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ROMANS 8:2-13

Romans Series: How God Changes People

[PRAYER] Lord, I found out this morning that it's Orphan Sunday and I want to thank you for adopting us into your family. But, Lord, as we live here on this earth we know there are a lot of children who don't have parents. We ask that you would continue to use Christians in the adoption process as you so do mightily around the world, that those children would find a home and find parents where they can grow and understand more about who you are.

In particular, we want to thank you for Hope Unlimited, our mission in Brazil, and we ask that you'd bless them today. Bless them in their work caring for these orphan boys who were found on the streets and need a home. We're grateful for that ministry that exists there and for the privilege that six of us have to go in and visit there, our Brazil team going there after Christmas this year. So we're asking, Lord, that you'd bless the Smith family who are leading that as part of our church but now living there in Brazil. We ask that you'd bless them mightily today in their work to care for orphans as well.

Lord, thank you for what you're doing in our own hearts and lives. We've come here today expecting a blessing from you. So we ask that you'd pour that out on our hearts through communion, through worship, through fellowship, through teaching. But Lord, also would you do something else inside of our hearts? Give us a blessing to share with others. So as we share and talk with each other afterwards or as we greet each other, we might be a blessing with those we come in contact with. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Please open your Bibles to Romans 8:1. We started last week by just looking at this one verse. I want to read this one verse and then pick it up and continue on through the passage up to verse 12 today. I want us to understand some very important key principles about sanctification. That's the growth process we have in the Christian life. So let's start with Romans 8:1 just as review from last week. If you didn't hear what we had to say last week, you can go on our app and you can listen to it on the web or you can read the transcript that's there as well.

Romans 8:1 – *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* There's no place for ongoing guilt in the life of the Christian. Christ died for past sins, present sins, future sins. If you feel guilty and you are guilty, then you need to confess and repent. When you do then God forgives you and wipes away or purifies you so that you can experience His grace and forgiveness.

Now if you continue to live in sin, you will feel guilty. There's no need for this lingering guilt that often takes place in people's lives. If you have lingering guilt you need to go in the backyard and plant a stake.

That comes from a story that my dad used to tell about a woman who had lingering guilt in her life that plagued her. So she went out into the backyard and she planted a stake. On the stake it said, "I'm forgiven." So whenever she was tempted to experience guilt in her life and to be overcome by that, she'd go back out to the stake and she'd say, "Satan, there it is. I'm forgiven!" See, God wants us to be free in our lives.

Now some people are tempted in this area to dwell on their own guiltiness and I think that's a mistake based on this verse, *there is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus*. God wants us to be free and that's how He elaborates in verse 2, *because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering*. By becoming a Christian you are set free. Free from the power of sin.

We still have two natures. As a Christian you have two natures. You have a sin nature and you have a spirit nature or the Spirit living inside of you. Those two natures wrestle with each other and sometimes we fail. And so there's some principles about sanctification that we need to understand and we need to grasp these and get them.

Very important principle number one for sanctification is this: Verse 1 – *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*. No condemnation from God, no condemnation from self.

Anytime you feel guilty, you need to ask this question: Is this true guilt or false guilt? If it's true guilt, you move to repentance, confession, and you receive the purification that God offers for you. If it is false guilt then you need to recognize that it is inappropriate. It's from Satan designed to discourage you.

Jesus' sacrificial death makes me confident that I can experience His forgiveness today. I'm not trusting in my own ability to be a good person or to keep the rules or to do anything on my own because that leads to condemnation because I always fail. I'm trusting in Jesus Christ who does not fail and He provides that for me. Very important concept. We have to catch this about grace. Grace does it all in our lives. It's all about grace and if we trust in God's grace, we're doing great. If we start trusting in our own actions and our own behavior, in something that we're doing, we miss it because we cannot do it all, and we become guilty then and we start feeling guilty. Grace does it all.

But we must go to the second principle of sanctification and it's in verse 12. Now I'm going to get to verse 12, but we're not there yet. The second principle is this: *Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation*. An obligation. We have something we need to do. That's what he's saying here and that's the second principle of sanctification.

If you miss the first one, no condemnation, then you miss out on God's grace. If you miss the second one, this one, you'll also miss out on God's grace. It's about God's grace. But we have an obligation. So I'm going to continue reading and we're going to get to this verse 12. But I want you to see the principle that's being taught here. We have an obligation. Chapter 8:12 is where we're going to get to, but it's described before we get to that conclusion going forward.

Let's go to verse 3. Verse 3 says, *And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

Now I want you to start tracking in your Bible the words that describe our responsibility. Here's the first one. *We do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

The word *live* is the word walk. It's taking steps one after another. That's our part. We need to walk in the Spirit. That's what he's talking about here. I want you to track them because there's God's responsibility and there's man's responsibility when it comes to our relationship with God. We need to understand both parts here.

Verse 4 talks about walking or living and there's a difference between our standing in Christ. Our standing is when God looks at us and we stand in the righteousness of Christ. That's our standing. But then there's our walk where we're walking in the Spirit and we take those steps in our walk before Him.

Verse 5 we're going to see the words *set your mind*. Set your mind. That's a part of what we do. That's our responsibility. And verse 12 it's going to talk about obligation. That's our responsibility. We'll see those as we go forward.

Let's look at verse 5 where it talks a little bit more about setting your mind. Verse 5: *Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live (or walk) in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

You'll see the word *life* mentioned several times. I'm going to draw attention to it further on, but at least note it here. Life, this quality of life or this eternal life or this life in Christ, this abundant life, it's all described in that particular passage.

Alright. So now let's talk about obligation. I want you to understand the difference between guilt and obligation. There's a fine line between guilt and obligation. When you get this idea, I think it will be very freeing for you because I think some people rely on guilt as their primary motivation to get things done. There's a better way. I want to talk to you about what obligation is so you understand it. Obligation is simply this. Obligation is I will or I won't because I want something bigger or I believe something important.

How is guilt different than obligation? It isn't different for some. Some people see them both as the same thing. But if you get this idea, I think it will be really helpful for you.

I make my bed. Why do I make my bed? Well because I have this obligation to make my bed. So when I get up in the morning I make it. I don't walk out of my bedroom without making my bed. That's just me, it's on my list. The things I ought to do. Why? Because I want to be known as a person who makes their bed. You'll never know whether I make my bed or not, but I'll know it as part of my personal integrity. I know if I left my bed a mess or whether I made it. So I want my bed made before I leave.

That's on my obligation list because of something bigger. It's my personal integrity. It's the same reason I don't cheat on my taxes, I'm faithful to my wife, and I don't eat junk food. Okay? It's because of something going on inside of me, my personal integrity. It's something bigger in my life. That's being responsible. Obligation is this sense of responsibility inside of us.

Now let's say I didn't make my bed. I go out of my room and I look back and I see it unmade. Would I feel guilty? Yes. I would feel guilty. And I would probably go back and make it. Or I'd leave and feel guilty about it being not made. But is that my motivation for making my bed? No. I make my bed because of something bigger, I believe something bigger, I want something bigger than that. So this sense of obligation is a very important motivator inside of our hearts that we need to understand.

Is obligation the only motivator? Good motivator? No. Sometimes we do things because we're grateful for someone, so that's a motivator. Sometimes we love someone. Now maybe you don't make your bed out of a sense of obligation. May you make your bed because your wife likes it made. And so out of love you make your bed for your wife. That's a whole different motivation than it is for me. There's a lot of motivations here that we can understand.

This idea of obligation really comes from the conscience. God has given every person a conscience. A conscience is a piece of internal equipment that every one of us have. God has placed inside the human heart the conscience, a human element, and the Spirit, a divine element – two things that work together to provide direction and movement for a person. Internal motivation. The Holy Spirit and the conscience are two different things. They're not the same. But the Holy Spirit can use the conscience to prompt us forward.

Now I want to share with you some information about the conscience today because I think it will help you understand a little bit more about yourself and what prompts you and moves you. If you work with children it will help you as well. So I want you to see the information I'm about to share with you doesn't come from a psychology textbook; it comes from the Bible. So I want to share some verse with you that I think will be helpful for you in understanding a little bit more about the conscience. Here are some verses. We'll take a little path through the Bible and look at a few of the verses.

In Hebrews 10:22 it talks about our last week's message. *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

What this is saying is when you get saved your heart is sprinkled with Christ's blood to cleanse a guilty conscience. That's one of the purposes of the conscience is to draw... My conscience is

guilty. I need a Savior. And so when you get saved, the clear conscience is one of the benefits of that salvation. But is that the only purpose of the conscience? No.

If we go to Acts 24:16, Paul is saying, *So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.*

First I want you to see that Paul takes advantage of the conscience and it's used even after he's saved. So he's taking advantage and using the conscience in his daily life. The other thing I want you to see is he says, *I strive*. It's work to keep the clear conscience. We need to understand that it takes work to keep your conscience clear before God and man.

Now Paul another time he uses this word in Acts 23:1, he uses the word conscience again because he's being attacked by the Sanhedrin for doing the wrong thing. *Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty."* I'm going to put the word obligation there because that's where we're going with this. *"I have fulfilled my obligation to God in all good conscience to this day."*

The idea is that the conscience prompts us to do what's right. The conscience prompts us to do things and Paul is saying, "My conscience is clear. I have done what's right. I have done these things you're saying that I've done. *I have fulfilled my duty* before God."

When you fulfill your duty, there's a sense of a clear conscience. When I get my to-do list done, I like to mark off the last thing on the to-do list before I throw it in the garbage. Why? Because there's this sense of satisfaction that takes place inside of my conscience. "Yes, I've done that."

Now we're going to apply this spiritually, but I just want you to see the power that the conscience has in the life of a person. I've done my duty. I made my bed or I paid my bills on time. I've done what's right. The conscience is very important and it actually is important in the way that you work with children.

I want to draw attention to that for a moment because if we try to motivate kids with a lot of external motivation, then they don't often grow up to be internally motivated. "If you don't get this done, I'm going to punish you or give you some kind of a consequence." If that's the primary discipline strategy that the person has, then a person grows up fearing punishment. I want to avoid punishment. A fear of guilt instead of this obligation to do what's right.

This is such a key difference between a motivation from punishment or guilt and a motivation from obligation to do what's right. It's thinking forward that some parents when they understand this idea say, "This is revolutionary. This is completely different than anything I've ever thought about."

This is so common. The alternative is so common that kids today make the choice to do what's right so they don't get into trouble. In fact here's what you can say to a child. Ask your kids this question. Any kid you ask this question. See what they say. "When it come to following instructions from mom and dad, why do you do what's right?" Do you know what kids say? "So I don't get in trouble." That is their most common answer.

That's when you take them to this verse, Romans 13:5. Look at this! This is so powerful for us as parents. It says, *Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities* (that is to do what your dad and mom say. Okay. Do what they say when they give you instructions), *not only because of possible punishment* (so I don't get in trouble, external motivation) *but also because of conscience* (internal motivation. I'm doing the right thing). Man, that is really powerful and it changes, I think, the way we parent.

But let's go back to some of us. Maybe some of you grew up in a home where there was a lot of negative discipline, a lot of punishment threatened. Guilt was a primary motivator. And so maybe you've developed a pattern in your life to respond to life situations and respond out of guilt and that becomes the motivator for you. I think you want to move to this sense of obligation, which is much more positive. It's much more strategic, I think. Why do you do what you do?

Earlier this year I was working with a seven year old boy who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. I'm trying to help him develop obligation. I work with a lot of kids who have challenges in their lives. I'm quite successful with children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder because I help children be internally motivated. So I was explaining to this boy, having met with him several times.

Now in this particular session I'm meeting with him and I'm talking to him about obligation, that God wants you to have obligation inside your heart. I draw a heart, I draw obligation in there. It's something inside of you that God wants to build inside of you this obligation and when you build that, it's going to overcome your urges.

That's when I say to kids, "You have urges in your life. Urges to talk out, to do things that are inappropriate." Because these kids often feel bad that they're doing these things, they just have a hard time controlling them. So I said, "I'm going to help you build obligation inside of you." So I sent him away.

His mom calls the office a couple days later to make another appointment with me. Called Joanne and says (we'll call him Jimmy), "And also, Jimmy wants Dr. Scott to know that today he was going to do the wrong thing, but his obligation was stronger, so he didn't."

Do you see what we're doing? This obligation is so powerful. It's not a motivation of guilt. It's a motivation that comes from something inside of us. Obligation.

The reason I share that story with you is because I believe every one of us has spiritual attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Okay? There are two things that mark that particular problem. One is that lack of focus, inability to focus. And the other is hyper. There's a lot of people today who are hyper, doing all kinds of different things and they can't focus on what they need to do. Right?

What we're seeing in this passage, I believe, is the solution for all of us when it comes and talks here in this passage about how we are to be internally motivated, how we are to have this

obligation. We haven't even got to verse 12 yet. But that's the idea that we're moving forward. If you're primarily motivated by guilt, you're missing some of the blessings of the Christian life.

I want to show you how sanctification happens on a regular basis. This is sanctification. Let's take grace. Because grace is through all of this.

In pre-salvation, that is the person who's not yet a Christian (maybe that's you today, you're not yet a Christian), I want you to know that John 6:44 says, *No one comes to the Father except if the Father draws them.* I want you to see God is the one who draws someone to salvation. If you're out witnessing to someone or you're sharing faith with someone that you know, you do not save the person. All you can do is lead them to Christ. The most important thing is to respond to their initiative because God is doing some work and, as He does, you want to be sharing with them so they can move forward. That's pre-salvation. It's managed by God's grace.

Now we come to justification. That's when you get saved. That's when you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Ephesians 2:8 says, *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith.* So it's all about grace when you get saved.

Then comes the next part of our salvation process, which is the growing in grace. That's what 2 Peter 3:18 says. *Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* We call that sanctification.

And the last part is glorification. That's when we see Christ face to face. If you look at verse 30 in our passage today, Romans 8:30 (I won't get there this week), but it says, *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.* God does this. We do not do this. So the common word through all this process is grace. Grace is what does all of this work.

So as I continue to talk, and whenever we start talking about human obligation, we need to remember that it's really God's grace that changes us. It's not a human thing that changes. It's God's grace always that changes us in our lives. We can only submit ourselves to the Lord. In any part of this process we only submit ourselves to the Lord so that He can do His work. And thus we come to our responsibility. We must submit ourselves to God in the midst of that.

I like to view it this way. I describe it as a grace train. There's a train going by of God's grace and I choose whether I'm going to get on it or not. When I take the step to get on the grace train, then I move forward and God grows me in grace. It's always grace, it's always God doing the work, but I need to take the step to step onto the grace train so that I can enjoy what God wants to do.

How do you get on the grace train? That's the obligation part we're talking about here. Verse 4 it says *walk*. Take steps in your relationship with the Lord. Verse 5 it says *set your minds on things above*.

Let's look at the word *mind* for a moment there. The word *mind* there is the word *phron* or *phroneo* if it's in the verb form and it means to concern. It means your mind, it means to think, it

means to determine something, to set your mind on something. Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder need that. They need to practice focusing and setting their mind on something and getting it done. That's what I teach them how to do. We build that obligation inside to stay on track. Spiritually we all need the same thing in our lives.

Let me show you that word used in Philippians 2 because the translators had a problem when they came to this word. How do we translate Philippians 2:5?

When I memorized it early on in my life, I memorized it in the King James Version –*let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*. The word we're looking at is the word *mind*.

But the New American Standard Version, when it came to translating it, translated the same word *attitude*. I have an attitude toward something. Great word to describe having an attitude toward life. Where are we going to place that attitude and why?

The New International Version, its latest edition, calls the same word a *mindset*. I need to develop a mindset in my life and that mindset or that attitude needs to be focused somewhere.

Do you see in Romans 8:5-6 there? You need to be focused, or my mind set on what the Spirit desires. What does the Spirit desire? So when my mind is focused on what the Spirit desires, then I'm moving along on this grace train. God is doing this work inside of me. It's God's grace at work. I have responsibility to step on the grace train and allow God to work. So we're setting our mind on something.

Colossians 3 says the same kind of thing. It says, *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things*. The idea of setting your mind on something is really valuable. It's important.

As I work with children who are struggling sometimes with doing the right thing and the wrong thing, I like to tell them the American Indian proverb about the two dogs fighting inside. There is a white dog that is helping you do what's right and there's a black dog fighting. There's this wrestling between these dogs inside, the Indians used to say. So when asked the question which one wins, the Indian says the one you feed the most.

I would suggest the same thing is true in yours and my life. The one we feed the most is going to win. Now Christendom all through the years has suggested that we have devotions, a regular time of setting our minds on God's word. But it's interesting that the word devotion would be used. That I'm devoting myself to something, I'm setting my mind on something. That's powerful. We're setting our mind on what the Spirit desires. Finish the word there. Our obligation, we're going to see, is setting our mind on what the Spirit desires. Living for Christ is what the Spirit wants.

Let's go on to verse 7 in our passage in Romans 8. *The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God*.

The flesh is the sinful nature that we've talked about. Okay? We all have one. Those who are in the realm of the sinful nature cannot please God. *You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*

I like the picture here of getting into the realm of. The idea is that there's this realm, there's these radio waves all over the place and we need to tune into them. I need to tune into what the Spirit has to say. Can I listen to the Spirit? Am I listening to what God has to say to me? Do I know how to listen to God and what He has to say to me? That's the powerful thing here. I want to tune into the Spirit of God.

Verse 10: *But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.*

Now this word *life* is an important word. It means life. That's what it means. But the idea here is that we can experience a quality of life. You can experience a quality of life when you're tuned into what the Spirit has to say and you set your mind on that and that guides you through the course of the day.

What's going to make your day successful? I would suggest that being filled with the Spirit, submitting yourself to the Spirit of God every day is going to make your life successful. You'll be able to deal with the interruptions, you'll be able to do the hard work, you'll deal with the pressure, the suffering, whatever you need to deal with in the day if you're tuned into the Spirit and your mind is set on that.

If you're used to being carnal (carnal is acting fleshly – by making dirty jokes, or by using foul language, or just by being inappropriate and not following the Lord), you're missing something. You're not tuned into the Spirit. So we must each set our minds into the Spirit, tune ourselves into the realm of the Spirit.

See the word *life* in the next verse. Verse 11: *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you.* That power that raised Jesus from the dead is living inside of me. That's pretty big power. That's the power to overcome the sin nature. It's the power to live the life that God has called me to live. It says *living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.*

So when we come to this issue of living our lives, we have to ask the question, what is motivating us to do what we do? Are we motivated by guilt? Or are we motivated by this sense of obligation that God wants us to enjoy and to have in our lives?

It's at this time of year that I feel the obligation or the desire to be more generous. Thanksgiving, Christmas – to be generous, not only in my family, but to people in need. Is that because I feel guilty? No. It's because I have a sense of obligation that brings me to this place of honor. I want to live honorably, so there are certain things I do that move me to that point.

Why do I feel an obligation when I come to a door and someone's following me to open the door and let the person go through? Why do I feel that sense of obligation inside? I feel that because I want to be part of something bigger. I believe in something. Things like just because I want to be a testimony. Sometimes it's just I want to be the person that God called me to be.

See, I think that's what makes Christians different. We live differently and even simple things. Because we have this sense inside that we want to be part of something bigger. We want to believe in something. Some of those desires that we have come from convictions that I want to be a testimony to others, I want to please Jesus Christ, I want to walk in the Spirit. Those are great. There's a sense of obligation, the daily things that we do tie into that because they move us to something bigger.

When you think of the word obligation if you just think of guilt I think you've got a problem. I think obligation moves us forward, positive. Guilt moves us backwards. Guilt looks at the past. Obligation looks for the forward. Obligation moves us to a higher level. So God is saying here we need to have an obligation.

Look at this, verse 12 now as we move there. It's the conclusion of the idea here and that's why we're going to stop at this verse today just for the sake of time. But I want you to see it's the conclusion of the idea. That's why it starts with the word *therefore* in verse 12. *Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation.*

So if anyone says to you it's grace alone, you can't do anything, they're partially right. It's all about God's grace. God's grace is what allows all growth to take place in our lives. We can't do it ourselves. But we have obligation and that obligation is to step on the grace train. That's what God wants us to do. We take action in order to do that because we want to be part of something bigger or we believe something deep in our hearts that's a conviction.

I was working with another boy who had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder last year. His problem was that he would talk out in class. He was getting in trouble in his Christian school and they were using a typical plan that people use in school today. They were giving him tokens for doing the wrong thing and when he gets three tokens on his desk, he lost some recess time. It's a punishment strategy for moving someone forward. It's what's commonly used in our world today. It's called behavior modification. It's a humanistic approach to child development.

I would suggest we want to use something very different than that and it's a radical change when we do something different.

So he comes to me. He's sad. He's disappointed in himself. That tells me already his heart is ready for something new. So as we talked, I said, "Where is it that you have a problem?" He says, "Well I talk when I'm finished with the job, my job at the table, but others aren't finished. So sometimes I say things and I shouldn't say them."

So here's my question to him. "Why? Why do you want to not talk in those moments? Not just 'so I don't get into trouble.' Why do you not want to talk?" Together we realized and we came to the conclusion "I don't want to talk in those moments because I want to be known as a

thoughtful person.” And that now gave him an obligation of something bigger so that he could move forward. Now we’re dealing with something on the inside, not something on the outside.

I would suggest, again, that all of us have this challenge that we are easily distracted, we find ourselves saying things inappropriately, that we find ourselves doing things when we shouldn’t be doing them. Maybe they seem socially appropriate, but they’re not spiritually appropriate. So we need to come before the Lord and say, “Lord, I want to have an obligation inside my heart to live according to what the Spirit desires for me. I want to be sensitive to hear the Spirit speak to me and to be able to work inside of my heart.”

In order to do that, we finish the passage. Our obligation, it says, *is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live (or walk) according to the flesh (the sinful nature), you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

You can’t do that on your own. Oh sure, by willpower you can self-discipline and restrain yourself sometimes. But the best thing to do is to allow the Holy Spirit to control you and to move you into a focused state where you’re not so easily distracted by the things that are around. You’re focused on Jesus Christ, on what the Holy Spirit wants you to do. When you do that, amazing things happen. That’s the obligation that takes place inside of our lives. An obligation to focus and live by what the Spirit desires.

A few weeks ago I took my grandchildren on a mystery trip. I told them the day before, “I’m going to take you on a mystery trip.”

“Oh where are we going, grandpa?”

“I can’t tell you. Just be ready tomorrow morning when I come here at 8:30.”

So when I got there I gave them their first clue. I said, “Look at Proverbs 16:24 to know where we’re going first.” They looked up Proverbs 16:24, which says that *pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and pleasant to the bones.* “Where do you think we’re going to go?” Of course they knew then that we’re going to the doughnut shop because grandpa always takes them to the doughnut shop!

So we walked from where we were, a mile-and-a-half, to Winchell’s Donuts in southern California. Walked to Winchell’s Donuts and we had doughnuts. They each had two doughnuts. I can’t eat doughnuts anymore, so I didn’t have any doughnuts. But they each had two doughnuts and then we walked back a mile-and-a-half. I figured we walk a mile-and-a-half there and back you can burn off some of that sugar that they were eating.

On our way back though, Hanale, who’s six years old, was tired. She couldn’t keep walking all that way. I’m encouraging her. “Come on. You can do it! Let’s keep going here! Let’s move forward.” But her brother, Hudson, eleven years old, comes over to her and says, “Hanale, go ahead and get on my back.” So Hudson, eleven years old, puts a six year old on his back and he walks with her quite a distance.

I’m just admiring him. Admiring not only him, but admiring his family because one of the things that characterizes their family (they’re doing a lot of things really well) is that they care for each

other. They're on the lookout for each other. They care about each other. And here's an example of that taking place right before me.

So I'm walking next to them as he's carrying his sister and I said, "Let me tell you a story. There's a story that's told. It actually became a part of a song. When someone asked a girl who was carrying her heavy brother, 'Aren't you getting tired?' she said, 'He isn't heavy. He's my brother.'" So I told that story. It's a Neil Diamond song. I shared that story with him as he's moving forward with her.

Why did he do that? Why did he go offer to care for his sister like that? Because he had inside of him this sense of obligation that our family cares for each other. So he went over and he did that.

Now I would suggest that each one of us can have that sense of obligation inside of our hearts. We need to have it because that's what's going to help us get on the grace train. That's when God's going to build the character, that's when He's going to do the work inside of us, and that's when He's going to use us to help Him bless so many other people.

It's about obligation. It's about that thing God wants us to do. Why? So that we can be in touch with what He wants to do. That's the obligation. Not motivated by guilt. Motivated by something much bigger. Obligation is I will or I won't because of something bigger, or because I believe, or I have a conviction about something. God does an amazing thing in our life. When we do that, He allows us to experience His grace, something that we all need and want.

So I want you to think for a moment about what God's doing in your own heart. Maybe God is prompting you in an area where you need to take some action. Maybe if you've got guilt going on in your life you need to ask the question, "Lord, is this true guilt? If it is, I need to confess, I need to repent, I need to make things right." If it's a false guilt, you need to say, "Lord, just help me to overcome this. Give me a sense of obligation so I can get on the grace train. Use that in my life in a powerful way."

If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, we offer that to you today. There will be prayer counselors on the side waiting to pray for you and to introduce you to Jesus Christ in a personal way. Wow. It's beautiful. You get on the grace train and God does amazing things inside of your heart. It's all God's grace and He wants to pour it out to us, each one of us, in our own lives.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come now before you, acknowledging that you are so gracious to us and we thank you for that. Lord, we don't want to resist your grace. We want to participate in it, so make us willing. Give us the courage and the humility to take steps toward you, to set our minds on the things you desire for us. Lord, take the application of this home to each one of us. We ask that you'd allow us to take Jesus home and into our lives every day this week. Use your word to do that today. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.