Greatness Flipped Upside Down

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[0:00] Anybody remember Muhammad Ali? World famous boxer.

Probably the greatest, that's arguably, but probably the greatest boxer of all time.! And knew it, right?! Famous for saying, I'm the greatest!
! I can't imitate him. But there's this story, and it might be apocryphal, a story of him seated on a plane, and the stewardess or flight attendant comes and reminds him to fasten his seatbelt.
And Muhammad Ali replied by saying, Superman don't need no seatbelt. And the flight attendant, without missing a beat, replied right back, Superman don't need no airplane.
As the story goes, he did fasten his seatbelt.
[1:09] No one would ever confuse that kind of bragging as a Christian virtue. The marks of the Christian life, and most of us understand this, are meant to be a life of humility, a life of selflessness.

And it's incredible that in this scene that we're in, where Jesus is sharing the Lord's table, the last supper with his disciples, this incredible moment, and the twelve are arguing about who's the greatest.
Apparently they never heard of Muhammad Ali. My timeline might be out of order there. Before we get into today's text in Luke 22, I want to talk a little bit about what we're going to learn today.
And I think maybe the main point might be something like this. In many areas of life, but especially when it comes to the Christian life, doing what comes naturally is so often the opposite of what we should do.
The idea of doing what comes naturally. The idea of following your heart, of just doing what feels good, what sounds good, whatever you feel like doing, that's the opposite of what we should do.
[2:50] And we see this kind of on display in this text. And I want to go ahead and begin reading from our passage today in Luke 22, verse 24.

Remember, Jesus has just shared his last supper with the disciples, with the twelve. Judas, his betrayer, is still in the room.
And he's actually called him out. And not by name, but saying that one of the twelve was going to betray him. And they're back there. No, it's not me.
It's not. It can't be. I'm not. Am I the one? And it goes from kind of that conversation into, well, I'm not. I can't be the one because I'm the greatest of us all.
And so it can't be me. And I just imagine we don't know necessarily how it went. But here's how the conversation went. A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.
[3:53] There are variations of this argument throughout the Gospels. At one point, they're arguing which one of them is going to be on the right hand of Jesus.

In other words, second in command, if you will, and those kinds of things. This time there are which one's the greatest. Can you imagine any of us kind of sitting around?
Well, I'm better than you. You know, we don't see that very odd, that kind of blatant, especially in this context. Oh, my goodness.
And, oh, I missed that. And Jesus said to them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. And those in authority over them are called benefactors.
In other words, it's natural. For in our fallen world, kings of the Gentiles, that's the Gentiles who are not followers of Christ, certainly not Old Testament believers.
[4:51] These are people who worship pagan gods, false gods. And for them, doing what comes naturally is the right thing to do. And it's natural for them to exercise authority, to claim their position and hold it above all those that they rule or reign over.

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But not so with you. Even though it's that way with them, it's not going to be that way with you guys. It's not supposed to be that way. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as one who serves.
We don't think of servants as being great, right? In the restaurant atmosphere, who's the lowest on the totem pole, if you will?
It's the servers, the waitress, the waiter, busboy. It's still a servant role. But the one who owns the business, you know, that's who we think.
The big shots who come in as patrons of the restaurant, you know, they're high above. And yet in Jesus' economy, it is the waitress, it is the waiter, it is the busboy.
[6:04] It is those who serve that are highest in his esteem. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves?

Is it not the one who reclines at table? That's the way the world thinks. But I am among you as the one who serves. And if you remember the context, I'm going to tell you the context here momentarily.
This argument about who's the greatest comes after another scene that Luke doesn't tell us about, that the apostle John does tell us about.
And I'll get to that in a moment. And it's amazing to me. You are those who have stayed with me in my trials. And I assign to you, as my father has assigned to me, a kingdom that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.
And sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. I almost did a Bugs Bunny there. The 12 tribes. Or is it Barbara Walters?
[7:19] I forget. Okay. So he's telling them that as faithful servants, they're going to rule and reign in the coming kingdom.

But there's reward for those who are as servants in the here and now. Who serve in the here and now.
And the standard of this, we find it in 1 Peter 4.10. What we're commanded to do. This is a command that's given to all believers. Okay. From 1 Peter 4.10.
And each of you should use whatever gift you have received, a spiritual gift, to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.
We are called as believers to be servants and using our gifts, our serving abilities, to serve the body of Christ.
[8:12] To serve one another. And my question would be is, are you doing that? Are you being that? Are you serving the body of Christ in some way?

And if not, why not? How can you become, as Jesus commands us to be, as a servant to the body of Christ?
Jesus defines, actually the world defines, when we talk about greatness, a new understanding of greatness, the world defines greatness by the word ascent, rising up.
We climb the ladder, if you will. And it's measured by how much power a person has, what kind of a platform a person may have, the numbers that they're able to garner, the recognition, the size of what you command.
And that's how the world measures greatness. And can you see how even this kind of mindset has crept into church mindset?
[9:20] Because even in past world gatherings, it's all about the size of your church and the platform that you have. How big is it? How many do you command?

What are the numbers? And that's how we, in a worldly way, evaluate each other. Jesus says no. And actually, Scripture defines and Jesus demonstrated greatness instead by descent, by going down, lower, if you will, through service, through humility, through faithfulness in obscurity, and devotion to a crucified king.
Obedience to a crucified king. And so this is how we, this is how Jesus is instructing us in terms of how we ought to view greatness, how we ought to view each other, how we ought to evaluate what becomes valuable in our society, in our world, in our culture.
So these are the things that we should be looking for. And it's not that God is against ambition. Don't misread this or misjudge this. Ambition itself is not wrong.
It's what is your ambition aimed at. That's the question. And so it's that he reorders the target of our ambition entirely.

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[10:53] The target becomes how much of a servant can I be. That's greatness. That's what we should be aiming for. That's what we're looking for.

Now, Jesus, again, perfectly pictured this. In John chapter 13, the chapter starts off with, and John gives us a much bigger picture of what happened on this night, right?
Because Luke, Matthew, and Mark, they give us little snippets, less than a chapter each, of what happened during this night, this Last Supper, where John gives us four whole chapters.
John gives us this long and detailed look into what happened this night. And one of the things that he describes is Jesus taking on the form of a servant, becoming a servant before them, wrapping a towel around his waist, and washing the feet of his disciples.
Understand, that moment comes before the disciples are arguing about who's the greatest.
[12:06] It's somewhere at the beginning of the meal, the timeline of this, where it fits into the timeline, is somewhere after the first cup has been passed, has been shared.

Remember, there were four cups in the Passover meal. I'll ask, sometime after that first cup, they've walked into the room. They've all got filthy feet. There's no one been in the room. There's not a master of the house.
There's not a servant of the house there to perform that normal task, right, of washing. It was normal. If you had guests come into your home, that you would take off their sandals and you would wash their feet before they would enter in because their feet were filthy.
They walked around with sandals on dirt roads. What do you think is going to happen to their feet? But no one performed that task. Not one of the other 12 decided, well, hey, there's not anyone here to greet us.
There's not a servant in the room. The master of the house is not even here in the upper room. So I'll go ahead and take on that task and I'll make sure everybody's feet are washed. And even if no one does that, and even then, no one even washes their own feet.
[13:16] They're just, they all just come over to the table and recline at table, right? And we've talked about this before, reclining at table. I can't even do it anymore.

It's getting down on your rear end. It's on the floor or on a pillow. There's no chairs. The table's low, kind of like coffee table. And, you know, the pictures that we have of Jesus seated with the 12 around him, right?
The da Vinci picture and whatever. That's not it. That's not what it looked like. They're around with this large kind of height of a coffee table, kneeling on the ground or sitting on the ground, kind of feet extended out one way.
And can I borrow one of you guys? I've done this before. Who wants to come up? I need Noah. All right. Very good job. Go ahead. Have a seat right there.
And then lean this way and kick your feet out that way. Can you see that now? Yeah, just like that. That's about how they were sitting. Does that look comfy?
[14:26] It's not. But they had pillows and stuff like that. Okay, thank you. And they're all. Can you imagine now? You're sitting side by side, feet.

Your head is right next to someone's filthy feet. And Jesus then, the beginning of the meal, gets up and begins to wash the feet of his disciples.
So he laid aside his outer garments. This is now in verses 4 and 5, John 13. And taking a towel, he tied it around his waist, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.
And he's going around the room, washing all the feet of his followers. The leader of the group has become the servant.
Has been all along. And he's continuing to be a servant and to wash the feet of his disciples. Now he comes to Peter. And Peter says to him, and poor Peter, right?
[15:35] How often does Peter get it right? And Peter just doesn't get it right. Not this time. He does occasionally. Peter says to him, you shall never wash my feet.

This is a moment of pride for Peter, right? My Lord is not going to wash my feet. And Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no share or partnership.
You have no part with me. Which is like, you know, I'd be kind of like Peter. Peter's response is, Lord, not my feet only, but, you know, wash everything else too.
My hands, my head, you know, just let me just jump in the whole water. I'll, you know, go ahead, give me the full treatment. And Jesus then says to him, the one who has bathed does not need to

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wash except for his feet, but is completely clean.
And you are clean, but not every one of you. And that was a reference to Judas. Judas not being saved. This is a description of what it, how we live as believers.
[16:46] Once you've been saved, you don't need to get saved again. Once you've been washed in the waters of regeneration of the Holy Spirit, regenerating us, making us whole in Christ, we don't have to go through that again.

But we do need to confess our sin. That would be the equivalent of washing our feet. And we do need to confess our sin, not in order to become saved again, but in order to keep that fellowship with him.
Okay? That's what's being described in this sense. Now, again, the order here, the foot washing. Then he talks about Judas betraying him after the meal. And then the argument comes. Which one of them is the greatest?
Now, at this moment in my preparation, the question in my mind becomes this, and you have this on your notes. Why would Christ, why would Jesus leave heaven's glory, submit himself to abuse and hardship, and give himself to secure our salvation?
[18:06] He did all of these things. Why would he do that? Why would Jesus be willing to go through all of that? The worst of it is yet to come.

Later that night, he would be betrayed. He would be arrested. He would be beaten. He would be crucified. Why would he do that?
It goes all the way back. The book of Exodus, chapter 34. And I want you, in these passages, I want you to see how I've highlighted the word.
It's the single word, the Hebrew word. And I have to turn and say it. I have to say it somewhere because there's spit coming out when I say this word. I go, chesed.
Chesed. That's the Hebrew word. Chesed. You've got to get a hocking thing going on in there. That's the Hebrew of it. And it's a word that there's no good English equivalent, and there's no good Greek New Testament equivalent for it.
[19:11] It describes a kind of love that is loyal, that is devoted, that is unconditional, that is determined.

That is his love for us. So we see this statement in Exodus 34. The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.
Why would he choose to do all of those things? Because of his steadfast love. He decided ahead of time, this is what he was going to do.
He was going to, Old Testament, choose a nation for, choose a people for himself, Israel. Not because they deserved it, not because Abraham, the first Israelite, the first Jewish person, was so worthy of it.
He worshipped a pagan god, and in the midst of his worshipping pagan gods, God stepped in and said, come and follow me. Go to a place I'm going to tell you to go.
[20:25] And Abraham believed God, picked up his family, and moved to where God told him to move. And God decided, before the foundation of the world, that he was going to do this, not just for Israel, but also for you and me, for his church, for those who would follow him, as Lord and Savior.

He chose us, before the foundation of the world. Lamentations, another passage, we actually sing a song around here, I don't know, I didn't think about this, Tom, why didn't we do this song today?
I don't know, I didn't, because I didn't bring it up. Next week. Okay. So the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. Right? It can't. Because it's unconditional.
Based on who? Based on God. God said it. Is he going to go back on his word? Is he going to go back on what he said he was going to do?
On who he is? He can't. It is against his nature. He just simply cannot go back on what he said, on what he promises. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.
[21:38] His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Isaiah 54. For the mountains, look at this, the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you.

and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you. He just can do no other. His love for you is that strong.

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Micah 718. Did Micah wake up when I said that? He's probably downstairs. Who is a God like you? Pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance.
He does not retain his anger forever because, look at this, he delights. He doesn't do this begrudgingly. He delights in his steadfast love for you.
That's his great love for us. Now, we bring that into the New Testament, if you will.
[22:54] There is no good New Testament equivalent for this word. There's no word in the Greek language that really, perhaps the closest would be agape, the word for unconditional love, active love, if you will.

But it's still incomplete compared to all that has said, communicates in the Hebrew language. But the concepts are there in the New Testament.
For instance, in Romans 5.8, but God demonstrates his love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This is a familiar passage to some of you.
Okay? While we were still sinners, because his love for us is unconditional. Because it's loyal to us. He forgives us.
He sent Jesus to the cross that we might be forgiven of our sin. Later on, Romans 8. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
[23:55] For I am sure that neither death nor life, it goes on, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Again, nothing will separate you.

Why? Not because you're so stinking worthy. You're not! But because he said so. Because that's his nature.
He said he would do it. He's doing it. He's done it. It's complete. You belong to him. If you've trusted Christ as Savior, you belong to him. His love for you will never end.
What a God we serve. Ephesians chapter 1, and sometimes we get bogged down in this.
In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship. That he predestined us for adoption. It just means he determined in advance to adopt us to sonship.
[24:58] That adopted into sonship is one word in the Greek language. And it talks about the deliberate action of bringing us into his family, not because of anything we've done, but just because he decided to do it.

Brings us into the family, gives us all the family privileges, all that comes with being the son or daughter of the king, all that comes with that.
He has brought us into that. And he determined in advance to do that in accordance with, get a load of this, his pleasure and his will to the praise of his glorious grace.
He's freely given us. Saving you. choosing you before the foundation of the world to include you into the family brings the Lord pleasure.
He delights in his steadfast love for you. your life gives him saving you, making you part of the family brings him pleasure.
[26:25] Now how often do we feel like this? How often do we feel like, oh yeah, the Lord's delighting in me right now? Right? Or the Lord's really taking pleasure in my life right now.

You know, after I've blown it again. But understand, the Lord has the big picture in mind of what he's trying to accomplish in your life. And guess what? What he's trying to make you, he's trying to make you into the image of his own son.
He's going to accomplish that. Not that you'll be like Jesus as in a God, but that you'll be perfectly sinless. At one point, he's going to accomplish that goal in your life.
And we will enjoy heaven forever in his presence without the presence of sin or any problems or any junk in our lives at all.
He's going to make it happen. Why? Because he said so. Because he determined in advance, this is what he's going to do. And when God determines in advance, this is what he's going to do, guess what?
[27:32] He's going to do it. And from God's perspective, it's already done. God sees you already as seated at the right hand of Christ, as seated with him in the heavenlies, as being a resident of heaven right now.

That's how he sees you. He sees Jesus Christ in you, not your failures, not your junk. Yes, he wants you to defeat sin.
Yes, he wants you to have victory in your life over the garbage that is there all around us in this world. But he also understands that we are weak and that we fail and that ultimately he's going to

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accomplish what he promised to do.
Because that's who he is. Oh, this is good news. From the New Living Translation of Ephesians 1.5 again, God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.
This is what he wanted to do. That's just another way of saying it was his will. That's just, you know, sometimes we get confused by his will. No, it's just what God wants. It's just a simpler way of understanding.
[28:49] It's what God wants, right? What is God's will for my life? Well, this is what God wants for your life. It's all written right here. If you want to know what God's will is, this is what God wants for you.

And what God wants for you is to bring you to completion, bring you to that place. And he's going to do it. And it gave him great pleasure to do this for you.
For you. How about this promise? Again, this is a picture of, I think, of chesed, steadfast love.
I just won't. I will never leave you or forsake you. I just won't. God wouldn't do that. It's against his nature. But Lord, I failed again. I know.
I'm not going anywhere. So only, on your notes once again, only his steadfast love explains the answer to that question.
[30:00] Why would Christ do all of this? Hebrews 12, I was fixed for the joy that was set before him.

Now, the great enemy of servanthood is self. And self is what comes naturally to us.
It's just, it's just how we are. we just naturally are inclined to be selfish. Look at how it's written here in Ephesians chapter 2.
And you, and now, understand, if you're a follower of Christ, if you've trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, this is a description of you. Of me, we're all in the same boat here, okay?
It's a description of us as believers. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. And then he goes on, we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, right?
[31:16] The passions, the desires of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body and of the mind. And we're by nature, we were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

Now, before Christ, that's an accurate description of you, a child of wrath because you are on the receiving end of God's wrath. If you are dead in your trespasses and sins, first part of that verse, if you're dead in your trespasses and sins, then what you're deserving of is hell and God's wrath.
And that is coming for all those who refuse to repent, who refuse to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. But for those of us who now have trusted him, this is a description of our past by nature, by nature, children of wrath.
our sinful nature describes who we are, what we're inclined to.
I have a list of songs, some of these may be familiar to you, that describe the way the world relies on self, on our nature, what feels right, what sounds right, in order to make decisions.
[33:03] Okay? These are songs that promote the idea of self is good, follow your heart is good, follow your feelings is good.

Okay? These are songs that describe that. A song natural, it even uses the word by Imagine Dragons. All kinds of different genres too, like even musicals, like Annie Get Your Gun.
Doing What Comes Naturally is one of the songs in Annie Get Your Gun. I don't even know what that song, some of you are familiar with that musical, and you know how that song goes. That's a lousy song.
The message of that song, the lyrics of that song are not good. Okay? Follow Your Arrow by Casey Musgraves. How about You Can't Always Get What You Want?
Rolling Stones, right? How about, how about, this is, when the singer, I saw this, I watched all these on YouTube just for kicks. when this gentleman was getting ready to sing this song, he introduced it to his audience by saying this way, all right, we're all going to sing now our national anthem, but you don't need to stand, and the music kicks into my way.
[34:30] I did it my way, as the epitome of self, right? It's a rotten song. It's my life.

It's my life. Oh, Bon Jovi, right? Go Your Own Way, Fleetwood Mac. Ooh. Born This Way by Lady Gaga.
This Is Me from another musical, The Greatest Showman. This Is Me, and this is how I am. Brave by Sarah Bareilles.

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Roar by Katy Perry. I Can't Help Myself by The Four Tops. Even Motown got involved. Can't Help Myself. I Can't Help Myself. I Love You Ain't Nobody.
Can't Stop the Feeling, Justin Timberlake, Shake It Off, Taylor Swift. Addicted to Love, Robert Palmer. I Want It That Way by The Backstreet Boys. I'm sorry, I brought that one up. Yeah. Even a couple of songs that describe it on the back end, on the consequences of this, The Sound of Silence, Simon and Garfunkel, Hurt, The Nine Inch Nails, Johnny Cash, describing the consequences of following your feelings.
[35:57] But almost all of these, except for these last two, treat nature as something that is a good, that can be trusted, that can be followed, that can be obeyed, which is the exact opposite of the biblical framing.

I want to pick on one of these songs, Follow Your Arrow by Casey Musgraves. The chorus of these songs talks about how there's no fixed target at all. Make noise or keep quiet.
Some of you could sing along. Kiss a lot of boys or kiss a lot of girls if that's something you're into. Roll a joint or don't. Just follow your arrow wherever it points.
In other words, she's saying it doesn't matter what you aim at. The target doesn't matter. You just do what you want. Do what you want.
If it feels good, it's relativism wrapped up in a poppy, fun kind of package. and it's leading people astray.
[37:10] The idea is you can't go wrong as long as you're kind, as long as it's genuine for you. It's the operating assumption that just do what you want.

It assumes that you yourself are a reliable compass. And that exact assumption is the opposite. Solomon said it first. There's a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Now, this is not my rant on saying you should never listen to secular music.
That's not the point of what I'm trying to say. But what I am saying is be aware of what you're listening to. Because, particularly your kids.
Because you might say, well, I can sing that and it's fine with me. I can do that. It's fine. I'm not going to be swayed by it. One, I don't believe you. Two, your kids are a lot more gullible than you are.
[38:15] Sorry. Sorry, I had to say that. So just be aware. of what's out there. Because the world believes, the world teaches, the world's philosophy is that self, what comes naturally is a good thing.

Secondly, self reveals itself in pride. Pride. Look at this passage. This is Isaiah chapter 14.
this is actually the Lord through Isaiah kind of giving a little glimpse into Lucifer slash Satan before he becomes Satan.
Before he's fallen or at the point of his fallenness. So this is a conversation, if you will, either in Satan's head or he's actually saying this.
You said in your heart, so he's talking, he's describing Satan. I will ascend. Notice these phrases. I will ascend. I will ascend. I will. I will. I will. Pride says I will.
[39:26] Pride says I will. I will do this. I will do that. Humility. Jesus in the garden. If it's your will, I'll fall.

I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high. I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the earth. I will ascend above the heights of the cloud.
I will make myself like the most high. That's just pride. And we are good at pride. Self reveals itself in competition.
Everything's a competition. And it says it again all over the place, but I'm going to show you one, Romans 2.8. But those who are selfishly ambitious.
Here is the equivalent word here in the Greek for competition. It's the idea of selfish ambition. Not righteous ambition. Right?
[40:30] That can be a good ambition itself is a neutral. It depends on what you're aiming for. selfish ambition is ambition for me. For what I want.

What I want to achieve. What I want to rise to. Selfish ambition. Those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness. But obey unrighteousness, wrath, and indignation.
That's what they will receive. And then self is what worldly leadership displays. And again, we saw this in the words of Jesus in our passage.

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He said to them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them. Those in authority over them. And so the choice, if you will, is set before us.
And here's the choice. Romans chapter 8 verses 5 and 6 give us this. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.
[41:38] But those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit. Now here's the bad news of this. Okay? If you're not a follower of Christ, if you've never trusted Christ as your savior, you have no choice.

The only option available to you is A, the first option there. Living according to the flesh. Because you don't have the spirit. You don't have the Holy Spirit within you. Those who are believers in Christ have the Holy Spirit residing within.
And so we, as believers, we can decide are we going to follow the spirit or are we going to follow the flesh? We can determine what am I going to live for? Am I going to live for the Lord? Am I going to live for myself?
We can do that. For those who are lost, for those who have never trusted Christ, they don't have the Holy Spirit so their only choice. Even when they are religious, they're still in their religiousness, it's still self.
Their religion serves self. It still does because that's their only option that they have as an unbeliever. Goes on in verse 6, for to set the mind on the flesh is death.
[42:45] That's what it leads to. To set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. And then finally on your notes, you see this idea of self or selfishness here in acting according to the flesh or to the sinful nature depending on which version of the scriptures that you use.

The old NIV would call it the sinful nature. most translations today are just sticking with the word flesh. When you follow the flesh, that's what it means to be selfish.
That's what it means to act naturally according to your flesh, according to just how you are. And so what comes naturally, we have to understand then, is sin.
Again, it's how we are. It's just how we are. It goes back to Genesis 6-5.
Saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. Wow. That's a description of you and me, by the way.
[43:59] Without Christ, the only inclination of our heart was only evil all the time. Jeremiah 17-9, the heart is deceitful above all things.

Desperately sick. It's beyond cure is the idea. Who can understand it? The only hope that we have is in Christ.
We cannot do anything of ourselves. Secondly, about this living according to the flesh is that it's inherited. It is not learned.
You're getting these circles, psychology circles. Is it nurture or is it nature? Is it nurture or is it nature? Well, the Bible makes it very clear that it's nature. But nurture can contribute too.
Don't misunderstand me. You put someone with a sinful nature in a context where there's evil around them, they will get worse. Okay?
[45:04] If you put someone with an evil, sinful nature in a good context with boundaries and rules, they can outwardly conform. There's still sin in their heart.

They haven't come to Christ yet, but what's around them will cause them to conform at least so that society can function. That's why society has laws.
Okay? But again, without Christ, this is who we are. Psalm 51, verse 5, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity.
This is David, the psalmist in his confession after his sin with Bathsheba and with killing her husband. I was brought forth, I was born in iniquity and sinned that my mother conceived me.
It doesn't mean that what his mother and father did was sinful when they came together and David was conceived. That's not what he's saying. He's saying that every one of us that is born in mankind is born in sin, conceived in sin.
[46:11] Any of us who are descendants of Adam are conceived in sin. We are born with a sinful nature. and the easiest way to prove this is to just look at a toddler.

Just look at a baby. For those of you who've got toddlers around or little ones, simple question, do you have to teach them the word no? Do you have to teach them how to be defiant?

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No. You don't have to teach them any of that. It just comes naturally because we are born with a sinful nature. Again, Romans 5.12, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through the one man, there he's talking about Adam, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.
We've all sinned. We recognize that. Not one of us has kept God's law perfectly. We can't. So, it is a part of our nature.
And so, change, then, comes from regeneration, not from reform. Change doesn't come when I turn over a new leaf, right?
[47:28] When January 1st rolls around and I got a new resolution and I'm just determined I'm going to start doing this and I'm going to start doing that. And reform doesn't work.

Reform can't change our hearts. The only thing that can is regeneration. Regeneration is to be made alive again. Or, as Jesus would say, being born again.
Jesus answered him. This is Jesus in conversation with Nicodemus, the Pharisee. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
It is a supernatural event that when we place our trust in Christ, we become born again. Born alive, if you will. where we were once dead in our trespasses and sins, he makes us alive in Christ.
2 Corinthians 5.17 says it this way, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. He's not someone who's been made over. It's not, you know, taking someone and fixing them all up and making them look better on the outside, but nothing on the inside has changed.
[48:39] It's from the inside out. It is a new starting point, if you will. And it is only then that obedience is possible.

Great passage in Galatians chapter 5. Actually, the whole chapter is incredible. And I'm just going to show you verses from Galatians chapter 5.
Paul says it this way, but I say walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. And he's writing to believers. He's writing to those who have trusted Christ as Savior and he's saying to us, if you walk by the Spirit, if you choose to follow the Spirit, you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
You leave the Spirit behind, you ignore the Holy Spirit in your life, you're going to be walking by the flesh, gratifying the desires of the flesh. He goes on after that to describe the works of the flesh and all the sins that are part of the works of the flesh.
And then he describes the fruit of the Spirit and what that looks like. If we choose to walk with the Spirit, what that's going to look like. Okay? And then at the end he says this, and those who belong to Christ Jesus, this is what they've done.
[50:02] They've crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. This is an ongoing work in our lives. Every day we have to put ourselves up on that altar of sacrifice, Romans 12, 1.

To offer your body as a living sacrifice. And you have to do that over, it's not just a one-time deal, not being saved is a one-time deal, but every day you have to offer your body as a living sacrifice and put it to death.
Because our tendency is to, like some zombie, want to crawl off the altar and take over my life again and decide I'm going to live my way. And so every day we've got to make that commitment to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires.
And if we live by the Spirit, let us also then keep in step with the Spirit. And so however the Spirit leads, we're going to keep in step with the Spirit.
I liken this to like a marching band. Jesus is the leader and we're just, the Holy Spirit is the leader and we're just keeping in step with Him. He turns this way, we turn this way.
[51:15] Just like in a good marching band, right? You keep in step with whatever the leader is doing. And this is what we're called to do.

Lord, thank you so much. that you've given us this picture of what it means to be a servant.
May we decide that that should be the goal of our lives, to be a servant. That's a picture of greatness.
greatness. That's what we're shooting for, what we're aiming for, to follow you, to follow hard after you.
That the desire of our heart, Lord, would be to walk by the Spirit, to keep in step with the Spirit, and to live a life of service. I pray, Lord, for those followers of Christ and yet as a contradiction are not really involved in service in some way.

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[52:32] I pray that you would help them to grab that heart, your heart, to want to serve and to say, yes, I want to be involved in some way, whatever that might be, and to do what it takes to speak to someone, to ask questions, to plug in, to keep eyes open, to look for opportunities, and to be a servant to those who are in need, to the body of Christ itself.

So, I pray for those today who have never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, whether here in this room or who are watching online, I pray, Lord, that you would convict their heart of the sin that is there, and that they would recognize that the only hope that they have is in Jesus Christ and what he has already accomplished for them.
thank you for going to the cross. Thank you for shedding your blood and their dying and paying the penalty for our sin, that substitutionary death, Jesus on the cross, and that Jesus absolutely did rise again from the dead.
We thank you for that, that truth. Thank you for the promise that it brings to us. thank you for the love that motivated that action, your steadfast love for us.
How could we explain it? It is, in a sense, too hard for our minds to fully grasp your great love for us, that steadfast, unconditional, loyal love, loyal love, that stubborn, you said you were going to do it and you done it, and you're accomplishing your goals in our lives, Lord.
[54:49] And you see it is already accomplished and we thank you for that, Lord. It gives us something that we can definitely look forward to, even in the midst of our failures.

others, we can look to you and know that you're going to bring us to completion. So, Lord, again, we thank you.
We love you. And we ask this all in Jesus' name. Amen.

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