

Series: Reboot

Sermon #2

Who Is the Boss of You?

Romans 12:1-2; Luke 7:24-27

Dr. Matt Cassidy – January 9, 2022

Hey, good morning, everyone! Hey, it's great to be back! It's been almost six weeks ... wow! I mean, I was here last week, you weren't, and then you came, and I wasn't here, and that whole thing. We had two people in my family with COVID, and I thought I did, but I just had a really bad cold. So, I look forward to that COVID coming.

To update you on the surgery, it went well. They went into the skull and cut that balance nerve. I'm still off-balance and regularly dizzy, but I cannot get the life-altering vertigo again ... at least from that ear, anyway. And so, I don't live with fear anymore of not knowing what's going to happen next or some kind of car crash or something. Hopefully, over the months, they say, I'll be ready for skateboard season, and I'll get back to Matt-normal, whatever Matt-normal is.

I want to thank the pastors. They didn't have much time and had to scramble. They suddenly put me at the top of the surgery line and we didn't have much notice. They did a great job filling the pulpit for me, and support staff had to fill in those gaps. Thank you, everyone, for that.

Introduction

We're starting a new year, 2022. It's off to a great start. *[Laughs]* Anyway, it might just be because I was lying in bed for weeks on end, but I was thinking, *What are we going to do when we start? And I just thought, Let's reboot. Let's just start over.* At least for me, I wanted a soul shower. I wanted to go to youth camp, go to Mo Ranch, go up on Church Mountain, and rededicate my life. I wanted to think biblically again and feel truthfully. I wanted to live a life that's holy and pleasing to God. And I thought, *Let's just start over. Let's reboot.* What do you say? I thought you could come along the journey with me.

The big picture of *Reboot* is thinking and living biblically, in the context of our culture, and courageously. That's what it looks like—thinking and living biblically in our culture, and courageously. And how that takes place? Well, the first thing you can do is to buy this book that really like a lot called *Confronting Christianity*. It's a wonderful author, and she does a wonderful job of defending the faith, but helping you supplement your beliefs on why it's a reasonable faith to believe. It also answers questions that some of your friends might have about contemporary Christianity and what it believes and why.

Also, we're going to have her here. She's going to come and join us. If you'll mark the date February 13, she'll be here leading from the pulpit. I'll be interviewing her. Good times!

I would love to invite you to join in one of our small groups, but also the one that meets this hour if you want to come first hour and then go across the hallway. They'll meet second hour, and they're discussing what we're talking about in the pulpit first hour—how to apply this to your life.

So, that's how it all gets going. That's the way it looks itself.

Today, here's the big question that is for us all. What is your North Star for your whole life? What do you follow no matter what? The "it" determines what is the lighthouse in the fog of life, in the storms of life, that you go to and know that hasn't moved. It's built on a firm foundation and that's what's going to define what's going on around us.

And I say this—not what we say defines us, but what we actually live out as it applies to major life questions, like the nature of God and the nature of man, the meaning and purpose of life, sexual ethics, how to negotiate everyday living in family and work situations.

What I'm proposing here is that you have to choose something to make those values in your life real. Because if you don't choose, your default will be, quite often, something like the way you were raised or the culture around you, whatever your best friend believes (whatever that might be).

The idea of *Reboot* is just to clear the slate and say, *Okay, let's just start over and just acknowledge what we can know to be true*. And what I go to when I think about rebooting and living a biblical, thoughtful, courageous, cultural life, is Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. Because these two sentences serve as the handoff between beautiful, dense, deep doctrine in Romans chapter 1 through 11. And then it turns to how to apply that in chapters 13 through 25.

And these two sentences hold them both together. And we're going to unpack every one of those phrases and find out not just what it says—that's pretty simple—but what those phrases mean.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Here's Romans 12:1-2: "Therefore I urge you, my brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as 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, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Review of Last Week: "... conformed to this world."

So, last week—I'd recommend listening to that sermon—last week was about what it means to be conformed to this world. What does it mean to be conformed to this world? And we started there because you can't get out of where you are if you don't know where you are. You've got to know what the culture is to know you're not to be conformed to that.

And quite frankly, the pox on the reputation of the Christian church since its inception has been Christians that were conformed to this world. They didn't know the difference between Christian values and cultural values. And they just floated along with the culture like a dead fish. A dead fish can swim downstream, and they were just following the stream. And that's how you make sense out of how, in the years of church history, the church got itself involved in the mistreatment of people that were not in power—people of color, or women, or children and babies, the handicapped—whatever it might be. And when the whole culture was disrespecting and persecuting and neglecting or abusing this people group, quite often church members were going and getting involved and throwing and burning, or sometimes just being silent about it. How does that happen?

Well, this gives us insight. These were Christians who were conformed to this world.

So, the question for us—it's easy to look back—is, how do we know if we're conformed to this world? Because back then there were transformed Christians who were acting contrary to the culture. And it was the Christians who were leading the way—transformed Christians were leading the way to end slavery and to cause fair treatment among all people. It was the transformed Christians who were starting and building hospitals and orphanages and educational centers that could educate anyone and everyone who wanted to go there.

This world that we're living in—what is this world? Well, you want to know if you're part of it or not? How have you been thinking, feeling, and acting towards the climate that we're in of living by fear or living by anger and judgment and a kind of self-righteous looking down? Have you lost relationships or involvement with a group of people over something that's somewhat petty, maybe calling them names, forcing them into false dilemmas—either/or, making hasty generalizations? Because that's our culture. And you're just being conformed to this world if you're playing along with that narrative.

This Week: "... present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice."

Romans 12:1

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

That was last week. This week, verse 1. Look what it says in chapter 12: "Therefore I urge you, my brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

"Present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice"—clearly, it's a word picture. It's doesn't mean literally. It means to give your entire life to Jesus Christ for whatever He wants you to do, regardless of what you want to do. You let Him choose.

What it means is this: it means to give your very souls over as an offering. And literally, it says, as a sacrifice. Sacrifice means that it's going to die there. And when you talk about the soul, you're talking about our whole being, what makes me, me. That has to go and die. So, it is

death to my rights and my freedoms, my desires, my emotions, my values. They all die. They just go up on that altar daily—that's the living part—and they're just dying. Because that's what it means to be a holy and living sacrifice.

What do you daily give your life over to? Is there something above you, something, someone, that has authority over your values, emotions, thoughts, and actions? Not your thoughts, not your feelings, but something else that absolutely declares what is right versus wrong, what is true versus false, what is beautiful versus vile; and you go that source as the boss.

Who's the boss in your life? Who runs that show? Who says the way things are? What alters your course when you want to go this way and that source is saying, *No, you're going some other way, and now just obey that?*

There's a great little parable that started in the 1930's. It's been updated generationally. I'll tell you the new one—it goes like this.

The context is a U.S. carrier fleet engaging with a single Canadian vessel. And it goes like this with the Canadians starting off by saying: "Please divert 15 degrees to the south to prevent a collision."

And the U. S. ship responds by saying: "We recommend that you divert 15 degrees to the north to prevent collision."

The Canadian says: "Negative. You must divert 15 degrees to the south."

Well, the American comes on and says: "This is Captain Keith Wilkins and I'm running this fleet. And we're rather insistent that you divert 15 degrees to the north so as not to cause a collision."

The Canadian says: "Well, this is Private Thomas Johnson. Hi, hey. And I'm going to say again that you need to divert 15 degrees to the south."

That did not go well. And the American comes back on and says: "I am commanding the USS Lincoln. It's an aircraft carrier. It's the second largest ship in the Atlantic fleet. I'm accompanied by three cruisers and three destroyers amongst other vessels. And I'm telling you to divert 15 degrees to the north, or we will commence countermeasures to assure the safety of these ships."

And the Canadian responds: "Well, I'm a lighthouse, aye, so you can choose."

It's a pretty obvious story. No matter how big and strong you are right now and how smart and intelligent you are, is there some other source that tells you, *Hey, you better head*

south 15 degrees or you're going to end up running aground? Is there something like this in your life? Where do you find truth?

I love the Sarah Groves song about the Word of God, the Bible. And she says, in contrast to that:

**People are getting fit for Truth
Like they're buying a new tailored suit
Does it fit across the shoulders
Does it fade when it gets older**

That's where we find truth. Or a person who's living as a sacrifice to God is going to go to this, God's Bible, and they're going to put this above themselves, because it has authority over them. The Bible has authority over them. And that is what determines what is right and real and true and beautiful.

The Bible is the authority, God's Word spoken to us. And that is our lighthouse. That is our North Star. And we do what it says. Is that true in your life?

Why the Bible?

Now listen, just for the record, we don't default to the Bible and say that's God's Word because it says it's God's Word. I mean, I don't know if you understand, but that's just circular reasoning. There are half a dozen books that are from God that say in their book that they're from God, but they're Mormon. So, we don't believe it's God's Word because it says it is. We believe it's the revelation from the Creator of the universe because it's been validated. If you were writing a book as the Creator of the universe, you'd want that validated so that people could logically invest in what is being said to be true.

And so, it has overcome all sorts of internal questions about its quality control, like the reliability of the manuscripts. There is nothing comparable to the reliability of the manuscripts when it comes to the Bible. There's a thing called higher and lower criticism, that it continues to win conflict about. It has external verification, external verification being other history books validating the history in there is in fact true. Or a version of that is archaeology itself: finding the digs just where the Bible said it would be.

My favorite external confirmation is fulfilled prophecies. I love how thousands of prophecies are very particular and specific in what they say is going to happen and then actually

happen in that specificity. And the only way that makes sense is if an all-knowing God who's also in charge and has the sovereign power to make that prediction become reality. I love that part.

That's why we do that, because it's been validated so many ways for so many years. It's not true because it's in the Bible; it's in the Bible because it's true. You see? There's a difference.

And because of what it's proven itself to be, it rules us. It tells us the way it is. As a person of living sacrifice, it covers us and tells us the way to live, how to think, how to feel. And that life lived in obedience to that book is a life that's a living sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing.

How do you know if it is actually the ultimate authority in your life? Again, in this audience and with a lot of people these days, we'd say, *Yes, it's an authority, that's for sure*. But how do you know if it's the ultimate authority? And I think a lot of us would put that book in the top three sources of truth, and we might even say it's the top source. But here's how you know if it is the top source. We get tested on this regularly. And here's what the test looks like. If you're in a conflict between what you want to think, feel, or do, and it's in conflict with what the Bible says to think, feel, or do, and you choose what you want to do, you've just made a decision. You've just said that's the highest truth for you. That is what you're giving yourself to. That's what you are living as a sacrifice to.

Now before I move on, because this could—it will show up, I'm sure—but I'm not talking about the passages that we don't understand. There's a lot of them. I'm not talking about passages that have multiple applications and we're debating that. I'm talking about things that we know to be true that the Bible says and we come head-to-head with them, we butt up with them, and then we say, *Well, I know, but look at all of the cool kids*. And when we side with that, we're saying, *That's my ultimate source and that source is looking down on the Bible and is judging that book. That's the sacrifice that I'm living for and there's a sacrifice that's going to be paid*.

I know that sounds a little bit obscure and hard to actually put your hand on. But what I'd like to do is give you some examples of how we know not if it's in the top three, but whether it's actually the top source of what is right and real and true; whether it's actually God's Word in our life.

The Bible and Historical Criticism

Let me give you three major categories here. The first one is if there's a historical conflict. The Bible uses details in history to name places and events and people so that it validates the other truths that are being communicated in there. So, if you doubt the history, you're kind of doubting the truth that's going along with that as well.

A real good example of that is the existence of Pontius Pilate. I know for most of you, you're probably thinking, *Yes, of course there's a Pontius Pilate*. Well, here's the thing, though. That looks good in your high school belief. And then you go to college and your sophomore history class teacher, the faculty member with his PhD in history and archaeology says declaratively so, that there is no such person as Pontius Pilate. He'll say that for decades we've been looking and there is no evidence that the man even existed. And he is not suggesting that he existed at maybe a different time or ruled in a different location; he is telling you there is no such person that turned Jesus over to be crucified. And so, there you are sitting in that class blushing, because you kind of believed in Pontius Pilate and the teacher is making you choose. Is it archaeology or is it this book? What are you going to do?

And a lot of people blink right then and there. You know what? I love the Bible and I can believe it without Pontius Pilate. So, that's okay. So, you just go in there and say, *Well, he's mentioned in Matthew in the last couple of chapters*. [Begins ripping out pages of a large Bible.] *I don't need those. And he shows up again in Mark. Unfortunately, he's everywhere in Mark. And then there's Luke ... oh, there's a lot in Luke. I'll just throw those away. John ... just one or two references there. Wait, hold on, he shows up in Acts chapter 4—a lot of people don't understand that. And then 1 Timothy chapter 6 Pilate is mentioned*. So, boom. I had to make a choice and I chose archaeology because it's science.

And here's the thing—or you could just say, *Why don't we just wait and see. Let the guys dig around in the desert a little bit longer. Let's see what happens*.



This is based on a true story. Decades went by and there's no Pontius Pilate. And then in 1961 in Caesarea by the Sea they're digging, and there's this whole stadium and amphitheater that have been under sand for a thousand years.



And then in 1961 they find a dedication plaque, and it literally read this: “Pontius Pilate, the Prefect”—the governor—“of Judea, has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius.” *Oops, we’ve got to get these back in* [moves to pick up torn-out pages on the floor]. *I’m believing in Pilate again.*

But what happened? Do you see what just happened? We had to make a choice between archaeology and Bible. And those are all in the top three, but archaeology got the first rung on the ladder, because that’s what you’re submitting to. That’s not living a sacrifice. That’s not giving yourself over to God.

The Bible and Miracles

Another major thing we have conflict over is miracles. I mean, we live in a time—come on—you know, this era, this part of the world—miracles. You can’t prove a miracle scientifically by definition. You have to be able to repeat it, so it’s begging the question, a logical

fallacy. But nonetheless, it's like a modern scientific person cannot believe in miracles. So, you've got to come in conflict regularly with miracles in the Bible, because miracles are attached to promises and God likes to show off His power. It starts in the creation story at the beginning. *We don't need those two chapters.* [More pages are torn out.] *That's okay.* But you keep reading, and you stumble from Genesis into Exodus. In chapters 5 through 13 you've got these ten supernatural plagues. What are you going to do with those? You don't need them. That's a lot of chapters ... hold on. [More pages are torn out.] *Oh, shoot, the next chapter is the Red Sea. Really? I mean, walking across dry land, two walls of water, it kills an entire Egyptian army? That one's easy. And the prayer and the song that goes with it ... that's good. Yep.*

And I'm just going to keep reading until I find ... oh, Numbers. Forty years feeding millions of people with protein-activated oatmeal and doves that just show up? Forty years of that? [More pages torn out.] *Who needs that?*

You want to really get into some heavy psychology, especially as it applies to science? You know a book people love to tear up because of miracles? Deuteronomy. Here's why—because in Deuteronomy chapter 5 and Exodus chapter 20, it says that Moses went to a mountain top, and it wasn't Moses who gave us some good laws; it says that Moses went up there and God Almighty, the maker and creator of all things, distributed to mankind natural law, laws that apply to every man and woman in every time and every context. And when people believe that miracle, that has to be destroyed. And if you ever wonder why tyrants go first and foremost after Jews and God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians, it's because they've got to get rid of the Ten Commandments, because the Ten Commandments say, “Thus saith the Lord.” And a tyrant can't have that. *We can't have Deuteronomy in this Bible either. None of that with the Ten Commandments. We don't need that.*

Then you get to the New Testament—uh-oh, more miracles. *The virgin birth. Anybody know a virgin that gave birth? No? Okay.* [Rips out more pages.] *That's Matthew and then—hold on—Luke. So, I feel a lot more comfortable with my values. Wait—the resurrection. That, unfortunately, is in every one of the gospels. So, the end of Matthew, if you'll bear with me for a second, and then Mark, just a couple of pages, Luke—my goodness, he goes on and on about this resurrection, page after page. And then John. There we go. Now the dead people stay dead and it's all making perfect sense to me.*

Here's one of the bigger problems with what's called an anti-supernatural predisposition. If you've already made up your mind that there's no such thing as miracles and you look at the life of Jesus, here's the problem. Jesus wasn't doing miracles to just show off; He was doing miracles to validate His claims and His promises. He was doing miracles to say, *No, no, no, you can't believe this, but watch this: I'm going to do a miracle to prove that what I'm saying is true.*

So, if you don't believe in the miracles, you don't believe in what He's validating it with. So now, you're looking at a whole lot of Matthew—I mean pages and pages of Matthew. *Because we can't have miracles in here. And we get to Mark, only because it's shorter, we can get rid of some of that. Luke—yeah, about every third page or every two pages. But John—good grief, this guy—the whole book, for the most part.*

And what do we have left? But I want you to see what's happening here. What just took place? There's an authority of what truth is that's happening in my life, in my soul, and I don't want to be embarrassed for believing in miracles. Whatever it is, I'm making a choice, and I choose, what, science? I've got to tell you, science has had a pretty bad beating in the last couple of years, hasn't it? But I'm still holding onto that. And that's not sacrificing your life. That's not a sacrificial life that's holy and pleasing to God. Because we're taking the authority of God and saying, *Umm, it's in there, but it's not the authority.*

The Bible and Ethics

Now those two topics served as an example to what I'm seeing regularly in this context and culture, and that is Bible ethics. There are some passages in the Bible that are, quite frankly—I don't think my definition of right and wrong is different than the Bible's definition of right and wrong, and someone's got to move fifteen degrees off course to prevent a collision. Some of it has to do with a lunch I had with someone who said, *Jehovah of the Old Testament—I can't even read it—Jehovah is the God of war. He's a war god. He kills everything.*

I'm looking at him like, *What?* And then I started reading it again, and thinking, *Yeah. I mean, in Joshua, they kill everyone. I mean, sure, kill the soldiers, but the women and the children and the goats? What did the goats do? And frankly, I do have a bit of a problem the ethics, the right and wrong, when it comes to war in the Old Testament. And I'm going to make a decision. And I don't like Joshua 1 through 11. Goats didn't do anything wrong. And then*

there's 1 Samuel—David—eeah. And then at the end of 2 Samuel, the very end, do you remember that last chapter with the plague? I didn't like that so much either.

I mean, this whole war ethic and violence—this is a true story. We were at Mt. Carmel on our last trip touring Israel, and we were reading 1 Kings chapter 18. And this is Elijah, and he's kind of run out of patience and he says, *Look, let's just get this over with.* So, in 1 Kings 18 he just says, *Look. All the prophets of Baal, meet me at Mt. Carmel. I'll come up and I'll meet you there.* And they build these giant bonfires. And he says, *Look, this is what we'll do—a little contest. Whoever's God lights this fire, that's the god that's true. And the loser, every one of his followers dies. Are we clear?*

And the prophets of Baal were saying, *Bring it.*

And so, they do their song and dance and the Baal bonfire never lights. And Elijah says, *Hey, God, how about lighting this thing?*—[sound of fire suddenly striking]—and He lights it on fire.

And so, our tour guide is reading this, and then she just closes the Bible. And I said, “No, you’ve got to keep reading.”

And she said, “No, I don’t like that part.”

And I said, “This is the last time you’re going to tour with us.” I said that in my head—and on the phone soon after that. And I just said, “No, here’s the next sentence. ‘And then Elijah said, “Round up all the prophets of Baal. Make sure none escape so that we might kill them all.”’”

See what she did? *I don't like that part—I'm taking it out.* [More pages are ripped out.] She doesn't like that war theory.

So, in the ethics of Jesus, I remember a few years ago that there was a big saying that “I’m a red-letter Christian.” Some of you might remember that. They didn’t like the teachings of Peter and Paul. I just want the ethics of Jesus. And I always thought, *Have you read the red letters?* I mean, there’s a lot in there I don’t like.

So, is there some ethics of Jesus—where is it? Back here. Yeah, “Deny yourself and take up your cross and die daily.” [Laughs and rips it out.] *This is the one I particularly hate in all four gospels: “Love your enemies.” I can’t love my friends and don’t even like to, not to mention that guy down the street that I’ve always been annoyed with. He mows his lawn before eight o’clock. So, I’m not going to love my enemies. I’m not going to love Bob.*

And then when it comes to sexual ethics—by sexual ethics I mean expressing sexual intimacy, before, during and after marriage, all things to do with sexuality and gender. We can just put it all under this giant umbrella and say, *Look, we've got to choose what this massive avalanche of culture believes and how I feel about that--this tidal wave or "these are the values and you need to submit to these."* Or you go to what the Bible says about what sexual ethics are and the definitions of things. And you have to make a choice. What are you going to choose?

I just want to get along. [Starts ripping out pages.] *So, it's just a few epistles. I know it's Romans, and I love that book, but hey ... and then there's Philipians and then there's some more over here in Ephesians, and Peter says stuff.*

And we're just whittling this down, aren't we, until we're comfortable? How is it supposed to be governed? I mean, we've evolved a lot. We've come a long way. But I think things have changed so much in the culture. If they have, then we should change the way we do church government if it's based on culture. But if the Bible bases some types of church governance on anthropological reasons, reasons that transcend time, culture, and ethnicities, then we have to hold to those. And if you don't like those, then all you have to do is go over here to 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and Peter and you can rest at ease.

And there ... there's what you've got left. All this stuff on the floor because you had to make a choice. See what's happening? I'm making a choice as to what is the authority in my life and I'm in this decision between the top three here. And it's going to be what I think is right and wrong and what the Bible has declared to be right and wrong. And I'm making a choice about my values ... at the expense of what?

That's what I'm choosing to give my life to. That's what I'm living a sacrifice to. And I don't have to understand the ethics of the Bible or agree with them; I just need to try and understand as much as I can and then apply them as graciously as possible in the relationships that I'm involved in.

Summary: A Living Sacrifice

In summary, the passage says this: to give your body, your whole soul, all that it means to be you, all of your values—give that over as a living sacrifice. And it means making the Bible, Holy Writ, as the authority. And it takes precedence over your emotions and what you think and

what you choose to do with your life. The Bible is your North Star. It's your lighthouse. That's what it means to be a living sacrifice. I don't have authority over the Bible; the Bible has authority over me.

There's a word for this. It's "lordship." It means that the cosmos is run and it's a monarchy. There's a King, and the King doesn't consult. He's not taking votes. It's not a democracy where He asks; He just declares, and then we obey. That's what it means. Do you obey?

Could I say this? You're going to love obeying this King. It's a benevolent King. And you're going to want to do what He tells you, even if you don't know what it means, and even if you don't like to do it.

Romans 12:1

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

Look at the fullness of this passage. Look at chapter 12, verse 1. Look at all that it says. It says, "Therefore I urge you, my brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as living and holy sacrifices, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

Leave this slide up there. Look at what it says there. It's saying that you need to obey the King because it's your spiritual service. "Spiritual" in Greek is *logicos*. Guess what the English word for *logicos* is: logical. It is a logical thing to follow and obey this King. Why? Why is it logical? Well, look at the first part of it: "by the mercies of God." In light of the nature of God, who He is and what He's done, why wouldn't you withhold judgment on a lot of issues, whether it's history or culture or ethics, and just say, *You know what? I'm just going to do it. Who's the boss? God's the boss. Who's in charge? He's in charge.* What are you doing? *I'm just following directions. He says it, I do it.* It's logical. It just makes sense, because He's the one that ought to be in charge of defining what is right and real and true and beautiful—"by the mercies of God."

And I told you—remember Romans chapters 1 through 11 are dense with doctrine and the other part is application. So, the first 11 chapters are about where we stand with Christ, who

He is and what He's done because of the favor of the loving God. And I was going to survey a bunch of little fun verses there about the mercies of God, 1 through 11, and I stopped at five because we're going to run out of time here.

What About Feelings?

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me tell you in chapter 5 three things that are declared about our identity. Here's how God looked at us, regardless of whether or not we feel like it. Look what it says in chapter 5, verse 5: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It says so right there that we are justified and we're at complete peace with God. But I don't feel like I'm completely justified. I feel guilty. I don't feel like I'm at peace with God. Guess what? It doesn't matter. Who cares? I mean, I've missed a couple of meals lately. I'm angry right now, and that's how I feel. And I'm one Snickers bar from having my entire emotions changes. What really scares me about the frailty of my anatomy is that I'm maybe one hormone away from feeling like I'm a llama. And so, feelings are the things that you put on the altar to sacrifice because they don't matter. They are the things that must die if necessary—if they're not true, they need to be sacrificed. The Bible is over my feelings.

What About Sufferings?

Romans 5:3-5

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Look what it says in the next couple of verses about the purpose of suffering and sorrow. He goes on—these are more truths. “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings ...” What, we glorify in that? “... because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

That’s a promise from God. And when you’re in the midst of suffering and sorrows and you’re on this ash heap like Job, scraping your scabs, and the culture tells you there’s no purpose in that and none of this makes sense, if there’s a God, He’s evil. And the Bible says that’s not true, that sometimes only pain can tell you the truth and that God is using these various things to make you like Christ in all of life. And He’s going to make you like Christ in all of life in these sufferings, so don’t waste them.

Romans 5:9-10

Since we have not been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!

He goes on about the nature of what’s true. “Since we have now been justified by His blood ...”—there’s that word again—“... how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!” There’s no wrath of God towards us. “For if, while we were God’s enemies ...”—yeah, I remember that—“... we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!”

Look at what that truth is saying to us, whether you’re intellectually or emotionally or volitionally—it’s in opposition to you. It’s saying declaratively that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; that you don’t do anything. It’s already been done, because it says that we’ve been saved through His blood, completely. No more wrath from God towards you.

And that's why Christians will say these audacious things. They sound like pie-in-the-sky, oh, look at you, hopeful, wishful thinking. They'll say things like, *Oh, I'm in a perfect relationship with God. I am absolutely going to spend eternity with Him—one hundred percent chance.*

And you say, *Why would you think that? I mean, look at your life.*

And they would say, *Because this has authority over me. He made a promise and He can't not keep it. And so, yeah, I don't feel like it. I don't think it makes sense. And I'm going to act like it's true.*

That's what He does. That book—that's our lighthouse. That's our lamp. That's our North Star. And it's written in a way so that it helps us choose a mate, learn how to negotiate friendships, how to live life in the workplace or in marriage. It gives us meaning and purpose. It says that this is how it all works out. That book is a miracle from God. It has been given to us and it's been protected against higher and lower criticisms and all sorts of other things. There is no higher truth.

Application: Choose

And so, today the question before us is to choose. Choose this day—not if it's in your priorities and in the top three—but what is the highest authority, the ultimate source that you go to, and you switched your life 15 degrees to the south because it says what is right versus wrong, what is real, what is fake, what is true versus false, what is beautiful versus vile. That's what we do. That's what it means to be sacrificing our souls daily as a living sacrifice that's acceptable and pleasing to God.

One of the easiest ways to apply that is to join one of our Bible studies. Or get involved in an adult community. Join a discussion group, one of our small groups, because we're all trying to go through life asking, *What does the Bible say? What does the Word of God mean?*

Now, I know, I don't follow the Bible because it's easy, and I bet you don't either. Here's why: because it's not easy. Follow it because it's true. I don't follow the Bible because it works. Frankly, it works, but a lot of it working is in eternity future. It will all make sense later, but until then I'm just going to do what it says to do now. Sometimes it doesn't work.

You follow the Bible because it's true and it's proven itself to be true under the scrutiny of believers and antagonists for centuries, and it still shows itself to be true. And it's not true to me—it's true truth. When Jesus talks about that truth, He says, *Heaven and earth, all creation, is going to pass away. And when the smoke clears and everything's gone, there will be a few things remaining. And one of those things will be this. And there won't be a dot missing over a single "I" or a "T" that's not crossed. This is everlasting and eternal.*

Jesus had a fun little lighthouse story. He's got a parable with a lighthouse himself. It goes like this. He says, *What's your lighthouse?* "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them"—obeys the King—"may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the waters rose, and the winds bashed up against this house; and it did not fall, for its foundation was on a rock." That person was a living sacrifice.

He doesn't leave it there. He ends with a bad note. "But everyone who hears the voice of mine and doesn't obey is like a person who builds a house down the beach. The rains came down and the flood waters came up and the winds smashed against that, and that house collapsed, because his foundation was on sand." And because of his lack of obedience, there's that last sentence there: "And there was great loss in that fall."

This morning my appeal to you is this: don't tear out pages. Submit to what it says and enjoy a life that is acceptable and pleasing to God, regularly, daily, a living sacrifice of your values, your emotions, your hopes, your dreams, your thoughts. Calibrate them to that standard and watch what happens. Would you do that and join me in making that a source of God's truth?

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we lift up this moment to you and celebrate Your Word—all that You did to get it here, that You wouldn't leave us alone without revelation of who You are and what You're like and the meaning and purpose of life. It's the power of the Word—the whole Psalm 119 is written about the love that you shared for us by giving us this book. So, Lord, I'd ask that we would dust it off, if necessary, get it off that coffee table and open it up and submit to what the King says; Lord, that we would be a church that follows You while the world laughs and mocks and snickers and maybe throws things. If it has to burn the place down, we'll do it anyway.

I'd ask, Lord, that You would bless us so that we might be a lighthouse for other people, that they might enjoy the life that You have for them as well in their surrender, in their sacrifice of all that they are for Your glory, not for theirs.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.