptures, the Gospel of the Apostle Paul, the Gospel by which we are saved, sanctified, and one day glorified. Cooperation with God. Trust Him. Trust God with everything and let Him be pleased to do as He wills with you. Amen.