

Christmas

God's Gifts: No Condemnation and Union with Christ

Romans 8:1-11

Let me read God's Word to you. Romans 8:1-11...

Before I read this let me say...the Lord called our former pastor Harry Reeder, beloved former pastor, home about a year and a half ago, and his last sermon was on Romans 8:1-4. So as respect and love for him, we're going to begin a series in Romans for the next months.

Listen to God's Word.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done with the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

Now we're going to focus on those first four verses to some extent, but the whole passage fleshes out what that means. 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 set their minds on the things of the spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death.

But to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set in the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. For those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, whoever are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. If in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life. Because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the spirit who dwells in us. Let's pray one more time.

Heavenly father, we pray that you would give us ears to hear all that you're saying to us by your word. Apply to our hearts. May we love Your Word and love you even more. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

And you may be seated.

A lot of families these days, don't try to buy a present for every last person in the family, because it becomes tedious and takes us away from the spirit of Christmas.

And so you draw names out of a hat, right? How many of you do that draw names out of a hat makes life easier and a nice gift. So we've been doing that for a few years in our family. But,

yesterday I came upon a sort of a list of awesome Christmas gifts presented on the internet, of course, by an outfit that says we have studied thousands of gifts and we have found the most awesome screwdriver ever made in the history of humanity.

And we're recommending it to you. And of course, it's on sale at Amazon. And so we decided to do that. We decided to get extra gifts just because now when you do that, you can say, well, that's commercialism, that's succumbing to the internet or materialism. But you could also say that you're participating in what's most essential about Christmas.

And that is echoing God's generosity, his gifts to us. That's certainly how I view it, that when we give gifts to each other, we're saying we've been moved by God's greater gift to joyful generosity to other people. Now, the greatest gifts God gifts, of course, are not screwdriver sets, but they're more binding and more powerful. No condemnation from God or even self-condemnation freedom from the law.

That is the principle of sin and death being governed by sin and death, and knowing that Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law and we can fulfill the righteous requirement singular of the law. We'll talk about that, and we can know the mind of God. We can turn away from hostility to God and align ourselves with God's will.

These are God's gifts to us now. The gift comes at a crucial moment in the book of Romans. In Romans chapters one two, three, four, five, six, seven. As you may know, chapters one, two, and three describe human sin and the fact that everyone is silent, guilty, and accountable to God. That's a conclusion in chapter three. So we're liable to judgment.

And then we have good news in chapter four and five were justified by faith. We have peace with God, were united to Christ. But chapter seven is almost, a description of the ongoing battle with sin. And that states that battle even for believers in stark terms, it says, you know, the good that I would do, I do not do the thing that I hate, this very thing I do.

It's Romans seven, the end, he says, who will rescue me from this body of death? As if sin hangs on to me like some dead thing. And there's no direct answer to that. The answer is not. Here's how you'll be delivered. The answer is given in Romans eight one. Simply saying, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now of course, the answer is Christ delivers us. But he starts with, you know, this ongoing disappointment you have with sin in your life. I need to tell you, Paul says, God does not condemn you anymore. And by the way, you shouldn't condemn yourself or of people around you either. There is no condemnation. It could be translated. There is nothing literal translation would be.

There is nothing of condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Not a shred, not a not a slip. Nothing, nothing. If confidence, you'll stand before God. Now, of course, confidence can be good or bad. There's hyper confidence which becomes pride or arrogance. This is not selfish confidence or self-directed or self-generated confidence. It is confidence in what God has done.

God has done something, so there is no condemnation. Now, people who study the book of Romans say that the book of Romans has this lovely, this lovely role in the Bible. They say things like, Romans is the greatest book of the Bible Romans eight, is the greatest chapter in the greatest book of the Bible. And they say that Romans eight is the inner sanctum.

It's the tree of life after we consider death, which Paul's just done in chapter seven. And so he says, we have confidence not in our own ability to arrest sin, which we'll never fully do. We can strive. We will never fully do. We have confidence because of what Jesus has done, condemning sin in the flesh, and because he has given us his spirit, which is very much a theme of Romans eight.

Know you can just listen or follow along with me if you like, but this is what it says about the spirit in Romans eight. In verses one and two it says, the spirit gives life, including freedom from the law or the governing principle of sin and death. And then we just read chapter eight. Verses 5 to 11 says, when we have the mind of Christ, our mind is reset.

And we think about we meditate on the things of God, the good news that God's given us a little bit later next week, we'll study this in verses 12 to 17, he says, the spirit gives us an assurance of our adoption into the family of God. You are God's sons and daughters. And then in chapter eight he says, no matter what's happening, there is hope.

Even in your suffering, there's hope of glory. Even we groan, we have hope. And then in chapter eight, 26 and 27 it says, even we may groan with such deep despair and inability even to articulate what's on our mind. The spirit takes those groans and makes them in the speech to God improves our prayers. And at the end he says, we have confidence in Christ and His return.

Now there's bookends in chapter eight. There's no condemnation. Eight one no condemnation by God at the end. There's no separation from God. These are the core gifts. Now we need these gifts because the law is not going to carry us over the finish line. Going back to chapter eight, verses one, two and three, verse three says, God has done with the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

Now what that means is that God has given us the law, and the law is very good. But the law is weak because of sin, because of our sinfulness. So if we use an analogy, imagine you're in a relay race and the law is a good runner or a good swimmer. There's four people running or swimming, and it's a 4x4 hundred, and the law is good and gets off to a great start.

And then if it passes Baton or tries to pass the baton to us and, and we, we drop the baton every time weakened by sin, or we grab the baton and we run 100 yards and just keel over and lay on the ground for a while. And we're not going to win. You know, you don't win races that way or we're swimming in the law as the first swimmer.

It's good, the law is good. But it's weakened by sin, by its partner, by the sin nature still dwells in us. And so the first swimmer gets a nice start. And then the second one, you know, they touch

the side of the pool, and the second one drowns at the 25 yard mark. Not a good way to finish a race.

So the law is weakened by sin. The law is excellent, but the spirit has to come and quicken our mortal bodies. Verse 11 says. Now the passage begins with the words, now therefore, therefore, now there is now. Therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And when you hear those words, therefore, now we know that we're in the realm of logic and reasoning, which Paul's given us a number of times in the book.

In chapter five, for example, he says, having been justified by faith, therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. And chapter six he says, because we're united to Christ, we've died to sin, we've risen with him. Our life is is like an instrument of righteousness for God's calls. And chapter seven goes back to not so fast, we still sin.

And the chapter eight says, yes, we still sin, but there is no condemnation because of the work that Christ has done. The spirit has set us free from the law, the principle of sin and death. And we walk according to the spirit first. It is no condemnation. I've already said that condemnation has a reference to God because we commit sins.

But let me add also that there is a tendency that people have to condemn themselves. Probably most of you spent time with family over Thanksgiving. Yes. And usually the best cook in the family takes over and they make everything you know really well. And people are sitting around saying, what a great meal. That was fantastic. What? Everything was perfect.

And then the cook, who has very high standards, says, well, you know, the green beans were pretty soggy. And everybody thinks for a second ago, you know, actually the green beans were kind of soggy. Now that you mention it, it wasn't really going to say anything about it. Hardly noticed. But yes, I guess they were soggy and the cook can then go into a little bit of a spiral.

I was aiming for the perfect. None of you really know this firsthand, but there are actually people who want everything to be perfect, and if everything isn't perfect, it's a failure. And they condemn themselves. Now, that's what people do. They condemn themselves, but notice they condemn themselves for little things. In my illustration, it's the beans which is not the main course of Thanksgiving.

And that's human nature. We condemn ourselves for small things, and we often let the big things go. We ignore them. We say, well, you know, I was just a little bit off here, but we ignore maybe a tendency to, I don't know, bitterness or complaining or getting upset that no one thanked them properly or judging others or pettiness.

Whatever the case may be, giving into fears. So we condemn ourselves over the wrong things. Oh, there's even more to condemn myself. And Paul says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Don't condemn yourself for big things. Don't condemn yourself for little things. God has not condemned us. Stop condemning yourself. There is nothing, not a trace, not a shred of commendation.

Sorry condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Why? Because we've been justified by faith, the judge has said, cleared of all charges. Because we're united to Christ and God looks at us and sees Christ, not the sins we most recently committed are soaking or bitterness or gossip, whatever it might be. Our appetites are grandiose dreams. Our the ways we imitate the sins of our parents or brothers or sisters.

Cleared of all charges, justified by faith. Now, the concept here, if you're wondering how this works, is imputation. And the Bible says that God looks at the evil deeds that we committed and he eradicates them, he throws them out, they're out of court. And he says, I'm going to see when I look at you, I'm going to see the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to you that is reckoned to your account.

Let me illustrate this way. another survey came out. They come out all the time. And once again, Harvard won the prize as the greatest university in the world. In the world. Harvard is number one. Oxford and Cambridge, Yale and Princeton. Stanford are weeping once again that they came in fourth or seventh or 11th, Harvard's number one. But there's a secret about Harvard.

And the secret is that some people get into Harvard because their dad gives a whole lot of money to Harvard, and some people or their mother and some people get into Harvard because the Harvard volleyball team does not have a guy who's six foot seven and can jump out of the gym this year. So they get let in and they kind of barely make it at Harvard.

And here's another secret. Just for just so you know, if you're a really gifted student, a good state university will do as much good for you as Harvard will, because at Harvard, all those introductory classes are taught by students, PHC students who want to graduate, not take care of you. And so you can get a great education elsewhere.

But they went to Harvard. They went to Harvard. And a Harvard education does you the most good in two and two ways, not education. Percent by their own studies. Two things one, better connections. And number two, if you're a weak Harvard student, if you're a weak Harvard student and people look at you go, this guy, this guy looks like he could have gone to Sasquatch University.

I mean, weird, this guy come from, but they say, you know, but he graduated from Harvard. I mean, he must be good. So Harvard ness has been imputed to this man who really does not partake of the spirit of Harvard. You with me? That's what Jesus does for us. We're not fit. We're not qualified. But he ascribes to us, imputes to us all the excellencies of Christ.

And that's what he sees. Not that we went to Wyoming School of Ceramics wherever we went. That's number one. Number two, we are free from sin and death. We are free from specifically the law of sin and death. Now, the law in this case does not mean that sin and death lay down laws, but it means rather the principle, the governing principle of this life.

The law, then, is that we really will never stop completely stop sinning, that to stop sinning in this life will never occur. And we can strive, we can fight, we can battle, we can concentrate. We

can read books that help us root sin up. We'll never be perfect. We'll never be perfect. And furthermore, without God's grace, we will be in bondage to sin, unable to stop really much at all.

But we've been set free. Verse two says, from the law of sin and death. Again an analogy. Imagine for a minute that you know somebody who has an illness, and I'll make it back spasms. Back spasms have troubled you or your dear friend for years, and crippling back spasm is hard to get out of, hard to get out of a chair and you're trying to walk right and not have people constantly offering to help you.

It's pain. And you've done the exercises and it's controlling your physical life. And then one day you find somebody and they're so much better. And whether it's acupuncture or exercises or a shot of cortisone, you're you are free from those crippling back spasms. But if you've ever had really bad back spasms, you know that you're never totally free from them.

You will still have to stretch. You'll still have to stay hydrated. You'll still have to do planks or whatever exercise the doctor told you to use. When you pick something up, you will not be able to go like this. You will have to bend your knees, not your back, because if you abuse it, you will be in back spasms again.

But you are fundamentally free. That's what. That's what the passage is saying. You're not perfectly free, but you are fundamentally free. That is the second blessing that God gives us, because Romans eight verse three says, God has done what the law. We're going to study this carefully. God has done with the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do by sending his own son part one in the likeness of sinful flesh for sin.

That's part two. He condemns in the flesh. I'll take those three apart. First of all, how did God deliver us? How do we escape condemnation, the law of sin. Now answer number one is Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Now some people have taken that to mean, you know, God would never really come into this world.

I mean, honestly, can you imagine that God had to have his diapers changed? That's just unthinkable. He didn't really come in the sinful flesh. It's just an appearance that's a heresy. The Bible teaches we hold here that Jesus really came in the flesh, but it wasn't exactly like our flesh. And therefore Paul says, in the likeness of sinful flesh, our flesh is filled with boiling and foolish and furious desires.

We're a cauldron of desires. We try to keep a lid on it, and our flesh is prone to that at all times. You to greater, lesser degrees. Jesus did not have a sinful nature. He had real flesh, but not a sinful nature. Furthermore, we sin because of habits. We see. We see sins that people mom and dad, brother and sister, and our friends committing were prone to commit the same sins.

And we also have pathways of sin. If you start telling a as you tell 1 or 2 and then you tell 18 and by the time you've told 100 lies, you're pretty good. Liar. And it's easy to lie. That's our sinful

flesh. Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh, meaning that he was really tempted, but the temptations did not come from within him.

They didn't come from boiling from his evil nature. They didn't come from bad habits required over time. But he came in real flesh, meaning, when you read in the Bible that Jesus fell asleep in the boat in a storm, it means he was really tired. Like people get tired. And when it says Jesus went and had a feast with the Pharisees and another feast with the tax collectors, it means that he got hungry and ate food and drank food and had a good time.

In fact, he had such a good time that people accused him of having too much fun. They said he's a glutton and a drunkard, which is false, but it was based on something they saw. He really eats and drinks, so he really came in the flesh. He really shares in our life and he did this so that he possessed it so he could destroy the power of the one who holds us in fear of death.

That is the devil. Because he came really as a human being, and he came for sin. If you're looking there, it says, by sending His son in, the likeness is in flesh, and for sin you might just. Those are just three words. That's very simple. And for sin. But I need to tell you that the little phrase for sin in the Old Testament over 60 times is used for sacrifice is for sin when it says, And he sent his son for sin, it means he came.

He sent his son to deal with the problem of sin to offer an atoning sacrifice himself, his own flesh for sin. And third. Third, he condemned sin in the flesh. That is to say, he said, it's wrong. He said it deserves judgment. It doesn't say he condemned us. He condemned sin in the flesh. When you read the word flesh in the Bible, you see the word flesh in the Bible.

You might be inclined to think that means, physical sins. And it can like drunkenness and sexual sin and so forth. But if you look at the list of the sins of the flesh in the Bible, Galatians chapter five, a lot of those sins are things like. And I'm going to look at the list right now so I get it right if I can find it.

includes things like envy, rivalry, dissension, jealousy. They're not all physical. The sins of the flesh are what's opposed to the way and the life of the spirit. The Lord condemned it and he condemned it. Verse four. This is the next blessing that the righteous requirement of law might be fulfilled. It could even some translations say, perfectly fulfilled.

That's a that's a very plausible translation. So the righteous requirement of law might be fulfilled in us. Now, I'm going to ask you to notice that the word righteous requirement is singular, not plural. Now, when we think of God's requirement, we want to put an s on it because we think, well, God gave us ten laws and then there are hundreds of other laws.

One person counted them up and counted 613 in the Old Testament. And there's more New Testament. There's hundreds of laws. How can you say that Christ came so that we might fulfill the righteous requirement of the law? And the answer is in the end, the law of God is very simple love God and neighbor. Everything else is commentary.

Now people say wrongly that Augustine said, Love God and do as you please. That's a meme that people use sometimes. Augustine certainly was a theologian of love of God, but he didn't say, do what you please. He said, Love God and the law will show you how to do that. But all the laws are essentially commentary on how you go about loving people.

So, for example, if at Thanksgiving your spouse, your beloved said to you, or Christmas, there's a party coming up and they say, hey, how do you like my clothes? You think this is right for the party? We're going to have now, you might want to avoid trouble at this moment, because what they've chosen actually is not good for the party.

And you don't want to tell them that because you're afraid they will make you even later than you already are by changing their clothes two times. And so you just say, oh, you look great. It's perfect. The law tells you, here's how you love people by not lying to them. Now you may say, look, it's not the best out for the party, but you know, you're beautiful and I love you and you're so wonderful and everybody loves you so much.

It'll be great. Don't worry about it. But if you ask the question, is this the perfect outfit? The answer is no, it's not. You may think, oh, that's a dangerous thing to say, but it's more dangerous to lie to your loved beloved. Tell the truth. Spend a moment to figure out how to tell the truth. Or let's suppose there's one piece of pie left, such as your heart loves and you know that somebody else at the party loves that piece of pie as much as you do.

And they've even said, this is the last piece of filling in your favorite pie. And you think to yourself, I already had one piece and they didn't, but I just like it so much, so I'm just going to cut a sliver off it. They'll never notice. And then there's one third and two thirds. And then you think about it some more and you think, well, I'll just take the two thirds and leave the one third for them.

This is not an act of love. The law of God tells you how to love somebody when there's only one piece of pie left. Don't steal their pie. The law tells us how to love people. You want to know how to love God? The law tells us worship and serve him alone. Don't create idols even in your mind.

Don't take his name in vain. I know a lot of people take God's name in vain. And when you're surrounded by people who do that, it's easy to fall into it. The law says, no, that's not the way we love God. Love God by force, commitment, keeping the Sabbath. Trust him enough to take care of you will not work every day forever.

You want to know how to love your parents? Honor them. Honor them with your words. Honor them with the words you speak to them. Honor them with the words you speak about them. Honor them. You want to love your neighbor. Don't kill them. Don't do things that risk their life. We drove back from Saint Louis. We had a wonderful time with our family in Saint Louis.

And there was an accident. We were pretty close to Birmingham on 280 going southeast. And there was an accident. It's a divided highway. There's about 40 or 50 yards. Somebody came

from the going north, going northwest, got all the way into our lanes. How did that happen? I'm going to say there's a really good chance it started with texting or drinking.

One of the other. You love your neighbor. Don't text and drive. Don't drink and drive. Don't get distracted and drive. You want to love your neighbor. Don't steal their things. The law of God tells us how to go about loving the people around us. That's the big idea. You want to love your neighbor, protect their marriage instead of interrupting their marriage.

You want to love your neighbor, admire their skills instead of envying their skills. This week, I had the privilege of talking to a Christian man named Webb Simpson. Those who play golf know who that is. He's a very dedicated Christian golfer, was at one point several points top ten in the world, won great tournaments and so forth. And he's a good golfer, really good.

He's so good that he gets to play with Rory McIlroy, who's not been one of the top ten but the best golfer in the world a number of times. But the rankings that have and Webb said, you know, I play with Rory sometimes and I wish I could hit a driver the way he does. They've calculated how fast he can swing a golf club 123 miles an hour.

That's really fast. And when you hit a golf ball with a golf head at 123 miles an hour, it goes a long ways. How far, you ask? 340 yards. But what's really awesome is that Webb Simpson can control it and hit it down the middle of the fairway. And Webb says, I could be envious of Rory Simpson 10th commandment don't covet.

I could be envious, or I could give thanks for what God has enabled him to do. And I've come to realize I need to give thanks. I love Rory McIlroy. Rory McIlroy by giving thanks for his gifts. Instead of envying his gifts, or hoping that a seagull comes and lands on his back during his back swing.

There's a woman named Jessica Patterson Long, who's a former student of mine years ago, and she's pretty high up and in the State Department in an anti-terrorism role. Her job is to detect and thwart terrorist attacks on her country. That's an act of love. It's not just a job. You love people at your work. How does she love people?

She loves the people of America, her nation, which she loves by thwarting terrorists. But you know what else? She actually loves the terrorists by stopping them because if they succeed, they'll have blood guilt on their hands and they'll probably get caught and pay a price for it. So she is loving the terrorist and her nation. She is loving the people around her.

Love is the core. That's the righteous requirement of law. Love the people around you. Everything. The law says is commentary on how we go about doing that at work. At work, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. Work to the glory of God. And when you look to the glory of God, you love God and you love your neighbor.

We can keep we can begin to keep the righteous requirement of law. How does that happen? It happens when we walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit that fulfills a prophecy from the Old Testament. The Old Testament says, God promises I will put my spirit in you. I will put my law in their minds and write in their hearts, and I'll put my spirit in you.

So you have a genuine capacity to fulfill, not perfectly in this life, but you really fulfill the righteous requirement of the law. J.I.Packer wrote a whole book about walking in the spirit. You said this the believer wants and wills to keep God's law and requirement perfectly. He's never able to keep the law perfectly or as consistently as he wishes.

This calls for constant preparation, rigorous alertness, dogged determination, and moment by moment faith. That's exactly right. Now what we need to fulfill this, verses five and six and seven and eight, and I'd say is a mind of the things of the spirit, because the mind set in the things of the flesh is hostile to God. Have you noticed how beautiful the late fall is here this year?

Have you noticed? Have you noticed the trees are beautiful here? We have so many trees. It's because there's so much water. It's a lot of water that falls is called rain. There's a lot of water that falls and waters the trees. And this year the trees are really beautiful, aren't they? And if you say that to your secular friend who is hostile to God because they can't help it, they'll say, well, I mean, you say, thank you, Lord, for the gift of trees, but we know where trees come from.

I mean, atoms have been bouncing around for a few billion years, and some of them collided in a really nice way, and it gave us trees. Don't talk about God now. They may be very nice about it. Atheists often have a very high opinion of Jesus as a moral teacher, and atheists sometimes write whole books about how good Christianity has been for civilization.

I read a 450 page book by a great scholar called Dominion. How wonderful it is. There have been. He's an atheist. How wonderful it is that Christians have had an influence in this age, and they can say very nice things, but in the end they're hostile to God. They can't help it. The mindset of the things, the flesh is hostile to God, and it can't help but do so because the mind, the denies the existence of God is dedicated to his own happiness, its own rule, its own goals.

And if they're being honest, they can't help but say to us, I'm sorry, you're delusional when you say, thanks be to God for beautiful trees. God didn't make the trees. The Big bang made the trees. Let me say in a different way. Herod Antipas, the Herod that lived during Jesus ministry. Put John the Baptist in jail for criticizing evil things he did during his reign.

But he went and visited him. And the Bible says, Matthew and Mark say he listened to him gladly. He liked to talk to John the Baptist. He would go to his prison cell and visit him and talk to him and have lovely conversations. And then one day he killed John the Baptist. Because you can be very kind and polite toward Christianity and still not have anything but a settled enmity, because the question is, Who is God?

You or the Lord of the universe? And well, if your mind is set in the flesh, you're going to be opposed to God. Now the good news, verse nine, is that the spirit dwells in you. And the good news, which actually heard in a Sunday School class between services, is that this is not only an individual thing, it's an individual matter, but it's also a corporate matter, because the you in this case is plural.

The spirit dwells in you plural meaning the spirit dwells among you. Plural. The spirit dwells in us individually, and we're a community of believers. And that allows us to reset our mind because we're social creatures and we submit to the influences around us, and we need each other to keep a strong, godly view of the world. Principles for living in the world.

What do we mean by that? Well, you all know we had an election recently, and you may be happy or sad about the election and its results, but a believer knows that politics is never ultimate. They're important, but they're not ultimate. There's no human that's a savior of this country. We have. There's one Savior. It's Jesus, and there is no person who is elected who will destroy the nation because God's going to preserve the world according to his plans.

We care about politics, but not all that much. And then there's sports. I understand there was a football game yesterday, and it was just a sad affair because the collective record of these two teams, which are deep in our hearts and minds, was either 12 and 10 or 13 and nine, something like that. You know, mediocrity abounds, or at least disappointment.

Sports are fun. Bring people together, but they're not ultimate. And if your team is having a bad year, it's okay. You can still have fun. You're cute. You can still enjoy the game even if your team loses because it's not ultimate. And then there's possessions. Possessions are important, and we can think in America that they're the most important thing, but we hang together.

We know what the Bible says. That job said, the Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. The Apostle Paul says, I know how to be in plenty. I know how to be in want. Possessions are good, but they're not ultimate. Now, what it takes, of course, is the spirit dwelling in you to see this.

The God who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who dwells in you. 15 years ago, more or less about 15 years ago, there was a man who came to speak to me when I was pastor your church like this. He came to speak to me after the whole church.

It emptied out. And I had never spoken to this man, but I knew who he was. Because it's not easy to see everybody up in the balcony. But he was in the balcony. And. And when I would look in the balcony, if you're sitting under the lights and I wasn't blinded by the lights, I could see there's a man who's really paying attention.

And then after a while he moved down to the back rows. And he's still laser focused. And eventually he moved to row 18 or so, way up to row 18. And he said, this is my last Sunday at church here, and I have to talk to you. I said, great, let's talk. He said, I finished my PhD.

Didn't find your church till the last year. My program, but I need it. I need you to know that I've been going to church my whole life, and I never heard the gospel until I came to this church. And then I did something that preachers are not supposed to do. You always wonder what's. What's that church where he went for?

He was 27 years old. What's that church you attended your whole life? You never heard the gospel. And I asked him. It's the only time I've ever asked anybody the question. He said, oh, it's church ABC. Well, I know church. ABC. I know the pastor. He is a good, godly, gospel preaching man. I've spoken in church ABC on multiple occasions. It is filled with godly, God loving, Christ loving, gospel preaching people. And I'm thinking, how on earth could he go to this church for 25 years and never hear the gospel? I'm just counting the first two years when he was so young. And the answer is the spirit began to dwell in him. Now, if you're hearing the gospel and hearing the benefits of Christ, if you're a visitor here maybe thinking about things you're not sure where you stand.

Thank you for giving us an hour of your life. But if you're thinking about these things, it's probably because of some desire something happen in your life. Maybe you bumped into a beautiful Christian and you just say, I got check this out. That's good. But if that's your personal motive and you're drawn to the things of Christ and the gifts of Christ, you have to understand that the spirit is also and actually first moving in.

You to quicken you, to give you questions about your way of life. And so it is important for you to yield to the spirit, and also to know that God is nudging you and calling you and pulling you to himself. Now, you may have an objection. A lot of people have an objection. Secular people have an objection. So it's an interesting one.

It's got some, some, validity to it. The objection is, you know, you Christians, you're so spiritually minded that you don't care about this life, and I care about this life. And I'll tell you, we care about this life, too. And it's right here in this text in verse 11. It says, If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies.

Now what that means this Jesus didn't just come to live, he lived in the likeness of sinful flesh, and he died at the hands of corrupt officials. And he rose again in the body, in the flesh. And as a consequence, he cares about you in your flesh, in your mortal body. So if you're wondering if Christians care about this life, they do.

Because God says, I care about your mortal body, not your immortal body, which, by the way, we will have bodies. It never end. But he cares about you now in our mortality and fineness and weakness. You know about the human body, right? The human body never reaches its peak. Did you know that? Because your greatest sprint speed and leaping ability comes from your 24 and your greatest endurance comes your 28, your greatest muscle mass?

If you're a man, comes when you're 32. So there's never a perfect age. And by the way, your mind is only fully formed around the age of 35. So despair as one person walked up to me after the first service, said, I'm 57, is there any hope for me? And I said, not for your leaping ability, but you know, you can continue to grow and develop as a person because the main idea is this, look, we're always mortal.

We're always feeling the imperfection this life, and God cares about you are mortal body. So somebody says Christians don't care about this world. I would say that's a that's a poor Christian. You've been talking to.

We care about the body because God made this world and God made our bodies. So welcome to a whole life. If you're a believer for the 500th time, give thanks for God. Gifts. If it's new to you in the faith for the hundredth time or for the first time. If God is moving in your life. Listen to these gifts.

No condemnation from God, or from yourself or from others. Freedom from the law, the dominating principle of sin and death. A reset of your mind. The ability to walk in the spirit by the spirit. These are great gifts and I hope you're enjoying them today. Let's pray together. I'm the father. I do ask that we would spend time.

Setting our minds on the things of the spirit. Thank you Lord for giving us a hunger for those things. Let us meditate on treasure, these gifts that are so much greater than any gift we can give under the Christmas tree. Not that the Christmas tree is bad, Lord. So give us grateful hearts in hearts and minds and bodies filled with all of your grace and your truth.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.