



## Getting Free of Counterfeit Faith

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Alright, good morning, church! It's so good to get to be here. I want to ask everyone by round of applause how many are glad that Jesus is enough? How many are glad for that, that He changes lives and that He's more than enough? It's oh so good.

Well, my name is Dave, everyone say "hi, Dave" and I'm glad to get to be back. I have to say this is my fifth time to be with you and so I kind of feel like, I don't feel like a guest speaker anymore. I feel more like a family member, honorary member, so thank you. I love you guys and it means a lot, man. This church means a lot to me.

As you know, I've spent all last week here, I've spoken thirteen times this week since I've been here and I started out with Vintage, with fifteen college students pray to receive Christ on Tuesday night which is amazing. It's so, so cool, so proud of what Wes is doing. And then I was with the students the next night and Joe is doing an incredible job and his new staff. They had seven high-schoolers pray to receive Christ on Wednesday night which is very, very cool. I did a singles kind of Valentine's banquet, which you know, if you're celebrating Valentine's

with me you've kind of hit rock-bottom. And, but, you know, what can I say and I was with the Golden Eagles and had great fun. And yesterday Pastor Jerry and I did a Communications Seminar, and we had almost three hundred people show up for that, and so that was an incredible, incredible time yesterday. We did a seminar with him before, that's a lot of speaking.

But it's been great, great fun and so I'm so glad I get to be back and I'm so excited at what we're going to look at this morning, and what we're going to look at is a little subtle but I have to say that in twenty-five years of so of traveling and speaking there's been you know a handful of churches that I've really kind of been connected with like I am here at The Chapel where I go back on a regular basis and see the same people or see new people and that kind of stuff.

So, one of those was in Nebraska and I kind of did the same thing there. I stayed all week, I spoke with different groups within the church and it was very, very cool, but the only group I really haven't spoken to here or really anywhere are children. Not like middle-schoolers, I've spoken to middle-schoolers but like whatever age they are when they're that high. I'm so single I don't know. But anyway, children. Where are my parents at by a show of hands, where are my parents at? Any grandparents? Parents, okay. Listen, you have my greatest respect, I don't know anything about raising kids or I don't have anything critical to say about parenting, but I got an email from the children's pastor at this church in Nebraska and she said since you're going to be speaking at the 'big church', she called it 'big church'. Big church, kids, alright. This is where

they like pull the kids out and they have them come down front and the pastor does like a Sunday school, like a little Bible study lesson. So she said since you're going to be speaking in big church will you do our children's sermon, right?

Now, you know I'm single and I'm an only child, I don't know anything about kids and I know that I don't know. I'm not going to pretend I know. The only thing I really know about little kids is that when they walk they look like little drunk people. And when they ask for food they look like drunk homeless people, and that's really all I know. That's about it and I'm going to show you my entire skill-set with kids. I'm going to show you all I know, ready? "Hello," after that I'm out, that's it. That's all I know. I'm out of material after that and so this children's pastor said to me "since you're going to be speaking in big church, will you do our children's sermon?" I couldn't just email her back and go "let me pray about that, no" and that seemed a little abrupt. So I sent her an email and I said "I would love to do your children's sermon and enclosed in the email you'll find the titles of the children's sermons that I have available. You just pick the one you want me to do and I'll do it." Alright, and so I sent her this email with these children's sermon titles and asked her to pick the title, right? And so I brought the email with me this morning because I want to read the children's sermon titles to you. This is reasons why I should never do children's ministry or write children's book, right? So you know, pick the one you want and I'll be happy to do which ever one you feel suits the congregation best. So, here are the titles that I sent her: Left behind, the kid's guide to hitch-hiking; I really

did send this, I'm not making this up. This is true, alright? Curious George and the high-voltage fence; All cats go to hell and other songs for Sunday School, sorry cat lovers, sorry; Strangers have the best candy, come on, that's my personal favorite; Things rich kids have that you never will; and Pop goes the hamster and other micro-wave games. And she just wrote back an email that said "never mind" and I was like...it's not so much whether you say no, it's all in how you say it. So, right, like you don't have to convince me of my weakness when it comes to communicating to children. I know it, I see it, I get it. No one has to preach me a sermon or take me to counseling, I know any good at it.

But this morning I want us to look at something that's much more subtle, right. It's easy for us to spot things that we're familiar with about ourselves or where we're kind of familiar with our weaknesses or even our strengths but yet there's something that can be in a person's life that is much more subtle, right. And it's this thing I want us to look at this morning. It's not easily seen, right? It's called counterfeit faith and counterfeit faith passes for Christianity in the lives of many people. But it produces a lot of frustration. It's the reason why some of us got burned in church and maybe you left early on in your past and you're like, you dropped out in your twenties and this is kind of your re-entry point. You're trying to figure it out. It's the reason why some people get frustrated with God and they see it as an unfair system. It's been this counterfeit faith that for a lot of people it's produced a lot of angst and a lot of anxiety and a lot of frustration and it's counterfeit. It's not real, it's not the real thing, right? This counterfeit faith, it looks like Christianity,

it feels like Christianity but it doesn't produce anything life-giving and yet many people have put their life, I think unknowingly on this track as a means to try to reach God, right? Counterfeit Christianity, another term for that is called religion, right?

Now when I say religion, I'm not talking about churches or denominations. Religion is a mindset, right? It's the way in which we think about how we're going to know God, right? So today when we look at this thing called religion that passes many times for Christianity and that a lot of people drift over into this religious track, right, I'm not talking about churches and denominations and all that kind of stuff, the spirit of religion is up here in our minds. It's the way in which we think about ourselves, it's the way in which we think about our relationship with God, right? Let me give you a working definition for word religion, right? Religion is always our attempt to reach God. Right? All religions, all religious effort is mankind's attempt to be good enough, long enough to work their way up in to the presence of God, right? Religion always tries to earn its way in and earn its way up, Christianity is about God getting into us through Jesus. The motion is totally different, right?

On the Christianity side, God takes the first step, Jesus breaks into human history, lives a perfect life, dies on a cross for all our sins, scars and struggles and secrets. He beats death, He comes back to life so that any person who opens their life to Him can receive and to experience the peace and the presence of Jesus, right? That motion is totally different. Religion, counterfeit faith on this side is always concerned with earning and proving and trying, you see it? And so the question of

the morning is how would you know if your life has drifted over on that track? So, with some people it's the only thing they've ever known. Some people grew up in that system. Some people have parents and grandparents that told them this is what you do in order to get to God and they just kind of ended up there, right? Some of us drifted over there unknowingly because we just thought well maybe I need to do some more stuff to try to get in with God, right?

So how would someone know if they drifted over into counterfeit faith, right? What would be the signs of somebody that is living on that track and this is what Paul's taking on, this is what brings us to our text today in Romans chapter 8. Paul is writing this series of letters to this group of believers in Rome and that city was turbo-charged with religious ideas, right? Everywhere they turned there was a spirit and the presence of religion and so Paul writes these letters to let these believers know how deep and how rich and how buoyant their faith is, right? And so when we get to this part of the letter, and it's now called chapter 8, it wasn't originally a chapter, when we get to this part of the letter, right, Paul is taking on this system of counterfeit faith, right? So as we read these verses this morning, every time you hear the word "law" or the word "flesh", right, Paul's talking about the system of religion, right. The way in which people think about how they're going to reach God. It's this religious mind-set, this religious mentality and so this is a little more subtle, right? You see, I get it. I don't know anything about kids and I get it but there's been different times in my life where I've drifted over into this mind-set, this way of thinking.

So how would you know? What would be the signs of someone who's put their life on a religious track? Now, I'm a point guy, so when you came in this morning you should have gotten one of these jumbo bulletins right here and on the back there's a place to write and so I'm going to give us four things that we need to know about dismantling counterfeit faith and getting out of counterfeit faith in our life and I'm also a point guy because it keeps me on track.

I'm a bit-short attention span. Do we have anybody here that's short-attention span, anybody? That's my fan base right there, alright. And I get it, right. I could click off at any moment, I'm not sure if I officially have ADD, I have ADDHD. Which means I can't pay attention but I do it in high definition. And so I have great clarity about what I'm distracted about. Or I have ADOS which is Attention Deficit, Oh Shiny! Like I can click off at any moment and so it doesn't take, like just for a moment during worship I was mystified why there was a guy on the screen in white jeans playing guitars but he wasn't on the stage. It frightened me, I was like am I seeing something, did I not get enough sleep? Anyway, so I get it, they're in the other room.

Alright, anyway, so do you see what I'm saying, right. So the points keep us all on track. So, here are the signs. What would we look for, right? What would we look for? Number one, someone who has put their life on this system is always focused on the score. In other words they have a score-card mentality. Now we're picking the verse up in mid-thought, right, but just look at it here. Now look at this, look at, if you don't have a Bible look at the screen, right? "So that" see the first line "So that the

requirement of the Law" now at the time Paul is writing this letter the religious system of the day in Rome had 613 commands, 248 mandates and 365 sacrifices. They had a score-card that had nearly 1,300 things on it. And the system of Paul's day said you had to do every single one in perfect order completely correct and if you missed one you were out, right. It was total pass/fail, like if you wanted to get in, get to know God, you had to keep all of these different mandates and commandments and ordinances, right? You had to do all of them in order if you missed one you were out. They had a score-card mentality. People put their life in that system like okay, I got to make sure I do all these and I've got to make sure I do the sacrifice and the mandate so that God will love me. Right. This is that system of thinking, right. Someone who has put their life on a religious track says God will love me if I do enough good things, right. God loves me because I do good things, right. If I do enough good things then that's going to make God love me more, right. That's the mentality.

You ever thought that to yourself? You're like, listen. I know it's all about Jesus but it's kind of a little bit about me, alright. I'm here to help God out a little bit and so we tend to think man, if I do enough religious stuff and enough holy stuff that that will make God love me even more, right. And I have to say many people have grown up with score cards. I did, I mean I'm from Oklahoma which is the buckle of the Bible belt. Like it's conservative, there's a lot of you know, screaming, sweating preacher guys that yell and sweat and burst into flames which is really the best part of the sermon and you know, and so I had a score card



growing up. Like where we had small group and Sunday school class they had a poster board on the wall that had the names of everybody in my class and every time we did something good we got a gold star. Every time I brought my Bible to church I got a gold star. Every time I showed up I got a gold star. If I showed up enough Sundays in a row and didn't miss one I got a pin for perfect attendance. I got a pin, right, says perfect attendance. I was like God must really be pleased with me, right? Every time I brought my little tithe, I brought my little dollar and gave it to God I got a gold star. Like if you rolled into the class where I did Bible study and you looked at my name there'd be my name with a row of gold stars. I'm like, I was a full-on five star Christian. I was, I had it going on, right. And I grew up believing that God loved me because I did all those things.

And you know what happens for a lot of us? That's what we do. We start thinking, hey, why wouldn't God love me, right? I'm here, I'm a decent person, I don't do nearly as much bad stuff as the people I work with or go to school with. Why, I mean of course, and for a lot of people they kind of get a little ego stroke off their score card. They kind of prop themselves up emotionally. They feel good, right. They're like, well of course, surely God's pleased with me, because I'm doing all these things, right. I'm doing good things for people. But here's the problem with all score cards. Every religion on the planet has a score card. Every religion has a score card, has a way of determining whether you and I get in, right. For some religions it's not wearing makeup, but looking homely and making your own clothes and making your own candles and living

in a compound, right. For other religions it's putting your roll of quarters in your pocket, waiting for some alien spaceship to pick you up. For other religions it's riding a bike for a year to get your own planet. I mean every religion kind of has a way in which it determines whether we're good enough. But here's the problem with all score-cards. All score-cards are created by people. They're all created by people. And what happens if we spend our whole life punching a score-card, checking off boxes, keeping track of all the good things we're doing and we get to the end of our life and realize that the score-card's wrong.

And that's not what God required at all. What happens if we get to the end of our life and realize that we've done all this up and God wasn't interested or looking for any of that? And yet this is so subtle. We tend to keep this score-card inside of our head and every time we do something good we check it off. You see it? Someone has put their life on this religious track. Always has a score-card. They're always focused on how they're doing, right? Not only that, but number two. The second sign is that they're always fueled by self-effort, alright. Fueled by self-effort. Now look at this, ready? Look at where this comes from. Now watch this. Now look at verse 5, now look at this. "For those who are according to the flesh" right, that old system of religion, that word flesh, he's talking about that old system of religion. "For those who are according to the flesh," look at this. "Set their minds on the things of the system", right. In other words, even the most religious person would admit that they got things wrong with it, right? Even the most religious person would say hey, I'm not perfect. I got some things and they say

that I've got to clean up, right. This sign, self-effort says I know I'm not perfect but God I'm going to get my life together and you're going to be a lot more pleased with me, right.

Now I know I've got some things in my life that I, you probably don't approve of, but once I clean it up, once I get it straight, then you're really going to, I know you love me now, but you're going to think a whole lot more of me once I do it. And so that's self-effort, right? That mentality says I know I'm not perfect but I'm going to clean it up. I know it's not the way it should be but I'm going to make it right. Right? Someone has put their life on a religious track is always fueled by their own self-effort. Right. In other words, they take the responsibility of change upon themselves. They're like, I'm going to do this, right. Now here's why this is such a big deal this morning. Because self-effort comes off as super-spirituality, right. Self-effort man, you know, it sounds spiritual but it's really just self-effort.

Let me give you examples of what I mean. Let me give you some examples of self-effort, right. For instance, self-effort says well, you know, I come to church to worship. People say you know, I come to church to worship. Well congratulations, right. But haven't we all learned by now, that all of life is an act of worship? Right. Isn't all of our life a response of worship, how we treat our spouse, and how we go to school and take tests and pay our bills, how we drive through traffic, right? Sorry, too close to home. Sorry, move on, right?

You know what I'm saying, isn't all I'm saying all of our life supposed to be an expression of worship but if counterfeit faith has it's way you know what it does? It takes something that's fluid and passionate like worship and reduces it to something that we do and at a certain place one time a week, right? All this should be is an overflow of what we've been doing all week. Living in a spirit of worship so that we roll in here and we say God, I've already worshiped you, I've already worshiped you this week, I'm just going to kind of let it flow. But if religion has it's way it makes us think hey, I've come to church to worship and I'm here and God's happy with that. See how subtle that is? It's self-effort, right.

Here's another one. Well, you know, I'm very involved in church. I've heard that my whole life. Do you know what I've discovered? I've spoken in 2,500 churches in my lifetime. You know what I've discovered? That a lot of people go to church and they don't really know why they're there. They've just been told they should go. I bet some of us grew up like that. Somebody in your past said to you God's watching you. You'd better get yourself to church. Right? And so you're like, all right. I'm going. And so all over you know, our country we've got people that are sitting in churches and they don't really know why they're there. They're just there because someone told them they should be and it's on the score card. But no real understanding of the church being the government of God, the place in which He distributes His light into the city and the community and the world. They're just there. It sounds spiritual, right? Just say, of course I go to church, right? But it's self-effort, they're just showing up because someone told them to.

Here's another one. Well, you know, Sunday's are sacred. All right. Alright, now, just by a show of hands how many people do we have here that you grew up in a church-going family, like you grew up, it doesn't matter what denomination, you just grew up, okay, okay. Now listen, you think back to what it was like with your family getting ready to go to church. Listen to the room, right? Everyone of you all know that getting ready to go to church is the least sacred day of the week. Right? You remember your household, right? You remember trying to get the family ready for church. Right? Your mom's in the kitchen frantically making breakfast to try to get everyone fed, you're like we need to eat, we're going to be late, we need to go. Dad's in the LazyBoy in front of ESPN classics like zoning out, your brother's in the hallway with a sock and no shoe and another brother's in the bedroom re-enacting Lord of the Flies, right? It's total chaos, right? All of a sudden all of the kids turn into the four horsemen of the apocalypse, you've got disease and pestilence and warfare riding through your house and it's total chaos, right. You've got someone going I don't know where my shoe is, how can you not now where your shoe is, right. I don't know where my Bible is, you don't know where your Bible is? You're going to need your shoe and your Bible. We're going to be late, go find your Bible, go find your shoe, go find it right now, I'm not going to hear one more time, go get it, right and everyone kind of crams down food and you're like we're going to be late, just get your Bible, you can put your shoe on in the car, let's go, right. And you're going to shove everybody out the door and you open up the minivan, shove them all in, you're like come on, we're going to be late, right and it's just that time, just at that time of morning you've

picked to torment your brother. And you take your finger and you start poking on his shoulder. You find that one spot there, right there. You start poking on it, right. And he says stop poking me and you just keep doing it more, right? Just trying to provoke your brother. He's like stop poking me, right and you just keep doing it and your dad goes stop poking your brother. And you pull your finger away and go I'm not poking you, I'm not poking you. He's like I know you're not poking but I can feel the death beat coming out of your finger, stop pointing at me, right. Stop pointing at me and your Dad's like stop pointing at your brother, just cut it out, right? And you just keep doing it, pointing and poking, pointing and poking and dad slams on the brake and says listen you two, you're going to see Jesus before we get to church if you don't settle down. And the minivan turns into WWE smack down and everybody's like at each other. And you wheel into the parking lot and you find a parking place and you're like get out, get your Bible, take your Bible with you, right? I mean you get into the church doors, you walk through the doorways of the church and it's "Good Morning". Sundays are sacred. We came to worship. I mean everybody in this house, you know that that's true. I mean that is the laughter and the applause of truth, right? I mean he is speaking truth, that's exactly right.

Some of you lived that this morning, right? That wasn't your past, that happened just two hours ago. You're like, you're like I just barely got here, I'm so angry I've got to take some Zoloft and then I'll be ready to worship. Right? I mean, right? How does he know I'm on drugs. What is he, a prophet? Maybe. Anyway, but here's the deal, right?

Let me ask you a question about that whole thing. How is it that we can almost kill each other on the way to church, right and then walk onto the church property and then somehow act spiritual. How is it we can do that? You know what that is? That's self-effort. That all, that's not Christianity. That's just knowing how to behave based on the room we're in. Right? That's self-effort, that's not faith. That's just knowing how to act based on where we are. And some of us, you learned this growing up because you grew up in a family of people that were driven by self-effort, right. They would live one way at work and they had another kind of lifestyle on the week-end, right. They used one set of words you know, in traffic and then they come to church, right and kind of flip on a God's switch and it's just praise the Lord we came to worship and go to Bible study and someone says what's the answer to the question, you're like "Jesus" and all right it's always the answer, how could it not be, how could that ever be wrong, and we sing some songs, blessing and peace be unto you also, right and then when we get done, right we leave and turn the God switch off and we go back to our week and fight people at work and fight people in traffic and argue with our family and then man, Sunday comes along and we drive back to the church property and flip on the God switch. That's all just self-effort. That's not Christianity. That's just acting.

But for a lot of people they mistook it for the real thing. They thought this is what it is, right? Someone always told me I've got to do good things for God and man I've got to get my life together and so I'm not perfect but I know how to act perfect. Right? I don't have it all together

but I can come off like I do. And that's the subtlety of self-effort and this is Paul's point. That somebody has put their life on this religious track, always just focused on the score, always fueled by self-effort.

And number three, if you're taking notes, it produces fatal success. Fatal success, and I want to read this verse, let me just read it out loud and tell me if this doesn't sound fatal. Look at this: "For the mind set on the flesh is death", does that sound fatal to anyone else but me? Right. Not like sort of okay, not like produces a little change, but death, right? This is Paul saying this whole system of religion, this mindset that says if I'm good enough long enough God will love me, if I clean my life up a little bit more then God will be please with me a little bit more. He's saying that whole system is a dead end. It doesn't produce anything life-giving, it doesn't take us any closer into the presence of God, it's death. It's fatal success, fatal success, right?

If you're taking notes, let me give you what I call the four fatal successes, living your life on this track of counterfeit faith. a) It makes people mean-spirited. You can always tell when you get around someone who's living on this track because they're super-judgmental. They're very condemning. Like I do this for a living, I'm a professional Christian. This is what I do. I travel around and talk about God. And yet I've met some religious people in my day that made me want to quit the ministry. Because they were so self-righteous, so judgmental, right? They look down on everybody like you know, their sin was looking down on people who look down on people, you know what I'm saying. You know, they were like the self-appointed holy spirit of everybody else's life and



I'd be willing to bet in a crowd this size some of us in our past, you've got hurt by somebody like that. Maybe when you were a high-school student or a college student. You got hurt by someone who was mean-spirited and you thought that was Jesus and you've kind of been out of church until just a few years ago. Because some of us know what it's like to have been hurt by that and I don't particularly get along with those people. I don't like conflict, right, but I just say in my conversation with religious people they always say the same thing. Well, listen, I'm just trying to do what's Biblical. I'm just trying to keep everyone right. They're like the self-appointed referee of everybody else's life and I'm like you know, that's really the role of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's job is to comfort and to guide and convict and to teach. That's really the job of the Holy Spirit and how come it's your job. And like listen, I'm just trying to be correct. I'm just trying to keep everyone right. And do you know what happens to those people? They end up driving everyone around them away from them. Nobody can stand it. No one can live up to that standard. And they drive everyone around away from them including God.

Listen to this verse. Listen, tell me, listen to what this says. Verse 7: "Because the mind is set on the flesh it is hostile toward God because it does not subject itself to the Law of God for it is not even able to do so." Verse 8. Listen to this: "For those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Even God goes "that's too religious for me." Even God goes "I'm out, I can't deal with that." Right? That hostility of this track says God, I got it. I'm going to change. I'm going to get it together. I'll manage this."

And the response is, even God goes, man, that's not what I'm about. See it? Fatal success. It makes people mean-spirited. Then b) marginal progress. On a religious track you can gain a little ground. If you've got enough self-control and self-discipline you can kind of make some changes and hold onto it, but eventually you lose it. Whatever ground you gain you also lose. It produces marginal progress. c) mini-secrets. people that grew up in the system always have a lot of secrets because they've been taught by the system that if you ever get honest you're going to get hurt, so they don't ever let anybody in.

Have you ever met someone, that they claim to be a believer but they're super-fake? Do you know why that is? It's not because of the Bible or Jesus or the Holy Spirit, it's because they've been growing up in a system that has taught them not to ever be transparent. So they learn how to how wear a mask like they're at a Halloween party or if you're religious, a harvest festival, alright, which is the Christian Halloween. And so you can come dressed as a ghost but it has to be the Holy Ghost, alright? So anyway, we learn how to wear a little mask to keep our guard up. That's a fatal success of the system, right?

And then d) major scars. People that grow up in the system always have a lot of scars. I've started twelve citywide Bible studies for young adults and young professionals, and those Bible studies were made up of people that were either searching for Jesus and just trying to figure out where He fits in or they were made up of people that had a terrible experience with religion and church and all that stuff and they left it,

you know, and their life blew into pieces and they came back, they're coming back to the Bible study to try to give Jesus another chance, right.

And I could always tell when I got around those people that had been hurt by this system of counterfeit faith because they always had stories. I would say, did you grow up in church? Oh, yeah, let me tell you about my...and they always sounded like footage off of Deacons Gone Wild, right? They would say like crazy staff stories, see the pastor overeat at Golden Corral and not tip. And I mean there's all this - everyone had ..... And I would say to them, how long ago did that happen? And they were like, 15 years ago. I was like, that happened to you 15 years ago? And they're still scarred by it? This is what this system produces. A lot of secrets, a lot of scars, a lot of struggles. And the system wants us to think that we fail at it because it's out fault. Some people go, hey, I'm not religious and I can't do that. And they just take themselves out altogether. O.k. - I can't keep the rules. I can't read that big giant book and I can't do it. The system is set up to make us think that it's our fault that we failed. But it's not your fault - the system is rigged so that nobody wins. Nobody ever wins in that system. That's Paul's point. It's a dead end. Nobody sort of wins, kind of places - it's always a dead end.

And so you know what we do out of frustration we start to make God promises. God, I promise I'm going to try harder. I'm going to read it more. God just give me one more chance. I'm going to get it together. I bet we've got some people this morning that that's your deal. You're like, God, I know, I know I screwed up but this time's going to be different. And we keep making promises. Listen - if making promises to God that

we're going to change was the answer, why hasn't it worked the first 1,000 times we've done it? We keep having to do it, right? O.k., you can clap for that. That's good, right? Because it's not the answer. Right? You can't promise your way into life change and to transformation. And yet some of us are stuck in this and we're like, this is all we know. We keep changing our behavior and making more promises and gaining a little ground and losing it.

You see this is so subtle but these two paths parallel each other - the path of counterfeit faith and the path of Christianity parallel each other but they're worlds apart. Let me just do a comparison. Right? If you're taking notes. Right? Counterfeit faith: always focused on the score. Christianity is focused on Jesus. Counterfeit faith: fueled by self-effort. Christianity: fueled by the life of the Spirit living within us. Counterfeit faith: produces fatal success. Christianity produces the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience. All the things that we could never generate on our own. Right? Counterfeit faith always tries to to fix itself with a bunch of promises. Christianity fixes itself with surrender. God, I give up my right to try to fix my own life and I give that right to you. These two tracks are parallel but their worlds apart. And so what then are we to do? What do we do about this? What if you take notes this morning and you say, and you've described me? That's what I've been doing. I've been keeping a list and trying to change my life making God a bunch of promises and trying harder and I've been trying to change the outside of my life. What then are we to do to get up out of this track? This is not it and this is.

How do we get from here to here? This is what Paul's ramping up to. If you've got your Bible or you want to look at the screen, look at this. This is verse 1 of Romans 8. Look at this. Therefore there is no no condemnation. Right? Lots of condemnation on this counterfeit Christianity track. Every time you fail, man, you feel like God's disappointed in you and He's like, you've let me down, you've really broken my heart. Could you - your life's such a mess, right? But now - look at this - now there is no condemnation. God's not the One condemning you. It's the spirit of religion. It's the system, this way in which we think, right? There's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Right? When I put my life in Jesus and I become free from this whole track. Look at this - for the law of the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus has set you free from this old system of counterfeit faith. That's what the law means, right? From the old system of sin and death - of counterfeit faith.

In other words, God has done something on our behalf that we can't do with our lists and self-effort. God has done something on our behalf that our fatal success could never generate on the inside of us. Look at this - for what the law could not do - right? The law could make you feel bad, right? You could hold up those 1300 things and go I'm terrible, right? I didn't even get one out of those 1300. Right? The law could condemn you. It could make you feel bad but it could never produce lasting change. Right? For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the old system - look at this.

Look at this. God did. God did. God did. God did something on our behalf that we couldn't do for ourselves. Look at this. Look what He did. By sending His own Son - that's Jesus - by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh - look at this: as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh. Listen the law said you have to be perfect or you're out. And so Jesus breaks into human history and lives a perfect life, sin free and error free. The law said if you screw up you had to pay for your own sin. There was a whole system of sacrifices and things that you did to atone for your own sin. The law said if you screw up you've got to take care of it yourself. But Jesus broke into this world and lived a perfect life and died on the cross and took on all of our shame, our secrets, our scars, our struggles, all of our sin. He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf and the Bible says that He becomes the final offering - that we no longer need to make up for our struggles and try to pay it off because Jesus paid for it on the cross. And law said if you fail you don't have any option. It's over for you. You've failed and you're out. And Jesus - he dies on a cross, they place Him in a tomb. He's back to life three days later. He beats physical death and He beats spiritual death and he ascends to be seated at the right hand of God and at that point He pours out His Holy Spirit and where the law said you didn't have any hope the Spirit of Jesus releases His Spirit to anybody who will call on Him and we're given a new life and another chance. This is the freeing spirit of Christianity. This is the freeing spirit of Christianity. It's that the lists are dead. The list has been atoned and paid for. When God wanted us to know that He loves us, He didn't send a list. He sent His Son. And if we're going to experience life as God meant it to be, and a

journey of faith as God meant it to be, our only hope of getting off this track and getting over here is to quit trying and start trusting. I've got to quit trying to earn and prove and pay off and now you've got to start trusting that Jesus is enough.

Give me Jesus. Give me Jesus. He satisfies my soul. He's more than enough. I loved those songs today. Right? I have to quit trying to do it myself and to start trusting what He's done. Religion says I've got to do. Christianity says it's all been done. That's the difference. You see every person that followed Jesus in Scripture had to lose their religion to do it. Disciples had to lose these religion to do it. Paul, the most religious man, by his own confession, right? Memorized the Torah, kept all the laws, had to lose his religion in order to follow after Jesus. So we have to lose this mentality of trying, earning, approving and to say, listen, I can't do enough to ever change my life but Jesus has done it all. My doings not enough but what Jesus has done is more than enough.

Now I have to say this is personal to me because I grew up in a religious system. It's all I knew. I came by it honestly. There wasn't any deception in my heart. It's the only thing I knew. My scorecards - I went to a Christian high school, a Christian college. I took seminary. I've been in ministry for most of my life. I've been in this system and I'm saying this is personal to me because I feel like in a lot of ways I'm a Pharisee in recovery. I don't really know if they had like, Pharisee AA where you get up and go, Hello, I'm Dave. I'm a Pharisee and I've been Pharisee clean for 6 months. Thank you for my chip. And...I don't know. Maybe there should be something like that. You know what brought me out of it? It

wasn't understanding theology or having some deep Bible study. You know what did it for me? My first Bible study I ever started in Houston, Texas was full of broken adults. I don't know how it happened but they showed up. People that were 23/24 already divorced. People in their mid 20's/early 30's that had been captured by addictions of different kind. And they would come to my Bible study. I'm Bible guy, you know, Bible study guy, you know. And they would come to me afterwards and go what am I supposed to do with all this wreckage in my life? I lost my marriage. My life's out of control. I got fired because of the stuff that I'm addicted to. And they would say to me what am I supposed to do about this? Do you know what my answer was? Well, you just need to tell God you're sorry. Why don't you just tell God you're sorry and just get your life clean. And I remember hearing that come out of my head and I thought that didn't sound like the Jesus that I read in the gospels.

I don't know if you remember the story of the man who lived among the tombs that was demon possessed and they had chained him up and he runs out of the grave yard towards Jesus. Nowhere in that story does Jesus say o.k., I'm going to set you free but before I do, I need you to keep this scorecard.. Would you do that? Do these eight things and I'll be able to work with you. Nowhere in Jesus' ministry did He ever say, before I set you free, before I heal your sickness, what I first need you to do is clean your life up. Go ahead and get clean and then let me see that you really mean it. Even when people in Scripture didn't believe Jesus, he would say to them, that's o.k. You don't need to have faith. I'm just going to use mine on your behalf. And I remember hearing me say you



just got to snap out of it. And I thought to myself that didn't sound like the Jesus that I read about in the gospels and this whole religious track began to unravel. I'd been doing all the right things but for all the wrong reasons. I thought it was going to improve my relationship with God. I thought it was going to put me in better standing. And listen, when you give your life to Christ you can't be more in Jesus. You just are.

And I finally figured out what God wanted from me. He didn't want my list. He did want my self-effort. He didn't want my mask or all this stuff that I'd pretended to be. You know what He wanted? This right here. He wanted me to come to him like this glass. Open and empty. He wanted me just to dump out my lists, dump out all my religious behavior, dump out all my self righteousness, dump out all my little thinking I'm better than everybody, dump out all my things that I'd thought I was going to do for God and just say God, I've got nothing to offer you. All I can do is to give you my life open and empty. This is what - that's good.

I love that you guys clap - that's great. You're going to make me want to go longer. Now I love that, right? It means you're hearing me. This is what God's asking from us. This is Christianity. Where we say, God, I can't change the outside until the inside is changed and so we just say God, you're going to have to do something in me that I can't generate and I believe that it can happen because You are the Son of God, You died on the cross, You rose again and now I'm going to open my life to You and to any person who opens their life to the Lord, His Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus is placed within us.

And so as the Spirit of Jesus begins to change us, it starts to change our struggles and change our habits. Right? God works from the inside out. Religion works from the outside in. This old counterfeit faith is worried about how things come off, how we appear. I've got to look religious and look like I don't have any problems. God lets our life be messy on the outside while He changes us from the inside out. He goes to work on the inside and slowly, over time, our behaviors begin to follow. This is Christianity.

This is counterfeit faith. Counterfeit faith is bottoms up. We put ourself under this little glass shield and we run around and say our little prayers and read the Bible and come to church and sing little songs and do good works and try to deal with our own struggles and our own sloppiness and our own messiness and all the while we're doing all of it, we don't feel anything. There's no power and there's no presence on it. It's because the Spirit of religion creates a glass ceiling between us and God and it's frustrating because we know that God's up there. We know He's real and we can sense it in the music but it's not real enough because we've been living with our hearts upside-down that this glass ceiling's been created between us and God and there's been no life change. We're just doing a lot of stuff and nothing's coming out of it. Working on our scorecards. Doing our best with our self-effort.

And somewhere along the way you go, I can't do this anymore. And we take our hearts and we do a 180 and we say, God, I'm going to step out of this track and You made it possible - for what the law could not do, weak as it was, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

And as an offering for sin, He can bend it all and set us free so the lists are gone. Now, everything you and I do is done because of our love for Him. We don't do it out of obligation. This old track over here was out of fear and obligation and manipulation, right?

Now, over here, what we do is an act of love, right? We don't go to church because someone said, you better get yourself to church. God will love you more if you go to church. We go to church because we say, God set me free from the law of sin and death. And you know what I want to do? I just want to put my life in a place where there's other people who've got their cups up. I just want to join other people that know what it's like to have once been here and are now here. I just want have my life joined in small groups and big gatherings with other people who are keeping their cups up. No one makes me do it. I'm just here because I want to be here, right? We don't serve because someone said, man, if you go on missions you get an extra point, extra jewel in your crown, right?

We say, wait a minute. God reached out to me in the midst of all my craziness, in the midst of all my drama and all my brokenness and He placed His Spirit within me and He set me free from the law of sin and death and so one of the only ways that I can show Him is to say I'm going to be involved in the ministry. No one makes me do it. I just do it as an act of love. You're not faithful to your spouse because someone said, you better be faithful because if you're not, God's going to judge you. We say God showed His faithfulness for me. While we were yet sinners Christ died for me. He showed His faithfulness towards me

when I was unfaithful. Now that His Spirit lives within me I just want to honor Him with my life. No one makes me stay faithful to my spouse. I just do it as an act of love, right? No one's making me get baptized. It's not a rule, right? It's not something I check off on a score card. We say there was a moment where I was covered in sin and I was buried in Christ and what the law could not do weak as it was, Jesus became my offering and His life washed over me and He reached down into my life and He rescued me from the grips of sin and darkness. I don't do baptism because it's a way of making a show or someone expects me to do it. It's just an act of love.

I just want to say that's what Jesus did before He started His ministry and I just want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and love Him like He loves the Father. Everything over in the freeing spirit of Christianity is an act of love, not obligation. I came here to tell you that you're free. You're free from the list. You're free from the scorecard. You're free from your self effort. You're free from having to pretend and play a part. The life of Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. Think of it. Jesus became everything we are so that we could become what He is. The cross is the ultimate exchange. Jesus takes on our sin and scars and screw ups and in exchange He gives us His presence that's pure and holy and free. God's not mad at you. God's not upset with you today. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and I wonder if we've got some people who would say I've been living with my heart upside-down I've been walking around with a glass ceiling between me and God. And I wonder if we've got some people here this morning who

would say I don't know if I've ever known the peace or the presence of Jesus. I don't know that I've ever known what it's like to experience His presence. I've just known the list and I've known the shame of failing Him and I've known the effort that it takes to try to please Him but I've just never known the freeing spirit of Christianity because my life, my heart has been upside-down.

Every person that followed Jesus always made a confession. They always just said Jesus, I'm in. They dropped their nets. They followed Him. Zacchaeus said I'm leaving my past behind. Matthew said I'm not going back to my old life, I'm going to follow You. Each one of those little pictures in the New Testament were a moment where these peoples' lives went from being upside-down to being right side up.

And I wonder if we've got some people this morning, that you've lived like this and you thought this was Christianity and it's not. You thought this was all there was and it's not. I wonder if we've got some people who need to do a 180 and turn their lives right side up and say Jesus, I dump out all my religious past. I dump out all my effort and I just hold my life out open and empty and ask you to fall fresh on me. Fall fresh on me.

Let's pray. Let's pray. I'm going you if you would to just bow your heads and close your eyes. I'm not asking you to do it out of religious reasons or out of sin nor shame or secrecy but it's a way of blocking out distraction. I want you just suppose for a moment that right where you're sitting is your meeting place with God. The Spirit of Jesus is not more powerful on the stage than He is out in the audience. The whole

room's filled with His presence. And that means right where you sit He can hear your thoughts and hear your desires. The cries of your heart. If you say my life's gone upside-down. I've been living with a glass ceiling between me and God. I never knew it. I get it now. That's why I don't feel anything. That's why there's no change. I've been living under a glass ceiling of religion. And as easily as you could turn your hand in a 180 - right side up - you can do the same thing with your heart.

So if you've got a glass ceiling between you and God, would you pray this prayer with me? Maybe for some of us this may be the first time you've ever prayed a prayer like this. This is a prayer to give your life to Christ. To empty out your life of all the past mistakes and past efforts and to open it up to the best of God, the best of the life of Jesus in the Spirit. Others have just have given our life to Christ but your heart has gone upside-down for whatever reason. But either way, would you just pray this with me this morning. Would you just say dear Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. That you died on the cross for me. And I believe that you're alive. And as best as I know how I'll open my heart to you. This morning I'm open and I'm empty and as best as I know how I ask you to step out of heaven and step into my heart as the leader and the Lord of my life.

If you've just prayed that prayer along with me and you meant it with all your heart, would you just put your eyes on me - would you just look right here if you just prayed that prayer with me? There's a lot of people. If you're looking at me because you prayed that prayer, would you just lift your hand up in the air and just say I just made that confession. I just

made that confession? That's powerful. That's so powerful. If today's prayer was the first time you ever prayed something like that, when we get done today, across the foyer there's a place called the Fireside Room. I'm going to ask you to go through there and we have a little booklet we want to give you because here's what you've got to do, right? Here's the next step. You've got to feed the freedom. You've got to feed the freedom. You've lived on the religious track so long that to live the way Jesus calls us to live feels a little illegal and it feels a little discomfoting. And so now we begin to feed our freedom with the Word of God.

On your bulletins there's a whole list of daily readings. I've picked those Scriptures out this week. And so I'm going to ask you to read through those because it's the Scriptures that tell you exactly what you've been freed from and how deep that freedom goes. And God, for those of us that have been religious, I pray that You'd set us free. That You'd help us to experience what's already true about us. That You've already set us free from the law of sin and death and so I pray for a breakthrough of the Spirit. A fresh dose of Your presence to live within us and that we'd go from doing a bunch of stuff to living by what You've done. That Your cross and Your resurrected life is more than enough. And in Your strong and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

And now, look at me just for a second. Here's what I want to ask you to do. Just say when I made this journey, it took me a little while - like it was a new thing, right? Because you get over here and you're like, my motivation for trying to clean up my life is gone. I don't have anything to earn or prove and so it feels a little uncomfortable, right? And so I

want you to do something that will help you to learn to live in the freeing spirit of Christianity. O.k.? I'm going to ask everybody this week to get a glass that you're not going to use and put it someplace where you know you're going to see it. Right? On your kitchen table, by your computer, where you get ready in the morning, on your desk, to the students in your locker or on the dashboard of your car. Someplace where you are everyday and I'm going to ask you to start your morning with this little simple confession. Just say Jesus, today, I'm open. I turn my life upward and open. And everyday you've got to remind yourself I've been set free. The law of the spirit of faith in Jesus Christ has set me free from the law of sin and death. All I really have to do is just to be upward and open. Just to point my heart upward and open. And so look at it every day and just say Jesus, I thank You that You've set me free from the law of sin and death. And so I'm going to ask you to do that. It took a little while to learn how to live on this. It takes a little while to train yourself to get used to the freedom, right? And it's a beautiful thing, man, the freeing spirit of Christianity is a beautiful thing.

And so when we get done today I have a few new books out in the foyer. This is called My Bible Adventure. If you've got kids - where are my parents at - do we have parents here? If you've got kids this is - I can't believe I wrote a children's quiet time - anyway none of the titles are in here. They're not in here. All right, so these are Bible stories that you can read out loud to your kids and each Bible story has a little memorable way at the end of it on how to help them remember the story. So it's laid out cool. It's really beautiful. I'm how proud it came



out. This is the new devotional. This is different from the one I had last year so this is brand new. It just came out last month. This is a devotional on Grace, Hope, and Love. It's a page a day on Grace, Hope, or Love and so this is a way that you start to say instead of filling my life with myself and all my lists, I'm going to fill my life with the Word of God so each page has a Scripture, a little thought about the Scripture, and a prayer. And this is how you feed your freedom, right? You've got to feed your freedom and this is how you get a little - by doing these three things. Reading a little bit of the Scripture, thinking about it, and praying it through. This is how you get traction and have momentum in your devotional life. So those are back there and even if you don't read it, it looks cool so you can decorate with it. All right so you can put it on your coffee table. Look how cool that looks. I haven't read it but it's cool looking. And I'd be happy to sign it for you and whatever you buy today helps me to eat next week so no pressure. That's right. So The Chapel - I hope to see you again. Thank you for receiving the Word of the Lord. Until I see you, keep your cup up. Keep your cup up everybody. Thanks.