

Tim and 106 other people are at the park because Brandon said there was 107. So I'm not real good at math, but it's like one plus 106. So here we are, for whatever reason, and I'm glad to be with you and I'm glad to see you. Sorry about not no kids programming. We're going to try to keep it short.

Somebody said, can you keep it to two minutes?

Yeah, we'll do ten. Two minutes plus a few more. But anyway, it'll be okay. I have to tell you something.

A week ago yesterday, I left my house at 2am to make my way to Guatemala with four other guys. Brad Pontius, Steve Dyer, Steve Riggins and Andy Williams. Not the singer. And we went to Guatemala and we were there for a week and I got back last night at 10 o'. Clock.

So if I. If I wander off, you'll know why. Sermon prep was a little challenging in Guatemala. I did quite a bit before I got there, but it was just a little challenging. We went there as a group of five older guys really to assemble a playground for a school.

We went to Aguaviva, which is a school of a Christian school of about 330 students. It's amazing. And so we went there to put together this playground that had been repurposed from a playground somewhere in the US that we paid to ship down there. It was a big job. We poured concrete.

You have to mix concrete, concrete on the ground and mix it up and pour it in holes. I don't know. I think we dug 24 holes. Some of them had to be 36 inches deep. And so that was a lot of good upper body workout, lots of bolts, lots of trying to figure out what piece goes where.

And it was a great experience because we got to interact a lot with the Guatemalan people. We got to go into their homes and have a meal with them. And it's just wonderful. Part of the reason I went, I was probably the weakest link. Part of the reason I went was to scout out the territory.

Because next summer we're going to have a family camp in Guatemala at that school. And we Hope to take 20 people from Sherwood Oaks, some from Bedford, some from Bloomington. So you'll be hearing a lot about that in the future. And next summer we will have activities for everybody, be a lot of relational work with the students. Students, even though you can't speak Spanish, you can play with kids and all that stuff.

We have a lot of sewing that needs to be done, making curtains for the school. Lots of maintenance work to be done outside. So we'll. We'll

lay all that out for you sometime soon and then you can see and hopefully you'll want to go. I've been at Sherwood Oaks for five years and seven or eight months, I guess.

I came in with Sean Green as a part of his team. And so I've had a lot of different roles. It just keeps evolving and have a lot of responsibilities in Bloomington and a lot of responsibilities here, which I really like being here. But one of the things I do in Bloomington I just started is the development of a 12 step recovery group. It's called Regeneration.

And we have a pilot group of 15 of us, some who have recovery experience through AA and other things, some of us who've not been through that, but we all know we're messed up. And so Regeneration is really great. And I'll tell you a little bit more about a second, but the 15 of us who are going through, it's about 10 months. And at the end of that, we will become leaders. When we go public next fall, about a year from now, we'll go public and offer this to the community.

So Regeneration is a biblically based Christian discipleship and recovery program that uses the 12 steps of AA and we'll share those in just a second. These 12 steps, or 12 principles, help people find healing and freedom from destructive habits, addictions, past hurts and pain. And. And the means of finding that healing is through a supportive, authentic community where we share and confess really how we are. And it's also through a daily rigorous program of Bible interaction.

So we have Bible verses, we have prayers, we have some writing to do. It's really very, very structured, very good. And it brings about spiritual restoration and spiritual formation. So it's not just for the classic addictions of drugs, alcohol and pornography. It's just for all kinds of things.

Because I say all the time we're all messed up. We've all got something that bothers us and keeps tripping us up. If you look at the 12 steps of AA, those really came from the Bible. AA was originally a Christian initiative. There was a guy named Bill, I believe Bill W. And he really wanted to help people who had an addiction to alcohol.

So he started praying and started figuring out some things and he came up with these 12 steps. Well, over time, the 12 steps got de Christianized as they went broader and broader into different communities. And so in 1991, the Saddleback Church, where Rick Warren was and is in California, said, we want to take those 12 steps, and we're going to baptize them. And as a product of that, we have Celebrate Recovery. How many of you have heard Celebrate Recovery?

We have a Celebrate Recovery in Bedford at the Free Methodist Church.

I believe it meets at 6 o' clock on Mondays. Scott Psalm, I believe leads that Celebrate Recovery is great. It is a Christianized version of the 12 steps of AA. Well, there was a church in Dallas that was doing Celebrate Recovery for years.

And as they went through it, they thought, you know, I think we can do a little more. And so they said, let's make it more discipleship focused. Let's make it a little more rigorous. And that's what turned into regeneration. And so it's more about heart transformation rather than behavior modification.

So it doesn't start with the addictions and the habits and the hurts that we have. It starts with the heart and trying to understand where we are and who God is. And so regeneration is deeply involved in scripture, Bible passages, Bible ideas, Bible concepts. So here are the 12 steps, steps of regeneration summarized. So, number one, you admit that you are powerless over your brokenness.

You got those bowed, there they are. Step two is you believe that God can restore you. Step three is that you then trust God with your life through Jesus Christ. Step four is you really take a hard look at yourself, a very deep moral inventory. And out of that, you confess your sins to God, to yourself and to a trusted person, a mentor.

You repent and you turn away from your sinful patterns. And then you follow God's path for you. And as you keep going, you realize that you need to do some forgiving people who have hurt you and harmed you. And then number nine, if God, if possible, you make amends. That's also part of repentance to those who have harmed you.

Except to do so would cause more harm than you just let it go. Then you continue the process, making the personal inventory, continue to confess your wrongs immediately to your mentor. And then you seek God's will through prayer and meditation, asking for the power to carry out his will. And then finally, you kind of share that with other people. You've been through it.

And then you take this message of hope to other people. Very, very biblical. So today we are in week two of our series called More Than. It's an examination of Romans 8. We're taking nine weeks to look at Romans 8.

You say, why would we do that? Because Romans 8 is such a powerful chapter that really kind of, kind of summarizes everything about Christianity. And so it's what we're doing. And last week Tim looked at Romans 1:7 and we saw that Paul builds a pretty good case. He says, look, we're all messed up.

Sin has power over all of us. We cannot fix ourselves. We are powerless. But God can. And as Tim said, God can flip the script.

And we looked at Paul's life and we said, you know, if. If God can fix Paul, the chief of sinners, then he can certainly fix you and I. So today we're ready to look at Romans 8:1-4. So I'm going to read this. This is from NLT.

Take this in deeply. So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do.

He sent his own son, a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body, God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirements of the law would be fully satisfied for us who no longer follow our sinful nature, but follow the Spirit. So did you hear what he said? He said there is no condemnation for those who follow Christ.

None.

But if we're honest. Do you always feel that way, even though the Bible says that's true? I sometimes don't know if it feels that way for me. And maybe that's the case for you. And sometimes I just still feel like, oh man, what's wrong with me?

Probably some of you walked in today carrying some baggage of guilt and shame stuff you did years ago. I don't know about you, but some of us hear voices of shame that whisper and maybe even shout at us. Things like, you're not enough. You're just not enough. You're a failure.

You're a loser. Look at you. You did it again. You'll never change. God doesn't love you.

He's mad at you. He's frustrated with you. And sometimes that voice can be louder than the voice of God who calls us his beloved. Paul wrestled with that. Paul wrestled with that.

Listen to some of the things he says in Romans 7. These are some excerpts from Romans 7. The trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. And I know that nothing good lives in me that is in my Sinful nature.

I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I'm not really the one doing wrong. It is the sin living in me that does it.

Oh, what a miserable person I am. Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

Thank God. The answer is Jesus Christ, our Lord. Anybody identify with what he said there? He wrestled with the same things that we wrestle with. And he says emphatically, Jesus is the answer to our guilt and shame.

If we are in Christ, then the words of Romans 8:1:4 are powerful words about our freedom. We need to see them. We need to hear them, we need to believe them. We need to trust them. And we need to remember them.

We need to remember them. Paul says there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. He doesn't say there is less condemnation. He doesn't say it's reduced condemnation. He says there's no condemnation.

None. So if you're in Christ, imagine you're in a courtroom. The gavel goes down hard. Bang. And the verdict is announced.

Not guilty. Not guilty. Case closed. That's it. And there's no need to reopen the case.

No need to reopen. No need to replay the failures that we've all experienced. No need to see those videos. No need to hear those audio clips of stupid things we said. No need to go back to court.

We have been acquitted. No condemnation. None. But here's our problem. I'm surely not the only one.

But sometimes I go back into the courtroom and I retry the case a little bit. And sometimes we walk around like, I'm condemned. I'm a condemned prisoner. And walk around like that instead of being free. Beloved children of God.

That's where Romans 8 calls out to us and reminds us, stop listening to that voice of shame. Stop replaying those videos. Stop replaying those audio clips. Start believing God's verdict. No condemnation.

Paul says we've been set free from the vicious trap of trying to relate to God based on our performance. We cannot fix ourselves. We just can't. Just can't do it. We cannot be enough.

We cannot do enough. We cannot save ourselves. But here's the thing. God can. And he did.

And he does. And he did it through Jesus. And that's what we need to know. When we know that we're in a position to really take that first step, which says, we admitted we were powerless over our addictions, our brokenness and sinful patterns, that our lives had become unmanageable. That's where we start.

I just can't fix myself. That's Romans 8:3 in recovery language. The law, which was good and right, the Ten Commandments and all those things are perfect, but they're powerless to save us because it requires perfection on our part. And I don't have that ability. I can't keep it perfectly.

I am powerless to do so. Freedom starts when I stop pretending that I can. When I stop pretending I can fix myself. I just can't do it. But God can.

And Paul says God did it by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. So where we failed, Jesus succeeded. Where we were condemned, Jesus was condemned in our place. That's why step two is so crucial. We came to believe that God is the one whose power can fully restore us.

You can't. I can't, but God can. That's the gospel. That's the good news of Jesus Christ. And all of this leads to new way of living.

We say we want to live a different way. God has set us free. We have a new identity. I am a beloved son of God. You're a beloved daughter of God.

We're beloved children of God. We've been forgiven, and we're constantly forgiven by the blood of Jesus. And so it's kind of like a windshield wiper. If you read First John, Chapter one, as we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus continually cleanses our sin. As rain comes on a windshield, the windshield wiper just takes it away.

As I continue to make missteps, continue to sin, the blood of Jesus continually cleanses me as I'm trying to walk in his light. It's a beautiful thing to think about. So we have a new status. No condemnation. We are never sinless, but we can sin less.

Not sinless, but sinless. Because in our freedom, we no longer follow our sinful nature, he says, but instead we follow the Spirit. We receive the Spirit of God. Peter says when we're baptized, we're given the gift of the Spirit. First Corinthians 12:13 says, we're baptized by one Spirit and we receive the Spirit.

The Spirit of God. He is a bit mysterious, but we know what he does. He lives within us, inside us. And his goal is to transform us, to make us look like Jesus. 2nd Corinthians 3:18.

And really, when you think about it, Galatians 5 talks about the fruit of the Spirit, which to me like the characteristics of Christ. So the Spirit is given to us and it's a long, ongoing, lifelong process of making us more like Jesus. We produce fruit. And that fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness and self control. These things become more of who we are.

So we're not only forgiven, but we're also set free to live differently. And this is why step three says we decided to trust God with our lives and wills by following Him. The Gospel doesn't just change our status, it changes our practice, our daily practice. So steps four and five, and we're not going past five, so don't worry. Steps four and five are so powerful.

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, just laid it all out there. And then step five, we admit it to God, we admit it to ourselves, and we tell another person just what it is, how we are, what our sins are. When we confess, we're not recondemned. We're actually living in the freedom of no condemnation. Confession is not about shame.

It's about walking in the Spirit and enjoying freedom. So if you belong Jesus, God does not condemn you. And he won't. He won't condemn you. Your guilt and your shame no longer define you.

You're forgiven and free. God's Spirit brings real freedom and true life. Life that is abundant with peace, joy and confidence, that just kind of morphs into eternal life as we pass through the door of death. Sin and death used to be our master, but the Spirit breaks us free from that power. We're not stuck anymore.

We can live differently. Rules and willpower will not save us. Just can't do it. You're just too weak. I'm too weak to do it.

We couldn't save ourselves, but Jesus took our place. Now we're forgiven. Free from guilt, empowered by the Spirit to live a new life. So we're going to take communion a little bit. If you haven't got one of these little guys, we'll get somebody here in a minute to bring one to you.

Let me just stop a minute to give a little practical thing. I don't like these things. There are two little tabs. If you just play with a little bit, there's a real thin little tab. And if you pull that off, there's a little piece of bread.

They call it bread. It's like Styrofoam, honestly. And then you take the next tab and be careful because that's where the juice is. And so in just A minute. We'll take that.

But I wanted to go ahead and give you a heads up about that. So communion is a powerful reminder of our new life in Christ. And so as we prepare to receive or take communion this morning, I want you to drink in a couple more words here from Paul, straight from the heart of God, written down by Paul. The first One is Romans 3:23 25.

Everyone has sinned. We all fall short of God's glorious standard, yet God in His grace, freely makes us right in his sight. You can't do it. But he did. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.

For God presented Jesus as a sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding his blood. And then 2nd Corinthians 5:21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. So this morning we have the opportunity to commune with Christ.

He loves you. I know personally there are challenges to that idea every once in a while. That's the voice of Satan. Jesus loves you. He understands you better than you understand yourself.

He knows every fault and every flaw. He knows everything about you. And he loves you more than you know. And he wants you to remember as you take this bread, he wants you to remember that he came to identify with us. He had a body and this bread represents his body.

He was tempted and tried, just as we are in every way, it says, but he didn't sin. And so that positions him to become this perfect sacrifice for our sins. But even though he didn't sin, he understands our hurts, he understands our habits. He understands our hang ups. He understands us and forgives us by his grace.

As we take the cup, the juice, we remember how he forgives. It's through the shedding of his blood. Leviticus 17:11 says, the life is in the blood. So when you think about that, Jesus pours out his blood. He pours out his life as a sacrifice for ours, giving his life for ours.

The condemnation that should be ours was absorbed by Him. And because of this, we don't need to condemn ourselves. We admit we're powerless and we must fully rely upon God, the grace and forgiveness, the mercy. AA has an expression, let go and let God. It's very, very biblical.

So you're not your label. You're not the label you put on yourself. You're not the label that somebody else has put on you. You're not that you're not your failure. You're not condemned.

You're not condemned. I think for me, the really hard part is believing that every day, all the time. And so as we commune this morning, let's just ask Jesus to help us really believe that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. So let me pray. Father, we thank you for such a wonderful thing to consider.

Take a deep breath and sigh a sigh of relief that we're not condemned. Because we know. We know how we are. We know that we make mistakes, we

sin, we do things we shouldn't do. We do things that we don't want to do.

We don't do the things we know we should. And yet you love us and forgive us. You have put a status on our heads of no condemnation. And we've been clothed with Christ. And when you see us, you see him.

And we are your beloved children. We thank you for that. We thank you for this bread. We thank you for this cup that reminds us of the body and the blood of Jesus. So as we drink this morning and as we eat, help us to remember there is no condemnation.

Lord, help us to believe that we believe. But help us to believe stronger and better. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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