

Romans 14, 15 (Conrad Bowman) (September 24, 2008)

Okay. The Seven Churches in Revelation. The letters to the Seven Churches are the last Word of God to the Church to carry us from the time it disintegrated at the end of the first century when the Church fell into ruins; all the way across the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Inquisition; that whole period of – of organizational church to the time when Christ comes again. And the thing that it give us in the Pauline epistles are the signs of the awakening of – of the Church to the Gospel which we are –we. That's the editorial "we." Which I am convinced, based on the things which I've studied, occurred around 1825 to 1835; and just blazed like lightening until about 1940. And then the attack of the enemy on the doctrine of the Church has been in full swing since 1940. And – and Satan's attack is upon destroying the purity of the Gospel. If there's one thing that the Church is called to do, and it's clear in Revelation and it's even clearer to us today, it's to preserve the Gospel. The Gospel as it was defined by Paul to the Churches; and as committed to the Churches and – and what the Revelation to John on Patmos said was going to be the main battle with the enemy from his day, which was about 100 A.D., to our day today. That's a pretty far view, isn't it? But he's right on target; and I miss my cable TV because I'm watching that come to be everyday on cable; and I'm down to Channel 13 through a blur of snow, in a weird buzz of sound. So I've got Phil's walk-man that I plug in for sound, and the TV that I turn on for that snowy picture; and that's the sum total of my intake today. So, you're looking at a very frustrated man.

Lady. I can understand.

Conrad Bowman. Yeah. I'm going to do this generally.

Yes. Alright, we're in chapter 14. I want to take you through chapter 14 now and finish that today, and see if we can get into 15 and how far we might go. Now. We're in 14:14. That's the last thing we hit; was, as one who's in the Lord Jesus,

14. ... I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself.

And you remember, we were talking about food offered to idols; or things offered to idols; and whether or not the believer is at liberty to partake into those things – to partake in them – and what effect it might have; and

14. ... no food is unclean in itself; but if anyone regards something as unclean, then to him it is unclean.

And here's – here's a double test, and it's one we often miss when we start arguing about legalism and things like that. If I sit down to a table, and I can eat anything on the table – now above the Mason-Dixon Line, that would include grits; and it would just aggravate the stew out of half the people there. Right? Because they don't believe in grits. Farther north, it turns into a boiled dinner, you know, which I wouldn't touch. Yeah. Cabbage and potatoes, and stuff like that. Broccoli. Ugh. [Laughter]. Stuff like that, that you just turn your nose up at. The Lord says all that stuff is good for food. The vegetarian rejects part of that, because the vegetarian can't bring himself or herself to, ah, bite into bandaged rump. But it's okay. It's okay with God. He has – He has no aversion to that. You know that. Okay. So that's – that's one view. So if I'm sitting down to a table with John – I'm glad you're here tonight, John. If I'm sitting down to a table with John, and I don't think there's anything wrong with this stuff, and I take on a nice big steak and eat that; and John, who is vegetarian, turns his nose up at it, and he – he says that he believes it's unclean; but later on, he decides – boy, it smells good, I better try that. So he tries it anyway. You see, I haven't ...

Lady. Sorry about that, John.

Conrad Bowman. He breaks down. I haven't sinned, because I've eaten something that I thought was okay to eat. But John has declared that this shouldn't be eaten by a Christian. Then John has actually committed a sin, because he's acted against what he believes to be true. Now that doesn't mean that you can define for yourself what is true and what isn't. It means you are captured by your conscience as a means of approaching God; that the first thing that you have to be able to do is to approach God with a clear conscience in what you do. And this is true of – of anything. Okay? Your conscience has to be clear about what it is you're going to do. You have to – well, how do you get your conscience trained? Well you get your conscience trained by study, because your conscience is entirely dependent upon what you believe to be true. So, Gil has to study in order to build up within himself a standard by which he can measure what's true and what's not. And he does that; and everyone of us do that. Okay? We build up that standard within ourselves. Now what the Spirit is doing in you on a daily basis is refining that standard so it coincides with God's standard. And the way He exposes – He exposes you to that standard is through Bible – is through Bible study – primarily through Scriptural study; and then through experiences with Himself. You go through life and you encounter difficulties and you say, my God, my God, what am I going to do in this circumstance? And you find you have exhausted your basket of tricks; and the thing that's still not

solved, so you through yourself on His mercy, and He says, FINALLY! You know. And you start looking around for His solution to the problem that you finally have just given up on. And He resolves it. Whichever way He does it is immaterial. He resolves the circumstance. And through the resolution, you are trained then to get to that point quicker. And He takes you through life's circumstances one after the other, and the purpose of those tests are to bring you to Him faster; to where the – eventually you get there – one day you run into a problem, and it might seem small to you. And – and you turn it over to Him; say, Lord, I – I just want You're answer to this. And you – and you realize that you've finally got to the point of spiritual trivial pursuits. And that's where you want to be. You want your mind in every circumstance to come to rest on dependency on God to provide the answer. And when you do that, maturity is beginning to set in. Unfortunately, when you get to that point, you're usually looking in the mirror at a – at a gray-haired – you know – slow moving character; because it took you a life time to get there. Right? Now, I usually – that'll preach in this crowd.

Lady. Oh yeah.

Conrad Bowman. Right? You betcha.

John Young. You quit picking on us young guys?

Conrad Bowman. Yeah. You young guys. That's right. I'll quit picking on you. But it's true. It takes you a life time to get there. The blessing of our class is having a guy – having a couple like this. Ruby and Adam in here. Getting exposed to this, and they can hear fifty "Amen's" in this class; because we've been there. Okay? And it took us a long time to get here. We could have gotten here any time we wanted to, or were willing to.

Betijean Kennerly. First of all.

Conrad Bowman. Yeah.

Betijean Kennerly. Could have happened first of all.

Conrad Bowman. Could have happened right off the bat. It did to David, didn't it? Of course, he still posed naked? Did he pose for that, you think? [Laughter].

Lady. Why would you ask that?

Conrad Bowman. I don't know. I don't know. It just hit me that he looked pretty dog-gone young in that little pose thing. Okay?

Betijean Kennerly. I don't think he ever looked that good to himself. [Laughter].

[Class chatter].

Conrad Bowman. Welcome home, BJ. Welcome home. Glad to have you. Alright. But you see what the process is we're going though, because that's what – that's what chapter 14 is – that's what Paul is telling us in chapter 14. He's telling us what this process of life is all about and how it impacts our faith in our relationship to God. When He says, there's one in Christ Jesus, one in the Lord Jesus,

14. ... I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself; but if anyone regards something as unclean, then for them it is.

So they better not eat it. Now the next thing we get to is Christian liberty, and our slavery to Christ; and that starts in verse 15. So let's go to 14 and 15, and start there.

15. For if because of food your brother is hurt, and you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

Boy this is big. Now, you're thinking about your brother in the next pew; or in the next row; and that's who you have in mind when you read this verse. But, when you look at the qualifier, "for whom Christ died," you realize that that crowd called "your brother" is a much broader, bigger crowd than just the guy in the next row. See, it's not just Gil; but it's all the people who hate us for what we believe. For Christ died for them as well; and that's tough. See. Christ died for the Iraqi, and the Iranian, and the Turkish Sheik just as quickly as He died for you, and for me. Okay? So when Paul said to the Romans, when I'm in Rome, I'm as Romans. Okay? When I'm in Turkey, I'm as the Turks. I do not offend anybody who might be willing to consider the claim of Christ on his or her life. I just don't do it. Why? Because Paul says, I have the liberty to forgo the pleasure of something that I enjoy that might be an offense to that person. So I'm free – I'm at liberty to forgo that pleasure in order to not to set up another roadblock – this is phony as anything – but to not set up another roadblock in front of that

person between them and God. I don't want to do that. So you find your Christian life and your Christian walk is a life and walk governed by the people that you're walking among. You have to adjust your walk to where they are not offended at all, but their attention is constantly drawn to the One who died to save them. Heaven forbid that they wouldn't look at Him because they're looking at me doing something that they consider offensive. I'm at liberty to forgo that privilege of mine. Now that's Christian liberty. Christian liberty says, you are at liberty to give up things you are absolutely entitled to enjoy just in order not to be a distraction to one who is barely acquainted with God, but who might be being drawn closer by the Spirit in you; and we want to walk in that Spirit. Okay? Is that clear? That's kind of convoluted, but I want to make sure it's clear. Alright. So let's take that. We've not giving up a privilege, but allowing the life of the Lord Jesus to show out before our brother.

15. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you're no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.
16. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil;
17. for the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
18. Because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

And that takes us all the way down to verse 18. Now, do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. Any questions on that? Our goal is peace and mutual advancement in the faith. The Christ life from within. That's what that is. Edification – the word "edification" – we're looking at verses 19 through 21 now. Edification means to build up. That's why they call edifice – the edifice. The facade of a building. Okay? It is this sense in which both you and your brother are under construction as – as men first; as believers second. A building designed for occupancy by God. This is an opportunity for a new addition on that building. All food is clean – the statement in that passage, takes us back to the pronouncement to Noah in Genesis 9 following the Flood. All food is clean. You remember right after being cast out of the Garden God said, here's what's food for you and for all living things. Vegetables, greenery, the fruit bearing tree with seeds; all those things are your food. Now understand, man was a

vegetarian when he was created. Life in the Garden was a vegetarian life. I'm glad I came along later. [Laughter]. But – but that was man was a vegetarian. Everything was. You didn't kill animals for food. The only reason you killed animals was for sacrifice. When they went to the altar to make their offering, and they placed their offering on the altar, Cain brought – I mean Adam – Abel brought his animals from the flock. And he brought them, and he cut their throat, and he put them on the altar, and that was his offering to God. You remember there was a sword with a – flaming sword – that was put up to guard the way, and fire would – poosh – right out of that flaming sword, and consume the offering on the altar that was acceptable to God. So Abel left his offering of – his animal offering up there, and the fire consumed it. Cain on the other hand brought food. He brought grain. He brought heads of grain from the food stores that he had grown for he and his family to eat. So what he was doing was giving up his sustenance for God. Now this is going to be hard for some – some people to take, but God never asked us to give up anything in order to please Him. In fact, everything you've ever learned, regardless of where you started in Scripture, was exactly the opposite of that. God said, I'm not pleased with your offerings. You could burn all the cedars of Lebanon, it says, in Proverbs and in Psalms. You could burn the entire forest of Lebanon, and – and it would not satisfy Me one bit. I don't want things you give up. I want you to understand that I've provided for My sacrifice, and My sacrifice costs you nothing; because you can't eat it anyway. You bring of My sacrifice; and you bring My sacrifice to Me – I'm satisfied and I'm happy. And the fire would come and it would consume that sacrifice. You see what Cain brought? Cain brought his own work. God never wants your work. That's not what He's after. He's not after your effort on His behalf anywhere at anytime. That's not what the Christian life is about. The Christian life is about you bringing back to God what is His, and just simply giving it back to Him. He provided it. He provided the Lamb. When Isaac went up on the mountain. Okay? They're up on the mountain. Okay? And he's going to offer his son – Abraham. Excuse me. Abraham is offering Isaac up on the mountain; and he lifts the knife up; and he's getting ready to plunge it into Isaac's chest; cut his heart out, and cut his throat. That was his intention; and at the last minute, God stays his hand; and then He shows him where He's provided a sacrificial animal. Didn't he? See. When Abraham was getting ready to go up on the mountain, then he said to you people that are traveling with me, you guys stay right here at the bottom, and you just wait; and the boy and I are going up on the mountain, and we will come back. Now he knew what he was going to do up there. He was going to kill his son and offer him as a sacrifice to God. So what do you think he meant by that? Do you think he meant God would stop him?

Betijean Kennerly. I think he believed in the resurrection.

Conrad Bowman. He believed in the resurrection. He believed in the resurrection. He believed that regardless of what he did, because God had promised him a seed through Isaac, that God would deliver on His promise through Isaac. He was going to kill Isaac, and God was going to bring Isaac back to life; because that's what it would take to keep the promise. He believed in the resurrection. Now he's not that much different from us in that regard, because we believe in the resurrection too. Otherwise, we would be lingering over graves and wailing and weeping at the loss of people who are dear to us. Just really, really dear to us. Mothers and grandmothers and grandparents and what-have-you. But we are free to rejoice when they go in the ground because we believe, like Abraham, in the resurrection. Now that was the same thing those gathered around the cross latched onto when they saw the Lord Jesus draw His last breath and declare, "it's finished." "It's finished." Because they believed in the resurrection, they too could find, in the middle of all that chaos, they could find rejoicing; because God was going to minister. Weeping because loss of the flesh; but rejoicing because God was going to provide, even though they didn't know how or why. Now, these people have all gone through that. So Paul is writing this letter to the Romans.

18. Anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Romans. Fifteen through 18. Our goal is peace and mutual advancement in the faith, the Christ life that comes from within us.

You don't lay it on top of your life. It boils up from within you. Edification is to build up. It's a construction word. It is the sense in which both you and your brother are under construction of a building designed for occupancy; and that's exactly what we are. "All food is clean" takes us all the way back to Noah in Genesis 9, following the Flood, that all thing were now given as food to man, just as the green herbs were given in Genesis 1:29. So if you don't have that reference, mark it down. It's in Genesis, chapter 9.

19. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

20. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.

21. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

And that takes us through verse 21 in Romans 14. So if you look at that carefully, please. Okay?

Verse 13 in Romans 14.

13. Let's not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this. Not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

14. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself, but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love ...

And that's *agape*.

15. ... do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

16. Therefore, do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil.

17. For the Kingdom of God ...

Verse 17.

17. ... is not eating and drinking; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19. So then let us pursue those things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

20. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense.

To a brother who's watching, is the intent of the word there.

21. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

22. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God.

That's 1<sup>st</sup> Thes. verse 4:11 come to life. Isn't it? What's Thes. 4:11 say? "Make it your ambition to live a quiet life; tend to your own business." Huh? "Work with your own hands." Okay. "So that you might live at peace and not be in need – but live at peace with all men" That's 1<sup>st</sup> Thes. 4:11. That's marching orders for the Church.

22. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

So don't let your approval of things bring you into condemnation or judgment from God.

23. But ...

But introduces a contrast. In contrast to that.

23. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatsoever is not from faith is sin.

So it says when you eat something, you have to be sure in yourself – it's okay to eat it. And as long as you have that insurance – assurance – ah, insurance is a good word. That's what I started to say. As long as you have that assurance, you can go ahead and eat whatever seems to be good to you.

And I'm going to go – here's something that we get to ever once in a while, and it always engenders a lot of conversation. You can trust God to give you the desires that your heart will follow. Okay? Remember what it says. God gives you the desires of your heart. It did not say, nor does it ever say, that God gives you what your heart desires to have. That's not what it says. It says God gives you the desires of your heart. Now if you're following the Spirit, and you're trusting Him, what comes up out of your heart that you want to lay hands on is of God. Okay? If you're not following Him, and not paying attention to His Word, and to His teaching, what will come up out of your heart will not be Godly desires but fleshly desires. Latch on to one of those and it will bite you. Okay? It will bite you. So, when Scripture says God gives you the desires of your heart, it doesn't mean He will put in your pocket the things you want; or the things you would like to have; or the wealth to which you aspire; or the woman you're chasing; or the guy that's chasing you and you want to slow down a little bit. You know. That's not what it's talking about. It's talking about Godly desires from the Spirit come out of your heart. He gives you those desires; and when you're walking in the Spirit, and you feel something coming up from inside of you that you want to achieve, trust that it is from God. At the same time be careful that you're also watching for the stop signs. Don't be afraid to go until you get a stop sign. Don't wait until you get a kick in the tail to move. Okay? That's the Christian life. Moving with confidence knowing that God will stop you if you're getting ready to cross over into an area that He disapproves of. Questions? That's good. We always get questions right there. Of course we've covered that a couple of times, haven't we.

Alright. So whether you have faith or not about these things, let that govern between yourself and God.

22. Happy is the man who does not condemn himself on the basis of those things that he approves of.

23. But the man who has doubt is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith;

It's from an exercise of his liberty. And we're never called on to exercise our liberty. We're called on to let everything that we do come from that which is faith; because otherwise it's sinful.

So we're in verse – chapter 15, verse 1.

Joyce Wood. Conrad?

Conrad Bowman. Yes?

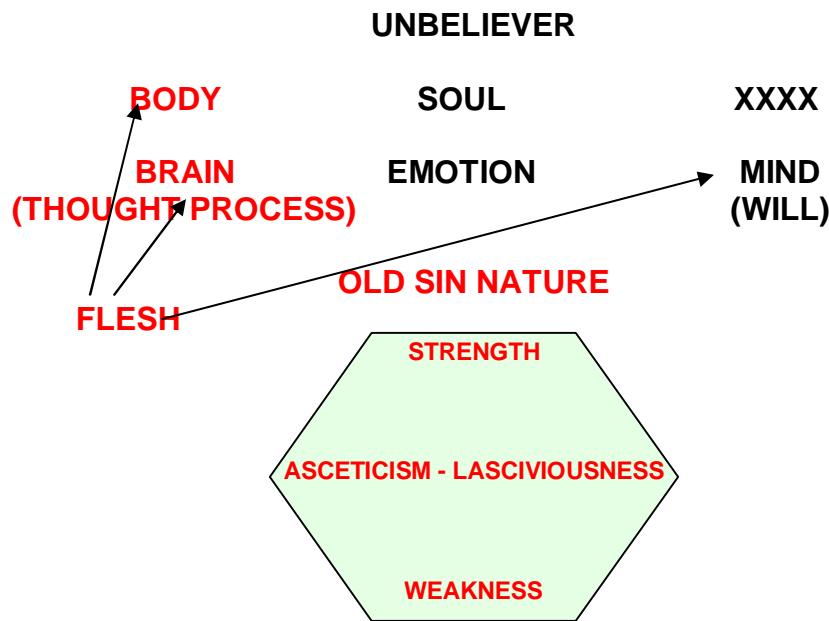
Joyce Wood. Help me be clear on whatever is not of faith ...

Conrad Bowman. Yes ma'am.

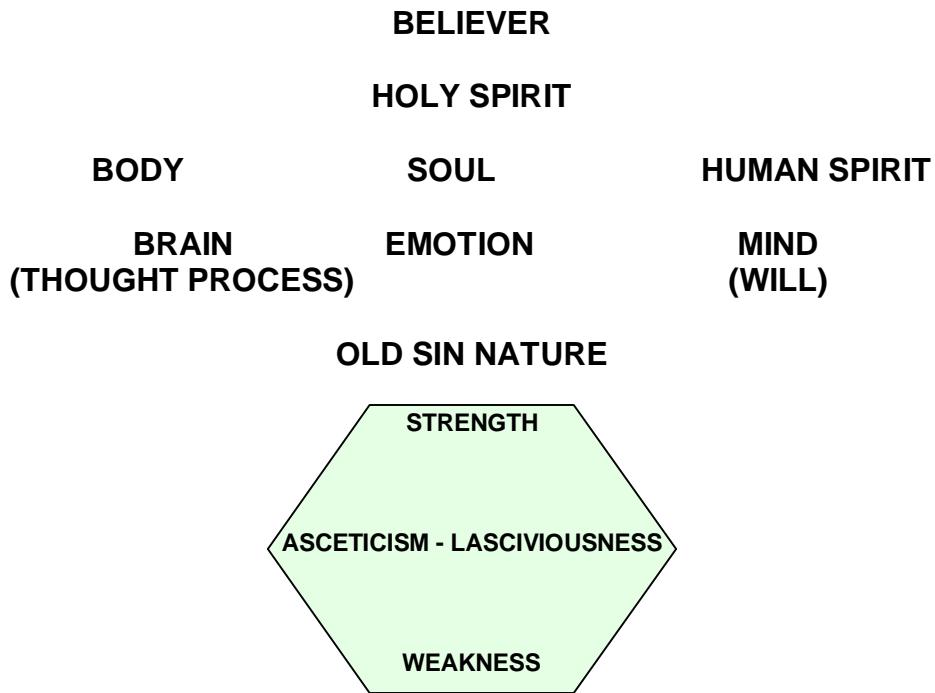
Joyce Wood. ... is sin. But liberty is not faith. Is that what you're saying? Liberty is what we've achieved of our own choosing?

Conrad Bowman. No. It can be. It can be. See, liberty has a source. Liberty is an action, but before that action ever hits the table, there's a – there's a source that has to be dealt with, and – and it looks like this.

[Conrad goes to the Board]



Now, look at this unbeliever, which you were in the past. Your decision-making processes were driven by information that you collected in your **soul**. Your soul got its information from your emotions (how you felt about one thing or another), or how it might benefit you in some way. Your brain decided whether or not this met your standards of behavior, and you acted.



Here's – here's the lost man, the unbeliever. He has a body. He has a soul. Okay. He has a will. He thinks with his soul, because that's all he's got going for him. He's the soulish man. In Scripture that's called the natural man. Now, the natural man receiveith not the things of God; neither can he know them, for they are spiritual discerned. They are discerned by the Spirit. Okay? So, that brings us right over here to the spiritual man. He has a body. He has a soul. He has a spirit. Now this is the human spirit. When man is born, he is born dead, because his soul is under sin. When he receives the Gospel, right here, he acquires this human spirit. It's regenerated in him because it used to be in Adam, and Adam lost it when he sinned. But this is the doctrine of regeneration – is when he regains his human spirit. Now, as an entire gift of God, God places in him the Holy Spirit in residence. This is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He takes up residence in – in the believer. Now, exposure to the Word – exposure to the Word occurs in the natural sequence of events. Over here [the Natural Man], this man doesn't understand exposure to the Word. So he bends it and twists it to whatever he wants. He makes philosophy out of it. This man takes the Holy Spirit – takes that Word; translates it into doctrinal precepts; and teaches it to the human spirit. And the human spirit begins to shape the conscience of man. And this man over here has a conscience; and his is being shaped by the natural ingenuity of mankind; his philosophy; and they build up in here a standard of right and wrong. And this man builds up in here a standard of right and wrong. Now you remember what Paul will say later in Romans – or he said earlier in Romans from where we are. Their consciences were seared as with a hot iron by

the sin that they practice. He said that early in Romans. Which means the man who follows after his conscience without direction by the Spirit, has his conscience inflamed, seared – just like you'd put a steak on a hot – a hot burner. And that seared – seared steak, puts all the juices back in the meat. Same thing happens here. You take life, and you take life with philosophy through your conscience, and the first thing you know, your conscience is cranking out all kinds of standards and norms of behavior. And you find that this is okay, and this is okay, and this is okay. Alright. And you look at every philosophy that we have in the world today that's destructive, and it started right there; in a conscience that was considering probably right or wrong, especially in this country where we grew up; the founding fathers were at least exposed to Biblical truth; and incorporated it in every document we have in Washington; and – and this – it's hard to describe this without using really bad language. [Laughter]. You know what I'm talking about. They have abandoned it and warped it deliberately, to allow for – for these philosophies to take place; and so people no longer know how to behave or how to act; or want to. Which takes us back to the last question. If the desires of the heart come from those kinds of philosophies, you're going to find yourself chasing every – every bizarre whim you ever had in your life.

Betijean Kennerly. Anything goes.

Conrad Bowman. Anything goes. Anything goes. It doesn't matter. If it feels good, do it. Okay? So, so, here's the – here's the difference between the natural man and the spiritual man; and this is what we're talking about. The Holy Spirit will lead this guy – because his brain which directs – his actions are now being driven by the standards and norms that came from the Word; were absorbed by the Holy Spirit; taught by our spirit because His Spirit witnesses with our spirit; and thereby we know the things of God. So you are a – you are a growing library of spiritual truth; whether you like it or not, you are; and you're going to take it in by being exposed to the Word; and it will either condemn you or it begin to drive your thought processes. But one of the two is inescapable. It will happen. It will happen. And if you don't want to change, I beg you to think twice about what you're doing. Because you keep taking in the Word, and every principle you take in becomes a point of leverage at which God will ask you to change; and you just be ready for it. You don't want – you don't want to back away from that. Okay? Because the Hound of Heaven never gets tired. He just never tires. He will stay on your back; and if you don't know the Hound of Heaven, look him up on your computer. Just type in "Hound of Heaven." "Hound of Heaven," and he will give you a full description. That poem was written by an opium

addict, son of a doctor, in London, England; on the back of an envelope picked up from the gutter with a grease pen. The Hound of Heaven.

I fled Him, down the days and down the nights; I fled Him down the pathways of my mind; and through the labyrinthine back-water pathways I fled him; and yet I heard feet way thundering; thundering after.

He couldn't get away. He fled for years and through drug addiction. But he said the prayers of a faithful grandmother followed him, and the Hound of Heaven drug him down. And he said the reason I fled him, is because having once found him, I would have to forsake all others; and he didn't want to do it. See, God's desire and his desires met right where the Hound of Heaven caught him by the seat of the pants. It's a marvelous poem written in seventeen hundreds; and you need to look it up and read it. It's gorgeous.

So that, let's see – 15:1.

1. We who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength ...

And that's *ad dunamis*. The negative *ad* in front of the word *dunamis*. *Dunamis* is the same word we get dynamite from. So it said the power of the Holy Spirit is like dynamite; and here's a guy that has none.

1. ... and not just to please ourselves.

We should – we should emulate someone without power; and not just to please our – please ourselves,

2. Because let each one of us please his neighbor for his good, to his building up.
3. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED THEE FELL UPON ME."

Christ said, all the reproaches that fell on God the Father, He took on Himself.

4. For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures ...

He's talking there about the Old Testament.

4. ... we might have hope.

5. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

So if Christ is our standard, I implore you again. Take these things to heart. Study them carefully. The days ahead of us are – are going to be days that the world has never witnessed before, as we approach the end of this age. And I believe it's coming in my lifetime. And – and everyday I get frail, and start to stumble, I think about that; because it means we don't have far to go. So I beg you. Keep your nose in this Book. Don't back off. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to study these things. This week I – I sat at the computer today and did a final pass through the Notes on Romans; and I'm satisfied with them as they are today. So I'll – I'll transmit to you – everybody who's on the e-mail list – I'll go ahead and transmit to you, the latest copy of the Romans Commentaries. And then as John and I get a chance to go over these last couple of lessons and put them in order, I'll send you the transcripts on those as well. And, any questions? If you're not on the list, by all means, give your e-mail address to Norma, and – and you'll get those – you'll get those Notes out sometime this week. Sorry I'm cutting it a little short tonight, but it's necessary. Thank you very much. Let's have a word of prayer.

Father, we just so much what You did through this blessed Apostle. Boy, You loaded the boat for us. Help us to be faithful stewards of what You've put in our hands. Lead us through the rest of the week, and into the weekend; give us days of strength and energy to do what we have to do; and we thank You, in Christ's name, and for His sake. Amen.