

# **ESTABLISHED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*Free Grace Expository Messages on Romans 1-8*

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Tetelestai Press

Established in Righteousness: Free Grace Expository Messages on Romans 1-8  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	ix
DEDICATION .....	xi
Romans 1:1-7.....	13
Romans 1:8-15.....	25
Romans 1:16-18 .....	37
Romans 1:18-32.....	49
Romans 1:18-32.....	61
Romans 2:1-5 .....	71
Romans 2:6-12.....	81
Romans 2:13-20.....	91
Romans 2:21-29.....	103
Romans 3:1-9 .....	115
Romans 3:10-20.....	127
Romans 3:21-25.....	139
Romans 3:25-31.....	151
Establishing the Law Part 1 .....	163
Establishing the Law Part 2 .....	175
Establishing the Law Part 3 .....	187
Romans 4:1-5 .....	197
Romans 4:6-12.....	209
Romans 4:13-18 .....	219
Romans 4:19-25.....	229
Romans 5:1-4 .....	241
Romans 5:5-8 .....	253

Romans 5:9-11.....	263
What the Gospel Is NOT Part 1.....	273
What The Gospel Is NOT Part 2.....	285
What The Gospel Is NOT Part 3.....	297
What The Gospel Is NOT Part 4.....	309
Romans 5:12-14.....	321
Romans 5:15-19.....	333
Romans 5:20-6:2.....	345
Romans 6:3-4.....	357
Romans 6:5-7.....	367
Romans 6:8-11.....	379
Romans 6:11-14.....	391
Romans 6:15-19.....	403
Romans 6:19-23.....	415
Romans 7:1-4.....	429
Romans 7:5-8.....	439
Romans 7:9-13.....	451
Romans 7:14-17.....	463
Romans 7:18-23.....	473
Romans 7:24-8:3.....	485
Romans 8:3-7.....	497
Romans 8:5-9.....	509
Romans 8:10-15.....	521
Romans 8:16-22.....	533
Romans 8:23-27.....	545
Romans 8:28-30.....	557
Romans 8:31-33.....	569

<b>Romans 8:34-39 .....</b>	<b>577</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....</b>	<b>589</b>



# INTRODUCTION

In July of 2016, I received the call to pastor Grace Community Fellowship in Newnan, Georgia. The church had been faithfully pastored by the same man, Carl Greene, for over thirty years. Carl was (and still is) a passionate promoter of a clear gospel message, and he taught the Word of God faithfully every Sunday.

As I prepared to join the church, I wondered, “What should I preach on? Where should I start with this congregation?” As I begin to speak with Carl and the elders of my church about what had been taught most recently in both the adult Sunday School and the main service, I realized that although the Book of Romans had been studied at the church, it had not been studied for quite some time. I figured then that there would be no better place to start than in Romans, as Paul wrote this letter to an established church, and he yet “layered down” on these timeless truths concerning God’s righteousness.

I am forever grateful for the time the Lord gave me to study and prepare these messages and for the congregation and attendees who cheered me on through their encouragement and excitement about what the Book of Romans communicates. As you read through these transcribed messages, my hope and prayer is that God Himself establishes you according to the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:25).





# DEDICATION

First and foremost, I give God all the praise and glory for His faithfulness in exposing me to sound Bible teaching in my life. Each day I rejoice more in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and I am thankful for the men who have taught me clearly about the wonderful work of my Savior.

Second, I am grateful to my wife, Carrie, who has supported me in many ways. These include and are not limited to: (1) supporting my desire to further my theological training at Tyndale Seminary and then at Dallas Theological Seminary, and (2) providing her unending love, support, and encouragement! She is truly my favorite person in the world, and I enjoy discussing the Bible with her more than anyone on earth.

Third, I am so thankful for my kids (Abby, Cody, Riley, Sadie, and Tobin) who are also a huge blessing and motivation for me. I love you, kids, and pray God burns a clear gospel in your heart and a desire to share it with others. I pray that each and every day of your life that you see the value of what Jesus did for you!

Next, I want to acknowledge my parents, Larry and Kathy Clark, who raised me in a Christian home and shared the gospel with me at five-years-old. I am eternally grateful to them both! My Dad passed away in 2019 from Alzheimer's Dementia, but he was truly one of the best friends I ever had. My Mom is still my number one fan (or #2 next to my wife) even after all the grief I put her through as a teenager!

A special thanks to Emily Miller, my administrative assistant, who made this project a reality with her hard work in transcribing each of these messages and formatting them into book form.

In addition to the commentaries listed at the back of this work, I am eternally indebted to the teaching ministries of many men who have influenced me directly or indirectly from afar. Some of these men include the following: Bret Nazworth, a dear friend and mentor; Pastor Dennis Rokser, who through his audio teaching ministry, reinforced and clarified many different areas of Biblical doctrine for me; Pastor Ken Draper, a dear friend and mentor; Robert Ambs; Rob Armstrong; and Brad Smith.

Also, a special thanks to my current leadership board at Grace Community Fellowship in Newnan, Georgia. These men are huge supporters of any project or idea to further get out the gospel! I have so appreciated working with them!



# CHAPTER 1

## Salutations in Romans

### Romans 1:1-7

We're going to start embarking on our study of the book of Romans. The desire is just to go verse by verse, try to keep things in context so that we can understand the Bible the way that it was written and intended to be understood, and that's obviously the goal as we study.

Remember as we get into the study, this book is all about God's righteousness. See, mankind has a problem called sin. We don't have the righteousness required to join God in a heaven for eternity, because there's a penalty for our sin and that, the Bible says, is the penalty of death. The Bible also says that there's no way to regain this righteousness on our own. Many people think that if you just do enough good works and you just work really hard, that you can become righteous enough to go to heaven.

Well, the book of Romans, and the Bible as a whole, but the book of Romans specifically is gonna tell us that's not how you gain a righteousness to go to heaven. It's not by doing good works. So, it's not by trying harder, it's actually by giving up. That doesn't sound right, does it? That doesn't sound religious, does it? That's my point. Religion is many times the problem. Because what God has done is He's taken His only begotten Son and sent Him to be the provision, the answer for the righteousness that you and I lack, the forgiveness of sins by dying in our place and rising again.

And so as we look at the book of Romans, not only is Paul going to delineate how we get that righteous standing, but after we get that righteous standing, how can we now live a life in righteousness pleasing to God? That's all here in the book of Romans, and so we'll try to as best we can, keep that as our primary point of reference as we study through.

We'll read the first seven verses and then we'll go back through and dissect these one by one: *“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

And so we start here in verse 1, and it's important just to start with the Apostle Paul. We know a little bit about Paul, and he was what I would call a pure-bred Jew - in other words, his mom and dad were both Jewish. He had the right kind of pedigree: he was of the tribe of Benjamin, which was a tribe of great pride to be a part of. The tribe of Benjamin had a good reputation for the most part, though obviously none of the tribes had perfect reputations as you read through the Old Testament. But he had a good reputation coming from the tribe of Benjamin.

Something else important about Paul is he was a Roman citizen. In those days you could purchase your citizenship if you wanted to, if you had enough money - but he was actually a Roman citizen by birth, which leads us to know or understand that his dad was a Roman citizen as well. And he was born in the town or the city of Tarsus, which is where he grew up, and Tarsus was a prestigious city at the time. And so there's speculation that Paul's parents were wealthy, could afford to give him the greatest type of education that might be afforded to a young man. In fact, in the ancient world it ranked

up there with Athens and Alexandria in terms of the type of scholarship, the type of education a young man could get.

But not only was he growing up in Tarsus, but we know that he was trained in the Old Testament Scriptures by one of the best rabbis of his day, Gamaliel. Gamaliel is actually written about in extra biblical sources as being a “rabbi of rabbis”. And so typically what Jewish families would do is at the age of 13, if they didn't live in Jerusalem, they would send their children to Jerusalem to live and study under these famous rabbis. And most likely that's what Paul did at the age of 13, sitting at the feet of this great rabbi.

And so he had a great concept and understanding of the Old Testament, but you know like many Jews of the day, he had missed the point for many years as to what God was actually doing in terms of making man righteous. And so we'll explore that further as we go through.

But Paul had grown up studying the law, he became a strict Pharisee, passionate about the law of God. In fact, Pharisees were so passionate, they took the 613 laws of the Old Testament and then they insulated it with, some speculate, another 500 or so laws. It's like telling your kids, “Don't get next to the edge because you're gonna fall off the cliff.” And sometimes you don't even say that, you say, “Don't even come within 10 feet of that edge.” Because you know how kids are. Most of the time they come up and toe the line, so you kind of back off the standards.

And so the Pharisees did that too to try to avoid sinning, that was their passion. Paul was a strict Pharisee. In fact, he calls himself a ‘Pharisee of Pharisees’, maybe a hero to other Pharisees in terms of the strictness with which he observed the law.

As it relates to our epistle, he had never been to the Church of Rome up to this point in time. This was a church that had been founded and planted without his assistance. Now indirectly, he might have been involved. But directly, he wasn't. He hadn't been there, and we gather that just from the Epistle itself.

And as we follow the history of the book of Acts, we find out that he doesn't actually make it to Rome until the end of the book of Acts, Acts 28, and he doesn't get there the way that he had planned to get there. In fact, as we see again, context, he wrote this epistle while he was wintering in Corinth. He was wintering there, and he was planning a trip back to Jerusalem. If you recall, the Saints in Jerusalem were very poor, many of them had lost their lands, they were starving many of them. And so what Paul was tasked to do by the elders in the church in Jerusalem was to collect money from the different Gentile churches that he was visiting, and then take back gifts.

And so Paul is wintering in Corinth when he writes this letter. He's getting ready to take a trip back to Jerusalem, he's timing it so he can be there to celebrate Pentecost and to deliver this gift to the Saints. And his intention after he delivered this gift, celebrated Pentecost, was to hop on a ship and head straight back to Rome. That was his intention. Because he wanted to get to Rome to do what? To jump off and go to Spain, which was the end of the known world of that day.

I think Paul in his mind says, “Hey, we're close. We're close to filling this Great Commission to the end, unto the uttermost parts of the earth. We're close! I'm gonna hit Rome, I'm gonna visit there, and I'm gonna use them as a jumping-off point to Spain.” So, I think he's thinking this in his mind.

Now God had other plans, didn't he? Because as Paul goes back to Jerusalem, we read historically that he gets arrested in the temple, he gets put in jail in Caesarea for two years, he appeals to Caesar, they send him to Rome, he's involved in a shipwreck and just kind of a crazy trip over to Rome. And then he's under house arrest in Rome for two years. And that's how he gets to Rome eventually.

And so he had written them to tell of his intentions to visit them shortly, and then secondly, he recorded a systematic and detailed presentation of the gospel that he preached, right here in this book that we're about to study. If you wanted to know what Paul would do to establish believers, to lead people to the Lord, to explain how you can get God's righteousness, to explain how you can live righteously, look no further than the book of Romans. It's a systematic, detailed, organized explanation of how all those things work out. So, this message is for everybody. This is a book that we need to understand so that we too might be established.

And so as we go on in verse one, we've only covered one word so far, but we're going to move a little bit quicker. We also see that Paul calls himself a bondservant of Jesus Christ. It's a very interesting word because there are six different Greek words that he could have chosen to explain or express servitude in the language. He chooses bondservant, the strongest word possible.

This word was different than just your average slave in the market. In fact, some of your translations may have the word "slave". That's a good translation of this word, but it doesn't capture the nuance that's associated with this word, which is this: he was like a slave, but sometimes in this culture after slaves had served their time, if it was an indentured servitude type situation or they were sold off to pay off a debt, or they sold themselves off, they would pay their time and then they would be released. Or some masters would just grant some of their slaves freedom.

A "bondservant" would be somebody that was granted freedom but chose to remain a slave of that master, for whatever reason. They loved that master, they got treated better under the master's care than they did when they were managing their own money or finances, but there were reasons to do that. In the Jewish mindset, this was actually an honor, a privilege to be a bondservant.

In fact, when you go back to as early as the law given on Mount Sinai, Exodus 21, you've got this concept of bondservant shared there in Exodus 21:5-6. And what they would do with bondservants in this culture is if a slave said, "Hey, I'm free but I want to stay with the master." They would take him down in a ceremony, and they would nail a nail into his ears called an auger, and they would bend it in there and keep it in there, and that was the sign of a bondservant. And many people, many Jews especially, would wear that symbol with pride. I was set free, but I have chosen to remain serving this master. So, Paul identifies himself in this way as a bondservant of Jesus Christ.

And then we notice this next phrase in verse 1, he's "*called to be an apostle*". We know from Scripture that his appointment was as an apostle to the Gentiles, he was called to share the message with the Gentiles. And as we look at Paul's background, how shocking is that to see this strict, law-abiding Pharisee that had no use or interest for Gentile believers, or Gentiles in general. He called them dogs. Part of the religious Jewish man's prayer of every day that he prayed was, "Thank God I'm not a Gentile." That was their prayer. They hated Gentiles. And so for God to take this Pharisee of Pharisees and make him an apostle to the Gentiles, there had to be some heart change there. God worked in this man's heart, to the point as we looked at the book of Philemon a few weeks ago, that he called a Gentile slave (the lowest of low), "my own heart". I'll take his place, Philemon. And so you see God working in his heart.

So, he's called to be an apostle. We could get into a lot of debate; you know this is kind of one of those fun questions: was Paul the 12th apostle? Judas forfeited his office, he committed suicide. And we have the account in Acts 1 where they appointed Matthias by lots, and a lot of people say, "Well, that wasn't valid, that wasn't this." I just happen to take the text for what it says. I think it was valid, I think Matthias is the 12th apostle, but I do think Paul is on par with the 12 apostles, and I don't think anyone would argue that he was the key doctrinal communicator for church truth.

In fact, if you took Paul's epistles out of the New Testament, it'd be hard to piece together some things. So, he kind of reveals that God used him as an instrument. So, he was a key doctrinal communicator, foundational to the church - for you basketball fans, I would call Paul the "and one" apostle. You know there's 12 apostles *and* one - he's kind of equivalent, on par with the twelve, but I don't think he's one of the twelve. That's just my take.

But then we go on in verse one, we see that not only is he a bondservant of Jesus Christ, but we also see that he's called to be an apostle. And then he mentions this next phrase, that he "*separated to the gospel of God*". And I want to just make a point there, because notice that he's not just verbalizing what he's separated *from*, he's verbalizing what he's separated *to*. And I think that's a key point that we need to take in mind.

I remember when I started getting interested in spiritual things, and as I began to try to explain to some of my worldly friends why I wouldn't be doing some of the things that I had normally done, it always came out what I'm separated *from*. It was, "Jimmy, I'm not gonna go drinking with you anymore. I'm not gonna go to the nightclubs with you anymore. I'm not gonna do this, I'm not going to do this." And it always became what I was separated *from*. And it wasn't until I saw this in the book of Romans that it was something I'm separated *to*. It's a positive separation. See, I am separated from those things, but it's because I'm separated *to*. You know there's a difference between running *to* something and running *away* from something. There's just a different focus.

And see, I think Paul's focus is he's separated *to* - why do I say that? Well because as we get into verse two, he loses his train of thought. He doesn't even finish his greetings until verse seven, because he mentions the word "gospel", he's like "Oh, and let me tell you about that. I'm distracted now, let me talk about the gospel, and the person of the gospel for the next three to four verses." And you see that his mindset is I'm separated to something. It's not about what I don't do anymore, it's about who I am, where I'm going. That's his mindset here.

And so we see that he had been separated to the gospel at a point in time. And the verb tense here is perfect, it's a participle, but the idea is that his position of separated to the gospel remained, continued, that was how he lived his life. He remained separated to the gospel. Again, most of the time when we talk about our Christianity it's generally what we're separated from, not what we're separated to, and Paul's mindset was what we were separated to.

Now as we get to verse 2, I kind of alluded to this, Paul gets distracted. Verse 7 should actually be verse 2. Well, that's how you typically start letters: "Hey, I'm Paul. I'm writing to you, Romans." Those should be together. But you're going to see that he gets distracted by the gospel. It's a beautiful thing as you see because Paul does this a lot.

You know what, it's interesting because as I see Paul, Paul got distracted by the gospel. What do you get distracted by? Have you ever just taken account of the things that you talk about? Do you ever just notice in your own heart when you get excited to talk about something? I know there are certain people in my life - and we're from Texas obviously - but if I bring up the Dallas Cowboys and Tony Romo, man, look out. I can sit down; this person will carry the conversation for the next 20 minutes. They're gonna tell me all the stats about Tony Romo. They're gonna tell me what his wife looks like, how many kids he has, why he should be playing over Dak Prescott right now. I mean, all these things that are so important in life, you just get the whole thing. But the same person I could talk to about Jesus Christ, and they clam up. And they're believers.

I used to comment to my wife Carrie, there were times where you'd go to church and I said, "You know, I talk more about Jesus Christ during the week with people than I do Sunday at church."

Because Sunday at church, what are we talking about? Well, some of us are talking about football, some of us are talking about scrapbooking, some of us are talking about homeschooling, some of us are talking about work.

What jizzes you up? What distracts you? You know. I mean, I'm sure something's coming to your mind right now. What fires you up in life? Is it something you're doing at work? Is it some product that you sell? Is it some event that you're coordinating at your work? What fires you up, what jizzes you up? If you don't know, ask somebody around you. They'll tell you.

Paul got jazzed up by the gospel. Paul got jazzed up, his switch got *flipped* the second you talked about the gospel, and *why not?* That's how we get to heaven, folks. That's how our eternal destiny is changed because Jesus Christ died in your place for your sins and rose again on the third day. What's better to get distracted by than that? Is there anything else worth getting distracted by than that?

And so we see in verse 2 that this gospel was not something that Paul just made up. It wasn't even something that God created as a Plan B when the fall happened in the garden. This was a prophesied event; this was God's plan. And so we see that this was a prophesied event in verse 2. "*Which he promised before, through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.*" And so we're talking about the Old Testament that was promised in the Holy Scriptures. And this word "which" there in the verse just refers to the gospel, and this is why we say Paul is getting distracted, because in verse 20 he says, "*Separated to the gospel of God which,*" - referring back to the gospel - "*He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.*"

And so what is the gospel? The gospel is a simple message. It centers around a person in history, who did something 2,000 years ago. The Gospel's not you. You're not the gospel. Walking an aisle is not the gospel. Praying a prayer is not the gospel. The gospel is the God-man Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man, died for your sins and rose again on the third day. That's the gospel. There's no bad news in that message because this is the way that God makes sinners righteous. You want to go to heaven? Don't try being a good person. Good people don't make it to heaven, sinners make it to heaven. Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners and if you're a sinner, you qualify. God can make the worst sinner righteous. God can make the worst sinner righteous because of this message right here. Jesus died for your sins, he paid the penalty that you deserved, and he rose again on the third day. That's the gospel that we preach.

In fact, we find that very clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, and for time I won't go there but jot that down, because he repeats a phrase there in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 and it's simply this, I'll quote it for you, and you tell me if you can hear it: "*Christ who died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*" See, this was a prophesied event. This is something that God had revealed in His word, through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. He revealed that Jesus would not only come, which we celebrate at Christmas, but that He would die. He would suffer for our sins, and that He would rise again on the third day. See, God prophesied this through the Scriptures.

In fact, God planned to execute this before the foundation of the world, and we see the first promise of the gospel in Genesis 3:15. All the way back in Genesis, immediately following the fall God says this to Adam and Eve: "*And I will put enmity,*" - He's speaking to the serpent, this is in the context of Adam and Eve and the serpent present, but He's speaking to the serpent. "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*"

And we see in this the promise that Jesus would one day come and crush the serpent's head, would steal the sting of death, if you will, which is hell. Every man born after Adam deserved to go to hell. That's you, that's me. The beauty of the gospel is that Jesus came to save us. You ever wonder why the Bible calls Jesus the Savior? We need saving. And so you see that this was something that was prophesied about.

And then we see in verse 3 the “who” of the gospel, because the gospel involves a person. Verse 3 says, “*concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh*.” You know what's interesting about the way Paul writes this in verse 3, is he is speaking very uniquely of Jesus Christ. We don't pick this up in the English translations just because it wouldn't read normal. We'd say, “Well that's just so choppy, that doesn't read right.” But you know in the Greek it would be “concerning His *the* Son Jesus Christ our *the* Lord?” There's a uniqueness that Paul has even mentioning Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the unique, one and only Son of God. The unique, one and only Lord. The unique, one and only promised Messiah, the one we were looking for since Genesis 3:15 to come to crush the Serpent's head.

So, there's a uniqueness here in the “who” of the gospel. We see that the gospel is about a person, Jesus the Christ who is our Lord, and even worked into that Greek word “*kurios*” was a very technical term used to translate the Hebrew word *Yahweh*.

And so when the Jewish person - because of the Greek translation of the Old Testament called “the Septuagint” - when they saw that word “*kurios*” they perked up. That was the name of their covenant keeping God. And so for Paul to say these things - I mean it becomes so commonplace in church and in our culture to hear this phraseology - but when Paul said that, that would have been a shocking statement for a Jew. “What? Jesus Christ, Yahweh? The Yahweh?” That's how they would have read it. And so there's this not so subtle - I don't think Paul was a very subtle person - reference to Jesus's deity, just in His title. Just in the way Paul wrote this phrase, we see that come through.

In verses 3 and 4, we're gonna learn two things about Jesus Christ our Lord. He's going to describe Him in two ways. And first, we see in verse 3, He was “*born of the seed of David according to the flesh*”. He had a human lineage. Jesus Christ the Son of God came in the form of human flesh. And He didn't come as a conquering king sitting on one of those floats that people carry through town. He came in a very humble way in a manger. I mean they didn't even have room for Him in a hotel. I mean, good night, that's just crazy, isn't it?

But He was “*born of the seed of David according to the flesh*”. We see that phrase “*according to the flesh*” he was born. He was born a child in Bethlehem to a real human mother, Mary. And we read about that story in the Christmas story, see that in the Gospels. We see that His earthly lineage went all the way back to David. That was a requirement, that it would be tied to David, that was the promise of the Davidic covenant, that he would have a descendant to rule on his throne forever, and it had to be this Messiah. So, we had to have a messiah, a savior, whose earthly lineage went back to David.

And as you look at the Gospels, what's beautiful about that is Mary's lineage, His bloodline, went all the way back to David. We find that in the book of Luke, and we also see in the book of Matthew that through His legal adoption through Joseph that His lineage went back to David. Every point of reference that you could figure out for Jesus in terms of His lineage, it all went back to David.

In fact, when you see the Pharisees trying to disprove who Jesus was, we see that He was indisputable, and He was the seed of David. Why? Because the Pharisees didn't even make that argument. They had the records right there in the temple, they could have just nixed Him and His qualifications quickly if they did just produce the records and say, “See, actually you see this little jump right here? You see this little deviation? He actually doesn't go back up to David.” And they could have just shown everybody, and that would have just squelched everything. But that was indisputable. They didn't even bring it up - I'm sure they checked it out - because it wasn't a good argument. It was indisputable that His lineage went all the way back to David according to the flesh. And so as many objections as they raised, this was not one of them to discredit His unique qualification to be the Messiah.



And then in verse 4 we see His divine nature communicated. So we saw that He was fully human, He had a human birth and a human history there if you will, but in verse 4 we also see that He was “*declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*” And this word “declared”, it probably would be better defined as “marked out.” Jesus was marked out or declared as God's one and only Son in a very powerful way, by the resurrection from the dead.

The word “marked out”, think of it as God put a highlighter on Jesus. Do kids still use highlighters in school? Home schoolers, y'all use highlighters when you're studying? Back in the day, we used highlighters, didn't we? Back in the old days when I went to school, and back in the old, old days when some of the rest of y'all went to school. No, I'm just kidding. I'll probably get it for that one! I'm just talking about people, you know, 100 years and older. That's what I mean by that comment.

So, we used highlighters, why did we do that? Well, marking something out that we thought was important as if the bold words in the book weren't enough, sometimes we gave it a little bit extra highlight. God's highlighted Jesus Christ. God is pointing His finger - we're gonna see that in Romans chapter 3 at the end, when God begins to reveal how you can gain His righteousness, the idea that God is pointing a finger at His Son. He's highlighting His Son, He's saying, “Look over there, look to My provision.” He's pointing. He wants us to be enraptured with Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. And so Jesus was marked out by God as His one and only Son, He was highlighted, if you will.

And we see that God raised Jesus from the dead because He lived a perfect life. His sacrifice was acceptable to God the Father, and if you have any question as to whether or not God accepted Jesus's sacrifice, just look at the resurrection. If there was something faulty in what He did, something faulty in the way that He lived His life, something faulty in which He wouldn't qualify, there'd be a grave today that you could go see, Jesus's grave, and He'd be there. His bones would be decaying, but He'd be there wrapped in that linen, He'd still be there, the stone would be shut, there'd probably be other bodies in there with Him too from Joseph's family, Joseph of Arimathea.

But He's not there. The tomb is empty. God accepted His sacrifice. It was based on the fact - you notice this phrase in verse four - that He declared Him to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness. And I believe what he's talking about there is this holy nature. A great exposition of this verse is in Philippians 2:5-11, which says that Jesus was in very nature - or very *form* is the word used, but it's speaking of His essence - His nature, He was God. He didn't cease to be God when He took on human flesh, He just added human flesh to who He already was. He remained God the entire time He was on this earth, He's been God from eternity past, and He will be God to eternity future, none of that changes because that's who He is.

And so as we look at this, *God* raised Jesus from the dead saying, “I put my stamp of approval on what He did for you. I put my stamp of approval on what Jesus did by dying in your place as a substitute.” And now the question for each one of us is: will you accept the same way to heaven that God will accept? That's the question for each one of us. That's a question for everybody in the world. Are you satisfied with what God is satisfied with? God is satisfied by the death of His son in your place, so much so that He raised Him from the dead. Are you satisfied with Him? And if you are, the Bible exhorts you to put your faith in Him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. It's as simple as that because Jesus paid it all.

And see, that's why Paul is distracted, this is an awesome message. There's no message on earth greater than this message, to know that you can be made righteous in the eyes of a holy God. You can be made righteous in the eyes of a just God, who has to give you what you deserve. Now the beautiful thing about the gospel is Jesus stepped in front and took what you deserve, so that you can get something

you don't deserve. That's called grace. You can get something you don't deserve, God can remain holy, God can remain just, because He executed His justice on Jesus Christ so He can give you something you don't deserve. It's called heaven. It's called eternal life. It's called forgiveness of sins. It's called a righteous standing before Him. All of these beautiful things that we get because of what Jesus did for you and for me.

When we preach the gospel in our day, what aspect of the gospel is generally left out if we leave out something? It's interesting, the Apostles if they were moving through a section or maybe not delineating it in full - like he did in first Corinthians 15 - they'll typically just preach the resurrection. You'll see that they preach the resurrection, they preach the resurrection, they preach the resurrection. Why is that? Because to have a resurrection, you have to have a death. It's implied by the term.

It's interesting, as we preach the gospel today, we generally leave out the resurrection. If we leave out one of the two, death or resurrection, we generally preach the death of Christ and we leave out the resurrection. That's just kind of an interesting point. Because it's the resurrection that we look to to say, "You know what, God accepted what Jesus did."

And so (unfortunately) in our day, that has become so commonplace to hear about Jesus's resurrection and yet it should captivate our minds and thinking. I mean, here's a Man who was raised from the dead. That's amazing! That doesn't happen every day. Not even somewhere nice like Georgia. It just doesn't happen. And yet so many times, that's what we leave out. There's power in this message of the resurrected Christ. In fact, in verse four, he declared Him to be the Son of God with power.

So, we've mentioned grace, Paul brings that up in verse 5 as we move on. He says this: "*Through him*" - speaking of Jesus - "*we have received Grace and Apostleship for obedience to the faith among the nations for His name.*" And so we see this concept that it's through Jesus that we receive grace. Why can God give you something you don't deserve? Because Jesus got what you deserved. See through Him, you can receive grace. Through Him, Paul received Grace and his calling as an apostle.

And so we see that it's through Jesus Christ that he received grace and his calling as an apostle. And also, just notice, this is a subtle observation, but notice what comes first: grace comes first, then service. Grace comes first, then calling. See, grace is always going to precede service. When you look at Jesus and the way He disciplined His disciples, the calling was always to Himself, then to service. And so many times in Christianity we just get the cart before the horse, we just get it backwards. We see somebody that's excited about the Lord and we're like, "Put that dude to work! Put that gal to work, get them busy!" And many times, they need to take the position of Mary, sit down at His feet, observe, enjoy, learn about your Savior, learn from Him. And then as God prepares His messengers, then go out and serve. But you'll notice this order throughout the New Testament, and so it's important I think to bring that out here in verse 5.

Now what reason did we receive grace and why did Paul receive grace and Apostleship? Why did we receive grace and this call to service, if you want to put it that way? Ultimately so that he and others that he taught (which would include us as we're studying his epistle), would obey God in His Word for His glory. That's ultimately why God gave us grace. That's the ultimate, if you want to call it, result.

Now we see it described later in Romans as being conformed to the image of Christ, living a life that's pleasing to Him. And so we see that here in verse 5, he says, "*Through Him we have received Grace and Apostleship,*" - notice that next word "for", there's our reason - "*obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.*"

Now one of the things we need to talk about here is the proper order. Because again, in Christianity it's so easy to get the cart before the horse. And what do I mean by that? Well, what I mean

by that is simply this: this is an obedience that comes from faith. It's really clear in the original language because faith is actually a genitive, and you might say this way, "It's the obedience that belongs to faith." Or you might say it this way - I like it this way, because I think visually it gives us an understanding of what's being communicated - "It's the obedience that springs from faith."

Obedience is not the horse. And so much of Christian teaching and Christian emphasis is on obedience being the horse. Obedience is the carriage; faith is the horse. That's what this passage is teaching. This is why you can line this up with scriptures when it says walk by faith. "*The just shall live by faith*" Romans 1:17. Galatians 2:20, "*The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God*".

See, faith has got to be the driver in our Christian experience. And so many times we get this backwards. Contrary to popular belief, obedience is not the key to the Christian life. Wow, that sounds like heresy. I know, I grew up in church. That does sound like heresy. I almost questioned putting it in there. But you know when it's true, it's true. And we need to challenge our thinking. If some of us have never thought this way, if we think that obedience is the key word in the Christian life, and if you don't know whether or not you think it, just listen to yourself. Listen to the way you talk to your kids. Listen to the way you talk to your spouse. Listen to the way you talk to other Christian friends in terms of the Christian life.

See, obedience needs to trail along. I'm not saying *don't* obey. Let me clarify, I'm not saying that at all. I'm saying that if you live a life with the cart before the horse, and obedience is your buzzword, you will live a life dominated by sin. I'm just trying to help. The Bible doesn't want you to crank out the Christian life in your own strength. The Bible does not want you to focus on obey, obey, obey. The Bible wants you to have a relationship with your Savior - Who is also called "your life" - as you walk moment by moment in enjoyment and dependence upon Him. Obedience is gonna spring out of that, that was Paul's message.

In fact, we're gonna see a man who wanted to obey, who wanted to live life by the rules, a Christian man named Paul the Apostle in Romans 7, and go read Romans 7 and tell me how that works out for him. The things I don't want to do, I keep doing. The things I don't want to do, I keep doing, and he's all over the place. He's a wreck, and unfortunately many of us live our Christian life that same way. We're just wrecks, aren't we? We can barely put one foot in front of the other to come here on Sunday morning sometimes, myself included when I'm walking and living in this manner. See, faith is the key to the Christian life. In fact, as you look all throughout the Bible, we're gonna see that faith always proceeds acceptable obedience.

Don't believe me? Go to Hebrews 11 and just read the chapter. Without faith it's impossible to please God. *By faith* Abel obeyed, offered a more excellent sacrifice. *By faith* Noah obeyed, he built an ark. *By faith*, Abraham obeyed but notice what leads, notice what the source is, notice what the *horse* is. It's faith. It's a walk of faith.

God never designed us to live independently of Him, He only designed us to live dependently on Him, and so that ought to question everything that we do in life, we ought to start viewing it through this lens. Am I walking by faith, or am I just doing it to do it? Am I just cranking it out to crank it out? Am I just doing it so other people at church will think that I'm spiritual and holy? Forget about us. Don't worry about what we think of you - I mean in a good way, I'm not saying just come in and be rip-roaring and obnoxious. But I'm saying forget about what we might think of you. What does the Lord think of you? Are you walking in dependence upon Him?

And so even though this is very subtle, you can see this is just a salutation that Paul is introducing in the epistle, but it's rich. There's lots of good stuff here for us. That's the proper order: faith, obedience.

And you know what I love about this illustration of the cart before the horse is notice the cart is *ready*, notice the cart has *wheels*, notice the cart is *hooked up*.

God wants us to live in good works, but He wants us to live in a way that we live out good works in an acceptable fashion, and that's as we're depending on the Lord. And if we hook up to that power wagon right there trusting the Lord, walking by faith, walking in the spirit, obedience is going to spring forth out of that. And then the Christian life is going to be a joy. The Bible is actually true. There's abundant life for us here, we can believe that, but that's where it needs to start. Get the cart back where it belongs, and get faith out, and start enjoying your Savior on a day-to-day basis. See the miraculous and amazing things that God will do in our lives.

And then he's going to describe the recipients. Let's go on in verse 6. He finally gets back to his introduction out of his distraction. He says, "*Among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;*" and then verse 7, "*To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father in the Lord Jesus Christ.*" And so we see this concept in verse 6 that they are the called. We also see he mentions "among whom", so he's going back to verse 5, these are part of the nations that he's writing to, the Roman believers. They comprise part of that group.

But this word "called" is an interesting word. It's a word typically used to designate those invited to a banquet, they were called. Of course, we have other stories in the Gospels about people being called to a banquet, but they didn't do *what?* They didn't respond.

Of course, this doesn't happen very much anymore, but I remember growing up as a kid, we used to play outside all the time. It's not that kids don't play outside now; it's usually fenced in in our backyard where they play. But I remember riding down the road for blocks! Sometimes it seemed like a mile then on my bike. And you kind of had the general idea of when you needed to be home for supper. But there were a couple times I was engaged in playing and I missed the call, and that didn't go over too well when I got home. I missed the call. But as soon as I respond to the call, I'm one of the called. And every night my brother and I eventually responded to the call. We were the called, if you will, and part of the reason was we responded to it, and so we're in the house and we get to partake of the meal.

In our day, God says in multiple places, John 3:16 is the easiest one, "*Whosoever will,*" He's calling to everybody. But the people who respond are designated the called ones. They respond by faith and so they're designated the called ones. And that's what I believe we see here in verse six, it's just a synonym for describing them as believers, they're the called. They've responded to the gospel, and they were the called of Jesus Christ and the idea is that they belong to Him. He's not only their owner, but also their source of life as we've described a little bit.

And then finally in verse seven, we see that they're described really in two ways here. Paul kind of separates it, but he calls them this, he says, "*The beloved of God*". What's interesting about this word, it's got its root word meaning in the word "*agape*" and we all have heard of agape love, it's an unconditional love, you might call it "the all give love". But when he says that they are beloved of God, what he's saying is they are the unconditionally loved ones of God. And that describes every believer in Jesus Christ.

That means I can't do anything to separate myself from the love of Christ? Well, we're going to read that's exactly what it means. That's exactly the wording that Paul uses in Romans 8. You mean unconditional *means* unconditional? Yeah, it does. That's what it means. I mean even if you're a language expert, that's what it means. Unconditional means there's no conditions needed to be fulfilled to be loved by God when you're a believer in Jesus Christ.

Isn't that just an incredible position that you can just enjoy and own on a daily basis? Because do you live perfectly? I don't. And it's in those moments that I don't say, "Wow, look how good I am. Look how much I'm improving!" There are some days I feel like I'm going the opposite direction. And you know what? God calls me a beloved of God. Wow. Because of Jesus Christ and what He did not because of anything I did, but because of what He did. Isn't that a beautiful position? Isn't that a wonderful place and a wonderful truth to know?

And then he also says, "*Called to be saints.*" Now this is one of those situations where the translators added "*to be*" for clarity, and I think they cleared it up to be about as muddy as the Mississippi. I mean they tried, right? But "*to be*" is not there. In fact, you'll see it in your translations a lot of times, it's in italics, so it's not there in the language. But what he said is

"*called saints,*" and I think that this gives us a better understanding of what Paul was saying. He's not saying that we're called to act saintly or to be saintly in our daily lives, although the Bible teaches that, this verse doesn't teach that. What he's talking about is our position. You are not only unconditionally loved of God, but you are separated to God, for His purpose.

And where were you separated to? We learn elsewhere in scriptures at the moment you put your faith in Christ, God puts you in Jesus Christ. You are separated unto Him, you're unconditionally loved, and this is how Paul starts the letter.

And then finally the last phrase in verse 7, "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" And this is a standard greeting, but if you look through all the epistles of Paul, you're gonna see that he starts and ends every epistle with grace. Romans 16:24, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*" And so Paul does a grace sandwich on every epistle. The bread, the outer layer, the bread. Grace on each side, because he never wants us to get too far away from that concept.

See, grace is a divine concept. You talk to any man, any religion, any city, any country, any region, any continent in the world, and if you just talk to them and they don't understand the Bible's message, they will not give you grace. No one will ever come up with grace, they will come up with works. You gotta work harder, you gotta try better, you gotta be good-er to get to heaven. The Bible says Jesus Christ was good enough for you. As we continue in the next section, we'll pick up in verse 8.



# CHAPTER 2

## Desiring Rome

### Romans 1:8-15

We're gonna continue our study in the book of Romans. When we do that though, and each week - I don't know if I'll say this every week - but just keep this in mind, this is just a repeated comment: when you study a book as large as the book of Romans, we want to keep the forest in mind and not get too lost in the trees, if you know what I mean. So, we want to keep this big picture context in mind, but at the same time when there's a cool tree, let's look at it, you know what I mean?

And so sometimes, like last week, Paul's really just introducing the book, but there were some cool trees in the first seven verses, weren't there? In fact, we saw last week as he introduced, he got distracted by the mention of the gospel, and he broke off into verses 2-4 and talked about this Man, this God-Man, this special, unique Man, the Son of God, the only Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was born, but as a *son*, was also given, as we read about in the prophecies in the Old Testament. And not only that, but that God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf.

And how do we know that? Because He raised Him from the dead. There's nobody else that can say that. Nobody else has been raised from the dead who didn't die again. We see some examples of people in scriptures who were raised from the dead: Lazarus, but he died again. Jesus rose again, and He lives forevermore, and that's the message that we celebrate here in the book of Romans, the gospel.

And as we get into this next section, in terms of the forest, here's the forest: Paul is about to tell them why he's writing the letter. Paul is about to tell them that number one, he cares for them, and he has been trying to get to see them face to face for some time, and he's been hindered. That's the forest. That's the section we're about to look at this morning, but we're also going to take a couple minutes to look at some trees along the way. Because like Paul does, he gives kind of the reason - I wouldn't say he gets distracted - but I would say he thinks about something and there's just nuggets along the way as we go through this book. And so we want to do that as we move.

So, join me in Romans 1:8, he says this: *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."* And so we see this idea that their faith has been spoken of throughout the whole world. Paul uses a continual tense verb here, and he's wanting the Roman believers to know that they are continually on his mind. He continually gives thanks for them. Why is he giving thanks to God for the Roman believers?

Well, apparently the Christians in Rome in their lives were big news within the Empire. You could take a capital city and you start to see this group of people doing things differently, worshipping differently, talking about different things, the way that maybe even some of them had removed themselves from some of the paganistic traditions that were even encompassed in the workplace. Where they had to be part of different trade guilds just to get business. Imagine if just to be a part of the Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce, you had to renounce Christ and say that you were polytheistic and you worshipped many gods, just to get business or to network. And that's what some of these Roman Christians faced.

And yet something was going on in the lives of these believers, something big and miraculous. And as the trade routes of that day went through Rome - you've heard that phrase "All roads lead through Rome" or "lead to Rome", that's exactly how it worked. And as people were coming through,

people were talking about these Roman Christians. Lives were being changed. Lives were being altered.

We see the same thing with the Thessalonian church in Macedonia where Paul was only there for three weeks. He also was trying to get back to them but was hindered, and yet they were along a trade route, and everybody was talking about this little church in Thessalonica, just gossiping if you will about them. "Did you hear about so-and-so?" "Did you hear about this group of people?" "Do you know what they believe?" "Do you know what they talk about?" and just talking about them, these unbelievers.

And you know as a result of this, Paul had been hearing about this church, hearing about this church, he says, "I want to go meet these people. I want to interact with these people." And you know I believe that Paul was looking for fat people. Not that kind of fat, it's an acronym, F.A.T. And what do I mean by that? Well, he was looking for faithful people. We see his mindset in 2 Timothy 2:2 was that in order to disciple people, you're looking for *faithful* people that you can teach, who can then in turn teach other people. He's looking for *available* people, and he's looking for *teachable* people. And I think in the Roman believers he found a bunch of F.A.T. people, a bunch of faithful, available, teachable people, and may we be "FAT" in that way as well. May we focus our lives on being this very acronym: Faithful, Available, Teachable, versus the contrast which is the old "Triple U Syndrome": Unfaithful, Unavailable, and Unteachable. And yet many times, that's what we find in our day.

And so Paul finds this group of faithful, available, teachable believers, and he has been longing to get to be with them to add to their faith. And that's what we see here in verse eight, is that Paul is thankful because they are an example worldwide to people all over the place. And so we find that in verse eight.

Now this is one of those sections that Paul deviates, we're going to look at a tree. He's going to kind of get away from his big picture which is, "Hey I want to come see you and here's why. This is what I'm praying for, I want to come see you." But he's gonna say this and we don't want to pass by it too quickly in verse 9. He's gonna say, "*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son,*" and let's just kind of stop there for a second, because we have some richness here just in this phrase.

He says that he could call God to the witness stand based on what he's about to tell the Roman believers, in terms of the fact that they're on his mind. He's not just blowing smoke; he's not just telling them that he's praying for them. You know, have you ever been around somebody that there's just a hint of insincerity when they say I'll pray for you this week? And then it seems like the next time you see them, they've forgotten all about what you've asked them to pray for. There's just a hint of insincerity. So, Paul is saying, "Hey, I'm not being that way with you. I'm serious. In fact, if I could call God to the witness stand to get into my thoughts, to get into my heart, you guys - you Roman believers - are on my mind and on my heart. And I want you to know if God were to take the witness stand, he would say the same thing about that."

And then we see - and this is why we're breaking out here, because this is an interesting thought - the word "serve" that he uses here in verse 9, "*For God is my witness,*" - he breaks off in this phrase, - "*whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His son,*" it's an interesting word, because there's lots of different words you can use in the Greek language for "serve". He picked this one, and it's to serve in a religious sense, specifically it was used of Old Testament priests. "I serve as a priest" is how you can literally translate this.

And so it's really interesting that Paul takes this word "serve" and he ties it directly to worship. In fact, you'll see this word translated other places in the New Testament as "worship". Serve and



worship, almost being equal or interchangeable in some sense. Now it's interesting because I believe that the two are intertwined in the mind of God or interchangeable, and yet many times we think of it differently, don't we? In fact, let's just be honest: service gets a very bad rap sometimes as being mundane, worthless, "Well, you know, I'm not John. I don't get up and teach the Bible every week. I just move the chairs, or I just flip the button on the sound board. I just print the bulletins. I just hand out the bulletins. You know, God doesn't view that as a distinction. Do you know that anywhere you are and in any service that you provide the Lord, it can be an act of worship?"

See, that's how God views the situation. We just view it, "Aw, I can't do anything. All I can do is pray." Really? Wow, and God views that as an act of worship! Just like He does somebody that comes up and plays the piano, just like He does someone that comes up and sings, just like He does a missionary that travels to Timbuktu or Madagascar, or any country that's far, far away and in other galaxies as Star Wars says, and we view *that* as service. We view *that* as worship, but moving the chairs, printing the bulletins, lighting a candle, whatever. We don't view that as worship, and yet it's interesting to note that "serve" is synonymous with "worship". God doesn't make the distinction.

So, you mean I can worship while I'm washing dishes? Yeah. Changing diapers? Some of us with little kids, of course we're hopefully getting out of that state soon, but you know there's an opportunity to worship in whatever you find.

And we don't think that way naturally, we think "Well I gotta go to work for 40 hours, I'll worship God when I get home, or worship God in my devotion in the morning." That's one of the reasons why I don't like a real big emphasis on morning devotions because it perpetuates this distinction that *that's* our worship time and the rest of the day's not. See, we live (hopefully) in a perpetual state of worship.

This is what I believe, there's a subtle nuance to what Paul is saying, "I serve with my spirit and the gospel of His son." You know where Paul is getting ready to go after he writes this letter, after he winters in Corinth? He's getting ready to go to Jerusalem, a long trip, to deliver money. That's an act of worship. He wasn't preaching the gospel necessarily, he was going to deliver money to the poor Saints, and that would be an act of worship. And it all goes back to last week as we saw it's this obedience that springs from faith. Are you walking by means of the Spirit of God? You can worship God while you're washing dishes, then.

And then he goes on and we get back to our main point, that was kind of a sidetrack there. But in verse 9 he says, "*that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,*". If you look at Paul's epistles, his prayer list was long. Has anyone ever just gone through his epistles and wrote down what Paul said he was praying for? I meant to do that this week and I ran out of time. It's an interesting prayer list because in almost every epistle he writes, "I'm praying for you. I'm *always* praying for you!" is the idea, and we've got to understand that Paul put much value in prayer for these believers.

And it's one of those things - I don't know if you have found this over time as well - but if there's one area that's very symptomatic and very consistent among Christians that they're lacking in or they wish they were better or more consistent in, it's this area. It's prayer. And Paul seems to have a high value in prayer. In fact, Paul could never say that "without ceasing I preached the gospel", because he wasn't always preaching the gospel. But you know, he said this a number of times: "Without ceasing I'm praying for you. Without ceasing, you are in my mind and in my heart and I'm constantly praying for you."

In fact, as Paul works through a really interesting list in 2 Corinthians 11:23, he talks about all the struggles and all the trials that he goes through in ministry and he says, "*labor's more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus*

one.” And he just goes on, and on, and on, all of these trials and all these things that just basically buffet him in his effort to share the gospel.

And then he goes on into verse 28 and he likens this with those things, and he says this: *“besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”* So, the Church of Jesus Christ was in the heart of the Apostle Paul. This is what he thought about, this is what his mind was set on. So for him to say to the Romans, “I’m always praying for you.”, he’s not lying. He’s not blowing smoke, and he wants them to know, because I think some of them started to wonder, “Well, we’ve got a church here, how come Paul’s never visited us? He must not care for us.” And some may have started to wonder, “Why has Paul not been there?”

And so we find in Romans 1 he’s saying, “Man, I love you guys. You’re on my heart, you’re on my mind. I have been wanting to come see you, and I am hoping to come see you, but I just want you to know, even though I’m not with you, I haven’t been there before, I’m praying for you. You are on my heart, you are on my mind, and I will continue to pray for you.”

And so we’re gonna see as we look further here in this passage that his prayer was really twofold. Number one (we kind of looked at this already), he thanked God for who they already were. They were F.A.T. people - they were faithful, available, and teachable. They had put their faith in Christ to be saved, and they were presently trusting Christ in their daily life, responding to the Word of God - and so he thanked God for who they already were in Christ.

And then number two, we’re gonna see that Paul prayed to God for what they could become. What they could become, but notice specifically, what they could become via his physical presence with them. He wanted to be there with them, he wanted to take his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles, and he wanted to invest in these believers, because he knew he could add something to what they were already doing.

And we’re gonna see that here as we continue to go on, and we’re gonna go into verse 10 here. And this is his request: *“making requests, if by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.”* As we’ve mentioned before, Paul had never been to this church. This church had been founded without an apostle. And that’s just an interesting thought, because the church was probably founded by believers who had trusted Christ on the day of Pentecost.

We read that back in the introduction to the book of Romans, back in Acts 2:10, that there were visitors from Rome that had put their faith in Christ, probably taking the gospel back, and did something that new believers many times do: they gossiped about Jesus Christ. They just couldn’t help themselves, and I tell you, we get so caught in our churches, and our religion, and growing up in the church that we’ve lost - many of us have - lost this excitement. And we talked about it last week. There was a Man who lived a perfect life, who came from heaven, who died on the cross for our sins so that you and I wouldn’t have to pay the penalty, and then God raised Him from the dead. Why is that not something we can get excited about? Why is that not something that we gossip about and share just *spilling* off our tongues, and every moment of every day, why is it not that way for us sometimes? I don’t know, probably because we get distracted by things going on in the world. That’s probably the honest answer.

But somewhere along the line these believers in Acts 2 took this message back to Rome and they just started sharing it, and people started getting saved, and people started growing in the Lord. And before long they had a church developing there, and growing, and being edified, and built up, and people started noticing. And Paul wants to get there, and so we see that that’s really his plan.

But notice this phrase because it’s really interesting there in verse 10 because he says this: *“making requests, if by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.”* See, Paul is basically

making a statement, he's going to tell us a little bit more. He has realized up to this point that his desire to go see them was not in God's will. That's interesting, isn't it? So, here's a church, they love the Word of God, they're responding to it, they're growing in their faith, and God won't let the Apostle Paul go there. What's up with that God? How could that not be in Your will? But Paul recognizes that up to this point of time, it wasn't God's timing yet, and he's gonna go on to describe that in a little bit more detail.

We're also going to see that God's will was to get Paul to Rome, it just wasn't in Paul's timing, and it wasn't in the way Paul thought he was going to get there. God got him there, and that was in God's will, but up to this point in time the timing was not accurate.

And so we're gonna look also at verse 13a, because it really describes the same concept we see in verse 10. So, we're going a little bit out of order - I'm sorry for those that like to go in order - but in terms of thought, this is in order. So verse 13a *"Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often plan to come to you (but was hindered until now),"*

And so Paul is gonna go in a little bit more detail as to why he hasn't come yet. And we see there that he's been hindered. We see back in verse 10 that it wasn't according to the will of God, so there's some reasons he hasn't come. He wants the Roman believers to know it's not because he doesn't care for them. He's been wanting to be there, there's just been some things that have kept him away from there until now.

And I have mentioned this a number of times, but it wasn't that he didn't care for them, it wasn't that he didn't think or pray for them. In fact, he goes on to say, "I want you to know that many times I've planned to come see you.", and we don't get all of that drawn out for us in the book of Acts, but we do see that he had planned to come to them many times. In other words, they were in his heart and mind, and why wouldn't they be? In terms of just natural human thinking, here's the Empire of the known world, here's the capital city. We think, "Man, if I could just get to the capital city and reach people there, I could make an impact." It's interesting, that's kind of the way I think we would naturally think. But Paul had been hearing about them, he wanted to get there, and so he's explaining to them it wasn't because he didn't want to be there, it's because there were some things that were getting in his way.

And so we look at this idea of being hindered. You know, it's an interesting word here and we're gonna do a real quick word study because I think it's very important. This word "hindered" - and we'll bring up the Greek word later - was *"koluo"* and it just means simply *to be prevented or restrained*. I'm going to show you another word where it's also translated *hinder*. That's not restraining and hindering, that's being a jerk, basically. Tripping, trying to hurt somebody. And that's not what we're talking about here in Romans 1. But we will just talk about the other word that's sometimes translated as *hinder*.

So, who was hindering him? That's the question. I think a lot of people naturally will say, "Well, Satan was. Satan was hindering him." I actually believe that looking at the text, it was both God and Satan. So, let's look at this concept here. First, was Satan hindering him? In 1 Thessalonians 2:18, we find this verse: *"Therefore,"* - Paul speaking to the Thessalonians - *"therefore we want to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again - but Satan hindered us."* And we see the same English word "hindered", but it's actually a different Greek word than what we have here in Romans 1. The word used here in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 is *"egkopto"* and it means *to cut down or to strike*. And it's a different word than the one used in our verse in Romans 1:13.

Satan's hindering seems to come with harm, with pain, desire, destruction. Why didn't Paul finish his ministry in Lystra? Well, because I believe Satan hindered him, and he hindered him through being

stoned - not medically by the use of medical marijuana - stoned with rocks. It certainly hindered him. And this is what I believe, that when we look at Satan hindering people, it usually comes with harm, pain, physical destruction, some kind of attack, if you will, there's a hindering in that way. And ironically enough, Paul uses this same word "*egkepto*" - the same "*egkepto*" that's used in first Thessalonians 2:18 - later in Romans 15:22 to describe his being hindered from seeing the Romans. So, I think Satan played a part in hindering Paul.

In fact, we read through 2 Corinthians 11, all the things that he dealt with in terms of physical harm that hindered his ministry, and I believe Satan was at the heart of that. But we also see in our verse in the word that's used here, this use of the Greek word "*koluo*" means *to be prevented or restrained*. And I think this is a good visual image: the Apostle Paul walking with the Lord Jesus, Jesus leading him by the hand and maybe preventing him from encountering something harmful. So, He's preventing him, He's moving him away from that. And that's kind of the idea.

And so where do we see this? Well, I think this happened in the way that God led him to other places. He stayed in other places. He was going to Ephesus I think with the idea of sharing the gospel, planting a church, and then moving on, and yet he ended up staying in Ephesus for two years, because there was an open door. And while he was there, he taught at the school of Tyrannus, and all of Asia heard the Word of God.

And we see his track down through Macedonia, where God was leading him from city to city. He had the opportunity to preach in Athens, he had three weeks there in Thessalonica after he had some time in Philippi. So, God was hindering him, if you will, from getting to Rome by leading him to these different places. And then we find that in Corinth, he actually stayed there a month and a half.

How else would God hinder him? Well, I think God was using other believers to build and establish the believers in Rome. It didn't have to be Paul every time. That's one of the things that I just despise about the modern church, is it doesn't have to be the pastor all the time. It doesn't have to be the pastor emeritus all the time. It doesn't have to be an elder all the time. We're *all* called to the ministry. In fact, what does Ephesians 4:12 say? It says that we're taught to be equipped so the Saints might do the work of the ministry, and really the job of the leadership is to empower you to serve the Lord in your context, in your sphere of influence, and that's really what the church is about.

And so God just gives us a beautiful visual aid. Here's this thriving church, never been founded by an apostle, never been visited by Paul, and yet they can still make it. Go figure! The Word of God and the Holy Spirit and they can make it. Wow. Why does that shock us? And yet God probably gave this and I'm sure there were other reasons, but maybe this is one reason, a visual aid that God can accomplish His work with or without fill-in-the-blank. Some big hotshot superstar that's on the radio that has a thirty-thousand-person church. God can march it on, and He does it through the lives of you individually and me individually. And so I think He gives us a great example of that.

And then I think that God's version of success and strategic planning is not always our version of success and strategic planning. As I mentioned before, if we're thinking humanly, the human way is like we're going to the capital city, we're going to get there because we're gonna get the most bang for our buck, we're gonna reach people, and then we're going to branch out of there, that's where all the money is, we can kind of fund our ministry. And that's how humans think, and God sent Paul to places like Philippi and Ephesus and Thessalonica, and he had not had a chance to get to the big dog city of the day. He was all over everywhere else, but he hadn't been there yet. And so I think in that way, God was hindering Paul from getting to Rome. And so I think he recognizes that here in verse 13.

Okay hang with me there, we're gonna go backwards now to verse 11. And we're gonna see that Paul says that he has got a very strong desire. Verse 11 he says: "*For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established-*". Again, Paul's really just going out of his way to make sure the Romans know that he wants to come see them. He's been wanting to be there. In fact, we know that even with the word that he uses for "long", because the word itself means *to desire earnestly*, and then in the Greek he slaps on an emphatic preposition on the front of the word to make its emphasis even stronger. It would be like, "I want to come see you really badly," or you could say, "I really, really want to come see you, really badly."

That's kind of what he's saying here. He's making this emphasis stronger, and he's gonna give two main reasons. We're gonna find one reason there in verse 11, we're going to find the second reason at the end of verse 13. And we kind of get a key off of the language when he uses this phrase that means *in order that*, but the first reason is simply this: "*that I may impart to you some spiritual gift,*" is what he says there in verse 11. And you know, he uses this word "some", and I don't believe he's talking about the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives when somebody believes. That's a spiritual gift given by the Holy Spirit. We're talking about something that Paul could impart.

So, what is he talking about here? Well, I think that there's a really clear use of it, and I believe he's probably talking about the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, because he uses the same word "impart". What does it mean? Well let's go to 1 Thessalonians 2:8. This is what I believe that Paul wants to impart to the Roman believers. 1 Thessalonians 2:8 he says this, and you see again he was longing for this church as well: "*So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.*"

And so as we look at what Paul is talking about, I believe he wants to impart the gospel in its full sense. We looked at that a couple weeks ago when we talked about the *three* tenses of our *one* salvation, this full and complete deliverance that God has provided for us. But he also wanted to impart his very life, and you do that face-to-face, generally. And they didn't have the phone back then. They didn't have FaceTime. So, this was a face-to-face meeting where he could impart not only the gospel - what he taught - but also his very life to these believers. And that's what I believe that he's longing to do. And this really kind of goes with the idea of fellowship, being a part of their daily life, interacting with them on a face-to-face basis.

And let's go back to Romans 1, and he says he wants to impart a unique, a certain spiritual gift, and I think again, he's talking about the gospel, his teaching, and his life, but then he also says there's a reason he wants to do this. Go back to verse 11 and see if we can pick that up. "*For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift,*" - and notice that next phrase - "*so that you may be established.*" I want to be there, I've got something to add to your life through my life and through my teaching, and the reason for that is so that you can be firmly established *or to fix firmly*, is really what the word means.

And so the main reason that Paul wanted to impart this spiritual gift was that the Roman believers would be established. And that word just means *to stand, to set fast, or to fix firmly*. The idea would even be *to hold up*, if you will. And as believers, do we ever face storms in our life where maybe it's easy to get blown over? We all need establishing. This is one of the beautiful things about the book of Romans, it's *the* book in a sense if you want to go from start to finish, be established in our faith, to be set up, to be fixed firmly, to be held up, this is the book to do it. This is the study to embark on because of the way Paul systematically lays this out. But here he's specifically talking about being there in fellowship with them, being there in person with them. There's a value in being with other believers.

In our day and age, how easy is it just to stay home, stay in our slippers, stay in our robes, and flip on the internet and catch a sermon? Isn't it easy to do that? All you've gotta do is Google 'sermon',

and you've probably got... I don't know what would come up... a million hits? You could get anything you want to from the comforts of your own bed, and yet God values fellowship. God values in-person relational interaction. We're gonna see Paul even develop this as we go further in verse 12, because I believe he talks about how we are established.

Look at verse 12: *"that is,"* - again describing how we may be established - *"that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith of both you and me."* And so in this case, how is one established? How do we establish people? Well Paul's emphasis here is on fellowship. Now why would that be important? Well because when we establish people, (hopefully) we're establishing them in the Word of God, in sound doctrine, an understanding of who their God is, and what He's done for them.

We need to have a concept of and a solid understanding of the gospel: that you don't deserve heaven, you deserve hell (if we're being honest with one another), that our sins have separated us from God, and yet God has gone out of His way to take care of that issue for us - not only the penalty of sin which is death, but also this lack of righteousness that we have and we cannot overcome - and God takes care of both of those issues in the gospel, that if we simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we can be saved from the penalty of sin. And that is something we need to know to be established, because everything builds from there.

Colossians 2:6: *"As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord,"* - how did you receive Him? Well, I put my faith in the finished work of Christ. - *"So walk in Him."* Colossians 2:6 goes on to say. So, the same way I got saved from the penalty of sin is the same way that I get saved daily from the power of sin, and I will be saved in the future from the very presence of sin. It's by faith in a finished work that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross. This is one of the things that has to be essential in being established.

And so Paul's personal fellowship, Paul's idea of being there, these are the types of things I believe he would emphasize with these believers. He's looking to firm them up, fix them up, prop them up, so that when the storms of life come, they can stand. They can stand on the Word of God, depending upon the Holy Spirit, trusting in the promises of God. And these are all things that I think are necessary to be established.

In fact, we see just a couple verses later in verse 17, Paul says that *"the just shall live by faith."* Now in order to be just, you've got to transfer your faith from whatever you're trusting in - if that's your good works, if that's your church attendance, or if that's your intention to be good from here on out - you need to quit trusting in those things. That's what will send you straight to hell. In fact, people slide all the time off of a church pew straight into hell when they pass away, because they've never put their faith in the One who died for them and rose again. See, that's what the gospel is, that's the good news, is that Jesus came to pay the penalty. And so before we can even talk about walking by faith, we need to talk about and you need to be exhorted to put your faith in the finished work of Christ who died for you and rose again.

And so when Paul says later the just shall live by faith, he's talking about somebody that's already been justified, somebody that's already been declared righteous by God when they put their faith in Jesus Christ. And those types of people, those "just" people shall now live by faith and shall now walk by faith. And what we're gonna see is that as Paul wants to get together with them, notice where his focus is.

Go back with me to verse 12. As it relates to establishing, he says, *"That is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith of both you and me."* See, this is why we get together as believers. It's not to go to heaven, we don't come to church to go to heaven. We put our faith in Christ to go to heaven. We come to church because now we want to walk and live by faith. And as I am walking by faith,

you're gonna benefit from that. And as you're walking by faith, I'm gonna benefit from that. And just go around the room, as you're interacting and rubbing shoulders with people, as they're learning to walk and trust the Lord, we're all gonna benefit from that.

We're gonna be built up, and we're gonna be established, because we're gonna be reminded of truth. We're gonna be reminded about how great our God is. We're gonna be reminded about the great salvation that he's provided. And yet every Sunday, we can build up our faith just by rubbing shoulders with other believers. This is what Paul wants here, this is why he wants to be there in person. It's not so he can go put his stamp on them and start claiming success for the Roman Church and their ability to reach others. He wants to benefit from them, and he wants them to benefit with what he's got to offer them. And so there's this mutual benefit we see here in verse 12.

His second reason we see at the end of verse 13. He was longing to see them so he might impart to them some spiritual gift to be established. The second reason we find here is at the end of verse 13, and we'll read the whole verse, but we're gonna focus on the last part. *"Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles."* And so we see Paul wants to bear fruit among them. He knew that the ministry that was given to him by God would benefit the Roman believers. And this wasn't an arrogant thing, God had told him, "You're the apostle to the Gentiles."

And so Paul wanted to take what he had been gifted to do and his calling, and go invest in the lives of the Roman believers so they would grow, and they would continue to bear fruit. He had more to teach them, and I think one of the reasons Paul wanted to be there is they were hungry for truth. This was a group of believers that was F.A.T. - Faithful, Available, Teachable. And when you find people like that in your life, believers who are F.A.T., drop everything and be with them. Drop everything and invest in them.

I really cut my teeth in the secular business world, so investment was always the big word. And I'm about investing, God talks about investing, and so I'm not necessarily downing any kind of secular investment. I'm just saying this: if you want an investment that's gonna go with you, it's people. It's other people. If you find a F.A.T. person, drop everything and invest in them. If you find someone that's faithful, available, teachable, and you've got something to offer them, drop everything and invest in that person.

See, that's the type of people we take with them. Dads and moms, start with your kids. I know what you're saying, "I don't know if I've got faithful kids." Some of them are growing, aren't they? Some of them are immature, they need to grow into that, but that's where your investment starts. Invest in them. But if you find someone in your life, I don't care if it's a cashier at Walmart, I don't care if it's a co-worker, I don't care if it's somebody you just met. If you sense that you've got a F.A.T. person, drop everything and invest. That's an investment that will pay dividends. And that's another reason I believe Paul wants to get to Rome. He's got a group full of F.A.T. people ready to roll, and so he wants to be there to invest in their lives, because he knows that they'll go on and invest in others.

Paul views his ministry as an indebtedness, as a debt. Look at verse 14, *"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise."* Paul was a continual - he uses this phrase in the present tense - debtor. He's continually in a position of indebtedness to the Gentiles. Now, it doesn't mean he didn't care about the Jews. How do we know that? Well, every time he goes through, he starts in the synagogues. So, it's not like he's just discounting a certain group of people.

I appreciate the way God has created the body of Christ with differences, but one of the things that just drives me crazy is when people get so specialized in their ministry. I've known people who

have come out of a really difficult background, maybe tattoos all over them, and then all they focus on are other tattooed people. And then I've met people that come out of another kind of background, maybe a legalistic background, and all they focus on is legalistic people. Or they come out of a background where they've been addicted to substance abuse, and all they focus on is substance abuse people.

Now, that might be a primary emphasis of one's ministry, I'm not saying that, but to bypass other people that need it, to look at somebody for whatever reason and say, "Oh they don't meet my specialized niche area of ministry. I'm not going to talk to them.", that's not what Paul's saying here. He's just saying, "Hey, my primary calling is the one to Gentiles, but guess what? Along the way I'm going to some synagogues. I'm gonna talk to my Jewish brethren."

Because we're gonna find out later in Romans, if Paul could give up his own salvation and his countrymen could be safe, he'd do it. And he kind of says the same thing: God is my witness. I'm not just blowing smoke; this is how much I love my people. And so he's not saying, "Oh now I just focus on the Gentiles and not the Jews.", he's just saying this is his calling. This is what God has called him to, and there's this continual indebtedness.

I understand retirement in our culture, I understand retiring from a secular job, a secular work. I've never understood retirement from ministry, for this very reason. Because there's an indebtedness. I had a friend, and he had a great way of putting things, but he used to always say about evangelism, "I'm just one beggar telling another beggar where I found bread." You've probably heard that phrase before.

But imagine a beggar who's found a place that's got unlimited bread, and for thirty or forty years he spent his life telling other people where you can find bread, and then one day just says, "I'm done telling people where they can find bread.", and just sits down for the next 20 years. And so there's this mindset here that Paul is in a continual position of indebtedness.

There's not a retirement from ministry. There may be a retirement from secular work and praise the Lord if you're able to do that, but I'm talking about ministry. This is an indebtedness; we've got a message that can change people's eternal destinies. How could we retire from that? That's good news! Don't you love sharing good news?

And then he says this in verse 15, and we'll close here: "*So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*" And so in verse 15, he says, "*I'm ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*" That oughta strike you as a little funny, not that he's ready to preach the gospel, but that he's ready to preach the gospel to a group of Christians. Doesn't that strike you as odd? Preach the gospel? What? I thought his audience were already Christians. Why would he want to preach the gospel to a bunch of Christians? Hmm, good question, huh?

But clearly, he says that, and he says he's *ready*. I love that! There's this readiness on my part, the word has this idea like, let me at 'em! Let me out, I'm ready! I'm ready to go, I've got this readiness about me to go preach the gospel. Why would he say that he needed to preach the gospel?

Well, you know that Christians don't remember everything. Did you know that? There's a ministry in the Bible that talks about just simply reminding you and I of what we already know, because we tend to forget, we tend to lose perspective, we tend to lose sight of what's important. They needed to be reminded of the gospel over, and over, and over again, and so do you. You need to be reminded that you've got a Savior who died for your sins and rose again, that's the gospel. We need to be reminded of that, that God loved you so much that He sent His only begotten Son, and whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. We need to hear that message. We need to know that we've got a God that loves us that much. What a great time of year also to remember that,



as we celebrate the coming of our long-awaited Messiah, the one who would take care of the sin penalty for us and provide a righteousness that we could not obtain on our own.

The other reason: there are so many voices out there in our day that we listen to throughout the given week, whether that's a Bible teacher on the radio, whether that's a book that we're reading, and many that we listen to are not clear on the gospel. And we need to be careful, and we need to guard this message. Because what ends up happening is anytime you introduce you or me into the equation, we turn it into a works gospel, and we take the focus off of Jesus Christ. We take the focus right off of Him, and then it becomes about what *we* did, and how *we* did it, and what *we're* gonna do, and the Bible wants to keep the focus on the Man who died for your sins and rose again. The Bible wants to keep your focus there. God wants to keep your mindset occupied with Jesus Christ. Because it's not just a set of doctrines and writings, we're talking about a Person. A Person who wants a relationship with you.

And so, so many times we think - and I've heard this before - "Well don't preach the gospel, because we're all Christians already, give us some deep, meaty truth." The deep, meaty truth that we need is to remain on a solid foundation so we can actually grow. I've heard that so many times, "Well why do you keep preaching the gospel? It's because we need to hear it! We need to be reminded of what Jesus did for us every week. We need to be occupied with the Son of God in our daily life. And part of that, and foundational to that, is understanding what He did for you on the cross 2,000 years ago. So, we need to keep that in mind, and I believe that's Paul's mindset too.

I also think, based on verse 17, "*The just shall live by faith,*" and he says at the beginning of verse 17: "*for in it,*" - in the gospel - "*the righteousness of God is revealed.*" I believe Paul is talking not only about the good news for the unbeliever (how to get saved), but good news for the believer on how to live a righteous life pleasing to their Father. And I think that's all incorporated here in the good news. The good news for the unbeliever is how he or she can be justified or declared righteous by God, which is based on the finished work of Christ. And I believe the good news for the believer, it's how he or she can be practically sanctified or made righteous by God, which is also based on the finished work of Christ, which is also accessed as we walk by faith.

And so this is what I believe Paul is talking about when he says, "I'm anxious, I'm ready, let me at 'em. I want to preach the gospel to you at Rome." I don't think he's just talking about salvation from the penalty of sin, I think he's talking about salvation from the power of sin, salvation from the very presence of sin, the whole message, the way God stepped into human history and took salvation and gave you a complete salvation package the moment you put your faith in Christ.

And how do you practically as a believer benefit from that as you walk by faith in a moment-by-moment way in your daily life? Heaven's already settled the *moment* you put your faith in Christ. Your sins are forgiven the *moment* you put your faith in Christ. That's the only message the unbeliever needs to hear, they need to hear the gospel. They need to understand that they can be forgiven of their sins the moment they put their faith in the finished work of Christ. But I think Paul goes on to teach in the gospel how believers - you and I who have put our faith in Christ - can now live without being dominated by sin on a daily basis. How can we be delivered from the power of sin in our daily life? This is why I think Paul is anxious to preach this message to the Romans.



# CHAPTER 3

## Theme of the Letter

### Romans 1:16-18

So just a quick review, a 30,000-foot view of where we've been in the book of Romans so far. In the first seven verses Paul just introduces himself to the Romans, he gets distracted by the gospel, he just kind of bursts forth and prays over the gospel, and then he sends his greetings to this church that had been founded by somebody other than him. And then we move into the next section, 8-15 which we covered last week, and we find out that Paul had been wanting to get there in person. Paul had been wanting to see them, he had been hindered up to that point of time, and that's really where we've been so far in the book of Romans.

And so today what we're gonna look at, if I can kind of give you the forest, like I said last week, and then we'll dive into the trees a little bit. The forest is this: man has no righteousness. God provides righteousness in the gospel and you, and I need it. That's what we're gonna look at today. We're gonna find the theme of the entire book of Romans encapsulated here in verses 16 and 17. And it's interesting because one of the things we're gonna look at and we see in verse 16 is that very first phrase, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,*" well that's a popular verse, isn't it? And we hear that a lot, in fact it's probably one of the most popular verses in Christianity. And we think about what that means to be ashamed of the gospel, or to not be ashamed.

Well, before we look at what it means and what it doesn't mean, I want to tell you what I *don't* think it means. I don't think it means that you're ever afraid to share the gospel, or that you have some fear associated with how people respond when you share the gospel. Now why do I believe that? Well Paul is going to tell us that he's not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but do you know that Paul was not some super Christian in the sense of what we think of a super Christian? And what I mean by that is he wasn't perfect.

Do you know that the Apostle Paul was just like you and me in many ways? That he had fears, that he had if you want to call it, insecurity. So, we see this through the Bible, he didn't try to hide it from us. Yet many times when we look back and we look over history, we think, "Oh the great Apostle Paul, he's perfect. He would never miss an opportunity, he would always show the gospel, he's not afraid of anything, he was bold, he was courageous, he would just go into a crowd and just start letting it rip. And here I am, I can't even share the gospel with an old lady living next door who's my neighbor, who wouldn't hurt me if I shared the gospel." And yet we kind of think, "Well Paul would never do that."

Before we go into Romans, let me show you something in Acts chapter 18 if I could. Paul was in Corinth, and Corinth had a reputation that wasn't a positive one, it was a very worldly city in that day. In terms of what we might liken it to in our culture, we might say it's like the Las Vegas of the ancient world.

So, he's in Corinth and we see that in verse 4 it says this: "*And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.*" Sounds good so far, being bold, teaching the Word of God, but do you know that Paul's ministry in synagogues kind of came in two parts?

One part, he would go to their scriptures, the Old Testament Scriptures, and he would show them from the Old Testament Scriptures that their prophesied Messiah had to suffer and die and rise again. That was actually the safe part of the message, because he could show them from the Scriptures that their Messiah had to do that and they'd say, "Oh yeah, you're right." The dangerous part, the fear

part, was then he said, “You know who that Messiah is? Jesus of Nazareth.” And that is when all whatever broke loose. Either people got excited and put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, or they rejected Paul and began to violently oppose him.

And notice in verse 5 - it's a subtle comment, and we pick up even more I think when we get to verse 9, but he was by himself at this point in time - *“When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.”* He needed encouragement from his friends to be bold, to get over his fear. Now why do I say Paul was fearful? Well go down to verse 9, what does Jesus say to Paul? Jesus actually has to appear to Paul in the night by a vision to encourage him to continue, and He says this to Paul: *“Don't be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in the city.”* Now why did Jesus say that to Paul? Probably because he was fearful and worried that he might get attacked in that city.

And so when Paul goes into verse 16 and he says, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,”* it doesn't mean that he didn't still deal with fears like you and I do when we have opportunities to share the gospel. But it means something different, and what we're going to see, and what we have to understand is that there's four “fors” in this passage. And to confuse you more, one “for” explains the why, and three “fors” explains what the first for is there for. How's that? Four “fors”, let's just look at them quickly, and then let's work through them.

Verse 16, the very first part of verse 16: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,”* - middle part of verse 16 - *“for it is the power of God to salvation,”* - verse 17 - *“for in it the righteousness of God is revealed,”* - and verse 18 - *“for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.”* And so what we're going to see is the reason Paul is not ashamed, is there are concrete reasons why you and I should not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. He's going to give us three concrete reasons, so let's just dive into verse 16.

He says this, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”* Now why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel Christ? Where does this first “for” come from, or what's it referencing? When you look back in verse 14, he says that he's a *“debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise.”* And then in verse 15 he says, *“I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.”*

Why is he ready to do those things, why is he a debtor? Because verse 16, he's not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. That's why he wants to get there, that's why he feels he's indebted, that's why he says I'm ready to preach the gospel, because I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. That's the reason that he says those things in verses 14 and 15.

Now this word “ashamed”, it's interesting because it's not your typical Greek word for “ashamed”, because he throws an additional preposition on the front. Now you do that in Greek when you want to intensify something, when you want to really, really say something, and he throws it on the front of this word. The word itself means *to be ashamed or embarrassed of someone or something*, and Paul says *“I am very much not ashamed. I'm really, really not ashamed of Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross.”* Remember the gospel is about a Person, and about that Person's work. The gospel is about Jesus Christ and the fact that He died for our sins and rose again. And Paul says, *“I'm very much not ashamed of that message, of that Person.”*

Now it has nothing to do necessarily with fear, although fear could motivate being ashamed. But in this case, I think it's distinct because he's going to give reasons why you and I don't have to be ashamed of the gospel Christ. He's going to give us three reasons as indicated by the other three “fors” as we move on. You know, what's additionally interesting about this word, it says it's a continual tense verb. He presently and continuously remains unashamed of the gospel and the reason we're going to

see is he's persuaded; he's convinced of something as it relates to the gospel. He's very convinced about something, he's fully persuaded.

And just like for many of us as we walk out and we see the sky is blue, I'm convinced it's blue. Why? Because it's blue. It's really simple, it's blue. I'm convinced. I don't need to defend that; I don't need to be fearful. You may not like the fact that I say it's blue - in fact, I've had people tell me, "Well, you know actually, it's not blue." And they gave me the scientific reason - but it's blue! That's what we see. And so in terms of being ashamed, Paul is gonna approach the gospel that way.

In fact, we know over time that Paul faced a ton of opposition with the gospel, to the detriment of his life. He was stoned in one city, he'd been beaten many times, as we read in his accounts. He was in prison...there's all sorts of reasons why Paul could be ashamed of the gospel. But he says that he's unashamed of the gospel, and he's gonna give us these three "fors".

So why is he not ashamed of the gospel? What we're gonna see in verse 16 is he's not ashamed of the gospel because of what it is. What it is presently. What the gospel is. We're also going to see he's not ashamed of the gospel because of what it provides. And then finally we're gonna see that he's not ashamed of the gospel because of what it prevents. So, we're gonna see that Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because of what it is, because of what it provides, and because of what it prevents.

And what we're gonna *not* see, which is so typical in our day when we look at this verse, is he is not going to say that his unashamedness comes because someone has put him on a guilt trip for not sharing the gospel with somebody. You know, many times that's exactly how our evangelism happens. We attend an evangelism seminar, and we start feeling guilty and we have this guilt trip. That is not the motivation to be unashamed of the gospel.

You're gonna see that Paul's motivation is going to be based on what it is. There's no other way to be saved. That's the gist, it's the power of God unto salvation. See, that's why he's unashamed, because it is what it is - as many athletes say in our day, talking about different things - but the gospel is what it is, and it will remain what it is all the time. And that is: it's the power of God unto salvation, and that's what he's about to tell us in verse 16.

And so we see in verse 16 that the gospel is *"the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also to the Greek."* First of all, this word "is" is also present tense. It *is* and it remains true that the gospel is the power of God. And I like what a commentator says, and notice this as you read it in the text: *"He does not say (speaking of Paul) that the gospel contains power, he does not say that it's powerful, he does not say that it has power or that it exerts power, he doesn't say any of those things. He says the gospel is the power of God to salvation."*

Now most people understand the word *is*, I know some of our politicians sometimes need help with that definition. But most of us know what the word "*is*" means. That means right now, presently, it's the power of God unto salvation and it remains the power of God to salvation. This is why Paul's not ashamed of the gospel.

The gospel remains the only way by which somebody can be saved and remember the gospel centers in a Person and that Person's work. Don't ever forget that. The gospel is not about you walking an aisle in a church, you going forward at a crusade, you raising your hand, you praying a prayer, you asking Jesus in your heart. The gospel is about a Person, Jesus Christ, who died for your sins and rose again 2,000 years ago on a day in human history. That's the gospel, that's the good news. Trust me, there's no good news about you. The bad news concerns you and I. The good news concerns the Savior, the one who died for us and rose again.

Now this phrase 'power of God', it's an interesting word. You know, the Greek word is "*dunamis*", you'll hear a lot of people say, "Well that's where we get our English word dynamite." I think that's true, but it's not like we're exploding people. We're not blowing people up. The point of this word is that it's to be able to be capable and it stresses - here's the uniqueness of this word, I think - it stresses not only the ability to do something, but the actual intrinsic power to get it done. So, if you want to look at the power of God, you can look at it this way: this is how God gets salvation done. This is how He - as you know we all say in the south - get 'er done. Get it done. Get this salvation done, get it accomplished. Forgiveness of sins taken care of, death penalty taken care of, righteousness to our account. God gets it done. He does it through the gospel. This is the power of God to salvation; this is why Paul remains unashamed.

And you know as we look at the gospel, it's the *only* thing that can take care of the two problems that you and I face. We have a death penalty that we cannot pay, and we need a righteousness equal to God's, and we cannot achieve that. And so the message of the Bible is to quit trying. Quit trying to do good works. Quit trying to be religious. Quit trying to be better and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ, because that's the only way that you can have a righteousness equal to God's. That's what we're about to look at here as we get into verse 17.

But before we do, we see a very key phrase in verse 16 and so let's read back through it again. It says, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation, for everyone who,*" - does what? There's a response involved to the finished work of Christ, and it's simply *believe* - "*believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*" That means anybody in the *world* can be saved if they'll stop trying to be good, stop trying to be religious, stop trying to earn their way to heaven, and they'll trust in the One who died for them and rose again. That's the beauty of the gospel. That is how God has chosen to save people, and so He does it through believing, man's response.

Now we know that the gospel is a finished work, nothing left to add to it, but you and I must personally receive this free gift by putting our faith in the finished work of Christ. That is man's response. If everything is done, the only thing left is what Jesus says in John 3, "*As a serpent on the pole was lifted up in the wilderness, so must I be lifted up.*" And what did the nation of Israel have to do to be saved from the venomous snakes out in the wilderness? They had to look at God's provision. That's what faith is, it's looking away from yourself, taking your eyes off of your hands, off of your feet, off of your heart, and putting it on the one who came to die for you. to pay the penalty for you. And that's what we're looking at here in man's response here in Romans 1:16.

Notice clearly, read it in your own Bible, there's no other requirements to be saved. Many people like to add things to simple faith in Christ, but there's no other requirements, no other restrictions, read it again in verse 16, it's the power of God to salvation for everyone who simply believes. That's the message, that's the response we need. And you say, "Wow that sounds like a free gift!" Yeah, that's exactly what it is. That's what the Bible calls salvation. It's a free gift, it's not something you work for, or earn, or strive to obtain, or hope for. Salvation is a free gift. Salvation is a completely free gift, paid for by Jesus Christ, offered to whosoever will believe, and that's the message here that we see in Romans 16.

And so rather than trusting our own works, or our own efforts to obtain salvation, the Bible implores us to stop working. Romans 4:5, "*but to him who does not work but believes.*" Stop working and trust in the one who died for you and rose again. You know, many people over the years that I've talked to in terms of my Christianity have said, "You know, Jesus is just a crutch for you. You're just leaning on Him, that's because you don't want to earn it yourself and you just want the easy way out, and you just want easy belief." And I say, "You know what, you're wrong. Jesus is not a crutch. In fact, Jesus is my

stretcher.” Because you know what a crutch implies? That I'm kind of doing a little bit of it, right? I'm kind of leaning a little bit of my weight. Crutches just kind of help me where I can't do it myself. No, I'm *collapsing*. I'm *collapsed* on the work of Christ.

In fact, if I get to heaven and God says, “Why should I let you in heaven?” I'm gonna say, “It's because of that Man seated at your right hand, who died for me and rose again. And if that's not good enough God, I've got no chance.” So, I'm totally depending on the work of Christ. That is the message of the gospel. You quit resting on your crutch *and* Jesus. Throw your crutch away and lean on this stretcher that is Jesus Christ, the one who died for you, did for you what you could not do for yourself. And that is man's response as I see it there in Romans 1:16.

And then Paul goes on to say here, “*for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*” And what's interesting about that is, first of all, I think in terms of studying the book of Romans, we pick up a subtle reference. A few weeks ago we did the introduction to the book, and you remember that one of the reasons I believe Paul wrote this epistle was because of a subtle antisemitism or Jew-Gentile tension within the church, I think we pick it up a little bit here in this verse (although I don't think that's the main point of this verse), but you see again he's kind of hitting that potential tension there.

But I think the main point of this verse is simply this: to the Jew and their Jewish Scriptures was promised the Messiah, and through the lineage of Abraham, His physical descendancy would come. And so we find that in Genesis 3:15 all the way back at the fall that God was going to send a promised deliverer to take care of the sin problem.

And then we see in Genesis 12:1-3 that he was going to send that Deliverer through the line of Abraham, and then that seed would be a blessing to all nations. And that's where the Gentiles come in. He was a promise of a Savior not only to the Jews, but He was also a promise of a Savior for the Gentiles. A good cross-reference verse is Galatians 3:8, where Paul actually says that God preached the gospel through Abraham, and he's referencing this verse in Genesis 12:1-3, that his seed would be a blessing or that all of the world would be blessed through his seed.

And so we see there and at the end of verse 16 that salvation is available to all people. Jew, Gentile, it's not just reserved for the Jew who had the teachings of the Old Testament, it's available to everybody. And everybody in this room that's not a Jew should say, “Glory hallelujah!” because at some point you were excluded from those promises. You had to become a Jew in order to be made right with the God of the universe, and now God has torn the veil both literally at the death of Christ, and figuratively, and says, “Whosoever will can come. Whosoever will can put their faith in My Son and I'll save them, Jew or Gentile, it doesn't matter, there's no ethnic distinctions as it relates to eternal salvation.”

And so Paul's not ashamed of the gospel for what it is. We saw that in verse 16, it is the power of God to salvation. What we're going to see in verse 17 is that Paul is unashamed of the gospel for what it provides. What does the gospel provide for us? Well, we're going to see in verse 17 that the gospel is where God provides righteousness, this great need that we have. Verse 17: “*For in it*” - speaking of the gospel - “*the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’*” Notice he says, “*in it.*” Again, just kind of going back to the text, what's he talking about? “*In it,*” he's talking about the gospel. In *it* - the gospel - God's righteousness is presently and continually being revealed.

Do you know that you and I have a righteousness problem? For some people it doesn't take much to convince them, because those people are honest with themselves. They know not only the things that they do that are wrong, they know not only the things that they think that are wrong, but they also know sometimes that they feel things that are wrong. There are all sorts of areas in our life

where we see that we have unrighteousness, that we are unrighteous. But the gospel presents a manner by which you and I can be made righteous in the eyes of the God of the universe, the one who will judge us one day according to His standards.

See, that's the beauty of this gospel. And what I love about this word *revealed* is it means "uncovered." So, God's not trying to hide the way to heaven. You don't have to climb up the mountain of Mount Everest on your knees to go to heaven, to hope to find out how you can get there. You don't have to crawl across the country of Mexico to a big Cathedral, you don't have to camp out at the Vatican in Rome, you don't have to spend all your days in front of a mosque to figure out whether or not you're good enough to go to heaven.

The God of the universe is trying to make it easy for you. He wants to reveal it to you, He wants to uncover it for you. He's not trying to hide this or make it difficult, that's exactly what we see here in verse 17: "*for in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.*" It says that word "uncovered" and we see that He is purposely revealing it, He's purposely removing a veil, purposely uncovering it, purposely exposing to open view so that everyone who hears the message and responds by faith can be saved. He's not trying to make it difficult. The difficult way to get to heaven, which *never* results in success, is if you try to work for it the rest of your life. That's an impossible task, because no matter how hard you work you can never be good enough.

That's the beauty of the gospel, Jesus the perfect Son of God took your place. The righteousness that you needed; you have in Him the moment you put your faith in Him. That's what the gospel reveals. And so it's a beautiful message, this is why Paul's unashamed, because there's no other well you can go to to get this. There's no other place you can go to, there's no other method. There's no other work, there's no other opportunity that you could ever have to get what God is offering in the gospel. This is why Paul's unashamed. I mean, the sky is blue! The gospel provides righteousness, that's as simple as that.

And then he says this: "*from faith to faith.*" you see that in verse 17? "*for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.*" And what I love about this phrase is it shows that the gospel is God's plan for making us righteous from start to finish. Not only does He want to provide you a righteous standing before Him, but He also - once that happens - wants to show you and give you the tools and the resources to live a righteous life right here on earth.

And not only that, but in the gospel, He's already made a provision for you to have a righteous, eternal future as well, called *glorification*. And this is just the beauty of God, He doesn't do things half-baked, He doesn't start a project that He doesn't finish, He doesn't think of all the potential contingencies, He puts it all together in a complete offering called salvation, and it's all a gift. And so when we look at righteousness, it's from faith to faith. From start to finish you get saved by faith, you are being saved daily by faith, and in the future, you will be saved by faith. You're saved from the penalty of sin, you are saved daily from the power of sin, and you will be saved from the very presence of sin. And God took care of all of that in the gospel, and so it's a beautiful thing as we look at it.

You know, the gospel not only takes care of our sin penalty - which is largely what we think of when we think of salvation, is that we won't go to hell (that's sin's penalty) - He does save us from sin's penalty, but we also see that because Jesus died in our place, He provides for us our other greatest need which is righteousness. This is where every religion in the world *fails*. This is why Paul is unashamed, there's no other well, there's no other solution to that right there. You need a righteousness that's equal to God's. Go find a religion that can provide that, other than Christianity.

Nobody even talks about it because everyone thinks you can be good enough to get to heaven, as if the God of the universe is gonna grade on a curve. He's gonna take His righteous standard and say,



“Oh yeah, well everyone failed so my top score is a thirty, so I’m going to make them a hundred and then I’ll bump everybody else up.” I loved having college professors like that in college! That was awesome! Let’s get my test, it’s thirty, and the next thing I know it’s like he puts +75 up there, and I’m like, “Wow, I got 105 on that and I really got a 30!”

See, God doesn’t grade on a curve, though. God grades according to His perfect standard. And so when we look at our need for righteousness, no other religion can provide that. No other belief system provides that. You’re on your own buddy! You better sharpen up, you know, tighten up that tie, button that suit, make that bed. A quarter better bounce off that bed when you’re done making it, too.

You know, that’s what religion teaches, the gospel doesn’t teach that. See, in the gospel we have a righteousness revealed by God, from faith to faith. God took care of it all for you, will you believe Him? Are you convinced that He did it? Will you simply receive His gift by putting your faith in His Son? If you do, you’ve got it all, you’ve got everything you need.

We see that by identifying us with Jesus Christ, placing us in Him - we gather this from other scripture passages - we now stand before God in the very righteousness of Christ. That’s the beauty, we see this in 2 Corinthians 5:21. In fact, notice this: I was looking at this the other day, and this is again another very familiar verse to us, but 2 Corinthians 5:21 says this: *“for He”* - speaking of God - *“made Him”* - Jesus - *“who knew no sin to be sin for us,”* - you might say He became our sin offering. That’s probably a better way to say that, or a clearer way to say that - *“who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

You know, many times we think in terms of, “Well when you put your faith in Christ, God is going to credit righteousness to your account, or He’s gonna give you righteousness.” You know what I see in that verse? I see something much better than that. And what I see is this, read it with me again: you have become the righteousness of God in Him. You see, instead of God giving you Jesus as righteousness - if Jesus is over here, and He grants you His righteousness over here - He’s taken you, and because you’re in Christ, you *are* the righteousness of God in Him. You see, it’s even stronger than this concept of giving or crediting righteousness. It’s stronger because is Jesus Christ ever going to be found unrighteous in God’s sight? No.

How do we know? Because God raised Him from the dead. He’s seated at the right hand, He’s been restored - if you will - to His former glory. And He’s coming back again to establish His kingdom, and He’s coming back for you, dear Saint, to meet Him in the air at the rapture. He will never be found unrighteous in God’s sight, and Colossians says you are hidden with Christ in God.

So, when God looks at you, He sees Jesus Christ. And that’s how you can know that your righteousness is not just some fading thing, something you have to maintain, something you’ve got to keep up, like an oil change on your car or something. Once you put your faith in Christ, you have a position of unchanging righteousness, and it’s so strong because God puts you in the very righteous One who you trusted in for your salvation.

And then we see this position is secure because God is the one who placed us in Christ. You didn’t jump into Christ, you didn’t claw your way into Christ, God puts you in Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:30. It’s of His doing that He puts you in Christ. So, you’ve got a position that many times - and it’s typically called positional truth, positional sanctification - you’ve got a position that is unchanging, regardless of how you act on a daily basis, and that should be the greatest comfort to our eternal security that exists. God has placed you in Christ, that is an unchanging position. You are the righteousness of God in Him, and it all comes through the gospel.

However, the good news of the gospel doesn’t end there! In fact, let me get back to Romans 1 because he goes on to say that last phrase in verse 17, *“As it is written the just shall live by faith.”* And I kind

of mentioned this earlier, but in addition to the first tense of our salvation, there's two other tenses. A few weeks ago, we talked about the three tenses of our salvation, theologically known as *justification*, *sanctification*, and *glorification*, but specifically looking at the word "salvation" we looked at each one of those phases.

What are you saved from? Well in *justification*, you're saved from the penalty of sin. The penalty of sin was death, eternity in hell. Christ paid that penalty for you, and you receive the benefit, you're declared righteous, that's what justification means, the moment you put your faith in Christ. And then you've got the second tense of our salvation called *sanctification*. What are you saved from in sanctification? Well, you're saved from the very power of sin in your daily life.

Do you know that as a Christian, you don't have to be dominated by sin? The sad thing about many Christians - and myself included - is we can buy into this notion that domination by sin is just the daily occurrence. We've just got to accept it, we've just got to put up with it, just like some of the quirks in our personality. Have you ever heard someone say, "Well, that's just the way I am! I've been that way for six years and I ain't changing." Don't approach your Christian life that way, "I've been dominated by that sin for six years, that's just how I am and I ain't changing." Well, you're missing out on a salvation that God wants to provide for you, and it's not salvation from hell. That was taken care of when Christ paid the penalty for your sins, and you put your faith in Him. But you're missing out on this daily opportunity to walk with the Lord, to be delivered from the power of sin in your daily life.

And then we've got a third aspect of our salvation, God completes the deal, God finishes what He started, and one day you will be completely saved or delivered from sin's presence when you get your glorified body. It's just like Christmas: do you know what's really cool about Christmas sometimes, especially for kids? Sometimes you go to open your gift, and you know what you realize? Man, there's more gifts in here, it's not just one!

It's just like that as we look at the three tenses of salvation: *justification*, being saved from the penalty of sin. We look at *sanctification*, being saved from the power of sin. And then we look at *glorification*, being saved from the very presence of sin. And so we see really three aspects of one gift, salvation being the gift we received by faith, but three aspects as you get in. It's kind of like an infomercial, right? But wait, there's more! You know those infomercials.

And so salvation is kind of like that, "But wait, there's more!" It's not just a ticket to heaven, but salvation is an abundant life now and it's a future where you're not gonna deal with sin anymore. Glory, hallelujah! I look forward to that day. I look forward to that day where I'm not struggling or wrestling in my thinking with sin. But you know as we go back to Romans here, look at verse 17, it says: "*As it is written, the just shall live by faith.*" The just shall live by faith.

And so what is he talking about there? Well, I want you to notice something that he *doesn't* say. He doesn't say there that the *unjust* shall be saved by faith. That's true, he just said that in verse 16, by the way. The unjust shall be saved by faith, that's verse 16. What's he saying in verse 17? He's saying the ones who are already justified, the ones who have already put their faith in Christ shall live by faith.

What does that mean? Well, we're talking about sanctification. We're talking about deliverance from the power of sin. We're talking about you get saved at a moment in time when you transfer your trust into whatever else you're trusting in, to the finished work of Christ. The penalty of sin has been paid for you, you are righteousness of God in Christ, He puts you in Christ.

But then from that point forward do you just go out and live any way you want to, or do you just go out cranking it out in your own strength? Or do you continue to moment by moment, day by day, walk in dependence upon the Spirit of God to produce a life of Christ in you? Yes, it's answer B, "*the just shall live by faith*". This is a sanctification verse right here. You and I are to live by faith.

And I said this a week or two ago when we were in the first section, but so many times we get the cart before the horse and we want to talk about obedience, obedience, obedience, and we need to be talking about faith, faith, faith, and then obedience springs from faith. Obedience, acceptable obedience, springs from faith. So, we see that in verse 17.

Now we go to verse 18, and we finally see this third reason that Paul's unashamed of the gospel. The first reason: what the gospel is. It's the power of God to salvation. Second reason: what the gospel provides. It provides a righteousness that you could not obtain, or maintain, or attain on your own. And then verse 18 we're gonna see that the gospel prevents something happening to you. The gospel prevents, this is why Paul is unashamed of this.

And so we see something else that's uncovered. We saw in verse 17 that the righteousness of God is revealed or uncovered, here in verse 18 as we start into a new section which we'll pick up next time, he says this: "*For the wrath of God is revealed*" - or uncovered - "*from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*" So what does the gospel prevent, why is Paul not ashamed?

It prevents you and I from facing the wrath of God. So, this is why Paul's unashamed, it's not because he needs some guilt to kind of build up his courage to say something, he's unashamed of the person and work of Christ because he knows it's the only way you and I can avoid the wrath of God on Judgment Day. He knows it. It's true. There's no other provision for all of these issues that we have, sin's penalty, and a lack of righteousness. And so he communicates that the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. So, whereas God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel, God's wrath is revealed against sinful man.

Now I want you to notice something about verse 18. Just as God is full and complete in His provision for us and for salvation, look at verse 18: "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against,*" - does your version say *all* or *some*? All. This means that you're not dealing with your mom and dad when it comes to judgment. Ever gotten away with something mom and dad never found out about? Am I the only one?

But the point is this: you get away with stuff. I was getting away with - I shouldn't even admit this, you guys are gonna think I'm the biggest speeder in the world - but anyway, so just full confession, I got away with speeding the other day. I wasn't trying to break the law, I just happened to look up at my odometer and I was going about 15 over on the freeway. Now everyone else on the freeway was hanging right in there with me, I understand, but I got away with breaking the law.

And what this is saying is that nobody's gonna get away with anything at The Great White Throne Judgment of Christ. No one's gonna get away with anything. All of it is going to be judged. *All*. That means actions, thoughts, feelings, heart, everything is going to be judged at The Great White Throne Judgment. No one will escape. You see why Paul's unashamed of the gospel? This is your only chance. This is my only chance. This is my only ticket to avoid this judgment, because when God judges, it's not going to be on a curve. He's gonna have the answer key right next to the test, and what's wrong is wrong. Period. That's what's gonna happen that day. And you just see it there in verse 18: "*The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*"

Now we want to also look at this verb tense here, it's present tense. We'll talk about that a little bit more, but notice it is revealed, *right now*. There's a point in time where in the future it's going to be revealed, He's going to judge sinners at The Great White Throne judgment, but there's also kind of an indication He's pouring out his wrath right now, even to a lesser degree.

Now what do I mean by that? He's patient with us. If God executed His judgment the way that He will one day at the great white throne, every time somebody sinned, *boom*, they'd be wiped out right

at that moment. I mean, He'd even do that with Adam, right? Spiritual death started at that moment, but He let Adam live another nine hundred years. But if God actually executed His wrath the way that He could, the moment you sinned, you'd be done. None of us would get out of toddlerhood, we'd be done.

And so we see that He's pouring it out in a small degree right now, but He's going to execute it fully. We also know that the Bible teaches this, that the reason you don't have to face His wrath - if you put your faith in Christ - is because He poured it out on Jesus for you. He poured out His wrath on Jesus while He was on the cross.

So that's a beautiful message of the gospel. This is why in the gospel you don't have to be ashamed because God in His work through Jesus Christ prevented you from having to face His wrath. Again, there's no other religion that provides this. You're left on your own, figure it out, get good, get right, get straight, that's the message of religion. The gospel, the message is: Jesus Christ is right, Jesus Christ is good, Jesus Christ is straight, He did everything on the cross, put your faith in Him and so we see that even in this wrath.

Now as we look at what the word "ungodliness" means, notice the order first: it's first an offense against God. This word typically refers to lack of reverence for God or just an outright rejection of spiritual things. And then we see "unrighteousness", which really refers more to injustice toward men. And so you see the order, first it starts with offending a holy God, and then and then it carries out with offending men or mankind. And so God is going to pour out His wrath against all of this. Whatever that looks like, whatever form that takes, nothing will be missed on Judgment Day. And so together these two words just show us humanity's failure to love God and other people as we should.

Now what we're going to see over the course of the next three chapters is Paul is going to get down and dirty with details as to humanity's failure. Because there's still people that would hear this message and go, "Well but I'm a good person. I'm still a good person," or "My grandmother was a good person," or "My mother was a saint, my father was this, my brother was this, my sister was this..." And they would argue this point. "Well yeah, they've failed, they're not perfect, but they're still good people."

Paul's goal over the next three chapters is to change that thinking, and to show us that no matter what category you fall in, if you are an immoral sinner, if you're a moral sinner, or a religious sinner, you still don't measure up. You still don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven. And so Paul is going to show in great detail, almost painful detail, how we're all a bunch of failures. So as a friend of mine used to say, "Raise your glasses and drink from the cup of failure." All of us. Because that's exactly what the next three chapters are designed to do. It's gonna be a little uncomfortable for the most part.

Now notice this one final thing in verse 18, "*His wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*" Notice this next phrase: - and we're gonna really build off of this next week and the week after - Who do what? "*Suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*" That's an interesting word. "*They suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*" You know what it means? It means *to hold it down*. And I was looking for a picture and I couldn't find it on the internet. But did anyone ever have a big brother, or a big sister just hold you down by sitting on top of you and you couldn't get up? That's kind of the image I get from this.

When ungodliness and unrighteousness permeate man, that's exactly what it's like. They're trying to just cover it up, rest all their weight on the truth, and just hide it and suppress it and hold it down. "Squash it" might be another way to say it. And this is one of the ways that they exhibit their ungodliness and unrighteousness. They suppress, they reject, they actively hold down the truth.

It's interesting as we get into this passage, look down at verse 21, because Paul doesn't even give them the ability to say, "Oh, we didn't know." He just knows they know. And we're gonna see why he knows that they know. He knows kind of the backstory of this message.

But look at verse 21, because he says, "*Because although they knew God,*" See, they know God. They already know this, they're just holding down this truth, they're suppressing the truth. And so Paul assumes they know God, and what we're gonna see as we continue to study this section is that not only are they impacting themselves, but they also like to impact others negatively. Misery truly loves company, as they say. So, we're gonna see that they're impacting others negatively. And so we're gonna start the next couple sections really down in the gutter. Ben Franklin said, "*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*"

And as I think of this whole concept of being unashamed of the gospel, my encouragement to you today is will you take the time to be established in the gospel? And what I mean by that is to understand why Paul is persuaded here from this passage. Why is Paul persuaded that this is the only way? And take time to establish yourself in the gospel.

And then secondly, will you be persuaded by the Word of God as it relates to why you can be unashamed of the gospel? Can you walk out of here and have the same mindset toward the gospel that you do toward the sky? It's blue, it is what it is, that's the only way. Do you believe that the gospel is the power of God? Do you believe that it provides the righteousness that's needed to get to heaven, and do you believe that it prevents God's wrath from falling on you? Are you persuaded of that like Paul was persuaded?

Well, if you're persuaded by that, you can be unashamed of the gospel as well. And you can pray along with Paul, who - later in his life in the book of Ephesians - prayed that God would give him boldness to speak the gospel. Interestingly, he didn't pray to be unashamed of the gospel. He *is* unashamed, and you can be convinced of that too.



# CHAPTER 4

## The Immoral Sinner Part 1

### Romans 1:18-32

Turn with me to the book of Romans chapter 1. As I mentioned last week, we're going to get down in the gutter today, and I'll tell you a little bit more about what I mean when we get there. But last week we covered really the essential theme of the entire book of Romans. We talked about the central theme of Romans, which is righteousness. That's the central theme, let's not lose the big picture as we study details.

And if you recall, Paul was eager to preach the gospel to the Saints in Rome for three reasons: One, the gospel is the power of God to salvation, the gospel provides a righteousness that you and I need, and then third, the gospel prevents the wrath of God from falling on you and me. We saw that in verses 16-18, and that's really the summary of the book, if you will.

You need righteousness, God can provide it, how do you get it? That's the deal. And then once you get it, once you get that standing in righteousness, how do you live a righteous life? That's the book of Romans, that's the entire book summed up really simply. But you know as powerful as the gospel is, it cannot save a man until he sees his need for it. That's the problem. It's powerful to say, but man has got to see their need for it.

And so we're about to embark on a section where Paul is gonna bring the entire world into God's courtroom. Every single one of us, man, woman, and child is going to be represented in the next three chapters as we embark on being in God's courtroom. And what we're gonna find at the end - a spoiler alert but I'm just giving it away today - everyone's guilty. That's where he's going to end up, but he's going to take great pains to prove that point.

And you may not see yourself in this first section as the immoral sinner, but many of us who have been saved, who have put our faith in Christ, we can relate to this section because this represented our lives on some level before we got saved. I know that this would represent a portion of my life, you could describe me as an immoral sinner. Other people can relate, too.

Now, the problem with the moral sinner is when moral sinners who think that they're better than the immoral sinners - because they don't get drunk, and they don't smoke and use drugs, and because they don't commit adultery - they actually have more of a problem understanding their need for righteousness, because they've got a little bit in their thinking.

And then it gets even worse because moral sinners sometimes then slip off into religion, and boy, that's the death when you begin to think of yourself as religious, and good, and reaching God through your own efforts. You're farther away from the truth than if you were rotting in a gutter overnight. That person has a shorter distance to go to realize that they need God's righteousness.

And so as we think about that, I'd like to bring out this illustration if you will, and you might be familiar with this verse, Matthew 7:13 where Jesus says: *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it."* And I want you to picture a broad road with three lanes, and as we get into Romans chapter 1 and get through the middle part of chapter 3, we're actually going to take a look at the three lanes on this broad road to hell.

We're gonna start with the section on the immoral sinner. This would be the person that, as you look at them, you just automatically judge and say, "Oh yeah, that person's going to hell. They're really bad." You know, the serial killers would fall into this category, child molesters would fall in this category, drunks would fall in this category, the "really bad sins" that we think of when we think of an immoral person who's the poster boy or poster girl for going to hell, that would be the immoral sinner.

But you know, that's only one lane on this broad road to hell. We're gonna look at two other lanes as we study through the book of Romans. As we get into the first part of chapter 2, we're gonna look at the moral sinner. And I remember an old funny story of my Grandpa Clark who used to smoke and drink, and he would spend all of his money that he made on the railroad on these two things, to the detriment of his 11 children. They had 11 children; my father is one of 11. And later in life he got lung cancer, and then he became an outspoken critic of smoking.

And that's exactly what the moral sinner does. They've engaged in some of these sins, but they think they're better than somebody else because now they don't do those things. This might be somebody who's made it successfully through the 12-step AA program and now thinks alcohol is the worst sin. "I don't do that anymore, I've improved, I've gained righteousness." And so all they've done on the broad road to hell is shifted lanes. They're still heading to the same place.

And then finally we see the religious sinner, and we'll pick that up at the end of Romans 2. This might be a moral sinner who thinks that they're doing better, and they're gonna change lanes and become religious. And now they're gonna add church attendance to their schedule, now it's not just going to be Christmas Eve and Easter, they're gonna start coming out *four* times a year. They're gonna pick up this religious effort because they're gonna build up this righteousness that they think that they need to go to heaven.

The problem is that road, no matter what lane you're on, leads to hell. That's what we're gonna find in the book of Romans. Paul's gonna get to the end of the section and it says all of us are guilty. There's only one way off that road and it's the gospel. And you've got to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the exit off of the road that leads to hell. But many people live life switching lanes thinking that *that's* going to get them there, and we're going to find out from this section in Romans that you don't get there.

Now as we start off in verse 19, I told you I was going to find a picture to represent suppressing truth, and I couldn't find an older brother sitting on a younger brother, but I found this dog sitting on the cat, amen? I'm a dog lover as you can tell. This perfectly represents what we see in verse 18. Let's read verse 18 to kind of jump into our passage: "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*"

Now as we looked at that word last week, this word "suppress" means *to hold down*. Notice that it doesn't imply ignorance, it implies that they know the truth, but they're actively holding it down, they're actively suppressing the truth. This is true of the immoral sinner, and the Bible doesn't assume, "Well maybe some people don't know. Let's give them the benefit of the doubt." No, the Bible is gonna emphatically say *everybody* knows. You mean the Hottentot tribe in Africa? Yeah, everybody knows, that's what the Bible says. It's really simple when you just take the Bible at face value. You don't get into these speculations of, "Do they know?" What we find is that people know certain things. That God has given that knowledge to every person that's ever lived, and yet many people hold or suppress the truth down, and they do it in unrighteousness.

Let's move on to verse 19, our knowable God. "*Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.*" And so we see that what may be known of God is manifest *in* them, for God



has shown it *to* them. In this verse we are seeing that they're clearly suppressing or holding down truth, because God is knowable for two reasons, we picked that up right there in verse 19.

The first reason is this: it's manifest in them. There's something internally that's been made clear to every man, woman, and child that's ever lived - and I believe that God does this via a man's conscience and his heart - that God exists. You know, Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has put eternity in the hearts of men. There's a reason that mankind all over the world, all over the universe, all throughout time, has tried to devise ways to get to a God, *the* God, multiple gods, there's something in them that's been placed there by the Creator that lets them know there's something bigger than themselves.

Now people can deny it, they can say, "Well I'm agnostic. I'm atheist." The point is we've got the backstory here. You can't fool us. You may be confused, but we know the backstory is this: it's been manifested in them and they're suppressing the truth. That's the truth of the nature. And so when you're talking to an atheist, go into that with a mindset that no, they're just blowing smoke at you. This is really the truth; God has made Himself knowable because of what He manifests in them. There's an internal manifestation if you will, that God has put into every person.

But we also see the second reason there in verse 19, "*for God has shown it to them.*" And so we have an internal manifestation, and we've got an external manifestation. Something that God is giving everybody to see, and experience, and know, so that they can know that God is who He says He is. Specifically, as we look in Romans, not only that, but that this God is able to reveal His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. That there is a righteousness needed based upon the standard of this creator God, that He has made Himself knowable.

And so the question becomes, "God is clearly seen by men, but how?" How is He clearly seen by men? Well look at verse 20, as he builds on that point from verse 19, "*for God has shown it to them.*" Look at verse 20: "*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*"

And see, you don't have to sit in a theology class at Dallas seminary, or Florida Bible College, or any other university that teaches the Word of God to understand God's eternal power and Godhead. You don't have to sit in a theology class to know that. Because God has shown it to us via His creation. And not only has He shown it to us via creation, but we understand some of His invisible attributes, things that you would think that you'd have to read a book about, but we can just see, because when we look at creation, we see a Creator.

Just like when we look at this building, I know there was an architect. Would I have to prove that to somebody? There is a builder of this building. Am I saying anything that is a shocking statement? No, why do we know there was an architect, why do we know there was a builder? Because there's a building here. I mean, I hate to be Captain Obvious on that, but we don't question those types of things. I know that's a chair, and I know there was a place - somewhere hopefully in America - that made that chair, right? But I don't have to prove that to you to prove the existence of somebody who made the chair, just point to the chair and say, "That's a chair." Just like I don't find a watch out in the middle of the woods in North Georgia, up on a mountain, and say, "Wow, look how this watch evolved over the last two million years." I'd say, "Someone dropped their watch and cool for me, I'm gonna take it, I need a watch."

But this is the point here, that God has shown us through creation. This word "clearly seen" that we find in verse 20 means *to look down upon from a higher place*. And then notice this: *to see or know clearly and with perspective*. That means that - and we're going to see, he's gonna say that nobody has an excuse - when we see creation, we see it with perspective. We see it with an understanding that God exists, that He is who He says He is. We see it, it's clearly seen, it comes into focus via creation.

And again, how does one clearly see? Simply by looking at the things that are made. We might call this the Bible of nature. I started researching stuff on the internet, and that's a dangerous thing when you don't have unlimited time, you know that. It's just that you can get lost. Let me just read a couple of things that we can see in our creation that just testify to a creator. Let's start with the human body.

Did you know that the human body has millions of tiny blood cells that carry food and oxygen to every part of the body through a network - now listen to this - of some 60,000 miles of arteries, veins, and miniscule capillaries? That's in your body, 60,000 miles. That's incredible! listen to this about the human eye: The human eye can distinguish ten million colors. Now if you're color blind, we just hope you can get green and red right, that would be a good start. But the human eye can distinguish ten million colors.

Now check this out: women sometimes can have a genetic mutation allowing them to see millions of more colors. That's pretty cool! That's why guys when your wife says, "What color is this?" and you say, "Red." She's like, "No it's not!" and she's got another name for it. She sees it, she may have that genetic mutation. You might have a very special wife. But that's things that the eye can do. Now check this out about the eye: it possesses a hundred and thirty million light-sensitive rods and cones that convert light into chemical impulses. These signals travel at a rate of 1 billion per second to the brain. So when you take it in, it travels to your brain and you see. This is God's creation! This is how we can know that God exists!

Now I take you to the animal world. Many people don't like beavers, and I apologize if you don't, but beavers are really incredible animals the way God designed them. Did you know He designed beavers with built-in goggles? You know, my kids can't even go in the swimming pool without goggles, they won't even swim unless you've got goggles to keep the water out of their eyes. Did you know that they've got eyelids that are transparent? They shut their eyelids when they go underwater and it's just like having clear goggles. That's how God made the beaver, and it's just incredible stuff.

This blows you away: they can swim underwater for a long time because of the way God made their lungs. But they're not like fish, they can't live underwater, they've got to come up for air. But in the winter, to retrieve stored food when ice covers the pond, the beaver needs to chew the sticks underwater. He's going to go under and get his food. They can do this without water entering their mouths, because they have a firm mouth flap between their front incisors and their rear molar teeth, which are set considerably further back. We can clearly see that God exists through nature.

Now I've just got to share this one, this is really cool. I think the point has been made, and we could go on forever and just sit up here and read stuff like this all day long for years, about how incredible the God of creation is and how you just simply look at what He's made and say, "Oh yeah, He's real. He's the real deal."

But listen to this: there's a bird that they call the incubator bird, and kids will like this. You know how chickens and most birds sit on their eggs to incubate them and keep them warm? This bird doesn't. They don't sit on their eggs, they don't use body heat, in fact, the mother lays the eggs and then she darts out of town, she's gone. Mom's gone. Dad comes in behind the mom and begins to pile up great heaps of debris, which serves as incubators. And it's like a fermenting compost that this dad puts together over these eggs. And they found some piles of a certain species of scrub fowl where he's actually built a mound 20 feet high by 50 feet wide. And they just know how to do this.

And then when the eggs hatch, guess what the babies have to do? They have to crawl their way through the dirt to get to air, they got three days to do it. And I'm telling you, 20 feet and you hit the wrong way once, and you're probably not gonna make it. So, they kind of know which direction to go to get air.

Now here's the crazy thing. These are the things, again, as we look at creation, you just gotta know there's a God. I mean, this is incredible. So, it gets even better, because the male begins to perform his God-given job of managing the incubation of the deeply buried eggs, but he doesn't just put a pile on top and then wait nine months. I'm just waiting for them to hatch. No, in order to keep the chicks alive in their eggs, he has to keep a precise temperature of 91 degrees Fahrenheit for those eggs.

And you know, scientists still don't know how he does it. They don't know if it's his beak that's got a temperature scale. They don't know if it's his tongue he throws in there and kind of reads what's going on. But when he determines that the temperature is about to get off, he voraciously rips away dirt to expose it to the sun, or he packs more dirt on to keep that temperature at 91 degrees. And then on top of that, he's got to keep it at 99.5% humidity in there, and he knows how to do it. I mean, that's a sermon in and of itself. That's just creation, that's not what we've got here in special revelation that tells us even more about this incredible God.

But this is what Paul is talking about here when we look at the sinner who is suppressing this truth, these are the facts presented to them or they see it in nature, they say "Wow, how does that tree take my carbon dioxide, and then flip it inside," - and I'm just giving the layman version here - "and spit out oxygen for me to breathe? How does that happen?" It's because there's a creator that designed it to be that way.

And so we see that Paul is just basically stating the fact. And not only can we clearly see that, but notice that the next phrase says, "*Being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse.*" And so we see clearly, but we also understand, and there's an internal element also to this. This word "being understood" means *to perceive with thought coming into consciousness as distinct from the perception of senses*. What does that mean? Well in other words, we have an internal understanding. Not only do we see things, but internally we know those things to be true in terms of what they are revealing.

There's no question about it in the mind of Paul. He doesn't even allow for somebody to say, "Oh well, I've never heard of that." That's not a defense. How many people have tried that with a police officer? I talk about speeding a lot, don't I? I don't know why that comes up in my mind. But you know, when you get caught for speeding, try telling the officer, "Oh, I didn't know what the speed limit was." You'd probably make him write your ticket for more! Ignorance of the law, ignorance of truth that you have, and in this case every person's got this knowledge of God because of what He's revealed in them, and what He's revealed to them. Ignorance is no excuse. So, there's this internal understanding of really some deep theological truth. Who God is, His invisible attributes, His Godhead, naturally understood by mankind.

And then we see that this will agree with what we see and perceive with our senses. And so that kind of goes with the clearly seen aspect before. And then at the end of verse 20 we see that nobody has an excuse. And why is that? Well go to verse 21, because although they knew God, and let's stop right there, because they knew God. Paul doesn't make any kind of exception for anybody saying, "Oh, I didn't know." No, you know, my friend. We know. It's very clear that we know God.

And what's interesting about that word is not only is it the word "no", but it's a special word in the Greek *no*, they've got a couple of words you can use there. But this "no" means that not only do you know intuitively, which we've already seen Paul said, because it's been revealed in them and shown to them, this word is a word that means *to come to know*. So not only do you know it instinctively, internally by what you see, but you also come to know that this is true as you live life. That's the concept. So, they knew God, they had this coming to God knowledge if you will, even as they live their life.

And so again, he doesn't make any exceptions, he assumes it's true, there's an internal and external manifestation of the proof of God. And because they have a knowledge of God, guess what? They're held accountable. They're held accountable for pushing this truth down, for suppressing the truth. And see this is the problem for the immoral sinner. They cannot say, "We can just live life any way we want, because there's no creator that exists who's gonna hold us accountable for our actions."

The immoral sinner needs to understand they know God, they've been given everything they need to know about God, and one day that creator God is gonna hold them accountable, and He's going to judge them in true righteousness. And the problem is - and we're gonna see at the end of this section - nobody's righteous. Again, that's the whole point of this section, for man to see the need for the gospel, they've got to see their need for the righteousness of God. They've got to see they don't have what it takes. And that's what Paul is in the process of showing.

Now as we get into the second part of verse 21, we're gonna see really six responses by the immoral sinner to their knowledge of God. Again, Paul says they knew God based on that knowledge, so how do they respond to it? Well, we've already seen that they suppress the truth, I think that's the general description. But the first thing we see at the end of verse 21 is that they did not glorify Him as God. "*Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God.*" And so in their thinking, having a knowledge of God, they didn't recognize Him. They didn't honor Him as such. They didn't esteem Him with dignity. You might want to say they disrespected Him. The younger generation - probably my generation when I was young - we say He was dissed. We dissed Him, we didn't give Him any kind of credence, any kind of respect. And so we see that even though they knew God, they didn't glorify Him as God.

Verse 21, look at that next phrase: "*nor were thankful.*" And so they knew God, they had a knowledge of a divine Creator, but they weren't grateful or willing to give thanks to Him. You know, we see this played out in human history, where people wake up every morning cursing the very God that gave them the breath to curse Him. This is the kind of thing, it's just not recognizing what we have from this creator God on a daily basis, that gives air the ability to flow through our lungs, gives all of our body organs the right way to function on a daily basis when we're healthy. And yet, even though they knew this God, they weren't thankful.

And we see again in verse 21 that they became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. And so they had a knowledge of the Divine Creator, but their thoughts about life, and thoughts about origins, and thoughts about the world, became vain, worthless, and then what we're gonna see is that this really canceled out the knowledge of God they had. And what's interesting about these two phrases here, "*became futile,*" and "*foolish hearts were darkened,*" both of those phrases are in the passive voice.

In other words, they didn't make themselves futile, this futility was acted upon them. Why? Because of the suppression of truth. As people hold down truth, what's gonna happen is their thoughts are gonna become more and more futile. That's why the leading proponent of evolution today, when trying to give an explanation of how life was created, says there were millions of crystals that came together, maybe dropped off by an alien life-form. Wow, what an illustration for a futile thought. What an illustration for having your heart darken. Because the possibility of a creator is rejected in that thinking, and so this is the best that people can come up with, with the origin of life.

You know, they began to actually believe there is no God. And see when there's no God, there's no accountability for your actions. That's really what the immoral sinner loves, they like lack of accountability for their actions. They have faith, and you know what their faith is in? That there's not gonna be a God who's gonna judge them in righteousness on Judgment Day. And for some of them

that there's not even a God, that there's nothing waiting for them after they die, and then all you know, dogs and good people go to heaven. And that's what they're hoping in. That's what their faith is in, that's what their trust is in. They might not verbalize it that way, but that's what they want. They begin to believe because they've rejected and suppressed the truth, they actually begin to convince themselves that there's no God and no accountability for their actions.

And then we also said that their hearts were darkened, again, that's a passive voice, it's a result of suppressing the truth. And so now we've seen kind of some reactions that have happened *to* them, but then they go on the offensive. They start to assert things about themselves as they suppress truth, they start to assert and think certain ways about themselves, and we see this in verse 22, which says this: "*Professing to be wise, they became fools,*" You know this word *professing* means that they just verbally asserted. Verbally, just confidently asserted that they had true wisdom in these areas. That they were the end-all, that they were the master of their faith, that they could determine their destiny, as it were. And it all came out of the fact that they were suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. They began to assert that they're wise. By holding down the truth, they asserted their own wisdom, and this actually caused them to become fools.

Have you ever been in a room with somebody that thought they knew everything? Those kinds of people are kind of fun to be around for a little bit because they're kind of entertaining in some ways. But I remember being in the room with somebody who didn't know that I used to play baseball at a high level, and I'd been exposed to some good coaching and some good instruction. And we were in a room, a group full of people, and this guy began to wax eloquent on the intricacies of baseball. And he was dead wrong. He didn't know what he was talking about, but the people who were listening would have never known, because this guy came off like he had it all together; you know, he taught Ty Cobb how to hit, and he taught you know, Babe Ruth how to hit home runs, I mean, this guy was around from that point, that was the attitude that he took.

This is exactly the kind of picture that we have here, they're telling you how smart they are. And in doing so, in rejecting the truth of God, they're actually a bunch of fools. They become fools in asserting how wise they are! And I had a good chuckle when that guy was talking too, because that's exactly what happened, he was just foolish in the way that he was speaking. He didn't know what he was talking about.

Now there's a subtle intricacy, and let's bring it out, because I think it's very important. And I think it shows us the outcome of taking this approach to God in the Bible, taking this atheistic approach. But this word "became fools" means *to make dull, not acute, not sharp*. But here's what's interesting about this word, is it also means *to cause something to lose its taste or purpose for which it exists*.

Let me give you an example of where else this word is used, it's used in Matthew 5:13 of salt losing its flavor, losing its purpose, the same exact word. Salt was used - especially in days gone by - for a couple of reasons: to preserve food, and then to season food. But as salt loses its seasoning capability, it's worthless. You know, I always joke with Carrie, I'm not a big mushroom fan. And she's like, "Well it's just mushrooms. You know, they don't even have a taste." That's exactly my point. Why put them on there? They don't have a taste, why put them on there? That's a joking, running conversation in our household. But if salt doesn't taste well, why even sprinkle it on there? That's a waste of time. Save your muscles for something else, don't even do the shaking motion.

And you know what's interesting about this is that when people reject the knowledge of God, they assert themselves to be wise, they become fools, or they become people who have lost their sense of purpose for why they exist. The people through their suppression of the truth of creator God actually

lose their purpose for living. I was reading through statistics, and you know where the highest rates of suicide exist? It's among atheists. Because if they don't have a purpose to exist...

This is why the book of Ecclesiastes is quoted in a Beatles song and worldly people know the book of Ecclesiastes, because what's the theme of the book of Ecclesiastes? All is vanity. All is pointless. And you know what, without God, it is pointless. That's basically where Solomon got to: yeah, without God, it is pointless. And I've been to the height and pinnacle of *this*, and I've tried *this* for pleasure, and I've done *this* to get satisfaction, and let me tell you something, without God it's all pointless. It's worthless. You might as well take your life.

And this is a sad thing. This is a very sad thing because as people begin to just become more and more confident that they understand truth, that they're wise and they begin to assert this, they actually become fools, they actually lose their purpose for living. And so this isn't just a neutral truth that we're looking at, this is a very personal truth.

This reminds me of a story, and I didn't even know the girl, but a friend of mine was relaying the story. He knew a family, and it's their daughter that I'm about to tell the story about. She got into a fight with the person she was dating, and she was an atheist. She rejected all sort of spiritual truth that would have been trying to be communicated to her. She broke up with the person she was dating, that person worked at a Burger King, and so she had gone for one last grasp effort to restore this relationship. 17, 18-year-old girl, somewhere in that neighborhood. Well, the person she was dating really embarrassed her at the checkout line like, "What are you doing here? I told you it was over." And these kinds of things. This little girl walked out of the Burger King and took her life in a vehicle. Just sitting out there and took her own life as a result of this. No hope, no purpose for living, because her purpose for living was wrapped up in the person that she was dating or no longer dating.

And I often wondered, and this is why I think it's very personal, because how many people do you and I pass going into and out of fast-food restaurants? How many people do you hold the door open for as they go? And I just couldn't get that out of my mind for weeks after this happened. What if I was the guy who was holding the door open for her, and she went out to her car to take her life? See, I know I'm kind of getting off the text, but we have an important message. And it's life-changing, and as much as people think that "Well I'm not going to share with him, because they just fight against it, and they're really hard-headed and all that." The more they continue in this thinking, the more desperate I think they become.

Let's be courageous. Let's pray for boldness in these situations. You just don't know who you're gonna interact with on a daily basis, and we know where this type of thinking ends up. And so let's be courageous, and let's trust the Lord, and as Paul said last week, let's not be ashamed of the gospel, because it *is* the power of God to salvation. It can provide the righteousness that you need, and it's the only thing that could prevent the wrath of God from falling on us. You've got a message; we've got a message to share. And so let's keep that in mind.

But as we get back to the immoral sinner, they asserted themselves to be wise and as a result, they became fools, they lost their purpose in life. And then he goes on to say even though they knew God verse 23, "*and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*" And so we see this slippery slope, where this type of rejection of truth ends up leading, verse 23.

And so as they suppress their knowledge of God, we see from this verse that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God, they changed it meaning they changed the former nature of something. It can also mean exchange. In fact, as we go down to verse 25, we're gonna see that they actually traded it out. They took the glory of God, and they traded it out for something else.

Verse 25 is gonna say this: *“they exchanged the truth of God for the lie,”* - notice it doesn't say *a lie*, we'll look at that as we get there. But they exchanged the truth of God for *the lie*. And so the idea is that as somebody heads down this road, it gets really slippery, really quick. And before long this glorious, incorruptible God that they know about from nature, and this internal revelation, all of a sudden, it's a creeping thing, this impersonal snake. As Israel blew it in the wilderness, this golden calf. I was reading that the other day and Aaron says, “Here's the god that delivered you from Egypt.” A golden calf, Aaron? Come on, man. But we think like this as a natural man. In fact, when you look at the history of polytheism, you know what you're gonna see? Man, birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things. Those are the gods that polytheists worship.

It reminds me of an old Chinese missionary who was teaching on Romans 1, and a Chinese man came up to him and said, “There's no way Paul wrote that in the first century.” And the missionary thought, “Wow, this guy's really challenging me.” He said, “Well why do you say that?” He says, “Because that describes the Chinese people to a T. It had to be written by a contemporary of our culture.” And that's exactly what we see throughout history is this slippery slope as you reject the truth that God's given you. You move from man, to birds, to four-footed animals, and finally creeping things, and that is clearly a slippery slope. And so we see the gutter of man, the gutteriness of immoral sinners here.

And so as we get into verse 24, we're gonna see something interesting. Before we read verse 24, I want you just to notice this repeated phrase, “God gave them up, God gave them over.” and I want you to notice that, if you'll just follow with me for a second. Verse 24, *“Therefore God also gave them up.”* Verse 26, *“For this reason God gave them up.”* Verse 28, *“Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over.”* All three of those phrases translate one word, the same Greek word.

And so we're gonna look at this “giving over.” What does that mean? Well first of all, I want you to notice that it doesn't say God gave up. Hallelujah for the grace of God. God doesn't give up on anybody. There's always hope, there's always a chance that somebody would respond to the gospel. We hear stories - not all the time, but once in a while - of ninety-year-old people putting their faith in Christ while in the hospital. They had 90 years of rejection, 90 years of suppression of truth. In fact, we're praying right now for a friend who's 86 years old who doesn't know Christ. And she's the sweetest lady in the world but doesn't know Christ. So, God doesn't give up on people, but He does give them over - and we'll notice in verse 24 - He gives them over to uncleanness, verse 26 He's going to give them over to vile passions, and then finally in verse 28, He's going to give them over to a debased mind.

And so let's dive into verse 24 a little bit. Verse 24 reads, *“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lust of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,”* and so we see this “therefore” right at the beginning of that verse, and this is huge here, because when we look at the word “therefore”, we want to see what it's referring to. In other words, there's a reason that caused God to act in this way, to give them over. What is that reason?

Well, we're gonna see that it's in response to what we've already read in verses 18 to 23. And if you need a catalog of reasons why God has given them up or given them over, just start back in verse 18, they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Verse 19, God had manifested Himself to them internally and externally, by showing them the creation of the world. Verse 21, they knew God but they didn't glorify Him, they weren't thankful, they became futile, their foolish hearts were darkened, they profess themselves to be wise, and they changed the angle and the glory of the incorruptible God, *therefore*, based on all of that response, an active rejection by mankind, God gave them up. God gave them over.

Now, what does this word mean? Well, it means *to deliver over or up to the power of somebody*. So God does not just give up on people, but eventually as they continue down a path of rejecting Him, He

actually cuts them loose to their own devices. He gives them over to the very things that they're chasing and pursuing wholeheartedly in rejection of Him already.

I like an illustration that I heard of a person holding a rope that's tied to a boat, and the stream and current is taking it that way, and you're holding it back, so it won't get away, and find you just let go of the string. And you let the boat go with the current that it will naturally go with, and I think that's what we're talking about here when we talk about God giving them up or giving them over.

Now what does he give them up or over to? Well, He gives them up, the text tells us, "*to uncleanness, in the lust of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.*" This word "uncleanness" just generically means *filth*. It could mean like natural or physical filth, you know, dirty house or dirty kids, sometimes those two go together. But you've got this natural sense of filth or uncleanness. But here, I believe because he brings in this concept of (in verse 24) the lust of their hearts, I think this is an internal filth. These are thoughts and actions that emanate from the believers' lust.

You know James 1:14-15 tells us this is where sin originates, that it originates in our lust coming out of our heart. And so God has given them over to pursue sin wholeheartedly. Well now why would God do that? It's an interesting thought. Why would God give them over? Well, we're going to see that He doesn't do it immediately. He's patient. This is after verses 18-23 of showing how they consistently have suppressed truth. I actually believe when you look at it, it's maybe even an act of grace to allow people to get to the end of themselves.

When did the prodigal son realize that he had a loving dad back home and that what he was doing was wrong and what he had done was sinful? When did he realize it? Was it when he was just out partying, and throwing money around, and blowing his inheritance, and just having a grand old time, and waking up hungover, and all these kinds of things? Was that when God brought him to the end of himself? No, it was when his resources were gone, he was laying in the mud with a bunch of pigs, and he said, "Man, that pig food looks good."

Can you ever imagine, like I mean, let alone pigs, can you imagine if you got to the point where you thought Alpo looked good? Liquid dog food? That's the most disgusting thing on earth! And yet here's this guy lying in the slop, wanting to share a meal with the pigs. You could lose a hand trying to share a meal with pigs too, they're a little aggressive.

But the point is this, I think, that in some ways this is an act of grace, of God allowing somebody to get to the end of themselves, to suffer the natural consequences of sin. And I believe in some small way, abandonment is a revelation of God's wrath. Abandoning them to what they want to do anyway for their own good. And so I believe that's one of the things that we're talking about here.

The sad thing about lust - and this is lust for anything, but I just think of lust in general, and I think the use of this word in its association with some other sexual sin seems to maybe put those two together a lot in the scriptures - is it's so deceptive. You have to have this thing because you need it, and then when you get it, it doesn't meet those needs, does it? And then you crave more, or you crave something different, and then when you get it...

The best illustration of that for me is when I was a kid on Christmas. Christmas was the best day of my life, and it was the worst day of my life. You know what the worst part of it was? When my last present was open. What a gut punch that was every year! How discouraging that was. But the lead-up was excellent because that's what I needed. I needed those presents under the tree. The problem was I needed just one more after that last one got opened, and then I would have needed just one more, and just one more, and there's no end in sight. That's the sad thing about lust.

And so as these sinners are turned over to their own uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts, I believe God is saying cut 'em loose. And nope I can't meet my need there, nope I can't meet my need



there, nope I can't meet my need there, and eventually maybe it'll dawn on him, "Oh, He can meet my need. This One who created me can meet all my needs." And you know I believe that's what we're looking at here.

It's also interesting because in verse 24 he says this, that He gives them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, and then this next phrase, "*to dishonor their bodies among themselves.*" The very thing you think lust is going to do is to treat your body right, to provide satisfaction, to provide pleasure, whatever that lust is, it does the exact opposite. It brings dishonor and no glory to your body. It brings no satisfaction.

And it's interesting because if we relate sexual sin and we think of sexual sin, we've got 1 Corinthians 6 that says that any sin that you commit is outside the body, but sexual sin, you sin against your own body. See, the Bible fits together like a glove, this is all talking about the same thing.

In the next section we'll get back down into the gutter of Romans 1 and just continue this thought, and then we'll look at the other two instances where God gives them up, as this text says.



# CHAPTER 5

## The Immoral Sinner Part 2

### Romans 1:18-32

We're picking back up in Romans chapter 1, and in terms of just getting a running start into our study, I think it's really important to have the context really solidified in our mind. So, if I'm repeating this too much and you got it, just know that someone out there may need it repeated, and that way we're all kind of on the same page as we go. But here's the summary so far in the book of Romans: in order to go to heaven, you need God's righteousness. The problem is nobody has it. The good news is the gospel provides it. That's really simplistically where we've been so far.

Now Paul is starting, in about verse 18, he's gonna take us into God's courtroom and show us how every person who's ever lived is guilty before a holy and just God. That's what he's doing here, he's calling people to the witness stand if you will or presenting evidence against each type of mankind. So last week we looked at what I'm titling in Chapter 1:18-32 as “the immoral sinner”.

And this is what's interesting, what we have to understand is that every person is accountable to a holy God. That the judge of the universe is going to judge righteously. He's not going to grade on the curve, He's going to grade on His standard and His standard is perfection. You see, that should cause a red alarm like a fire alarm going off in our head, because we've got to understand if we're being honest with ourselves, we're not perfect. We don't have it all together. We've broken God's law. Even if we've done so unintentionally, it's happened.

And so we looked at this illustration last week and I think it's good for us to look at it again. Matthew 7:13 says: *“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.”* And so what I believe Paul has got us looking at here in the first three chapters of Romans is really this broad road to hell. And you'll notice that on this broad road to hell there's many different lanes on this road.

And so what we're looking at right now is lane one, “the immoral sinner”. And then what we're gonna look at in the coming weeks is lane two, what we would call “the moral sinner”. This is somebody that looks at the list in 18-32 and they say, “I don't do that, I've given up drinking, I've given up carousing, I've given up swearing. I've moved along, I'm not killing anybody anymore.” Whatever is in this list for the immoral sinner. And they actually begin to think that they're better now than the immoral sinner, that they're actually closer to getting to God.

And then we see this third lane that we're going to look at, which is found at the end of Romans 2 and at the beginning of 3. And it's what we're gonna call “the religious sinner”. This is not only somebody who's trying to improve their life morally, but now they're really taking that next step up to start getting religious and go to church, and do these religious things like reading their Bible, giving their money away, attending church, getting baptized, getting catechized, getting circumcised, and getting all the I's taken care of and dotted, because they think religion will get them to heaven. The sad news is all three of those lanes lead to hell. That's the problem. The sad thing is as you change lanes, notice that as you get more and more religious, as you get more and more dependent upon your own righteousness, you actually get further away from the solution, which is right up there at the top.

And so the solution's found in this: it's called the gospel. That's the exit off the highway to hell, so to speak, this broad way to hell. The exit is Jesus died for your sins and rose again, the righteousness that you need is found in Him, and God is willing to give that to you when you put your faith in Jesus

Christ. And as you exit that road, you get the narrow way to heaven. And that's what we're looking at now, the immoral sinner. But you know what we're gonna see is that people all the time just think that if they change lanes, that it's going to change their destiny, and that's not true. The way to get off this highway to hell is to put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you recall, the moral sinner is said to be holding down the truth. We picked that up at the end of verse 18, that word “suppress the truth in unrighteousness”. And that's what we were looking at last week, we saw that the immoral sinner, not only does Paul assume that he knows the truth, *why* does he know it? Because verse 19 tells us that it's manifest in them and God has shown it to them. How did God show it to them? Through creation.

And so we know that in verses 18-20, this is the problem of the immoral sinner. They are suppressing, rejecting, holding down the truth. They have the truth. It's not a matter of ignorance, it's not a matter of, “Well, I didn't know any better.” Try using that on a police officer. “I didn't know the speed limit was 50, that's why I was going 95.” It doesn't work, ignorance of the law doesn't work, right? And so this is what the immoral sinner does. They suppress, they hold down truth, they reject truth. And as we followed through last week, they professed themselves to be wise, they became fools, and in verse 23, they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, in birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping things.

Then we get into verse 24, and this is kind of a review from last week, but verse 24 starts with a big word in the English language. But it's a very key word as we interpret the Bible because it's the word “therefore”. And what it's doing is referring us back to all of the actions that we see in 18-23, namely that people are suppressing or holding down this truth of God. They're rejecting the truth of God. They're changing the glory of God. And on the basis of that we see, this phrase in verse 24 that, “*He gave them up.*” We see it again in verse 26, “*God gave them up.*” We see it again in verse 28, “*God gave them over.*” And that's what we're gonna build off of today, this whole concept of God giving people over or giving them up to these certain things that we see in the verses.

Now as we stated last time, this doesn't mean that God gives up on people. He doesn't say, “Oh, I just give up on them, they're past saving.” No, it doesn't mean that at all. What it means simply is this: He's delivering them over, and I think probably the best way to say that is He's letting them pursue what they already want to pursue, and He's not restraining them anymore. To experience the consequences of their own choices, of their own sin, and I believe it's actually an act of grace. Because as people experience the consequences of their own sin, many times they turn back to God, they begin to look for answers from God, from a spiritual perspective.

And so a good image I think - at least it was good for me, and I liked it, and it might help - is if you've ever seen somebody standing on the side of a river with a current flowing down, holding the rope that holds a boat. And as they hold the rope that holds the boat, the boat stays. But what happens when they let go of the rope? The boat goes down the current. It no longer is being restrained. And that's what I see God doing here in this word “give up,” “gave over,” “give them up.” And it kind of brings the thought to mind, if God wasn't restraining evil, imagine how bad this world would really be. Imagine what the news would actually look like at night if God wasn't restraining evil in this way. It sheds some light on how much evil is actually in this world.

And so let's hop into verse 25. We see a very bad exchange here in verse 25, but to get there, let's read 24 and just get ramped up. “*Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*”

And so we see this concept that they exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and they worshiped and served - now this is really similar to verse 23, isn't it? Because they worshiped and served the creature, and in verse 23 it tells us how that happened. It started with corruptible man and then it just worked its way down the food chain into slimy, creeping things, verse 23 tells us. But this word "exchange" is a compound word in the Greek, and it just means *to trade out or to convert from one state to another*. In other words, you'll see also that implied in this word is that they possess the truth of God. Because in order to exchange it, they had to possess it.

So again, Paul is assuming they know these things, that these immoral sinners know these things. And so what they've done is they've taken the truth of God and they've exchanged it, they've bartered it. They've said, "I want what you have more than I want what I have." And in this case, it's the truth of God for the lie. But notice not only that, he says that they suppress the truth, he says in verse 23 that they changed the glory of God, and then they replaced it with *the* lie. Did you notice that it said *the* lie and not *a* lie? I think there is a version that says *a* lie, but the underlying Greek text has got an article there, the translation is the word *the*.

So, he's talking specifically about a lie, *the* lie, a specific lie, so that begs the question, what's the lie? What are they trading the truth of God out for? What's the truth of God? What is he talking about here? Well, I believe in the course of the book of Romans we're gonna see that even more clearly. But I believe the truth is that God is a just and holy God, and He's going to judge in perfect righteousness. That's the truth of God. It's that mankind is accountable to a Creator. A Creator who establishes the rules, who says what's right, who says what's wrong, who gets to determine what the standard is to get to heaven, who also gets to determine the penalty for those that don't keep the standard.

That's the truth of God, so what's the lie? Well, I believe he's trading it in and the lie is simply this: holding down and replacing this truth. What truth? That there's a God. He's gonna one day pour out His wrath on all ungodliness and unrighteousness. That's the truth that the immoral sinner suppresses, rejects, and exchanges for. You know why? Because if you don't have a God holding you accountable for your actions, then guess what? You can live any way you want to.

And that's what the immoral sinner does. In fact, as we're gonna see from this list, not only do they live any way they want to, but when someone else does it, they go, "Man, good job. Good job! Come with me and do it too." And that's what the immoral sinner's mindset is because they've traded the truth for a lie. They're like the man who has problems in his life, or the woman who has problems in her life, and instead of dealing with the problems, they put their head in the sand, that's the immoral sinner. So not even attempting to gain righteousness at this point, because in their mind they've convinced themselves that one day, there's not going to be a God to stand on the throne to judge them.

A version of this lie we hear many times is, "How could a loving God send anyone to hell?" That's a version of this lie that's been exchanged and many times you hear that coming out of celebrities, you hear that coming out of Hollywood, you hear that coming out of the educated elite. If there was a God and He's loving, how could He send anyone to hell? You know the better question is, how could a just and holy God allow anyone to go to heaven? That's the best question, not how can a loving God send anybody to hell. How could a *holy* God forgive people who break His law and not judge them based on the penalty of sin?

And so we see this being carried out, in fact, if you want to jot down a cross reference verse, I think this really fits well here with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, John 16:8-11 which says the Holy Spirit is going to be sent into the world to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And then what are we talking about here in the book of Romans? Those three things: sin, righteousness, and

judgment. And so the immoral sinner has exchanged this truth for the lie that they will not one day have to face a holy and just God.

So, verse 26, we're going to see for this reason God gave them up to vile passions. And let's stop there, because we'll get to the second part of that verse in a second. But you saw that we had a "therefore" in verse 24, now we've got a "for this reason" in verse 26. And it's referring to this whole exchange, this rejection of truth for the lie, this lie that God will not one day judge them in perfect righteousness. And so we see it's as a result of their response, their exchanging of the truth, then again, God cuts them loose to pursue what they want to, to receive the consequences for their actions. God cuts them loose, He lets them go, and lets them pursue what they're already wanting to pursue for that very reason.

And it's interesting because Paul (in this verse specifically) says that God gave them up to vile passions. It's an interesting word because he goes on to define a little bit further for us in the next verse. But these are basically lusts that dishonor and disgrace those who indulge in them. So, it's very specific, when we're talking about vile passions, we're talking about activities that dishonor and disgrace those who indulge in them. And so we see they're given over again to suffer the consequences for these choices that they're making.

Now we get into verse 26b and verse 27, and honestly, in our day and time, this could be a sermon series as it relates to homosexuality. And this is something that's on the forefront of our minds. It seems like there's something going on in the paper every week, there's people being accused of being bigoted or homophobic. If you were to teach from the Bible that homosexuality is sin, then people are gonna label you as hateful, speaking hate speech. But we've got to let the Bible speak for itself here.

And so let's just read the text, and then let's talk about it in the middle part of verse 26, "*For even,*" - speaking of further defining vile passions for us - "*for even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which is due.*" And so we see this passage here, and a couple of just interesting things to make a note of: notice Paul's terminology as he describes homosexuality. He describes it as against nature, he describes it as unnatural, and he describes it as shameful. And not only that, but at the beginning of verse 26, he also described it as "*vile passions,*" which was, remember, *lust that disgraces or dishonors itself*, that's basically the concept here.

Now I think we've got to be clear on the issue of homosexuality, that homosexuality was not, and is not part of God's plan for mankind. Clearly, it's not. This is a sin that like the other ones we're going to look at here, it is a result of God specifically giving people up to pursue these vile passions. So it's not part of God's plan for mankind, this wasn't His original design. And again, you go back to Paul's terminology, it's against nature, it's unnatural, it's shameful, the way that he describes this.

And not only that, but these are sins that dishonor and disgrace, that those who participate in them, it's a direct result of being given over by God to suffer the natural consequences that they bring. So, this is what we're looking at in context in this passage, it's just one of the ways that God gives people over. And as we see this developing in a society, we can understand from the scripture what's going on behind the scenes. That this is a God who's been holding the boat for a time, and is now just releasing it, and letting that proceed along those lines.

Now, let's take a rabbit trail on this real quick. Let me make a couple of comments and this may generate more discussion, which is totally fine, but you know what I have found in the area of homosexuality and talking to homosexuals is that denying or questioning feelings or experiences is very irrelevant to them. You don't get very far. Because feelings are feelings, experiences are experiences, and

many times if people feel like they've had an experience or feel a certain way, you're not going to convince them based on that argument. So just recognize that going in.

But the second thing is, and I don't think this is a bold statement, but I don't know why we don't talk about this more as Christians. Do you know that homosexuality has never sent anybody to hell? Do you know that? Because you know what sends people to hell, don't you? It's rejection of Jesus Christ. So, if homosexuality is a sin, and Jesus Christ is the savior of sinners, and He died for that sin, why can't homosexuals go to heaven? Well, they clearly can, so that is not even the issue!

In fact, it's really interesting, as I've sat at fairs and done the survey evangelism over the years, and sat across from a homosexual, they want to make homosexuality the issue. And I just cut their legs out from under them because homosexuality is not the issue. Have you ever told a lie? Let's go to the Ten Commandments, forget about your homosexuality for a second. What about telling a lie? What about stealing? What about lusting? What about hating somebody in your heart? What about dishonoring your parents? And I could go on and on and on.

See, it's not the sin of homosexuality that's the issue. That is not the issue. The issue is they are sinners in need of a savior, and they would go to hell if they only told one lie, regardless of the way they live their life. So, when we're talking about unbelievers who are homosexuals, don't make homosexuality the issue. It's not the issue. The issue is a Savior, they need a Savior. They need to know that Christ died for their sins and rose again, and they need to know they can be saved when they put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Now I'm quick to also state that just like any sin, just like a heterosexual sin: fornication, sexual immorality, we would obviously discourage that in the life of a believer. So, for the homosexual, or people that have homosexual tendencies who are saved, they need to understand that the only ordained expression of sexual intimacy by God is one man, one woman, in a marriage relationship. Now that's true for homosexuals, and that's true for heterosexuals. And so that truth doesn't change, but it needs to be a truth that's accepted for the believer that may be struggling with these thoughts. Like I said, a sermon series in itself, I know we could say a lot more about that, but let's keep on trucking here in Romans 1.

And so we get to the end of Romans 1:27, and let's just read 27 again, *"Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful,"* - and then this last phrase - *"receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."* And so we see that there's consequences of sin.

And it seems specifically in this area of homosexuality or vile passions, that there's a penalty that they receive - and notice the word - "in themselves". Something going on internally, and it's interesting because it's through these actions that homosexual behavior leads to receiving one's penalty, which is clearly deserved and inevitable. And I'm not saying that in a harsh way, I'm just stating what the scriptures say: *"receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."* You could translate that "which was necessary, which was inevitable."

And so that's what we're saying there, is that when people engage in this type of activity, there's going to be a consequence, a penalty in them. And as I was doing research this week, it almost brought me to tears for a couple of reasons. But I think one, to just see God's Word play out in practical living, but also to think about the homosexuals in our community that are struggling through these things. These are real people. These are real people for whom Christ died.

And this is what brought me to tears: do you know that statistics show that more mental and physical health issues are found in the LGBT community than anywhere else? Mental health, physical health. Now obviously we all get physical health issues, there's lots of STDs and those types of things

transmitted, but I'm talking about mental health issues, depression. And it's not that we don't struggle with those mental health issues as well, but I'm just saying that statistics show it's a heavier concentration in these camps. My heart breaks for people that need to know the Savior. I hope ours as a church does too.

But in verse 28, he goes on. And we see in verse 28 really a value proposition, and we'll explain that here in a second, but verse 28 he says, *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;"* And we see in verse 28 that they're said to not like to retain God in their knowledge. Well, it's interesting because this word carries the notion of proving a thing whether it's worthy or not. And so as they've looked at the knowledge of God, as they've looked at who God is and the fact that He's going to judge in righteousness, you know what basically the immoral sinner says? "It's not worthy to keep. That is not a knowledge that I even want to think about. It has no value to think of a God in that way."

And so what they've done is - and we've already seen - they've exchanged the truth of God for a lie. So, they would much rather have or hold on to the truth of the liar, though they'd rather hold on to the lie and suppress or hold down the truth. And so that's what we see here with the moral sinner, and they've done that because they've placed no value on this knowledge of God. And as a result of this, again, an immoral sinner or man reacts or responds in a certain way to truth, and then God gives them over. They respond or react; God gives them over.

And so in this case, we see in verse 28 that God gave them over to a debased mind. And this is part three of giving them over, this is the third time that He said He's gonna give them up or give them over, it's the same word in the Greek. And so again, God cuts them loose to pursue what they want to pursue, and this time it's interesting because it involves their thinking. Thinking typically is what leads to actions, and I think we'll see that is exactly the order here. But He gives them over to pursue what they want in their thinking.

You know that many times, thoughts, and actions come to people's mind, but it's what they do with those temptations that really dictate whether or not they're held responsible for that. There's lots of things that pop into our head, but it starts when we start getting a little bit loose in our thinking, and we begin to consider vain things. Even for the believer in Ephesians 4 we see that: don't walk like the other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind and their thinking. And so thinking is very important, not only for believers but also unbelievers.

So, in this place, God gives them over to a debased mind. It's an interesting play on words, because they didn't consider God worthy or valuable, and God gave them over to a debased mind. In the Greek he says they did not approve or *"dokimazo"* the knowledge of God. And this God gave them over to an unapproved and a *"dokimazo"* mind. See, it uses a little play on words. In other words, they didn't approve God, so they got a mind that's unapproved. He's given them over to their unapproved minds, so a little play on words there, kind of interesting, Paul interjects those from time to time.

But notice that wrong thinking results in wrong actions here. In fact, at the end of verse 28 he says, *"God gave them over to a debased mind,"* - notice that next phrase - *"to do those things which are not fitting."* God gave them over to do those things which are not fitting. And then not fitting is just a subtle way to say abominable things or things that are unbecoming. In other words, we might say "to sin".

Now we could move on into verse 29, and we're gonna hit this list here, and this list if we wanted to just study every word, it could take us a few weeks to get through it, so we're not going to do that. We'll read through, we'll touch on some of it, but I do want you to know and see as we look at verse 29 that he says that they are filled with all unrighteousness, and then he goes on into his list. And this word "filled" has the idea that they have rejected God, they've rejected the knowledge of God, and



instead they've been filled up, and the verb tense indicates that they *remain filled* with all the following things. It's like going to a toilet that you cannot shut off that's overflowing. That's kind of the image that I think Paul would give here if toilets existed in those days. It's being filled up and remaining filled with all of the following things.

So, I want you to think about lives that look like the following descriptions. And when we look at the word “unrighteousness”, it's the same word used in verse 18. Remember verse 18, “*for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,*” it's the same exact word that we see. Now, I want you to notice something, because really the key action for all of these immoral sinners that we've been reading about, really the initial action is a suppression of truth and a rejection of God. And I want you to notice that a suppression of truth and rejection of God does not lead to moral neutrality. You're going to see in the list, these are not morally neutral people. These are aggressively, obnoxious, sinful, in-your-face type people.

And when we look at the word “unrighteousness”, it refers to injustice as it relates to other human beings. In other words, a rejection of God and suppression of truth is not normally the typical outcome of someone who's just morally neutral, a good citizen, stays at home, and leaves people alone. Pays their taxes, pays their bills, shows up to work on time, but rather it typically results in an aggressive outflow of sin. In-your-face immorality, and that's why we've titled this section “The Immoral Sinner,” but you can see that as we kind of go through the list.

Notice again that it says, “all unrighteousness.” Notice that it's the rejection of God or the knowledge of God that leads to sin against other people. I get it, it's ironic because you don't have to go very far in our day to hear some entertainer, or some pop-culture icon, some famous athletes, whoever gets a microphone stuffed in their face, to say stuff like they just want peace, they just want inclusion, they just want love, they just want everyone to get along. And you know what I see in this passage, is that when people reject God, exchange the truth of God for a lie, that that is impossible.

And so they want all the goodies without the source of how that comes. Because the natural outflow of people who change the truth, or reject the truth, or suppress the truth, is what we're about to read in verses 29-31. And that's the sad thing. So, let's get in the cesspool of sin for a couple of minutes here, and let's fly through here. I don't want to spend a lot of time on this, but I do want to make a couple of comments as we go.

*“Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;”* And let's go from there.

So, the first one I'll make a comment on is sexual immorality, which just means to commit fornication or any kind of sexual sin. It's also included in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19. And so we see that not only this, but the Bible also says about sexual immorality, it's the only sin that you commit against your own body. So, you would think the selfishness of sexual immorality is, “Hey, I want to get my pleasure now for my sake.” And what people don't realize is when they pursue that end, they're actually coming back against themselves, a sin against themselves, as we learn in 1 Corinthians 6.

And then we see this word “wickedness”, interesting, it carries the idea of not only *doing* evil, but *being* evil. You turn on the news and it's so interesting because every time I've ever taught this section, I can say just turn on the news, and there's some story that just happened recently that you can insert here. Well, story to insert here this week: what about the kids who took the disabled kid, and beat the tar out of him and tortured him for a couple days on YouTube? That is not just *doing* evil, that's *being*

evil, right? And we see example after example, you don't have to go too far to see that that's true and how it plays out.

“Covetousness”, very self-explanatory. “Maliciousness”, it's wickedness as an evil habit of the mind. This is not just making a mistake, this is a habit of the mind to engage in some kind of evil or wicked behavior, and so we see this described here. We see this phrase, “*full of envy.*” Again, this is a heart that's stuffed or full with pain, felt at the sight of excellence or happiness in somebody else, something that we cannot have, something we don't currently possess, and so we see that the immoral sinner is full of envy or stuffed to the full.

Murder is self-explanatory. Strife, beating down in contention. Wrangling, work of the flesh, Galatians 5:20. You want to see strife on a daily basis? Just go to work somewhere and see how many people stand around the coffee pot and complain about the boss. And just complain about everything. And I remember it, there were times I was in a work environment and the company would change a rule that everybody had been complaining about. And then guess what would happen the next day? They'd pick a new rule to complain about and cause strife, and contention, and another reason to criticize the boss, and so this is very common and in the world that we see this idea of strife.

Deceit, again, self-explanatory. Evil mindedness, taking everything with an evil connotation. Have you ever known anybody like that? Everything that happens to them is because somebody else is Satan incarnate. Have you ever met somebody like that? They say something to you, “Oh, they didn't really mean that. What they're really trying to say is how much they hate me.” Well, no, I think they said they liked your jacket. I think that's probably what they meant. But it's the people that take everything with an evil connotation, they give a malicious interpretation of the actions of others. “Did you see how he helped that lady get her jacket on? So, he was just trying to look good for everyone else around him.” See we do that too, don't we? It's not just the immoral sinner that does that. But this is the idea when we talk about evil mindedness.

We see this concept of whisperers, a secret slanderer. Ironically enough, the Greek word has a hissing sound, “*psithuristes*”. I couldn't even pronounce it; I'd probably mess up my tongue for a couple weeks. But it renders this Hebrew word meaning a *snake charmer*, it's got this idea of a snake. And I want you to put this in perspective too, because how many times in our churches do people whisper, or slander, or gossip? The next word “backbiters” would go with that as well. And yet we engage in it, we listen to it, sometimes we even pass it along. And if every time that happened, a hissing sound went off, I think we'd be shocked to hear about how many little snakes are around, if you will.

This little slithering, what's so interesting is that's become acceptable in our churches. I mean, imagine if any of these other sins in the same list became acceptable in our churches. What would we do? Oh well, I'd quit, I believe, and I would encourage you to go out the door and find a new group of people that actually believe the gospel. And yet when it comes to whispers, and gossip and backbiters, we'll sit next to them. We'll have them over to the house. We'll take phone calls from them. Wow.

“Haters of God”, destitute of God. The Greek called someone who turned against God this term. And that makes sense if they're rejecting the knowledge of God, if they're exchanging the truth for a lie, they're haters of God, they've turned against God. “Violent”. I love these words, because as you define them you just get more insight. But notice it's others who mistreat people for the pleasure which the affliction of wrong brings to them. In other words, I'm inflicting harm to somebody because it brings *me* pleasure. That's what we're talking about, violent.

You know who describes himself with this word? The Apostle Paul. Paul describes himself with this very word in his pre-conversion life, in his approach to believers when he was persecuting them. He went after them, he afflicted them, he mistreated them, and he was gaining personal pleasure from

doing so. Wow. At the martyr of Stephen, did he gain pleasure watching somebody die through stoning? And that's who we're talking about here, that was the Apostle Paul.

"Proud", "boasters", again, kind of self-explanatory. And then I just think it's an interesting description, "inventors of evil things". Someone who creates or invents evil things to think, do, or encourage others to think or do. It's not bad enough that we've got this standard of evil that people know, but these immoral sinners are coming up with new ways to inflict harm on other people.

And then kids pay attention to this one. This is another one just couched in with all of these gross types of sins that we would look at say, "Oh I would never do that." In fact, when we get into chapter 2, that's exactly what they say. "Oh, I would never do that!" and yet look at what's couched in the middle of the things that we *do* do: "disobedient to parents", unwilling to be persuaded or convinced as it relates to listening to their parents. You know, quick word for the kids here, do you know that your parents are your biggest cheerleaders in life? Do you know that they just want what's best for you? That's what parents do. They're not trying to keep you from having fun, they're not trying to keep you away from fun things. They have been there, done that, seen it, and seen what happens as a result. They see the big picture, so there's no reason for a young kid not to be persuaded or convinced to listen to their parents.

And when you do, kids, you're walking according to the flesh. You're out of fellowship with the Lord. That's the importance of this, and he throws this into a list of sins that you would never want to engage in, that are disgusting, I would never do that, and yet how many times do we do this? And those of you that are adults that have kids, how many times did you do it to your parents, right? This is the true perspective, but you know where that's coming from? It's not coming from the source of the Holy Spirit. But we see again that this is going to be true of those immoral sinners.

And so as we look at that in verse 32, we're gonna see the righteous judgment of God. Now another interesting phrase because Paul says that they know this. They know about the righteous judgment of God, look at verse 32. "*Who,*" - speaking of this whole list - "*knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*" And so they know the righteous judgment of God. It's not that they don't know, it's not that they're ignorant of it. They have taken this knowledge and they've suppressed it or rejected it.

And so again, Paul assumes that they have come to know fully the righteous judgment of God. Now the question becomes, what do they know? Well specifically what they know, is this next phrase that we see in verse 32, that those who practice such things are deserving of death. Do you know that every person that walks this earth has this truth embedded in their noggin? Their mental apparatus contains this truth.

That's why it is so important to be available, to be willing, to be looking for opportunities to share the gospel. Because when you begin to describe a holy and just God, and the fact that He's got righteous, perfect standards, and the fact that we have sinned, and when you say the penalty of sin is death, all of this is going to ring true with people whether they admit it or not, whether they want to dismiss it and say, "That's not true, how can a loving God..." This is in their skull. This is in their thinking, they know this truth, that's what Romans 1 tells us. They've got it in their mind.

And so you're working with knowledge that they have, and that's why many times when you communicate these truths to people, they're gonna say, "You know what, you're right." They understand it. They believe it because it's been ingrained, it's inside of them, they have eternity written in their hearts, they have the knowledge of this God based on what God has given them via conscience, through the creation as we've looked at in Romans 1.

So, they know these things, in fact, not only that, they know they're deserving of death. They know if they measured on the scales, they would be equal on each side, they would be guilty, they know that they've earned it, they know that they deserve it. And those that don't, they've spent a lifetime denying the fact that they are not good enough to get to heaven, and they are trying to convince themselves beyond all shadow of a doubt, "No, I'm doing enough. I'm doing enough. I'm trying enough, my heart is in the right place. Maybe I'm not perfect, but I've never killed anybody." And that's usually what comes out, "I've never killed anybody." As if that's the standard to get to heaven.

Mankind knows fully that God's righteous judgment demands death from the sinner. And this is a biblical concept that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. When you sin, you will die, the soul that sins dies, the wages of sin is death, and we see it over and over. That's the whole purpose of the Old Testament sacrificial system: a death penalty, an innocent animal dying in the place of a guilty sinner.

So, we see this, we see it in the gospel, the innocent Son of God, the perfect Son of God laying down His life, dying for you. Romans 5:8: "*But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" He died in our place so that we wouldn't have to face His death penalty. But the immoral sinner knows this, knows that they're deserving of death, deserving of hell and undeserving of a perfect heaven.

But notice their response to this knowledge. This is what blows you away about the immoral sinner, that not only do they practice such things, they know that they're deserving of death, but look at that last phrase, "*not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them.*" You would think that once they knew this truth, they'd stop doing what they're doing, but they don't, they continue to do it. And then we see that they involve other people, this true concept of misery loves company.

So, these people not only continually do the unrighteous acts found in this list that we just read, they know they deserve the righteous judgment of God, but in true fashion, misery loves company and they are continually thinking well of - this is what that word means - or taking pleasure in others engaging in these sinful acts as well. I don't typically read from the message Bible, but for some reason I was prompted to do that this week, and I just read this section to see what it said, and it was an interesting close to this section.

He says about these people: "*They keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives. They ditch their parents when they get in the way. Stupid, slimy, cruel, cold-blooded. And it's not as if they don't know better. They know perfectly well that they're spitting in God's face. And they don't care - worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best.*" And I think that really summarizes it well for us today.

So just as a quick review and kind of an idea of where we're going here in the next section, the immoral sinner not only needs God's righteousness, but they need to see the value of it, and they need to see their own need for it. The immoral sinner doesn't even realize those things. They don't have a value for it, they've just dismissed God, and His righteous standard, and His judgment as something to be dismissed. So they need to see their value for it, they need to see their need for it.

Now in the next section and the following couple sections, we're gonna look at two other categories of sinners who value righteousness. They actually see the need for it. The problem is, they think they can obtain it in their own way. They think that they can get it doing their own thing, and so that's what we're gonna look at starting in the next section.

# CHAPTER 6

## The Moral Sinner Part 1

### Romans 2:1-5

Join me in Romans chapter 2. We're gonna look at the first five verses of chapter 2, we're looking at what I've termed, "The Moral Sinner." And the reason we're doing this is because Paul is in the middle of an argument that started in chapter 1 verse 18. It's going to take us all the way through the middle part of chapter 3, and the argument is simply this: nobody in the world, man, woman, child, has the righteousness needed to get to heaven. And he's just systematically building his argument.

We've looked in the first chapter at what we termed "The Immoral Sinner," and last week and the week before we used this illustration, so let's just kind of keep it consistent and use it again. Matthew 7:13 says, "*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.*" And as I said and have said in the previous weeks, Paul is basically telling us there's three lanes to hell. This is a highway if you will, leading to hell. And many people might stay in the top lane their whole life, "the immoral sinner", and we looked at that last week. These are the types of people that when you look at them, you say, "Yeah, that's pure evil. That's disgusting." This is the Adolf Hitler's of the world, this is the Stalin's of the world, this is the Jeffrey Dahmer's of the world. Everybody can look at these people and say, "Oh yeah, they're going to hell." "Oh yeah, they don't have the righteousness needed."

But for the next couple sections, we're going to look at two other classifications or categories that Paul introduces as other categories of sinners. The ones we can recognize are the immoral sinners, and you know why they're easily recognizable? Because they don't even care about righteousness. They're not even pursuing righteousness. In fact, we get their mindset at the end of verse 32 in chapter 1. Not only do they do these things, but they applaud those who also do them. So they're not interested in righteousness. In fact, if they were interested in anything else, it's how high can we go on the sin meter?

And so those people are very easy to recognize. Those are the people you don't want as your neighbors, right? These are not good citizens; these are not people that we would categorize as "good people".

Now you might not mind having a moral sinner as a neighbor. I mean, they might come over and mow your lawn once in a while and you say, "Wow, that was a surprise!" They might bake you cookies. They might welcome you to the neighborhood. They might come down and give you a slap on the back. They may comment on how nice your car looks after you get it washed, they may have all sorts of nice things to say about you, but that's not what it takes to get to heaven.

And so many people might even change from lanes, they may realize after a short jail stint or some other catastrophic event in their life that the immoral sinner route isn't the way to go. And so they start trying to clean up their life and they just switch lanes. Problem is, this is still the highway that leads to hell that doesn't get somebody to heaven.

And so we're going to look at the moral sinner, and then in the following sections, we're gonna look at another class of people called "The Religious Sinner". And these sinners are people who have found religion. There's an exit off of this road, and the more people depend upon their own righteousness, the further and further away they get from the exit, which is simply this: it's called the gospel. Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again on the third day. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when people put their faith in Christ, they get to exit the highway to hell, and they take the narrow path to heaven. And so regardless of what lane people are in, that is still a highway that leads to hell.

You know what's interesting as we look at the moral sinner, it's probably wise to say that most people in our world - not just America - fit this category. And this category is simply this and let me give you a humorous illustration. You know, I - of course, being a pastor - go to hospitals, go to ICU wards and things like that from time to time. And imagine to my horror if I walked into an ICU ward and I heard a patient saying something out of a room. And as they got closer, yelled louder, and I started to make out what he said, imagine if he was in there saying, "I'm healthy. I'm not as bad as the guy next door." And imagine if that was his version of health. He's in intensive care, he's probably on his way to death, and he's running around the halls of the ICU going, "I'm healthy because I'm not as bad as the rest of these people in here." Wouldn't you just pull him aside and say, "Bro, you're in the ICU! You're not healthy."

And you know, that's really the image that I get from the moral sinner. The moral sinner's version of righteousness is, "I'm not as bad as them, thus I must be righteous." And you'll hear this, "Well I've never murdered anybody; thus, I must qualify for heaven. I've never committed adultery; thus, I must qualify for heaven. I've never purposely broken the Ten Commandments," - I love that word inserted *purposefully*, as if intent is the standard of the law. "I've never *purposefully* broken the 10 commandments, and I'll never *purposefully* do it again, so thus I must qualify for heaven. Thus, I must have the righteousness that's needed to get to heaven." See, that's how the moral sinner thinks.

And so we're gonna look at that starting in chapter 2, and this is what the moral sinner believes: I'm better than you. Now, I might not be better than *you*, but I'm better than the rest of y'all, and that's kind of the idea that we've seen. So, let's start in verse 1, Paul says this, "*Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*"

And so we see Paul begins to continue to build his argument, he uses this word "therefore". "*Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge,*" and what's the "therefore" referring back to? That's always the key as we study our Bibles, what is the "therefore" referring to? Well, I believe that if you look back over the context, it's referring back to verse 18 of chapter 1. And what he's referring to specifically is that the wrath of God is going to be revealed against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men. Not just what you and I think is ungodly, not just what you and I think is unrighteous, but what God thinks about it.

And so therefore, since God is going to reveal His wrath against all of it - that means outward actions, that means inner thoughts, that means inner feelings, God sees it all, nothing's hidden from the judge of the universe - *therefore* you are inexcusable, O man. You, the one who judges, you, moral sinner. And you know what the natural response is to the people and deeds of chapter 1:18-32 from a moral person? They're disgusted. They're judging. And you'll hear phrases from people that think this way, "Oh, I would never do that." "Those are incredibly bad people." "Oh, I'm not as bad as Hitler was. There's a special place in hell for that guy." And these are the types of thoughts that come forth from the mouth of a moral sinner. They begin to pass judgment on people, disgust, they're judgmental in their attitudes, and that's what Paul was dealing with.

In fact, do you know that from independent witnesses, we know that the Jews of the day that Paul was probably writing to in this section were living off of the vices of the heathen whom they despised? They had learned how to make money off of the heathen vices that were going on in their culture, and yet as they made money and padded their pocketbooks, they were over there sneering at them, thumbing their noses at them and saying, “What a bunch of heathens. What a bunch of evil, wicked, pagans.” “Oh, I'm not like them, I'm a Jew. I'm circumcised, I'm born of Abraham, I'm not like those dogs.” And yet they were profiting from the very things that they were despising in them.

And I like what one person wrote, he said, “*An open rupture betwixt,*” - and you can tell how old this quote is - “*betwixt profession and performance, between religion and morals; on one side, a faith which was mocked by their life; on the other, a life which was condemned by their faith. For while in morals they were a byword even to the heathens, these same Jews were eaten up with religious self-importance, and looked down on the heathens as outcasts and unclean.*”

And this is probably the original group that Paul was writing to, but we can relate to this in our culture. Because we look at sinful people, outwardly sinful people, that are engaged in the activities that we looked at last week in chapter 1:29-31, and we can say, “Heathen, pagan, sinner? Yeah, they deserve God's judgment! Look how bad they are!” And we can see it, it just naturally flows off of our tongue. Here's the problem for the moral sinner: they are judging based on moral grounds, upon their own moral discernment. In other words, *they* have become the standard of right and wrong. *They* have become what is good enough to get into heaven and what's not, and so they're passing judgment based on their own moral compass, their own moral discernment.

And you know, there's a difference between the immoral sinner and the moral sinner, and there's a similarity. You know what the difference is? The immoral sinner applauds and approves the activities that are going on in Chapter 1. The moral sinner is disgusted and condemns those. But you know where they're similar? They both do the same things. That's the irony of it all! That's what Paul is gonna tell them, “You think you're so much better than these people, but you do the same exact things.”

And guess what? Because of that, he says, “You're inexcusable. You are without excuse. You are without apology. If we were in a courtroom of law, you have no evidence to contradict what I'm saying. You are completely guilty, there's a smoking gun that's going to be pulled out, you're silent, you have no defense. Sit down, no closing argument, it's done.” That's what he's saying, you're inexcusable, you who approach others that way.

As we get into the Greek, the verb tense used here indicates that even Paul's audience was doing these very things at the time he was writing. The very things that he's writing about, they were doing it. So, it would have been one of those situations where they read Paul's letter and said, “Oh man, that just hit me right in the heart. I do that all the time,” or “I'm doing that,” or “I know people that are doing that,” or “I used to do that before I got saved,” however it happens, they knew that there were people doing it right then when Paul wrote it.

This word “judge” as we look in verse two, it's interesting because verse one starts out with man judging, and this section in verse 16 ends with God judging. See, that's the proper order. Man's judgment is faulty. Man's judgment is untrustworthy. Man's judgment is limited even in the court of law, because judges are dependent upon evidence, and they're dependent upon accurate testimony to offer accurate judgments. See, the God of the universe is not dependent on any of those things, so His judgment is not limited in those ways.

But this word “judge” means *to separate, to distinguish, or to discriminate between good and evil*. And basically, what these people were doing was establishing their own standard of good and evil. And you know how that works, don't you? If you don't know how it works, it's really simple: I'm gonna establish

a system where you don't qualify, and I do. That's how moral sinners think. There's always a standard they have, but it's a standard low enough for them to jump the hurdle.

It's like limbo. It's like the limbo stick, and for everybody else, they're gonna put it down low and you gotta be as flexible as a gymnast to get under there. But their limbo stick is much higher, and they kind of just get right under that, no problem. And they make the standard, but they set it so high for everybody else, they just change everything.

So based on this standard, we see really simply, they come out smelling good. "Wow, I'm really good, I'm righteous!" Because they're adjusting this standard as they look at immoral sinners, and Paul is about to drop an absolute atom bomb on them. The very things that you're judging, you're doing yourself. The very things that you're condemning others for, you are condemning yourself with. And we'll look and see how he develops that.

It's probably a good point to say this - because it's just so misunderstood, and this could be a sermon in itself - do you know that judging is actually not wrong? That's actually biblical. What we're talking about here is the difference between judging, making an accurate statement. I can look at Romans chapter 1 and I can look at the sins listed, and I can talk about homosexuality, and I can talk about sexual immorality, I can talk about covetousness, and I can talk about maliciousness, and I can talk about being full of envy, murder, strife, ect. just read through the list, and I can make a judgment that those are sins, based on the Word of God.

But you know what? The difference between Christians and the rap that we get in the media is I'm not judging them saying, "Look at those sinners, look how much better I am." I'm saying, "Look at those sinners, I'm just like them and I need a Savior too." So that's the difference, that's the distinction. We're making a distinction when we look at what people are doing with their lives, what we are doing with our lives - hopefully it starts there, by the way, with what we are doing with our lives - and then we look at others and we can make a judgment based on the Word of God. But it's not a judgment that says, "You're worse, thus I'm better."

See, that's what they were doing here in Romans 2. That's the moral sinner's issue. That's why their issue is more of a judgmentalism than it is simply an accurate judgment. Now were they right about the immoral sinners? Were they sinners, were they evil, were they breaking God's law, did they deserve judgment? Yes, that's correct. Where they were incorrect was, they thought, "Well, I'm not like them, so I don't deserve judgment." So that's the issue for the moral sinner.

So, as we go on in verse 2 he says, "*You are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*" And I think that many moral sinners are unaware hypocrites, they don't know deep down what they're doing and judging others for, they're doing the same things. They don't realize that they're hypocrites. And I want you to notice that Paul uses a pretty interesting word, he says, "*in whatever you judge another.*" He's not naming a specific sin.

See, this is the way moral sinners think. They think, "Well, I kind of struggle with alcohol, so I'm gonna take it easy on alcoholics. But I'm gonna judge their tails off on everything else." And Paul doesn't allow for that, because he says, "*in whatever you judge.*" Whatever that is, wherever you come down hard on them, it doesn't matter what area of morality it is, you're guilty of the same thing. And I can hear the thoughts in the moral sinner's head, "What? I don't commit adultery. I don't murder, I don't steal, I don't lust, I'm not engaged in sexual immorality, I'm not a homosexual. Wait a minute, Paul's wrong there. He must not have met me when he wrote this." That's what the moral sinner thinks.

Whatever you judge, not just one standard of morality, but everything. Moral sinners need to understand this: their determination for good and evil, right and wrong are not the official standard. If



there's one thing they can take away from Romans 2, they need to understand there's a standard much higher than theirs. It's not the six-foot-tall limbo. That's not the standard. In fact, if you want to look at God's standard, it's not even an inch off the ground. It's perfection. It's impossible. Nobody could get under it, that's Paul's whole point in this section, chapter 1:18 all the way through chapter 3. Nobody qualifies.

Spoiler alert! I've given it away before; I'll give it away again: everyone's guilty. That's where he's going to go in the middle of chapter 3. Nobody's good enough, everyone's guilty, it doesn't matter what standard of morality you're basing yourself on, because we're not perfect. Hence, we need a Savior. Hence Jesus died for our sins and rose again. Hence God credits righteousness to us when we believe in Him, all of these things that we need and don't have, God provided in the gospel.

And so we see the moral sinner is struggling with this, they have thought that they are the official standard. And the irony is when they take this stance, they're condemning themselves. That's just incredible to me! If you've ever put out a standard - I remember just being a teacher sometimes and I would put out a standard to my students, and I would say, "Hey, you need to be in your seat five minutes before the bell rings, because then you're gonna have your pencil out, you're gonna have your homework out, we're gonna be ready to go." And then guess what would happen to me the next day? I would get caught out in the hallway talking to somebody and the bell would ring, and I would be five minutes late. And you think the students ever let me know I wasn't keeping the standard? Yeah.

And so when the moral sinner does this, they put out this standard on everybody else, they don't even realize they're condemning themselves, it's coming right back on them. In fact, in their judging, they feel in many ways when they judge immoral sinners, they think they're clearing their name. They think they're actually clearing their name, and making an argument for their righteousness, and what they're doing is they're actually condemning themselves. So, they've got a problem here that they need to understand basically. Again, you don't brag about being in the intensive care unit and how healthy you are, those two things don't go together. And moral sinners need to know that they're in the intensive spiritual care unit, and they need a Savior. They've got a problem; they've got a big problem. They need to understand that their righteousness is not good enough to get them to heaven.

Now we ask this question, "Wait a minute, I'm not like them, those guys over there. I'm not like them. I am NOT worshipping idols." But we learn in Colossians 3:5 that when you covet, Paul calls that idol worship. Do moral sinners covet? Man, I mean... saved sinners covet. All kinds of sinners covet. "Wait a minute, I'm not worshipping idols." They took the glory of God, and they made Him into corruptible things, all the way down to creeping things, and yet many of us will worship a piece of plastic that's got pictures and sound coming out of it on a daily basis. That's idol worship.

"I'm not killing anybody. That's a big, old, fat immoral sin that I'm not engaged in." And we go to Matthew 5:21-22, and we see that Jesus says if you're angry at your brother without cause, 1 John 3:15 says if you hate your brother, God considers you a murderer. God, the ultimate judge of the universe, who knows both our thoughts and our actions - not just our actions and what people see, not just what's out in the open in the public eye, but He sees everything - He judges those things the same.

See, the moral sinner needs to understand they're being judged by that standard. "Wait, I'm not them." In fact, if that's their claim to righteousness, "I'm not them," it's not a very strong argument. "I'm not them, thus I'm better than they are. I'm not them, therefore I have the righteousness needed to get to heaven." They've got the standards all backwards. And their standard is simply this: they've confused it, because their standard to get to heaven has been set so low, and their standard to go to hell has been set so high that they'll never meet it. They've got the standards backwards. It's not, "Why would a loving God send anybody to hell?" It's, "How could a just and holy God allow anyone to go to

heaven?" That's the flip standard that they and any type of sinner needs to realize. It's not such a low standard that they themselves can make it, but nobody else can, and that's what the moral sinner needs to understand.

They also need to understand this, and verse 2 is going to tell us this: God is accurate. God is truthful. God is precise in His judgment. Look at verse 2, "*but we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.*" And so we've got to see that the moral sinners have to understand that God doesn't just judge on the actions, but He judges according to truth. This includes our thoughts as well as our actions.

You know, one of the things that I think many of us dislike about our human court system is there's so many loopholes, there's so many technicalities, there's so many legalities that let guilty people go free. We hate those stories, don't we? The fact that they got this guilty guy red-handed in the confession room, he confesses to the murder, and they've left out one word of the Miranda Rights, and he gets to go free. And you're thinking, "What a miscarriage of justice!" And you know this is what I love about God, but this is also what the moral sinner needs to fear about God: there will be no miscarriages of justice, there will be nobody getting off on a technicality, there will be nobody able to argue their way out of this sentence. God doesn't need evidence from some other source than what He's already got.

In fact, you jump down to verse 16 of chapter 2 and notice what He's going to judge us by: "*in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*" This isn't taking cookies from the cookie jar when your mom and dad have gone off to work, and as long as you get the chocolate and the crumbs wiped off your face, you're gonna get away with it. That's not who we're dealing with here! And that's what the moral sinner has got to understand, that this God, the God that created us is going to judge us according to truth. He's gonna set a standard of righteousness before everybody, and it's the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and if you meet that standard, you get in, and if you don't, you don't. You don't get in no matter how much better you are than somebody else, that's not even the issue.

And so we've got to understand that God judges our thoughts as well as our actions. His judgment is not subjective, it's not a sliding scale. He's not adjusting with culture His version or view of sin, it's always been the same, God doesn't change in that way. He's always holy, He's always just, that's who He is by nature. And so we've got to understand, and the moral sinner specifically has got to understand that this is the way God is going to judge. He's going to judge in truth, he's going to judge according to our thoughts and our actions.

And you know what's interesting? You know that contrast, the moral sinner was judging the immoral sinner because of who they were, and they were doing the same thing? Do you know the moral sinner is also suppressing truth, also holding down truth, always also exchanging the truth for the lie? You know what they're exchanging is their own standard of righteousness. "This is the God of the universe, He's going to judge us based on a righteous standard, but I'm gonna approach Him the way I want to approach Him based on *my* righteous standard. So no thank you God, I don't need your truth, I'm good enough to be there."

That's the moral sinner, they're rejecting and suppressing truth just like the immoral sinner. The immoral sinner doesn't even care about righteousness, the moral sinner thinks, "Oh I got that one checked off the list, I am righteous because I'm not like them." Again, that's the point. And Paul is just shooting this argument down, he's just blowing these guys out of the water. The very things that you judge others for, you are going to also be judged on, you're condemning yourself.

And so Paul, again in his argument, he's gonna ask them two questions in verses 3 and 4. And so verse 3, the first question we see he says this, "*and do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing*

*such things, and doing the same,*” - you'll notice he just assumes now that they know they're doing the same things - “*that you will escape the judgment of God?*” So, the question is simply this: you who do the same things, do you think you're going to escape the judgment of God? Do you think you're actually going to get out of God's judgment, even though we know that you do the same things that you're condemning these others for?

If the moral sinner clearly sees the immoral sinner as rightly being judged because of their unrighteousness, - and they do, that's what they see. They deserve judgment, they've earned it through their actions - how could they think they would escape God's judgment if they're doing the same thing? That's Paul's question. How do you think you could escape it if I've just shown you and told you you're doing the same exact thing?

A good example of this is King David. Remember when he takes Bathsheba? You know when he's got that wandering eye up on the roof, and he takes her, and he commits adultery and gets her pregnant. Then he called her husband back home and Uriah was a righteous man, wasn't he? He was an honorable man. David tried to pawn it off and get Uriah to come back from the battle, spend some time with your wife and they could hide the pregnancy. And when Uriah wouldn't do that, he sent him out to the front line and had him killed, he put him in a dangerous spot.

And then what happens later? Well, the prophet Nathan comes over and says, “Hey David, I've got a story for you, I need you to judge this.” He was setting him up big time, wasn't he? He said, “I've got a story for you, I need you to judge this. There was this guy, and he had all these sheep, and he took this one guy's sheep and stole it from him. What should I do?” And David just flew off the handle, “You tell that scumbag...” - I mean, whatever he said. He said, “Now that guy deserves to die.” And what did Nathan say? “You're the man, dude. I'm talking about you, that's what you did with Bathsheba.” And see, this is what's so interesting, is his judgment when it comes to somebody else, we can clearly see. When it comes to us... I want a couple second chances in there, you know? I want a lower standard to be met. And so that's what the moral sinner does.

And then Paul's second question in verse four, he asked this, “*or do you despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*” So, the question becomes, “do you despise the riches of His goodness?” This word “despise” means *to hold in contempt, to think lightly of, to not care for*. We might say in our day “just blows him off.” They were just blowing God off. Blowing off His riches of goodness, His forbearance and longsuffering. They just weren't interested, they held that in contempt.

In fact, their mindset was, “Why doesn't God judge the immoral sinner *right now*? Why doesn't He get rid of all this unrighteousness? Why doesn't He just take these people out, why doesn't He wipe their kind off the face of the earth? I mean, He did it in Sodom and Gomorrah, can't He do it again?” And I've talked to Christians that have that attitude, “I wish God would just wipe that movement off the face of America.”

That's the attitude. We sometimes despise the riches. We like grace for ourselves, we hate it for other people sometimes. We like the fact that God is merciful with us, we just hate it when He's merciful with somebody else who doesn't deserve it. And that's when the bell should go off in our mind, because grace is something we don't deserve. That's the whole definition of grace! Of course they don't deserve it. Do you realize you don't deserve it? That's the million-dollar question.

And so the moral sinner here is holding God's goodness, His forbearance, in contempt. It's interesting because these are the three things that they despise. They despise the riches of God in these three areas: number one is goodness, the fact that God treats mankind better than they deserve. Do you know that God can be patient with a homosexual? Do you know that God can be long-suffering with a

sexually immoral person, a murderer? Do you know God can be these things with all the most evil kinds of people you can think of in the world? That's what this verse is teaching.

And why does the moral sinner despise this? You know why they despise it? Because in their thinking, God should wipe them out immediately. But as for me, slow down God. Be patient. I want your goodness for me, I want your patience for me, I want your long-suffering for me. But for everybody else, zap them God. Go get them. I'm gonna sit here with my popcorn, "Get them, let me see you get them!" And that's the mindset of the moral sinner.

And so we see this idea or this need for repentance expressed here in verse 4, let's read it again. *"Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"* And so we see again, the mindset of the moral sinner is God should wipe out the immoral sinner off the face of the earth immediately. But Paul is quick to point out that God is good and patient toward their unrighteousness as well. And the reason He's good and patient toward unrighteousness, it says He is giving them a chance to repent. Better said, *change their mind*. That's the definition of repentance. They are given the opportunity to change their mind, and it all comes as a revelation of God's goodness, long-suffering, and patience hitting them. They have an opportunity to change their mind.

Now the question is, change their mind about what? What do they need to change their mind about? Well they need to change their mind about their lack of righteousness and their need for it. See, right now the moral sinner thinks, "I've got righteousness because I'm better than them, so thus I don't need it." They need to change their mind about that. No, you don't. You do not have righteousness; you do not have the righteousness needed to go to heaven.

I don't care how many old ladies you help across the street; I don't care who you drive here and who you drive there, I don't care what kind of money you give, and I don't care what philanthropic cause you're involved with, it's not good enough to get to heaven. I don't care how many times you mow your neighbor's lawn; I don't care how many times you rake their leaves, nothing like that is good enough to get the moral sinner to heaven. I don't care how many times you darken the door of the church. "Yeah, I did Christmas and Easter last year, you know, I'm gonna mix in a third one this Sunday, so I'm really staying ahead of the game." None of that stuff gets you to heaven.

The point is what they needed to change their mind about was their righteousness. They don't have it, they need it, and only God can provide, and He does it through the gospel. Like we've said, this is Paul's whole point. You know that the very thing that they despise - God giving these immoral sinners chances and chances to repent, to change their mind about righteousness, to change their mind about God, to change their mind about truth - God is giving them the same opportunity, and they don't realize they even need it. That's the sad thing for the moral sinner. You can see why - as we used that three-lane illustration early on - that if somebody changes lanes from the immoral sinner to the moral sinner, they actually move further away from God. Because now they don't need God. They think they've got it going on with their righteousness and the way that they're living their life.

Verse 5, it shows us that moral sinners are stubborn as a mule, as the saying goes. Verse 5, *"but in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"* This word "hardness" just means *obstinacy or stubbornness*.

My in-laws own a ranch, and they've got some animals out there, and I remember a couple years ago, my father-in-law needed some help one day. And I am NOT a country boy. I mean I'm from Texas, but I'm not a country boy, okay? Let's just get that on the table. I'm barely a city slicker. I can kind of find my way around a little bit, but I'm definitely not a country boy. And I went out to his ranch, and he said, "I need some help getting these cows into this trailer, I've got to get them to the vet." I'm

thinking, no problem, right? I'm thinking I've had some dogs and cats, I know how to get them, you just put a leash on them, and you just roll them up there, you know? What's the big deal? I mean, after about an hour, we still don't have these two cows up in the trailer. And I mean, we were strategizing, and we were working hard, I mean that's a cow not a donkey, not a mule. They say, "stubborn as a mule", and that's probably what we looked like that day. Of course, I was too scared to get behind because I just kept thinking I was gonna get kicked.

But the point is this: the moral sinner has this type of attitude, this stubbornness, this jerk in the neck, this obstinacy, as it relates to this area of righteousness. And this text tells us that they're actually hardened or stubborn to the point of refusing to change their mind about this area of righteousness. They won't change their mind. They will not change their thinking. They think, "Yeah but I'm still good enough, God has to let me in." I don't know why, I mean, the justification is that they're good enough, they're not as bad as somebody else. And they get so stubborn and to the point that they don't even want to agree with God.

And they disagree with God in a couple areas: one, they disagree with God that they need righteousness that only he can provide. They disagree with God in a second area, they disagree that they need a Savior. And why did God send Jesus if you could get to heaven on your own? What a waste of ink and space and time, why would he send Jesus? Why would God call Him a Savior? You know, we just finished the Christmas season. That's *exactly* what God called Jesus, that's what the angel's message was, "Today, born to you in the town of Bethlehem is a Savior." We need saving. People don't realize this; the moral sinner doesn't realize this. They won't accept God's estimation of their state, they're stubborn as a mule about this.

Based on this response they're, "*treasuring up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*" This word "treasuring up" means they're literally laying up, it's like they're putting money in a 401k, but not the good kind of 401k. You know, something that's going to be exposed to them on the day of judgment, that they've been treasuring up all of these good works to get them to heaven, and it's gonna be worthless, pointless, not able to get the job done. You know what's ironic about this, is what does Paul say in verse 4? They despise the riches of God, and yet they're treasuring up God's wrath. Isn't that an interesting play on words? They despise God's riches, but I'm gonna build my riches up over here. And unfortunately, their riches are not gonna pay out the type of return that they're looking for. And that's the message of Paul here, he is blowing them out of the water. These people continue to be stubborn about their own righteousness, and they are merely storing up wrath for their day of judgment.

If you're reading this and you're not saved, you're not sure if you're born again, you're not sure if you're going to heaven, and you have a mindset that says, "Well I'm gonna get there, me and God got this worked out. I'm good enough, He's not gonna send good people to hell." Let me just tell you as if you were in a court case: God's got the smoking gun, God's got the video, God's caught you red-handed, if you will.

And you know as we look at God and the way that He's going to judge unsaved humanity at the Great White Throne Judgment, let's turn to Revelation 20:11 and let me just tell you what we're about to read.

Here's the crazy thing, the moral sinner wants to be judged on the basis of their good works and they have this mindset that, "Well mine outweigh my bad works," or "mine are definitely better than his," and they've got this good work measurement thing going on. And you know what? God's gonna grant them their wish at the Great White Throne Judgment. He's gonna judge them based on their works.

Now some moral sinner might be like, “Hallelujah, I'm gonna get my day in court, I'm gonna go prove my case.” That's not how that works out though. That's the sad thing, because in Revelation 20:11-15, the way it works out is this: *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead,”* - notice this next phrase - *“were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who are in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

Go back with me to Romans 2:16, in which Paul says, *“that in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”* See, that's the standard. If you don't want to be judged based on your goodness, your amount of works - which, by the way, ends up in a guilty conviction for a hundred percent of the people that appear before that throne - you need your name written in the Book of Life. And the way you get your name written in the Book of Life is you believe what God has said about His Son, that He sent Him to die in your place on the cross for your sins so that you wouldn't have to pay the penalty. And now when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you become the righteousness of God in Him. The same righteousness that Jesus Christ has is yours. See, God's provided it in the gospel. God's provided it in the message of what Jesus Christ has done.

And on that great day, the Great White Throne Judgment, people are gonna show up and they're gonna say, “Man, look at all these works!” and they're gonna start getting excited as God opens this book, and they're gonna be like, “Yeah, that's one, that's two, that's three,” and on up to a hundred or thousand, however many good works people have done. And then God's gonna pull out His other hand and say, “Yeah, but this was the standard. Jesus Christ was the standard.” And we don't have eternity to review the amount of good works that Jesus Christ did. We will spend eternity just glorifying Him in His perfection, in His beauty. And so we don't have time today at the Great White Throne, but I will just tell you this: if you do not meet that standard, off to the lake of fire. And see, the moral sinner needs to understand that they need to get off of the mindset that because they are better than certain people, they have the righteousness needed to go to heaven.

Now one of the things we're gonna learn in the next section is Paul makes a very interesting argument, and the argument is this: *if* somebody could be good enough, *if* somebody could be perfect, God's an impartial judge, He'll let them in. The problem is, nobody exists like that, and that's Paul's point.

# CHAPTER 7

## The Moral Sinner Part 2

### Romans 2:6-12

Let's read the passage that we're going to be teaching through today, and we'll give you some background and really try to hit the ground running as we go forward in our study of the book of Romans. Romans 2:6, Paul writes, *"who 'will render to each one according to his deeds': eternal life to those who by patient continuance and doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness - indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law,"*

And Lord willing we'll get through verse 12 today. But just as a reminder, and we've used this diagram or illustration every week, so let's just continue to build off of it. You know what we find in Matthew 7 is Jesus says this, *"Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way"* - or it could be translated *road* - *"is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it."* And what we've been looking at really since we got to about the middle part of chapter one is this highway to hell, this broad road, if you will.

And so lane one as we called it, is the immoral sinner. Just as a reminder, the immoral sinner is not really hard to point out. This is the one when you think of the term sinner or evil person, this person would come to mind. This is the person who, as we learn in chapter 1, rejects the truth of God's righteousness, and even rejects their need for it. This is, if you will, a person that puts their head in the sand and says, "I'm not gonna have to face a God one day who's gonna judge me righteously. I don't even care, and thus I reject that truth altogether." They don't seek it at all.

And then we find out at the end of chapter 1, they applaud those who also do the same things. Misery loves company. Most people who have a problem with alcohol have a drinking buddy, or multiple buddies to do it, and things of that nature. There's not this alone type of sentence, it's gathering other people with them. This is what we find about the immoral sinner.

And most people who believe there's a God, who believe that he's going to judge righteously, think the immoral sinner deserves hell, most people agree with that.

Right now, we're looking at the moral sinner. And this is the person who may have actually been an immoral sinner, but they may have changed lanes. They may have gone to the 12-step program and stopped waking up in a gutter every night, and they're waking up in their bed now because they're not drunk, out at a club all night or multiple clubs. This might be a person who's decided, "Well, I should probably stop selling drugs. I should probably stop doing the things that get me landed in a federal penitentiary. I should stop killing people, I should stop robbing old ladies." And they say, "I'm gonna start living a good life, because goodness is what's going to get me to heaven, or goodness is what's going to get me accepted by God. And yeah, I've done bad things, but I'm really trying now."

And the moral sinner, as we looked at last week, one of the other ways that they think, is, "You know what, I'm good. I'm going to heaven because I'm not as bad as them. I'm good, I'm not as bad as them over there." And we used the illustration last week that it's equivalent to someone being in the

intensive care unit saying, "I'm healthy because I'm not as bad as the guy next door." That doesn't even compute. The moral sinner doesn't understand that they are in big trouble, and so they *see* the need for God's righteousness, but they still *reject* God's manner of making them righteous or giving or providing righteousness. They seek to do it on their own, and it's a really low standard. It's, "Well I'm better than so-and-so, and thus I'm righteous," or "I do good things and thus I'm righteous," or "I want to do good things." They even say, "Well I know the right things to do, I would've, I could've, I should've, I wished I would have, so thus I'm a pretty good person."

And that's how the moral sinner thinks, so they judge others even though they do the same exact thing themselves. And that's probably where the majority of people in our world today are, probably right there in lane two thinking, "You know, my good kind of outweighs my bad, I think I'm gonna get in because I'm not as bad as so-and-so." and that's the mindset.

And then finally what we're gonna start to transition to in the next section is this concept of the religious sinner. These are people who have found religion, they found church, they found the Bible, they found prayer, they found fasting, they found tithing, they found giving, and they think that all of these things are somehow going to get them to heaven or gain them favor with God. We'll look at them in a little bit more detail later.

As I've pointed out many times, there's only one exit off of this highway to hell and it's very narrow, but it's available to everybody. All of these types of sinners, if they will simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, God wants to provide the righteousness they need to get to heaven through the gospel. That's the message of the book of Romans.

Paul is gonna go through these three chapters and he's gonna show us that all three of these types of sinners are guilty before God. They don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven. And that's what he's doing right now, he's building that argument, he's showing it out, he's playing it out, he's saying, "If you want righteousness before God, there's one way, it's narrow, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be righteous. You'll have eternal life; you'll have your sins forgiven." Many people think that as they change lanes on this highway to hell that they can somehow get to heaven, and yet all three lanes lead to the same place.

So where are we going today with the moral sinner? Well, the whole message really could be summed up in the thought found in verse 11: "*there's no partiality with God.*" And what Paul is going to say is that God is not partial, God doesn't show favoritism, God is fair, God is the best judge that's ever existed in the world. He will judge exactly the way things need to be judged. And some of us who have had bad experiences with the judicial system say, "Hallelujah! Finally, somebody will do the right thing. Finally, somebody won't take money under the table. Finally, somebody won't look at my race, my creed, my background, somebody won't look at my socioeconomic status, and they'll actually give me fair justice. They're not going to look at my criminal record and hold that against me in today's court proceedings. Finally, somebody will judge righteously."

And it's one of those things you'd better be careful what you wish for. Because the judge who judges righteously also gives to everybody what they deserve. And it's not just our actions, as we'll find out from verse 16, it's our secrets. It's the things that nobody else sees. Do you know that as a man that I have sinned after I became a believer? I know that's shocking; I didn't tell the elders that before they hired me. But now it's all out in the open, you know, I might not be here next weekend. But you know what? My neighbors may not know exactly what sins I've been engaged in. My closest family or extended family might not know, but you know what, there's One who knows. And it's that One who's gonna judge mankind,



And that's what Paul is about to get into in this passage. And what he's gonna say is simply this: if somebody is good enough (he's just making an argument), if somebody's perfect, God will render them worthy of eternal life. God's fair. God's impartial. But you know what, if somebody's not good enough, they're not perfect, God will render them judgment. And that's Paul's argument here. So, for the moral sinner, they're going into this argument thinking, "Yeah, good! He's gonna give me what I deserve. I *am* good! I *do* deserve heaven! So obviously God's gonna find me righteous." And that's what the moral sinner thinks, and Paul's whole argument is like, "No, man. It doesn't work that way."

In fact, if you even go back to the Old Testament, we know that in Isaiah 64:6, what does he say about our righteousnesses? They're like filthy rags. And so the moral sinner says, "Man, I got all these good things that outweigh these bad things! God's gonna take all the good things off this side of the scale and lump it on this side, and there's going to be nothing left." See, the moral sinner doesn't realize that, and that's what we're gonna look at. Join me in verse 6 as we look at this weight of evidence.

Verse 6, "*who will render to each one according to his deeds.*" This whole idea of rendering each one according to his deeds, it's referring back to verse 5. He's talking about God's righteous judgment. How does God render righteous judgment? Well, He's gonna do it according to our deeds. The very thing that moral sinners say: "Yeah, hold me up, I'm the gold standard, I'm good, look at all these good deeds I do, look at all the bad deeds that so-and-so does that I don't do. Yeah, judge me by that." In fact, when you talk to anybody in this world about salvation, do you know that their salvation is generally based upon their understanding of their good deeds? "Well, I think I'm good enough." "Well, I hope I'm good enough." "Well, I've never murdered anybody." and they start thinking that way, they think in terms of good deeds.

And do you know that God is gonna judge, He's gonna render judgment according to their good deeds? We find this all over the Bible. Let's go to Revelation chapter 20 where we find this, at the end of time at the Great White Throne Judgment, this is exactly what God does.

Revelation 20:11 he says, "*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who are in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*"

And so we see that God is going to judge people according to what they really did. And He's gonna have the accurate ledger. He's not going to be missing a witness, there's no evidence that's gonna be entered illegally or through a loophole that you can get thrown out. That's not how that's gonna work. God is gonna judge every person, He's gonna deal with every person on what they really did, not what they intended to do, not what they hoped to do, not what they wanted to do, but what they actually *did*. And then if you throw in Isaiah 64:6, where all the righteous things that we're depending on actually get cast on the other side of the ledger, you can see why we're in trouble if that's our standard of getting to heaven. If we believe that morally we can be good enough to get to heaven, to obtain or attain the righteousness needed to get to heaven, we're in big trouble. Because this is how God is going to render His verdict.

We see this word "render", it means *to do something necessary in fulfillment of an obligation or an expectation*. What does that mean? Well, it means God is obligated to judge rightly. He's required to. Why? Because somebody over God said, "You will judge rightly. You better do it or else!"? No, because it's according to His character. He *is* holy, He doesn't just act holy once in a while. He *is* just, He doesn't

just act just when He puts His robe on and has the gavel in His hand. He also *is* love, and He doesn't just act loving when He feels like it. That's who He is, that's His character. And so in the case of judgment, He's obligated to do this because of who He is. Because of who He is in His character, He must judge righteously and judge fairly, and so He is going to render to people exactly what they deserve. And unfortunately, this is what the moral sinner is basing their eternal destiny on, that they are good enough to go to heaven.

Well in no uncertain terms, let me just share with you what the Bible says: nobody is good enough to go to heaven. That's where Paul's gonna get at the end of chapter 3, nobody's righteous, no not one. Nobody's good enough, no not one. Pretty all-inclusive. So I'm not pointing fingers at you, I'm pointing fingers at myself as well. Nobody, that means me too. Nobody's good enough. That's the verdict, that's the rendering.

And so the verdict at the end of time will simply be this: are you righteous or are you not? That's the deal, and God's the one who gets to determine that standard. Righteousness according to God's standard is perfection. No mistakes, no sin in thought, word, or deed. Where will you stand on that day, according to that standard? See, we've got a big problem, and that's exactly what Paul is trying to communicate in this section.

Now as we go into verse 7, we're gonna remember what section we're in, in terms of what section of the book we're in. Paul is not breaking off for the next 4 verses we're about to read to say, "Okay, if you want to get to heaven, here's how: you got to work your tail off and you got to get there." That's not what he's doing. In fact, he's using an argument to say this is how impartial God is. This is how good a judge God is, that if you - and he's using a hypothetical - if you could live a continually perfect life, God would render you righteous, worthy of eternal life. That's how good a judge God is, if that could possibly happen. But at the same time, the moral sinner's got to understand that if you don't, God is also impartial. God is also just, He will render what you deserve, and the deserving judgment that each one of us deserves because we're not perfect is - you're gonna see - indignation and wrath.

And so he's making this argument here, let's go into verse 7. Which, by the way, it's interesting how Paul does this, but verse 7 really goes with verse 10, and verse 8 goes with verse 9. So, he kind of introduces the concept in 7, he revisits it in 10, and then 8 and 9 are sandwiched in between covering the same topic. And if that doesn't make sense, just follow along, you'll see what we're doing.

Alright so verse 7 he says, "*eternal life*" - and this is what God would render - "*eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;*" - jump down to verse 10 - "*but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*" So, you see what he says here. God is willing to give eternal life to those, if there's anybody that exists, who in patient continuance does good continually. In other words, they're perfect. They do this *all* the time; this is who they are by nature. If God were to judge that person, He'd render them worthy of eternal life. That's what the passage says. And so Paul, again, is not teaching somebody how they get to heaven, but what he's trying to do is say how fair God is in His judgment.

And then we see in verse 10, "*glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*" Now why does he bring this up? Well, he's saying this: God is not even going to give the Jewish people, His chosen people, partial judgment or favoritism in judgment. If this is true of Jew or Greek, if there's somebody that lives continually good, perfect, they're gonna be rendered worthy of eternal life. That's Paul's argument. Now one potential verdict - again, we're speaking in hypotheticals - one potential verdict of the judgment of God is righteous, worthy of eternal life. And if He gave that person a righteous rendering because they lived a perfect life, He would be completely just in doing so. He would be completely impartial in doing so.

But as we saw in Revelation 20, there's no one in history who's ever met this standard. The standard is perfection. Nobody meets this standard. There was no one at the end of Revelation 20 that said, "Yeah man, I missed the Great White Throne Judgment. I avoided it, I lived a perfect life, I missed it!" No, it's all encompassing. Everyone that appears at that judgment as a group gets cast into the lake of fire, after being exposed for who they really are: somebody without the righteousness needed to go to heaven. See, that's what we're looking at here.

And so we said we're gonna learn that later in chapter 3, that there's no one righteous. Just look at Romans 3 on through 23. There's no one righteous, no not one. There's no one good, no not one. That's what we see. However, as Paul is making his argument, if there existed a person like this, if there existed a person who was perfect, who continued in doing good, who did good works, who was perfect, never sinned, God would be fair, he would render that person eternal life. That's the argument that Paul's making, and again, remember the argument is not "How does somebody get to heaven?", he's actually proving you *can't* get to heaven this way. That's his whole point. But he's using a hypothetical situation to say *if* that were the case, God would be fair, because that's who He is, He's obligated to be that way.

But now we see the flipside. God is just and some will earn hell. Let's go to verses 8 and 9, "*but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness - indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.*" And so we see this concept here that those who are not perfect, those who don't continue in good - like you and me, like the rest of us, the people that actually exist on this earth. We don't obey the truth, we obey unrighteousness - the outcome for them is indignation and wrath. The only other potential verdict of the judgment of God is unrighteous.

You know, there's nothing in between. Righteous or unrighteous. There are two options there in the judgment of God. And so when people are rendered unrighteous, they're promised indignation, as one thing. It means *to move impetuously in a violent motion or passion of the mind, an outburst of the vengeful mind*. It's a judgment term. And then we've got this idea of wrath, meaning *wrath as a state of anger, a state of mind*. That's why we read elsewhere in the scripture for the unbeliever that the wrath of God abides on him. It's this continual state of mind, because they're not in right relationship with God as it relates to righteousness. That's the issue here. And so we see that those who take this stance are going to incur the indignation and wrath of God.

Now this person's described a couple of ways, if you look back at verse 8, he's first of all described as somebody who's self-seeking. And just by definition, it just means *those who seek their own way*. Those who are looking out for number one. And you know, you don't have to go too far, or even too far away from the mirror in this case to find somebody that's just naturally self-seeking.

You know, I've got a confession to make. I haven't even told my wife this. I know this is scary for Carrie, I'm sorry, hon'. But there are times that I wake up in the morning - we've got this 17-year-old cat, I don't know how that thing is still alive. We have to keep him in a room because he's lost control of the bladder functions - and do you know that as a selfish (I'm just calling it out like it is) husband, do you know some mornings I'm so busy, or I want to accomplish something, that when I walk into that room to feed the cat, I see the cat has thrown up on the floor or gone to the bathroom on the floor, and you know what I do sometimes? I leave it for her. I know... confession time. Anyone else want a turn? But I'm just saying, you can relate to this. This is how we look out for number one.

See, this is what moral sinners don't recognize. They have this in them. They leave the poop for their wives too. But yet they think they're good, they think they're righteous, they think they're looking out for everybody else. And this is the whole point, is that when you and I behave this way, when a

moral sinner behaves this way, they're looking out for number one. They're only looking out for their own interests. And there's a consequence for that. There's a consequence, a deserved consequence.

This word "self-seeking" was used of mercenaries in the Greek and Roman world. It was used of somebody who's canvassing for public office. Wow, that ought to ring a bell in our mind after what we just witnessed. The self-seeking, self-serving. But you know what else, it's an apt description of all of mankind, because man is incurably self-focused. And not only that, but man is also incurably self-reliant. That's the problem that the moral sinner has, because they're depending on themselves to get to heaven, and they don't realize that when they look down, God sees the time that you leave the cat throw-up on the ground for somebody else (or worse) and your self-focus there.

We also see this person is described as somebody who does not obey the truth in verse 8, but they obey unrighteousness. The word "obeys" is an interesting word, it's not your typical word used to translate "obey", and it means *to be persuaded, to be affected by something*. You might say it means *to be convinced*. If you go back to verse 8, they're not convinced of the truth, they're not persuaded of the truth. And although the truth might be appealing to them, or they might know the truth, might be able to repeat the truth, it doesn't persuade them. It doesn't affect this person in their lives.

Do you know that almost everybody in the United States of America can tell you that Jesus Christ died for sins? Do you know that? Do you know most people know that in America? And yet when you ask them what they're trusting in to get to heaven, "Well, you know, I try to be a good person. You know, I try to go to church, and I try not to do the bad things I used to do anymore." And yet, they know the truth. It's appealing in some ways, because obviously the Bible has been a best-seller for generations. People are interested in this message, or at least aware of it, but they're not persuaded. They're not convinced. They would rather trust in themselves to get to heaven than to trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Imagine that scene, if we appeared before God's pearly gates, as they say, and God says, "Why would I let you in?" Would you rather say, "Because of what I did", or "Because of what that Man seated at your right hand did"? See, I'm going to the bank on the Man seated at God's right hand. The one with the nail prints in His wrists and in His feet, who was risen from the dead, whose sacrifice was accepted by God. If He's not good enough, I have no shot. My bank is on the Man seated at His right hand.

But so many other people want to depend on themselves, the moral sinner wants to depend on themselves. "I don't need a Savior, God. You are *wrong*, God. I don't know why you sent Jesus, I don't know why you said I need a Savior, I don't know why you did that. I'm good, don't you know that God?" That's the mindset of the moral sinner.

And so God is saying this: that they are not persuaded, they are not convinced of this truth, they need to be convinced that they have no righteousness, they need to be convinced that God is going to judge according to righteousness, they need to be convinced that the gospel is the only means by which God provides righteousness, and they need to personally put their faith in the Savior. And they're not convinced of that truth. And we see the outcome for them at the end of verse 8, indignation and wrath.

We also see in verse 9 it says this, "*tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.*" And so we see this concept, if you will, this tribulation and anguish sandwich, this idea of tribulation and anguish on *every* soul. Notice those words when you study Scripture, these all-encompassing words: *all, every, each one, never, no one*. That's huge.

I used to teach high school math, and I used to love it because I would have students in every class, and as I would teach a problem they would say, "Now Mr. Clark, can I *always* do it this way?" You know, sometimes in math you can say, "Yeah, you always do it this way." But it always broke my heart

to tell these students, “Well no, there's some exceptions. That's the next chapter, we're gonna get to those exceptions.” And these students, it's interesting, even in that day they want to know once they got it figured out, is it always gonna be this way? Is it always gonna work this way?

You know, with God, He's not a contingency God. “Well... maybe.” I mean, He's not a politician, praise the Lord! He doesn't speak out of both sides of His mouth, right? He tells us exactly, and He uses these all-encompassing words that we should pay attention to. Every soul of man who does evil, the Jew first, also the Greek. Again, it doesn't matter who your father was. It doesn't matter who your grandfather was, right? This is what he's saying here to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

This word “tribulation” really describes *troubles pressing on someone from without*, and then this word “anguish” kind of describes more of the *distresses that arise from within*. This is what's promised to the sinner. And not only does it deal with this eternal punishment that we've been looking at, but it also gives this very practical explanation of why people experience hardships in this life. It's a direct result of sin. It's a direct result of doing evil. There are natural consequences of sin that people will experience in this life.

And so he just clearly says that if God is impartial, and He is, we're gonna see that again in verse 11, that's where he's bringing this to. In fact, notice that first word in verse 11, it's “for”. Notice the first word in verse 12, it's “for”. Notice the first word in verse 13, it's “for”. Notice the first word of verse 14, it's “for”. Paul is wrapping up his argument as it relates to the moral sinner, and he starts to transition into the religious sinner, which we'll get to next week. But notice this is his argument, he's wrapping it up, he's saying, “*for* God is not partial”. Verse 11, “*For there is no partiality with God.*” And so we find that in verse 11.

There's no partiality with God, there's no favoritism, if you want to say it that way, with God. You know, that's exactly what partiality means, it just means *favoritism, respecting a person, giving somebody something they don't deserve over and above something or somebody else that may deserve something more*. He's fair, as we've kind of talked about over and over again. And with the verb tense there in the Greek, it's the present active indicative, it just means that there's presently and continually no partiality with God. That means when you wake up tomorrow, you can count on this truth because it's going to be the same. This is who God is, this is who He always is, is kind of the concept. He's not gonna change His method by which He judges people, and He's going to be fair, because that's who God is.

And so what does that look like? Well as we've looked at, if someone were good enough to be rendered eternal life, God would give it to him. We'll look at Galatians 3:21 in a second. But if someone's not good enough to be rendered eternal life, God would not give it to them. Simple. That's Paul's argument here.

Now Galatians 3:21, you can flip there or just write it down, but basically Paul says if there was a law given that could have given eternal life, it would have been given. If there was any other way God could accomplish what we needed in terms of righteousness, God would have done it another way. God would have just given a law. You know, don't eat of that one tree over there, right? Easy enough. Some of us say, “Man, I wish I had that, I wish that's how I was spiritual. I just stay away from this tree.” Some of us can't even stay away from hamburgers. We might have trouble if He said stay away from the good hamburger or something. But you know the point is this, that there wasn't a law that could accomplish what we needed. We needed something else; we needed a savior, we needed God to undertake.

And so there's a couple of things that the moral sinner needs to understand as it relates to God being an impartial judge, and the first thing is this: you've got nothing to say. The moral sinner has nothing to say. In fact, as you look at what the moral sinner has nothing to say, they have no say as to

whether or not they're good enough to go to heaven. That's not in their realm of declaration. They have no say as to whether or not somebody else is good enough to go to heaven, and what they need to understand is that God is the only judge, the only one who can judge what it takes to get to heaven. God is the only judge that has access to all of the evidence, all of the testimony, if you will, God is the only one who can render accurate judgment. And you know why? Go down to verse 16, He knows our secrets. He knows everything, so He's the only one that can render accurate judgment.

So, for the moral sinner who wants to stand up and say, "Oh yeah, I'm good enough to go to heaven." And yet you don't even know, many times, what you ate for dinner two nights ago, and yet you're confident about what's gonna happen when you appear at God's throne? Yeah, you're gonna remember it all there and you don't even know what you had for lunch three days ago. And the moral sinner needs to realize this: they're not in a position to have a say, that they are not the ultimate authority, that Somebody and Someone who is greater than them, who has existed before them, who will exist all the way into eternity, the one who determined the laws, the one who spoke creation into existence, the one who determined the standard of righteousness, is the One who's got the say. The One who knows everything has got the say. And see, the moral sinner does not realize this.

Now what we're going to do here in verse 12 is really we're going to start a new section here, because Paul is going to - you'll see all these "fors", and we'll kind of look at that next week - but what he's doing now is as it relates to this impartial judgment of God, he's gonna anticipate a response and say, "Well that's not fair! He can't judge the Jew and the Gentile the same way, because the Jews had the law and the Gentiles didn't, so how is that fair? How is that impartial?" And so what we're gonna see in this next section is that ignorance of the law is not going to save the Gentiles, and possession of the law will not save the Jews. That's really not even the issue, is what we're gonna see here.

And so let's start this section as it kind of leads into a transition in the next section, let's look at verse 12. *"For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as if sinned in the law will be judged by the law."* So, what is Paul saying there? Well, very clearly, "those who have sinned without law" is referring to the Gentiles. And you know, Gentiles were not afforded what I'd call the special revelation. What I mean by that is this direct communication from God found in the Old Testament law and profits that the Jews were afforded. They got this special revelation.

So, the question becomes, "Well, wait a minute here, then how could they be judged if they don't have this special revelation, this special revelation of what God's standard is?" Well, we looked at it in chapter one. All people have violated the knowledge that they've gotten from general revelation. What are we talking about, general revelation? We're talking about creation; we're talking about conscience.

In fact, if you've forgotten already, or just a quick reminder, look at Romans 1 starting in verse 19, because he says this: *"because what may be known of God is"* - number one - *"manifest in them,"* - I believe that's via the conscience, knowing right and wrong. And then the second thing - *"for God has shown it to them."* Well, how did God show it to them? Verse 20, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."*

See, we've got to understand that God is gonna judge people based upon the revelation or the light that they understand, and nobody is gonna have that opportunity at the Great White Throne to say, "You know what, I didn't know. I didn't know. I've got an excuse. That's the escape clause." It's not there, because of general revelation, because of conscience.

In fact, you're gonna see later that he brings up in verse 15, speaking of the Gentiles, *"Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts"*

*accusing or else excusing them.*” Do unsaved people, people who claim they reject God, know when they're doing right and wrong? Yes, because of the internal witness of the conscience. And as they violate that, they are violating, they are sinning, they are missing the mark. Now it's not according to maybe a special revelation, they didn't sit in a Jewish synagogue growing up and get exposed to the Hebrew Scriptures of the church necessarily, but they're violating the light that God has given them, and they'll be held accountable.

You know, it's interesting here because in verse 12, with the first group, he uses this word “perish”. It's the same word in John 3:16 when God promises that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not perish. You will not be destroyed. But here, for those who have sinned without law, the Gentiles, if they violate the law, they will be destroyed. In fact, it's a mood of fact in the Greek, it's a guarantee that this will be the outcome for those who have violated their conscience, who have sinned, who have missed the mark.

So, the Gentiles would not be held to the standard of law, because that wouldn't be just. To be held to a standard that they weren't aware of would be unjust, but God is gonna hold them to a standard based on the knowledge that they had. And you know what, the same result ensues. Nobody is good enough. That's why Paul is just breaking this out line by line, we're gonna get to the conclusion everyone's guilty.

And we see the second part of that verse, *“as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.”* This is clearly a reference to the Jews, who *were* afforded the special revelation, who *were* given the covenants, who *were* given the service in the temple, who understood - or should have understood - these things. But the Jews too had missed the mark, but in a sense, their mark was more clearly defined, because the Gentiles didn't have the mark. They had God's law, they knew exactly what sin was, they knew that you should not covet, and yet they coveted. They charged gross interest on people because their God became money.

You shall not bow down and worship any idols, you shall not make any idols, and what did they do when Moses took a little time up on the mountain, a little too long for their taste? The first thing they did was start carving out idols, and poor Aaron he's like, “Yeah they gave me the gold, threw it in the fire, man out popped this calf, I don't know how that happened.” A chisel, Aaron. A chisel and some hammers, you guys took care of that. And so they had missed the mark! But they had it clearly defined, and yet they rebelled anyways.

You know, I love the Word of God. Because what God wants to say, He says. He's clear, He's precise, He uses words, He changes words, He changes tenses to get across His truth. But notice the switch here, from the first phrase that, *“those who have sinned without law will perish without law,”* notice the switch, *“as many who have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.”* That's not to imply that the Jew wouldn't perish also, but it's interesting that he uses the word “judge” instead of “perish” here. Now why the switch? Well, the word “judge” is a legal term, it means *to form or give an opinion after separating or considering the particulars of a case.* For the Jew, they had legal culpability because the law had been defined, and they were breaking the known law. So, they had legal culpability, and thus Paul switched to a legal judgment against them. And it's just interesting to notice how that happens and he switches here. So not only would they perish, but their judgment was also legally indefensible.

And so we've been looking at the moral sinner, and what we're going to do in the next section as we get further into verses 12-16 is start diving into the religious sinner. When we say, “religious sinner,” we're using that as a broad terminology or a broad term, because Paul is dealing specifically with the religious Jew in this section. But the application can be made for those who, instead of now trusting in their own moral goodness, are now trusting in their religion, in their church, in their

ordinances, in their catechism, in their circumcision, in their baptism, whatever it is that's a religious work, and Paul is going to shoot those folks down as well so that we can actually get to the good news. I mean, teaching the Word of God is fun, but I want to get out of this bad news section. It's depressing me in some ways because there's good news on the other side of this! For everyone who is guilty, it's not an eternal sentence of death that you can't get out of, because God has taken care of the issue through the gospel.

See, that's the good news. But before we can appreciate the good news, before we can appreciate number one, that we need righteousness, and number two, we can't get it on our own, thus we need something outside of us, *someone* outside of us to do something for us, to save us the way we can't save ourselves, we'll never appreciate the gospel.

And that's why Paul is just layering down line upon line, verse upon verse, thought upon thought, argument upon argument, anticipating questions, so that when we get to the middle part of chapter 3, verses 19 and 20, we're gonna see we don't have righteousness and nobody else does. I don't care how good they purport themselves to be, how religious they think they are. In fact, as you've seen in the illustration before, as you get to the religious lane on the highway to hell, you get further and further from the truth, because now you're really confident you got it, and you don't. Not unless you've put your faith in Jesus Christ.



# CHAPTER 8

## The Religious Sinner Part 1

### Romans 2:13-20

Let's continue our study in the book of Romans. We're gonna pick up in chapter 2, verse 13. But as a quick review, we're gonna get into "The Religious Sinner" this week. We've talked about these three lanes on the highway to hell, and so for many of us, this is a review. But as you recall, Matthew 7:13 says, "*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.*"

And we've looked at these three lanes on the highway to hell as Paul has elaborated here in the first couple chapters of Romans. We looked at "The Immoral Sinner" in chapter 1. Remember, this is the type of sinner that most of us could point out. This is when we think of the term sinner, debauchery, you know whatever we think of in terms of sin, these are the types of people that we think of. We think of the drug dealers, we think of the adulterers, we think of the people who are stealing money, who are hurting children, etc. This is the type of category that we think of.

And we learn what Paul says about these people: they've gotten this way because they've rejected the truth of God. It's not that they didn't possess it, they did. They've rejected it, they've suppressed it, they've put it aside, and they've determined that in the area of righteousness they don't even need to go after it, because it's unneeded. Because in some ways, God doesn't exist in their thinking. And so their goal is to live life according to their standards, not pursuing righteousness, and then cheering everybody else on who also pursues a life of sin. That's the immoral sinner in a nutshell.

Now many people start off life this way, and they begin to realize that that's not good living. There's a need for righteousness, I've got to start getting more good in my life and start doing better things with my time. And so they shift lanes, they change lanes, and now unfortunately they haven't gotten off the highway to hell, but they've become a "Moral Sinner". And now their concept is, "I need a righteousness, but you know what, I'm doing pretty good on my own, because I'm not as bad as these people over here. And not only that, but I'm doing some pretty good things." And we've kind of been looking at this category the last couple of weeks, and we'll wrap up in this section today.

And as you remember, part of the crowd that Paul was talking to were Jews who were not religious during the day, but thought that they were good enough, better than the Gentiles even though they were participating in and benefitting from some of the licentious behavior of the Gentile communities around them. And so the moral sinner is pursuing righteousness, but they're pursuing it in their own way, neglecting God's righteousness, thinking that if God were to judge them and give them what they deserve, they would deserve heaven. Because like I said, I'm not as bad as that guy over there and I've never murdered anybody, so hence that's the standard to get into heaven according to the moral sinner.

And then third, we see this third lane which we'll get into a little bit today and continue next week, and that's this concept of "The Religious Sinner". Not only are moral sinners on the highway to hell, but people who then find *religion* are also on the highway to hell. Religion does not save you. Denominations don't save you. Churches don't save you. Grace Community Fellowship cannot save you.

And see, many people in our day don't realize that, and they think if they start going to church, they start ringing into a building that's got a steeple on the top and some stained-glass windows - I mean,

we don't even have stained-glass windows we *really* can't get saved here - but they think you walk in, you've got stained-glass windows, you've got some special water up front that you can sprinkle on people, you're lighting candles, you're reading your Bible, you're praying, you're giving to the poor, you're tithing, you're doing all these things, that those types of things are good enough to get you into heaven. I mean, the Jews thought if somebody cut the foreskin off when they were babies that they were good enough to go to heaven, because it was a religious right, and they were trusting in religion.

And we see, unfortunately, that the religious sinner is also on this highway to hell, and there's one exit off of this highway and it's called the gospel. It's God's solution to man's problem, not man's solution to man's problem. Man doesn't have a solution to his problem. The problem that man has is they have no righteousness. And when I say "man" I need to get more specific: that means you and that means me. That means everybody. And so God's solution for our righteousness issue is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the one exit, that's the one narrow path off of this highway to hell. And so what we see over time is that people think that by just simply changing lanes, that can help them get to heaven.

Now as we get into our section today, we're gonna start in verse 13, but in terms of review, I think we need to read verse 12. And so if we can start back in verse 12 and then we'll kind of get a ramped up start today. Now I kind of mentioned this last week, but starting in verse 11, I noticed the word "for". Verse 11 starts with a "for", verse 12 starts with a "for", verse 13 starts with a "for", verse 14 starts with a "for". And so these three "fors" that we're gonna look at describe why God is impartial and how He executes judgment. In fact, how does His impartiality play out? That's what we're gonna see in verses 12-14, and also 15-16.

The answer is simply this: God is going to be fair to judge the Jew by the standard that they have. God's gonna be fair. He's gonna be impartial, no favoritism for the Jew, He's gonna judge them based on the standard that they have. But conversely for the Gentile, He's also going to judge the Gentile by the standard that they have.

See, the Jews had the law and many of them thought just possession of the law was going to get them in. Possession of the law does not equal justification. In fact, we're gonna see in this section the very first use of the word "justification" in verse 13 as a verb form. That's a huge word in the book of Romans. So, I'll say it today, but we'll define it again, "justification" means *to be declared righteous*. And what we're saying is that the Jew, just because they had the law, will not be declared righteous. But conversely, some would say, "Okay, well that means the Gentiles don't have the law, so they're probably going to be declared righteous, because they didn't have that high standard." And God's gonna judge them impartially as well. So, we're gonna see how God does this in this section.

So, let's start in verse 12 and let's read it, "*For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law,*" And I want you to stop right there. He's talking about Gentiles, and he's going to go on in verses 14-15 and show why God is impartial in judging Gentiles, even though they didn't have the law. Let's go back to verse 12, the second part, "*and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.*" He's going to expand on that in verse 13, and that's for the Jew. So, God is impartial to the Jew in His judgment, God is impartial also to the Gentile in His judgment, and that's what we're gonna see played out.

So, in verse 13, did you notice that little curvy mark in verse 13 right at the beginning called a parenthesis? And notice where the parenthesis ends as you kind of trace it down through the passage, it ends in verse 15. And so he is expanding here on verse 12, he's further explaining verse 12, and so that's where we're at here in verse 13. Let's read it, "*(for not the bearers of the law are just in the sight of God,*

*but the doers of the law will be justified;*” And so we see that here is a law and that equals the Jews. He's talking about the Jews in this verse, they're not just or righteous just because they have the law.

In fact, you might say that it probably makes them more guilty, because privilege requires more responsibility. It wasn't as if they were just shooting in the dark trying to figure out what God was doing and what God required. God specifically delineated it, and for those of us who think the Ten Commandments were the entire law, no, there were 613 of them! There's a ton of Commandments. God specifically delineated what was expected of the Jew if they wanted to live by the law in perfect, continual goodness to earn their way to heaven by being righteous. It was all lined out for them, 613.

Just imagine if you carried those on paper and tried to live life like that. I mean, I wouldn't even leave the house! I wouldn't talk to anybody; I wouldn't even take a step out for fear I'm gonna break one of these things. Because man, if it's on the back of page five, like the fine print in advertisements, so there's a law down here that I didn't realize, well there goes my perfection. There goes my opportunity for heaven if I was a Jew.

Now going back to verse 7, and also verse 10, it's this person, you see this phrase in verse 13, “the doer of the law”. The doer of the law, but how much do you have to do of the law to qualify for heaven? Well, you've got to do all of it, and you've got to do all of it all the time. You've got to be perfect.

And so we see in verse 7 this concept of patient continuance and doing good; in verse 10 those who work what is good. It's this continual aspect, living a perfect life, and as we discussed last week, nobody qualifies. Nobody qualifies. And yet the Jew in their thinking thought, “Well I possess the law, and thus I'm gonna get in.” And we're gonna see that even more so as we get into the religious sinner in terms of what they were trusting in.

This word “justification” is a legal term. Now this is important because it doesn't indicate lack of guilt. Guilt is still there. Did I break the law when I lied? Did I break the law when I stole? Did I break the law when I lusted and hated, and did all the things that the Ten Commandments and other laws talk about? Yes, I broke the law, so my guilt is always before me. I am guilty, I'm deserving of death, I'm deserving of the penalty that sin requires.

So, it's not that I'm guiltless, but rather in the eyes of the law, I would not be culpable, and I don't have to pay for my crimes. And you know why I don't have to pay for my crimes? This is where the beauty of the gospel is, because the man Christ Jesus came and lived a perfect life, and He stepped in front of me, and He took my punishment for me. He was my substitute.

So, here's how God can declare a guilty sinner righteous: it's not by closing His eyes and saying, “Yeah, come on in the back door.” No, in full public view, He crucified His son in my place so now He can accept me if I'll simply trust in what His Son did for me. That's the beauty of the gospel. It's not that I have to be righteous, or I have to be non-guilty to go to heaven, it's the fact that I've got a substitute who was righteous for me, who died for me. He took my guilt, my shame, my burden, my punishment upon Himself so that I wouldn't have to face it.

And God can take a guilty sinner, a despicable sinner like me and like you, I might add, and He can declare us righteous. I was getting a little uncomfortable, so I had to include you with me. But that's the beauty of the gospel, that's the beauty of the word of God, is God can take anybody. In fact, He took the chief of sinners. So maybe you're the assistant chief of sinners. He saved the chief of sinners; He can save you. And that's the beautiful message of the gospel.

See, the Jews had a misconception. In fact, do you know that according to their law - we look at James 2:10 - do you know that if James 2:10 says that if you keep the entire law (613 commandments) and you stumble in just one, you're guilty of all. Wait a minute, so let's play that out a little bit. This is

the only sin, by the way, that most people ever remember, “Well, when I was a kid one time, I took some cookies out of the cookie jar when my mom didn't tell me.”

It's really funny as you talk to people, “You mean you've never stolen anything; you've never sinned?” “Well, I guess when I was three years old,” as if they haven't sinned since they were three years old. But let's just use that sin that everyone shares in common, stealing the cookies at three years old - I've got one right now stealing candy corn when he's not supposed to - but stealing the cookies at three years old. According to James 2, that would make you guilty of breaking the entire law. Murder? Yeah, that would make you guilty of murder, or just as guilty as a murderer. Make you guilty of adultery, make you guilty of whatever sin you can put under the catalog of sin.

Imagine if our U.S. justice system worked that way. I mean, I already shared my struggle with speeding, although I'm doing pretty good. I'm about five months into Georgia, and I'm doing really well! I think the police are a little bit easier here than in Texas. But I'm doing pretty good. But imagine if you get pulled over for speeding, and they start reading you your Miranda rights. They say, “Well sir, since you're guilty of speeding, you're also guilty of murder, and we're gonna try you and seek the death penalty.” What?! That would be crazy, wouldn't it?

But you know what, it's only crazy because we don't understand God's standard of perfection. That's what we have to understand, that we're talking about a holy and just God who cannot let imperfection into His heaven. If He allowed us into heaven the way we were, it would ruin heaven, it would wreck it. So, God in His justice has to deal with sin. He must, He's obligated, as we looked at last week.

The other thing we want to notice here is that the verb “justified” is a passive voice. What does that mean? That means you don't justify yourself; you don't declare yourself righteous. This is the problem that the moral sinner and the religious sinner have, they want to tell you how good they are. And we saw that the moral sinner will take that to their grave. They're stubborn as a mule, declaring how good, and how righteous, and how deserving they are of heaven, and they don't back off of it.

On Judgment Day, I want the voice coming from the throne saying, “John Clark, you're righteous, come on in.” I don't want to be there defending myself, I want to say, “Lord, it's because of that Man seated at Your right hand that I can get in. I want You to declare me righteous.” And see, God has not hidden that from us. God has not hidden the way that you can be declared righteous, He's revealed it in the gospel, and that's what we're looking at here.

But the moral sinner cannot justify himself, even the Jew who possesses the law. And again, these “fors” are illustrating that God is not partial in the way He judges. He will judge the Jew according to the standard, the special revelation in the law that they received.

And so now we move on to verse 14 for the Gentiles, which says this: *“for when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves.”* You know, many Gentiles over the years have had a moral compass via conscience. They've followed that moral direction. Some don't follow that moral direction, some buck against their conscience, I think that's what we see in the immoral sinner, and we saw in Chapter 1. But some do, they follow their conscience.

Do you know that in many cultures and many religions, if you walk into their village or society or culture, - in fact, they find this in cultures all over the place - that adultery is viewed as wrong in every culture that they asked? That murder, in a sense, is wrong. Now, there are certain cultures where certain murders are okay and accepted, but if you were to ask them, “Can I murder one of your family members?” that would be considered wrong, and there would be retaliation for it.

It reminds me of an old missionary who dedicated their lives to some people in New Guinea, and as they were working through the translation, they came to the word “sin”. They're translating the Bible into their native language; they came to the word “sin”. And so in order to kind of get a concept of how to translate that word, they began to speak to some of the locals about this concept of sin, and they said, “How can we translate *sin*? What is *sin*?” And you know what they came out with? These are some tribal people, and this happens all around the world, and they said, “Well, it's when you lie, it's when you steal, it's when you kill, when you take another man's wife.” Like they're reading from the 10 commandments, and they've never even *seen* a Bible, they've never even *had* a Bible! It's incredible the way God has built this in, and it goes all the way back to chapter 1, verse 19 when he says, “*He manifested in them,*” remember that? And what did He manifest? The knowledge of God. Who He was, His eternal attributes, so that they are without excuse.

This is why God can judge the Gentile impartially. They are without excuse, they have an internal mechanism, whether it's via conscience, whether - as we'll see in verse 15 - it's this work of the law written in their hearts via conscience, to know that what they're doing is right, what they're doing is wrong, what they're not doing is wrong, and what they're not doing is right. They have this internal mechanism that they're going to be held accountable for.

And this is why as we look at verse 14, some of these Gentiles who all they had was conscience, were actually living a better life than the Jews who had the law in their day. What a flip! Because for the Jew to stand up and say, “I'm a son of Abraham. I'm circumcised, I've got the law, and I'm better than these dogs over here.” And yet these dogs over here were actually following what they knew better than the Jews were following what they knew. And there was this hypocrisy there, and we see it even come out further when we get to the religious sinner.

And so these Gentiles, though they're not privileged with what I would call special revelation, (the law, the Word of God) they're more doers of the law than some Jews. And this is what's insane about this, but at the same time, we're going to see that they didn't keep it perfectly. They were a law to themselves, they were following the light given to them, but we know that they didn't keep it perfectly. But even some of them were better off behaving, if you will, in a more righteous way than Jews who had the law, even though they never had it. All they had was general revelation, and all they had was their conscience. But again, it wasn't perfect, and we're not trying to justify that, “Oh okay, as long as Gentiles follow their conscience they can get saved.” Well, they too would have to follow that perfectly, and no person like that has ever existed either.

Verse 15, speaking of the Gentiles, “*who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them*”) And so we see this concept of showing the work. Now one of the things I want to point out - and you can look in your Bibles here with me - but just notice the text does not say that the law was written on their hearts. That's kind of a concept that's thrown around a lot. The law was written on their hearts, the law was written on everybody's hearts. It doesn't actually say that. It says that the *work* of the law was shown to be written on their hearts. Little distinction.

And I'll tell you why it's a distinction: because God will one day write His law on His people's hearts. It's part of the New Covenant that's gonna happen during the Millennial Kingdom. And when He does that, you're gonna see that it's gonna have the effect that He intends, and that means that they are gonna keep the law. They're gonna be empowered by the Holy Spirit, His Jewish people empowered by the Holy Spirit, law written on their hearts, they're gonna keep it, no man is gonna have to teach his neighbor - you know that passage, we'll read it here in a second - but what is he saying here if that's not

what he's saying? He's not saying that the law is written on the hearts of the Gentiles, but he's saying the *work* of the law. Little distinction there.

And so what does this mean? I believe it means this: that based upon their understanding of right and wrong, via conscience largely, via general revelation, but also possible, let's just call it what it is, it could be societal teaching. You know, we live in America, there's a moral compass, a moral standard that's still taught, regardless of what we think about our nation. There is some morality left, and there's some societal expectations of morality, and so that kind of fits.

And so what we see is that these Gentiles, whatever that was, were positively responding to that. They were positively responding, and so they were showing the work of the law even though they didn't know it, the law itself wasn't written on their hearts, they were responding to the work of the law in their daily life being a doer of the word. And so this is what I believe it's talking about here. And then we see that this is manifested or shown through their lives and how they respond to the truth that they have.

I like what a commentator named F.B. Meyer said, *"Conscience is the judgment seat of God set up within our nature. You may always know when conscience speaks, she never hesitates, or questions, or pronounces on the expediency of a course. But as in any case is presented to her, she pronounces absolutely and directly upon it as right or wrong. And as she speaks, she anticipates the verdict of the Great White Throne."*

Now we know that conscience is not always a hundred percent right. Some of us probably have an overactive conscience, we probably need to cool it down a little bit. It's okay to sleep in one morning and not read your Bible, you're not gonna go to hell for that.

You see, when we get these religious rights and principles, and all these things that we start to think that we have to do to either please or maintain our pleasure to God, just enjoy the Lord. Walk by means of the Spirit. And when you need sleep, sleep in. You're not gonna get anything out of it when you're tired anyway. And so we don't even do things like that in our own strength, right?

But the point is this: that when we talk about conscience, it usually comes in clear. Black, white, that's right or wrong, and you sense it immediately. And that's the point, it's designed to be in there to give people an opportunity to respond to God's law even when they don't have the law, or it's not written on their hearts. And as I mentioned, God's law will be written on the hearts, we'll see this for the Jewish people in Jeremiah 31 as a promise of their New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31 starting in verse 31 says this, *"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the Covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."* - And then notice the effect in verse 34 - *"No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*

And so we see the effect of writing the law on somebody's hearts is that they're gonna be able to keep it. They're gonna be able to know it, and obviously it's not describing the moral sinner here in terms of that. So, he's saying that these Gentile unbelievers are showing the work of the law via conscience, understanding of right and wrong, and they're responding to it. And as a result - so go back to verse 15, that second part of the verse there - *"their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)"* This is where we get this concept of the conscience being a witness. It's interesting because even as moral sinners, even as we have a conscience, even when we go against the conscience, we're admitting that what we're doing is wrong. We're showing out, we're proving

that the conscience has said, “No, that's wrong,” or “Yes, that's right, you should do it.” And then when we don't follow that, it's testifying against us.

It would be like if you got arrested for murder because you killed somebody. And five minutes before you killed somebody, you had a witness who said, “Don't go there. You're angry, you've got a gun, that's not a good idea.” And what's gonna happen after at your murder trial? They're gonna find that witness and what are they gonna say? “I told him five minutes before he went there: don't go there. You've got a gun, you're angry, you don't know what's gonna happen.”

And this is kind of how our conscience is set up, it's going to be a witness against us, and it's not a witness you can coerce. Because it's designed to say right, wrong. Right, wrong. Right, wrong. It's really simple. And so this is going to testify against us, and the conscience is going to *accuse* us of sin, and it may also *excuse* us of sin. “Well, no, their motivation was actually pure. They were following the conscience.” But the conscience is going to testify against us or for us, depending on how we respond to it.

And so for the moral sinner, here's the sad thing: they are going to be condemned by their own standard that they've set for themselves. See that's the thing, when you start to look at how this all plays out, when they go against conscience, conscience is going to testify. And now it's not, “Well I'm better than them and I still do these good things.” They say, “Well why did you disobey your conscience, why did you go against the light that you had?” And so the moral sinner, the religious sinner, they're going to be condemned by their own standards.

And then it gets worse. Because not only are we set up as sinners to condemn ourselves, based on the fact that we don't abide by either the law or by conscience, it gets worse. Because in verse 16, we've got a gold standard. He says this in verse 16, “*in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*” We see that God is going to judge us, judge our *secrets*. That ought to frighten all of us. Secrets? The things that nobody sees? Yeah, that's what he's talking about. The things that nobody sees. “*In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*”

What's interesting about this word “will judge”, is it's an indicative mood in the Greek, which means it's a mood of fact, it's a promise, this is going to happen. God will indeed judge men. The immoral sinner needs to realize this truth from chapter 1. It's not about putting your head in the sand and hoping that God won't do this, or hoping that He doesn't exist, or just planning your life as if He doesn't exist. He does exist, the guaranteed reality is that He will judge sinners. That's reality, that's what the Bible teaches, is that God is going to judge men, it's a promise. It is a promise that He's going to judge men.

But not only will He judge, He's gonna judge secret things. Things that nobody else can see. So many times, in our court system, human court systems, we can get off on a technicality. Because they didn't have the witness there at the right moment, they didn't have a camera turned on to show the evidence against me, and so sometimes we can get off on a technicality.

It doesn't work that way in God's courtroom. It doesn't work that way at God's throne. He is going to be able to see everything. And see, this is why when Jesus elaborates on the law in Matthew 5, He likens lust to being the same thing as adultery. Why? Because God can see lust just as well as He can see adultery. He can see the physical act, but He can also see the thought process that leads to that act, and He counts it the same.

This is why in Matthew 5 He likens anger or hatred to murder. You know honestly, I'd much rather you hate me than kill me, right? I'm a human being. I'm not saying that in a human realm we would view the same thing, right? But I'm talking about God's estimation of judgment. He likens it to the same thing.

We see covetousness as likened to idolatry. “Wait a minute, I've never built a statue, I've never carved in it, I've never bowed down in the corner of my house to an image!” But God says if you covet something that belongs to somebody else, you're an idolater, just like it. Because God can see your heart. God can see your thinking. He's going to judge the secrets of men.

Forget about all the external stuff that you did. Because if you're anything like me, the internal stuff is 10 times worse if we're being honest with ourselves. I challenge you to be honest with yourself. Imagine that God is going to judge according to that standard. Imagine if all your private thoughts, words, actions, will be laid bare to the judgment of God, even your emails and your texts.

Maybe someone from the Democratic National Committee's listening today online. But you know it's funny because this could happen, I'm sure they could pull some stuff out of the Republican National Committee too, so this is really a political comment. I just find it ironic the way that they're responding not, “We're sorry we wrote these things,” but “How dare they hack into our emails.” You know, those are going to be exposed.

Have you ever sent a text to somebody, thinking you were sending it to one person, and you accidentally sent it to somebody else? That's a little embarrassing, right? But imagine if God laid bare all the texts you sent, all the private posts you put on Facebook, all the rude snapchat pictures. You know, all these things if God were to expose and lay bare. What would that look like for you? What would that look like for mankind? It would be a pretty ugly day. Now we can see that we're not gonna get by on our public persona.

It was like a guy that told me one time, I said, “Hey, are you gonna go to heaven, do you know?” And he said, “Yeah, I'm going to heaven! You know, me and God got this thing worked out.” I said, “What do you have worked out, man?” He said, “Don't worry about me, you just worry about yourself. Me and God, we got this thing figured out.” And I just told him, “Well if your “figuring out” doesn't include the work of Jesus Christ, you don't have it figured out. You don't have anything figured out.” Because this is the judgment standard, this is the gold standard by which God is going to judge.

You know we see in Acts 17, Paul also alludes to this there too, that it's by Jesus Christ. So you know, if the standard of righteousness is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what you have to measure up to, you can see nobody's gonna meet that standard. I jokingly put this picture up here on the screen, but “The Town of Perfection, population: 1,” that's Jesus Christ. You're not part of that town. You're not allowed into that town on your own merits, but you can get there on the merits of that One. You can get there as a result of being His guest, as being a part of His family. And so that's what we're looking at in the gospel.

And here's the problem for the moral sinner, they're comparing themselves to the person in the intensive care unit next door and saying, “I'm healthier than that person next door,” when God is going to compare them to the perfectly healthy Jesus Christ. It'd be like comparing yourself - you're in the ICU - to the person next door or comparing yourself to an Olympic athlete that just won seven gold medals. The standard's totally different.

And we're going to be judged, as God says, by Jesus Christ. And you know what He's going to judge on? Did you accept the gospel? Did you accept God's provision for your lack of righteousness? And when we talk about ‘accept’, let's be even more clear: you've got to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ. You've got to believe that He died for your sins and rose again. That's what we mean by receive the gospel or accept it.

But the point is, God accepts the gospel as the answer to your issue, *do you* accept the gospel as the answer to your issue? Or are you gonna join ranks with every other moral sinner and religious sinner who's burning in hell today, thinking that you're gonna get there on your own?



You know, the message of the gospel is “give up”. Don't try to be good, don't try to work your way to heaven. In fact, we're gonna learn in Romans chapter 4, it's the person that *stops* working and trusts in the work of another, trusts in the work of Somebody who accomplished what you and I needed. And so we see that Jesus is the righteous standard needed to get to heaven. This is what the standard is going to be that we're judged against, and it's only through the gospel we can obtain this righteousness.

And so where have we been so far? Let me just give a quick summary of the moral sinner: man is condemned by self-judgment through his or her conscience. But man is also condemned by God through His righteous judgment, based on four principals (and this is all found in Chapter 2). God is going to judge according to truth - that's found in verse 2 of chapter 2. God is going to judge according to deeds - that's found in verse 6 of chapter 2. God is going to judge impartially - that's found in verse 11 of chapter 2. And God is going to judge the secrets of men - that's found in verse 16. So, the moral sinner has no leg to stand on. In fact, we've told you many times, the spoiler alert is that all are guilty, no one is righteous, and that's where Paul is going with this. But we see it played out just even on a practical level.

And so now we move on to verse 17. Verses 17-20 let's read it, and then let me just give a brief introduction to this section as well. He says, *“Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.”*

What's interesting about this section is that it's really ironic, because everything Paul just said in verses 17-20 was not a cut down to the Jews. He was not even making an argument yet; he was telling them things that they already believed about themselves. And I could just see a Jewish person reading this as he's following the flow of the argument, and he's thinking, “Oh yeah, the immoral sinner, that's out there. That's good I'm not them.” “Oh yeah, the moral sinner. Yeah, I get that. I'm not there either. I'm the religious sinner.”

And then Paul gets to me in verse 17 he's like, “Yeah, I'm a Jew. Yeah, I rest on the law, I know God's will. I'm a teacher of the blind.” And they're like. “Yeah, Paul is about to drop it down that the Jews are saved, religious Jews are saved.” And I could just imagine this going through his mind. And you know what? Paul can do this because he was one of them. He knew because this is exactly how he thought. And in fact, all of these things we read in verses 17-20, it's paralleled in Jewish literature of the time. It was very common for religious Orthodox Jew to think this way, the way we just read in verses 17-20.

And you know what's really sad for the religious Jew? And we'll get to Paul because he's gonna blow them out of the water next week. He's just gonna blow them to smithereens, and he does it just by asking them questions. Because again, Paul knows what's going on on the inside. Paul knows what's happening on the inside of this religious Judaism that's hypocritical, that condemns them according to their own standards, so he'll blow them up next week.

But this concept of a religious Jew was this: they're resting in their position. They're resting in their position of being a Jew. In fact, the average Jewish person thought, “I'm going to heaven,” or their mindset would have been, “I'm going into the kingdom because I'm a son of Abraham, I've got the law, and I'm circumcised.” That's all it took to go to heaven.

You can see that the emphasis of the ministry of John the Baptist is “Repent, you need to change your mind.” Change your mind about what? Change your mind about what it takes to spend eternal life with God. What did they need to change their mind about? Well, you see it in John's message. If God wanted to raise the children of Abraham up from these stones, He could do it. Being a son of

Abraham, it's not enough to get you into heaven. Having the law is not enough to get you in heaven. In fact, it holds you to a higher standard, probably condemns you worse. And being circumcised doesn't get you to heaven. And so he's gonna really build on this argument here as we close out chapter 2, so that's kind of where we're going.

And so the Jews mind set, "Well *of course* I'm going to heaven, because I'm a Jew!" You know, the application is so clear in our day, isn't it? "Well of course I'm going to heaven, I'm a Baptist. Well of course I'm going to heaven, I'm a Methodist. Well of course I'm going to heaven, my dad and my grandpa, my grandpa's grandpa, they were all pastors." It's this religious mindset, "And I've got a Bible in my home!" As if a Bible in the room was enough to get somebody to heaven, but that's how the religious sinner thinks. "Well of course I'm going to heaven, because I go to church every Sunday." And "Of course I'm going to heaven, because I give 10%." "Well of course I'm going to heaven, because I'm baptized." "Well of course I'm going to heaven\_\_\_," and you can fill in the blank.

And let me just make this statement as a statement of compassion, although it won't sound that way because it makes me very angry at the same time: do you know that religion is the one thing that has sent more people to hell than anything else on this earth? Because religion actually comforts people and encourages them that all is right between them and the Lord, because they're reading their Bible, because they scratch a check and put it in a bowl once a week, and they think that's going to get them to heaven. They think if they sit on that pew and they really wear it in, and it starts to form to their rear end enough, that they're gonna go to heaven because they're sitting in a building called a church.

And my heart breaks for those people. I talk to those people often, and you cannot get them off a dead center, because they've sat in the Methodist Church their whole life, they're teaching Sunday school, they might even be the Sunday School Superintendent, and yet they're trusting in their own religion, they're trusting in their own church, they're trusting in their own good works to get them to heaven, and the Bible that they read contains the words of the gospel about Jesus Christ, and they don't even know Him. Isn't that tragic?

And see, it's even more tragic because the Jews had this law as well. They had this special revelation as well. They were set up, if you want to say it, for success in this area. And that's why when Jesus talks to Nicodemus and He says, "Nicodemus you must be born again," and Nicodemus is acting like, "I have never heard that before," and Jesus says, "You're a teacher of Israel, and you don't know these things?" Implying they should have known these things. Nicodemus should have been teaching on being born again, and he wasn't, and they had missed the whole point.

And so many Jewish religious people, many Gentile religious people over the years, are sitting in hell today, not understanding, "Wait a minute. I went to church every day of my life! I was born in church, I died in church!" You hear people say that. It's like if you're in a garage, that doesn't mean you're a car, you just happen to be in the garage.

And so to be a Christian is very simple. And if you've realized for the first time that you don't deserve heaven, that you're sinful, and if God were to judge you based on these standards that we're looking at today in the book of Romans, and you realize you need a Savior, do you know that you can get saved right where you're sitting today?

You don't have to come up to the aisle, you don't have to close your eyes, you don't have to repeat a prayer after me, you don't have to raise your hand, you don't even have to run around the church and quack like a chicken or some embarrassing thing. You have to simply - where you're sitting - put your faith in Jesus Christ and what He did for you. Do you believe - where you're sitting - that Jesus Christ died in your place, paid the penalty that you deserved, and rose again from the dead? If you believe that today, God says you're saved. God says you have eternal life. God says you'll never perish,

you'll never face the death penalty. He says your sins are forgiven, and you are guaranteed to spend eternity with Him. And if you made that decision today, I would just love for you - again, this doesn't get you saved - I would just love for you to tell me on the way out, "Hey, I made that decision today. I'm trusting in Jesus Christ alone." I'd love to hear that from you today. It would greatly encourage me if that happened.

Let's go on in verse 17. Paul now turns his exclusive attention to his Jewish readers - the religious Jewish readers - to show them too that they lacked the righteousness needed to get to heaven. He says this in verse 17, "*indeed you are called a Jew,*" and so in contrast to the Greek he's contrasting, they think they're better because of their nationality, because of their ethnicity. Again, this was found in all of the Jewish writing of the day. These Jews were proud of their physical heritage. Many were mistaken as to the fact that this got them into the kingdom. The fact that they were a son of Abraham, they could trace their lineage down.

We also see that these Jews would claim to rest on the law. You know the sad thing about that is they rested on the very thing that could condemn them. With greater privilege comes greater responsibility. Greater clarity and revelation become greater responsibility. And that was true of the Jew. They were proud to have gotten this law from God, they were the ones who received it, so they're very proud of that fact.

We also see that they made their boast in God. This was their self-assessment, they were bragging that the God of the universe was their God, but it became a selfish thing. "Yeah, *my* God, not for you." And like a three-year-old in the nursery, "My toy, not yours. I'm taking it, I'm keeping it." And that became the mindset. And we gain some additional insight in Romans 10. Because although they were boasting in their God, in essence they were boasting in themselves, they were boasting in their own righteousness which was so opposite from what the Old Testament taught.

Romans 10:2, "*For I bear them witness,*" - Paul speaking of the Jews - "*that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*" See, they're trying for righteousness, but they're establishing their own, they're boasting in themselves. And so we see even there in this boast for God, they weren't really boasting in God, because boasting in God would be boasting in His solution to the righteousness issue, and they were not boasting in that.

Verse 18, it goes on to say, "*and they know His will,*" The Jews were confident that they knew and understood God's will and were in line with this thinking on things. This is why Saul, the rising Pharisee among Pharisees, thought it was God's will to kill Christians. He was doing God's service. This was the mindset of the Jew, is that they knew God's will. Not only that, but they also knew how to approve the things that were excellent. If you wanted to know on that day what would please God, you would go to a Jew and they would confidently tell you, "Yeah this is what you need to do, this is what you need to stop doing."

And they thought they had it all figured out. All the worthy things in life to pursue, they thought they had it all figured out. They were instructed out of law. They had the benefit of teaching and being taught from the law, the problem was, as Jesus pointed out, the law testifies of Me and you guys know nothing about Me. They're missing the main point, settling for the minors and not majoring on the majors.

Verse 19, they're confident. "*You yourself are a guide to the blind,*" and we're going to see that the rest of these references are a direct slap on the Gentiles. "We're the ones that have it all together, and we're here to teach you lowly Gentiles," and that's how the Jews thought of themselves in that day. The Jews were confident, they were fully persuaded. They remained in a state that they were guiding blind

Gentiles to the truth of God's Word. It's a perfect tense in the Greek, they were confident, and they remained confident. It was a continual state of mind for them, that they were always above the Gentiles, helping them out. They looked down upon these non-Jews that they guided. They felt like they were light to those in darkness, again speaking of the Gentiles.

And then finally in verse 20 as we wrap up. "*An instructor of the foolish,*" again, this review of Jewish superiority over Gentiles. So, you can kind of see what the natural thinking of the religious Jew was as Paul lays this out. They're better than the Gentiles. They're getting in because of who they are ethnically, who they are because they have God's law and the fact that they're circumcised, they're trusting in their position, they're trusting in their religion, if you will.

They had the form of knowledge and truth in the law, and we see that the Jew believed they were the very form or embodiment of knowledge of truth that's found in law, that they were it. They were the example of truth and righteousness on earth, and thus they were naturally going to get in.

Now what we're going to see in the next section, is Paul is gonna completely blow this group out of the water. He *is* gonna teach, don't get me wrong, but if you notice in verse 21, he rattles off five rhetorical questions. But the questions are very penetrating rhetorical questions. In other words, by the time he asks - and you know how, people have done that to you, right? They ask you and you kind of know you're guilty, you just have no response - that's what's gonna happen to the religious Jews. And he is gonna ask these questions, they're penetrating, and we'll show why in the next section, what he was getting at there.

# CHAPTER 9

## The Religious Sinner Part 2

### Romans 2:21-29

Matthew 7:13 says, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.”* And we've looked at this, and those of you that have been here have heard this. But really in terms of the different lanes on this highway to hell, we looked in Romans chapter 1 at “The Immoral Sinner”. That's the person that's easily recognizable as being a sinner. Somebody deserving of hell, somebody that doesn't have the righteousness required to get to heaven. These are your drunks, these are your drug addicts, these are the people that are sleeping around, these are the really bad people that we know in our life. And many people have no problem assuming those people are going to go to hell. In fact, as we looked through that section, we saw the immoral sinner doesn't even *try* to obtain righteousness, doesn't even go for righteousness. They just blow God off, forget about Him, suppress truth, and act like God's not even there.

And then we see that some people, they leave the lane of the immoral sinner, they change lanes if you will, they become a “Moral Sinner”. Maybe they stop drinking, maybe they stop smoking, maybe they stop beating their dog and kicking their wife, and whatever else we might think of that immoral sinners do. Maybe they think that's not the way to do it, and they think because now that they're starting to do good things, moral things, *now* they've got the righteousness needed to get to heaven.

And then we started last week to look at this third lane, “The Religious Sinner”. Many times, the moral sinner says, “Well maybe I'm not doing enough good. Maybe I should get some church in me. And instead of just going on Easter and Christmas, I'm gonna go more consistently. And I'm gonna start investing my life in the church, and I'm gonna start reading my Bible, and I'm gonna start praying, and I'm gonna start giving to orphanages in Africa, and I'm gonna start giving to feed the children on the team, and I'm gonna just work, work, work, work, work my way to heaven.” And they think they've actually one-upped the moral sinner, because now they've got religion.

And as I've said so many times, there's one exit on this road, and it's when somebody is presented with the gospel that Jesus died for your sins and rose again, and you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You can get off the highway to hell, and you can gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness. See, that's the problem with all of these sinners right here, nobody is good enough to get to heaven. That's what Chapter three is going to conclude when we get there.

Now, as I've pointed out before, the sad thing is many people would think that the religious sinner is actually the closest one to the exit. “Man, they're really improving! They're getting close, at least they're coming to church now.” In fact, when I hear that an unbeliever is coming to church, part of me is excited to hear that and part of me dreads hearing that. Because how are they going to respond to the teaching? Are they now trusting in the fact that they're going to church to get them to heaven? Well, that puts them farther away from the answer.

I believe as you move further and further away from the lane of the immoral sinner, you get further away from the exit. Because religious people want to trust in themselves. They are the most proud, arrogant people in the entire history of the world. And if you don't believe me, just read your Bible. Go all the way back to the beginning where Cain and Abel are in the garden. And many people

say, "Cain was an immoral sinner." No, he wasn't. Cain was a religious sinner. How do I know that? Because he brought an offering.

In fact, his offering required *ten times* the amount of work that Abel's offering required. He put that together himself, he put it all together, and he presented it to the Lord. He probably put nice little dangly, sparkly things on there to make the presentation well, too. And God didn't accept that offering, and that was the first example of a religious sinner.

Religious people want to come to God in their own way, that's the problem. "God, you have to accept me based on the righteousness I'm doing. I've been to church every Sunday. I read my Bible an hour a day. I pray, I give to the orphans." And that is the mindset of the religious sinner, always self-justifying, and they are self-deceived, they think more highly of themselves than they should, and they don't even realize that they have a need.

And that's why in Matthew 7 you're gonna see people that say, "Lord, Lord, I did all these great things in your name! Religious things!" And Jesus is gonna say, "I never knew you. I didn't even have a relationship with you, and you're out there just running around in religious activity like a chicken with your head cut off: super active, but not going anywhere." And that's why we see also in the Gospels that Jesus tells - probably the most religious man on earth at that time - Nicodemus, "You must be born again. Nicodemus, you don't have what it takes to get to heaven." Wow, to tell a religious man that? That's incredible.

And so last week what we started to look at was this concept of the religious sinner. As Paul's building his defense - you know, I love the way Paul thinks, because he's building an argument, he's building a defense, he's anticipating objections - he gets to the end of the section that we call "the moral sinner", which is Romans 2:16, and then he starts into the section we call "the religious sinner", verses 17-20.

And you can see the Jewish Religious Orthodox Jews relaxed at this point, because they think Paul is probably gonna say, "Oh yeah, that's exactly right, Paul. We are," - look at verse 17 - "called a Jew. We do rest on His law; we do make our boast in God." And so the religious sinner starts to relax and says, "All right man, we're not going to be condemned." They're patting their buddies, "Yeah, he's talking about us now, he's about to say that's how you get into heaven. You've got to be a son of Abraham, you've got to be circumcised, you've got to have the law." And they're like, "We got it, we got it, we're in."

And so he goes through 17-20, and he does that, and what he does here in our section today as we start in verse 21, is in a rapid-fire format Paul is going to annihilate their position. They're relaxed and they're letting their guard down. "Ah yeah. We are pretty good. We *do* have it." You know, that's how a religious person feels, right? "Hey man, I've got 365 ties. I can wear 365 different ties to church, every single day of the year." And they're proud of all of these religious things, "I'm going to get there, I'm going to do this", and these Jews were the same way. And so in verses 21-24, Paul's gonna ask five rhetorical questions, he's just gonna explode the base out from under them. In fact, he's gonna ask questions that expose the hypocrisy within the camp.

Now why was Paul the perfect person to expose the hypocrisy within the camp of a religious Jew? Because he was one, remember? Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was on pace to potentially be the high priest. Maybe, that's the speculation. But he was on pace to at least be part of the Sanhedrin because he was surpassing all of his contemporaries in Judaism. So this is like taking a chef of a restaurant and then making him part of the city inspection group that goes behind kitchen doors.

And then the chef comes on his first inspection, he comes to the restaurant that he used to work at and says, "You who teach that you shouldn't use meat more than three days old, do you guys use

meat more than three days old?" And see, they know he's been behind the kitchen doors. And yeah, they do it all the time, because they're trying to save money. "You who say that you can't have raw meat touch with other ingredients, do you do that in your refrigerator?" So, he's asking these rhetorical questions because he knows what's going on behind the camp.

And you're gonna see that when he gets to the end of asking these questions and at the beginning of verse 25, he shifts gears to circumcision, because he knows what they're thinking now, "Well yeah, even though we don't keep the law, we're still circumcised so we're in." And that's the train of Paul's thought today as we go through our study.

And so if you're taking notes, I would encourage you to write down Matthew chapter 23. This is where Jesus pronounces woes on the Pharisees, and you get a good insight into what their lives looked like in terms of this hypocrisy, and the way that they would purport to live, the way that they would teach, versus how they actually lived, and you see that play out in Matthew 23.

And here's the thing: resting in the law, resting in your position, resting in your religion, resting in your denomination, resting in your church attendance, none of those things are good enough to get you to heaven. None of them. Do you know it's not even good if you come to *this* church? That won't get you to heaven. In fact, if you came to church today thinking, "This is how you get to heaven," I would love to leave the building, walk down the street, and share the gospel with you so that you can know that the gospel is what saves. Jesus Christ is who saves. Not a pastor, not a church, not a steeple, not these special lights. Religion doesn't save. Religion, many times, distracts.

And so let's hop into verse 21. The question is, "Do you practice what you preach?" This is Paul's first rhetorical question to these Judaizers. He says this in verse 21, "*You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?*" And basically, Paul's asking them, "Do you practice what you preach?" Jesus says in Matthew 23:3, He basically says like many parents do: do what I say, don't do what I do. Well, he says that about the Pharisees, do what they say but don't do what they do. They're hypocrites, they don't practice what they preach. And see, the religious Jewish sinner of this day, as a general whole, did not practice what they preached. In fact, what flowed from their life contradicted what flowed from their lips. It was diametrically opposed, and we're gonna see that as he breaks this down.

You know what's also interesting, he's gonna ask a question, "Do you not do this?" And then he says, "You who would teach this, do you not do this?" When he says 'do you not do this', all of them are present indicative verbs, which means, "Aren't you doing that right now? This is what you're doing right now." So, it wasn't like they did it at a point in time or they might have done it in the past. Paul is basically accusing them, "You who teach 'don't steal', are you not stealing right now? You who teach 'don't commit adultery', aren't you committing adultery right now?" See, that's the thrust of what he's saying here.

And you say, "Wait a minute, these guys are religious Pharisees, how are they committing adultery, how are they stealing?" Well, we'll look at that as we study through. But the first question is, "You who teach another, do you not teach yourself?" Are you practicing what you preach? And do you know that religious sinners in general can become very creative in their methods of sinning, without technically sinning? I don't even know where to start because Christians do this too, don't we?

You know it drives me crazy to see somebody park in a handicapped parking space that doesn't have a handicap parking sticker. And that just bothers me, it just shows a lack of respect. But do you know sometimes that when I just need one thing out of the store, I just need to get a video, or I need to do this, do you know I'm tempted to park in the handicap parking space? What a hypocrite! I mean I used to be an athlete, I can still walk around and get around a little bit. I probably need to walk a little bit farther out anyways because I've got some pounds on me, I probably should do that anyways. But

you know that those are the types of things that we do, and then we can creatively explain stuff like that away.

Can we do that in our marriages? You know, I used to think, “Wow, if Carrie didn't do some of the things that she did, then I would just be perfect. I would never respond in a bad way.” And I used to verbalize that to her, can you imagine being married to a guy like that? Basically, I said, “If it weren't for you, I'd be perfect. If it weren't for you...” Can you imagine the pain and hurt she put up with, being married to me all these years? But we become creative.

See, religious sinners become creative in their methods of sinning. Recently, our kids played a team that was a private school, and they observed the Sabbath. So, it was comical to me that when we showed up to play the game, we couldn't start the game on Saturday until the Sun went down. We're like looking out the door waiting, “Okay, who determines when the Sun goes down?” And then that very night that coach got kicked out of the game with profanity laced expletives, as he knocked his middle school son onto the ground trying to keep him away from the referee. This is what religious sinners do. They get creative and they don't practice what they preach.

In fact, when you look at the Jews, they had this elaborate oath system that meant nothing. If you walked into Jerusalem and someone said, “Well, I swear to you I'll do this by the temple!” You'd say, “Man, that's a pretty good swear. That's a pretty good oath, this guy's legit.” Well, you didn't know they had this secret language there. That really meant they weren't gonna honor the thing. But if they swore by the *gold* in the temple... ah, now you got the spit and the handshake. I mean, you got the real deal now. And so they'd have these oath systems, and they weren't practicing what they preached. They were sinning, but technically weaseling their way out of it, explaining it away. And that's what religious sinners do; they justify themselves.

What about stealing? “*You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?*” Are you presently stealing? How are these Pharisees stealing? Well of course they would teach - or any religious person - you shouldn't steal. That's a pretty common moral standard, you shouldn't steal. But you know practically in life, they were *presently* and *continuously* stealing from others? Paul knew this because he was in the camp, he'd done this himself.

Well, how were they stealing from others? Well, we know that they were stealing from widows. How were they stealing from widows? By coming in and actually acting like they cared for the elderly, acting as their financial planner, and guess how the financial planning went in those days? Give everything you've got to the temple and God will take care of you. Wow. What a bunch of scumbags. That's another group of people that I would love to get my hands on, you know, if I was walking according to flesh. These people that call and rob from the elderly, that try to take advantage of them, and yet that's exactly what the Pharisees were doing. That's exactly what these self-righteous Jews were doing. That's exactly what these religious Jews were doing that we're saying, “Oh no, no, no. You shouldn't steal.” And then they were going on in their lives, stealing from widows.

We know that they were stealing from their parents. You know, Jesus mentions this in Matthew 15. And what they would do, was they would take an item in their household that they wanted to possess, which they knew they would need if they needed to take care of their parents in the future, and they would declare that item as a gift devoted to God so they could keep it. So, they wouldn't have to take care of their parents.

You see how slimy religious sinners are? And yet we look at them as squeaky clean, perfect, close to the answer. No, they're far from the answer. Because they're self-deceived, they're self-justifying, and they're slimy. They are sinning, trying to find ways out of technically sinning. Do you know that



they would not pay their taxes? These are all ways they would steal, and this is exactly what Paul was saying to these sinners in this area.

He moves on to the next question in verse 22, let's read it: "*You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery?"*" There's our next question, and of course the Jews would say, "Yeah, adultery is wrong." Any religious sinner would not condone adultery. That's wrong. They have no problem recognizing that as sin and telling people that that's sin. But based on Jesus's standard in Matthew 5:27-28, do you know that if you look at somebody with lust, you've committed adultery in your heart? See, that's the standard that God judges by.

Remember back in verse 16 it says the standard that God is gonna judge by, is He's gonna judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Everything internal is gonna be exposed and bare. So the religious sinner doesn't think this way, they think, "Oh well, I'm not *physically* committing adultery." I've been in too many locker rooms in my life, but you know, "I'm just eyeing the store window, I'm not going into the store and getting any of the candy." That's how they put it. "I'm just looking. I'm just window shopping." That's how they would describe it. It's scary that people think that way. "I'm just window shopping, I'm not really doing the act." Well, no, according to God it's the exact same thing. Judged on that righteous standard, it's the exact same thing, and I believe the Pharisees were guilty of this.

You know, that's giving them the benefit of the doubt. Some of them might have actually been engaged in physical adultery, some of them might have been excusing the different types of laws in their day, and just been full of lust. Because you know what's interesting, is when you find somebody that's full of power, who wants power, who wants prestige, who wants accolades, who wants to be the main person, usually they have a problem with lust as well. Usually, those things tend to go together. When you give somebody absolute power, they say absolute power corrupts absolutely, and it's usually those things that all go together. And so these religious sinners might have actually been engaged.

I mean, go ask the people that got their Ashley Madison account broken into. I'm sure if we had the list there were Sunday School teachers on there, there were elders on there, there were deacons on there, there were pastors on there, I guarantee that's what happens. Because the religious sinner thinks just that way, "I can get away with it. I don't mind teaching the truth, but what I do in my private time, if I can get away with it, I'm okay with that."

And so many people think this way, and that's what Paul is saying here. You who say, "*Do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?"*" And again, you're gonna see it's gonna shut their mouths, because they know what's going on in the real world, and Paul knows what's going on behind the curtain, if you will.

Verse 22 he goes on to say, "*You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?"*" And you know what was interesting in that day, it was not uncommon for Jews to actually go into temples of pagan gods and steal and rob the idols in those temples. And they would take - especially the ones made of precious metals - they would take them and melt them down and resell them for money, and they would justify that. They would justify stealing because they were taking from pagan temples, and Paul basically says, "Do you know you abhor idols, but you robbed temples?"

In other words, the mindset that you're using in this justification, it's betraying your own form of idolatry: covetousness, greed. You know Colossians 3:5 actually identifies covetousness as idolatry. The very same exact sin that they were despising, they were going and robbing so that they could build their own idols, and in this case, it was money, it was gold, it was precious metals. And so they were doing the same thing.

And then finally in verse 23 he says this, "*You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?"*" And Paul's religious audience as they were talking, as Paul was writing for them,

they were presently making their boasts in the law, presently saying, “We have the law, we keep the law, we’re the children of promise, we’ve got the Oracles of God.” They were boasting about all these things, and at the very same time, dishonoring God by breaking the law.

You know, that's like a kid walking out in the middle of the family room, holding the family rules, one of which says, “Don't eat chocolate chip cookies before dinner,” and they've got chocolate chips just dripping down their face, *holding the rules*. That's the image we have here of the religious sinner. They're boasting in the law, they're boasting in the very thing that can condemn them.

This is typical religious hypocrisy. This is, if you're familiar with the term, thespianism. Thespianism at its best. Saying one thing, doing another. Saying one thing publicly, doing something very different privately. This is speaking one way and acting in a totally different way when no one is watching. You know, this is religious hypocrisy at its best. This is wearing a mask; this is wanting to be thought well of because you're in church.

And you know, the most violent and vicious responses that I ever get in my attempts to share the gospel are with religious people. Because you know what, I'm offending them by asking them if they're saved. That's offensive to a religious person, because you know their mind set is, “Of course I'm saved! I go to church, what's your problem? Don't you see the clothes that I'm wearing? I'm a good person. Don't you see the house I live in? I'm a good person. Don't you know that I go down the street to the Episcopal, the Lutheran, the Methodist, the Bible Church, the Baptist, don't you know I go to church every Sunday? You see my driveway? It's empty, you know I go to church. Why are you asking me if I'm saved? What's your problem?”

They get so offended by that. That's because religious sinners want to look good above all else, and when you question anything about that or they take offense to something you say, and you're chipping away at their external veneer, they hate you for it.

Now verse 24. Paul is going to make a conclusion in this section, and he's going to say this, “*For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, as it is written.*” See, what the Jewish religious sinners in this case don't realize, and what religious sinners in general don't realize, is the world is watching them. The world sees the hypocrisy. In fact, what's the greatest complaint about the church in America by people that don't go to church? The church is full of hypocrites. And to that I say a hearty “Amen.” It's true.

But you don't go to church because you're looking for a church without hypocrites, you go to church because you're hoping to hear something from the Word of God that provides answers to eternal problems. And you can get that even from faulty men and women, right? But the point is, the unsaved world of the day is looking at these religious sinners and saying, “What a bunch of hypocrites. Their God must not be the real God.” And they began to revile God because of the actions that they were taking.

In fact, it says the Gentiles blasphemed, they hurt the reputation, they smote with their words the name of God. And based on the tense of the verb, it wasn't only going on at the present time, but had been going on for history. In fact, go back all the way to David's sin, and I'll just give you a reference, David sinned with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 12:14. Nathan tells him that the nations are gonna blaspheme his God because of what he's done with Bathsheba. And so you see that this has been going on for some time.

Now we get into this section, Paul has just taken a couple sticks of dynamite to every foundation that the religious Jew is laying for themselves to get to heaven, because he's exposed their hypocrisy. So now he anticipates their answer. And the Jewish answer I think that he anticipates here, before we get to verse 25 is, “Well perhaps I can't take refuge in the law or keeping the law. Maybe that's not where I

should place my hope or my confidence, but I'm circumcised. But I'm a son of Abraham. But I've got the Oracles of God. I've got them, I've got the position, I'm circumcised, I'm a son of Abraham." And now Paul is going to address that potential answer, and now he's going to knock even circumcision out from under them as a source of righteousness to get to heaven. And so let's look at that as we go on to verse 25.

Do you know that some of the Jews of this day believed that God would not permit any circumcised male to enter perdition or go to hell? That they would show up at the pearly gates and if they were circumcised, they got into the kingdom, into eternal life. They felt like this religious rite guaranteed their acceptance by God.

You know, we've got to understand that there is no religious right on the face of the earth that can gain you acceptance by God. And many people confuse that, they want to throw baptism in there as something that is going to gain our acceptance with God. They want to throw catechism in there, they want to throw all these religious rites, they want to throw communion in there, and it doesn't matter. You could sit and eat from the communion tray all day long until you got bread and juice coming out your nose. That's not going to make you acceptable to God or have the ability to go to heaven.

And so we've got this religious group that wants to trust in rites, the Jews trusted in circumcision, and in our day people trust in every other thing imaginable under the sun whether it's lighting candles, whether it's taking water and getting it sprinkled on your head. There are so many different rites. Step into a box with a screen separated by a priest and confess your sin, there's all these rites that people are trusting in to get to heaven, and Paul is going to say no rite can get you there. No external thing can get you there. And so we're gonna look at circumcision here for a second.

Verse 25, "*For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.*" And so he says in verse 25 that 'circumcision is indeed profitable', but notice that word *if*. So, he's not denying that it's useful. He's not denying that being in a position that the Jews had was a profitable position.

Why is that? Well jump down to chapter 3, look at verses 1 and 2: "*What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?*" - look what Paul answers, verse 2, "*Much in every way!*" - Why? "*Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.*" And so they had the Word of God. They were in the privileged position, as a people, to receive the direct communication, special revelation from the God of all creation. They indeed were in a profitable position. But again, if they don't benefit from that, then they lose that profitability, and that's what Paul is going to say.

And it's interesting because he says circumcision, their position as a Jew, is only useful if they keep, if they practice, if they perform the law. And as we looked at earlier in chapter 2, what was the standard for practicing? Eight out of ten times? Six out of ten times? Or you know, the game of baseball success, if you're a three out of ten hitter, you go to the Hall of Fame. Was that how it was? Was God grading on the curve? No see, God's standard was ten out of ten times. "Okay, well I can do that today." No, you got to do that tomorrow too. "Okay, I'll try to do that tomorrow. Maybe I'll just stay in bed all day, that way I'll just avoid any kind of sin." But he says ten out of ten times, day after day, after day, for the continuance of your life. And if you can do that, God would be a fair judge and grant you worthy of eternal life.

But the problem is, and as Paul's going to show us in his conclusion in Chapter 3, nobody has that. Nobody's good enough, nobody's done enough. That puts us all in the same boat, the boat is called *lost*, and it's not a three-hour tour to Gilligan's Island. I wish! That wasn't too bad of a life there. But we're talking about lost to hell. We're talking about paying the eternal penalty of sin, the second death as the Bible talks about. So, it's a very serious matter. We've got to understand that we're in that boat,

because until we understand we're in that boat, we're not going to see our need for a Savior to get us off that boat, to get us off that boat of being lost.

And so the Jews, they had circumcision, they had this position, it was useful, but they had to keep the law. Now in contrast as I mentioned before, the Jewish teachers hold that only a radical decision to renounce the Covenant could invalidate a Jewish person's circumcision. So, if you are a Jew, born in a Jewish family, circumcised on the eighth day, and you never said anything negative about the Covenant, about Judaism, you got in. So even if you didn't want to practice Judaism, but if you just kept your mouth shut and didn't say anything negative, you got in. That was what the Jewish teachers held in that day. That was the doctrine of salvation. And you can see why they're a little surprised by what Paul's saying here. They're shocked. "What are you talking about, circumcision doesn't get me in? Of course it does! I just have to not renounce this thing."

And then I bring this up because it's a technical point in the Greek, but you're gonna see Paul do this a couple of times in the next few verses. The "if" here, go back to verse 25, "*For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law.*" It's what they call the third-class condition in the Greek, and all it means is it *indicates that the fulfillment of the condition is uncertain*. Maybe... maybe not. Now Paul knows that nobody can keep the law, but he's using this as he's building his argument. He's building his argument, he's kind of doing it softly, but he's saying hypothetically, it's profitable if you can keep the law continually. That's kind of where he's going with this.

But if you're a breaker of the law - now notice this. To read this next phrase would have caused a Jewish person who was sitting in their seat to *fall over*. This is how shocked they would have been by this next statement: "*if you're a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become circumcision.*" Now were they breakers of the law? Yeah, what about the five rhetorical questions we just went through that shut them up? "Oh yeah, I guess I am stealing. I guess I am committing adultery." Yeah, they're breakers of the law. And what Paul is saying, "You know what, if that's the case, your circumcision doesn't count for anything. Your ritual doesn't count for anything. It actually comes in reverse now, and you're no better than the Gentile dogs that you criticize, that you make fun of, that you think you're better than, you are no better than them." That would have caused the Jew to just... I mean, some might have had a heart attack. Shocking news for them because they were trusting in this.

Paul uses another third-class condition in the Greek, again, softening his argument, "If you are a breaker of the law, maybe you are, maybe you're not, but *if you are*, then this is true. If you've broken a law - we looked last week at James 2:10, which says what? If you keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, you're guilty of just that one sin? No, you're guilty of the whole law. That means when a Jew lied, he was just as guilty as a murderer. When a Jew stole, he was just as guilty as an adulterer. You know that when we break God's law in the same way, we are just as guilty as a murderer.

And I've said this a million times from up here during this section, but you know, many people think that just because they haven't murdered somebody they're going to heaven. Like that's the key, that's the Golden Rule. They haven't committed adultery, they haven't murdered, they haven't done the big two, thus they must be going to heaven. And God says, "No, if you've broken one point in the law, it's like you've broken them all."

So, you see how we're all in that lost boat together? This isn't me pointing fingers at you, this is like, "Hey, we're all in this situation, we need an answer." And praise the Lord, He provides it in the gospel, doesn't He? He provides a way to get out of the boat, He provides an exit off of the highway to hell. And that is because as sinners, we have incurred a death penalty, and Jesus Christ came and died and paid that death penalty in your place, as your substitute, so that you wouldn't have to face that penalty. And then God accepted His sacrifice we know because He raised Him from the dead.

And so the Bible is very clear how somebody gets saved, it's not by coming to church, it's not by getting religion, it's not by giving to the church, it's not by going on a mission trip, it's by putting your faith in Jesus Christ and what He did for you. Believing that Jesus died for the sins in the world is fact, but when you believe that Jesus died for your sins, that's salvation. That's salvation, and that can come right where you're seated today. That can come in a moment of time, the moment you quit trusting in whatever you're trusting in to get you to heaven, and you say just like at a poker table, "My chips are all in on Jesus Christ. I'm betting everything I got on that Man who died for me and rose again." And you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone.

And at that moment the Bible says you have joined the family of God, your sins are forgiven, you have eternal life. That's the beautiful message of the gospel. Not only that, but as it relates to the book of Romans, you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. That means your righteousness issue that you don't have on your own, is now taken care of as well through the gospel. That's the beautiful message of the gospel. That's why we preach Jesus Christ. I'm not gonna tell you how good I am in my life, or how good you need to be in your life, I want to tell you about the goodness of God in sending Jesus Christ, to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. So that's the beautiful message of the gospel, that's why it truly is good news by definition.

Paul's point is that if the Jewish person broke the law, they would still face the consequences of breaking the law. That's his whole point here. If you're a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision, you will face judgment. Even though they were circumcised. And so physical rituals don't save us from the law's consequences. What's the penalty for sin? The penalty for sin is death. Circumcision is not death. Baptism is not death. Communion is not death. Doing good works is not death.

Imagine going into a courtroom, I've just been convicted of murder. I've got the death penalty. I'm sitting down on death row, and I say, "You know judge, can I have a word with you? On second thought, instead of facing the death penalty, I'd just like to clean dog poop from the local animal shelter the rest of my life." How's that going to go over? That doesn't work because the penalty is death. We don't get to make up how we pay that penalty, the judge decides what the penalty is. And so all of these rituals don't take care of that penalty.

But guess what? If someone steps in and takes the penalty for you, and dies in your place, then guess what? The penalty has been paid. And that's why Jesus can cry out from the cross in John, "It is finished." I've paid it all, I've paid it in full. Again, the gospel, we come back to preaching Christ. This is all bad news because yes, you cannot get there on your own, but we've got a Savior who can get you there if you'll simply trust Him. And that's what we're preaching here, and that's what we believe and we're passionate about, obviously.

And so Paul is getting there, and I'm kind of jumping his argument. He's waiting till the middle of chapter 3 to get to what I'm telling you, but I can hardly hold it in because it's just so exciting.

And so verse 26. You know for the Gentiles, he says this in verse 26, "*Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?*" Notice he uses this word "therefore" again. And so Paul is just making the same argument, if *this* is true, then *this* is true. And what he's saying is if verse 25 is true, Jews could lose their privilege if they didn't keep the law perfectly, become like a Gentile, then he's making the argument that the reverse would be true. What if a Gentile, who only had general revelation and conscience, had the work of the law written on his heart like we looked at back in chapter 2, they could gain the privilege if they kept the law perfectly? Again, no such person exists, but he's making that argument again.

Again, he uses another third-class condition to soften it. Hypothetically, if this is possible, maybe so, maybe not, but if he *can*. And so Paul's not trying to blow anybody up. This is great, by the way, when you debate Christianity and you talk to other people that disagree with you, Paul is a great example. Because some of us bring a blowtorch, or we bring a gun to a knife fight, right? I mean, we bring a bazooka to a knife fight sometimes. Or we bring a blowtorch to a discussion that just needs a small flicker of a match, and we just try to blow people away.

See, even Paul, as passionate as he is, he's not trying to blow them away in the sense that I was saying earlier, I'm just saying he was blowing their foundation out from under them. But he's doing this very graciously. So sometimes it's great when you have the right message, but it's just like doubly great when you can share the right message with the right attitude, in grace. And Paul is exhibiting that force right here. Maybe so, maybe not, he's softening his argument, he's proving his point, they're getting it, they're already shocked by what he's saying.

And so he's saying that if Gentiles were to keep the law perfectly, God would save them, He would grant them eternal life, they would be worthy. But again, as we said, nobody exists like that.

Verse 27: *“And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?”* Talk about flipping them on their head. Because they had always viewed themselves as - well we saw back in verses 17-20, right? - an instructor of the foolish, a light to the Gentiles. Those poor Gentiles, let's help them along, and they kind of had this judgmental attitude towards the Gentile. And a question Paul just flips around and says, “Who's judging who here? If the Gentiles keep the law perfectly, they're gonna judge *you*. Because you actually had it! You had this special revelation.”

And so verse 27, physical circumcision does not avail anything. Righteous fulfillment of a law does. The Jew needed to understand this, they needed to take their trust off of their ritual, off of their birth. In fact, this message had been preached since about the time of John the Baptist in terms of reminding them, because John says, “You need to repent.” Repent of what? What did they need to change their mind about? We go back and read in Matthew 3, and you can see it. They needed to change their mind about the very thing that Paul's talking about here. Being Jewish doesn't save you. Being circumcised doesn't save you. Being a son of Abraham doesn't save you. Because guess what? God could raise up children from the stones that are Abraham's children. Remember he says that? That's John the Baptist's message.

And so we see that they were trusting in their birth. Jesus says to Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, you must be born again.” And I won't get into the details, but do you know that in the Jewish culture there are six different ways to be born again in Jewish teaching? And Nicodemus, he was only eligible for four because the other two - one involved Gentiles, and one involved I think being a high priest. But the four out of the six ways that you could be born again, Nicodemus had been born again. So, imagine his confusion, “What do you mean I need to be born again? I've been born again, and again, and again, and again. How else can I be born again?” His point was don't trust in your circumcision, don't trust in the fact that you're a son of Abraham. They need to understand that this is not the way to heaven.

And so the contrast is painted. The Jews judge others that don't have the law, and those who are circumcised, even though they keep the law, they judge the Jews who break their own law. And so you see this contrast here that Paul is painting. Paul says just the opposite will happen if a Gentile were to fulfill the righteousness contained in the law.

And then Paul goes on in verse 28, and we'll kind of summarize and conclude this chapter here when he says this, *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not*

*from men but from God.*” And so in verse 28, he's saying outward versus inward. Jews had an outward emphasis or focus. Religious sinners in our day have this outward emphasis and focus.

Religious sinners get very proud of the way they dress, they get really proud of what they eat or don't eat, and they get really proud of all these external things. And unfortunately, a lot of that even transfers over in a church when people get saved, and then they start to try to live lives pleasing to God by doing all of these external things.

One time I had a guy tell me, he's like, “Oh yeah, basically I'm going to heaven,” And I said “Oh, why is that?” And one of the reasons he gave me was because he wears a suit to church every Sunday, because he's gonna give God his best. I said, “Well, don't you think you should give God your best all seven days of the week?” And he went away like really sad because he only had one suit, and suits are expensive. If you really wanted to get to heaven, and my point was exactly that - you're trusting in an external thing and good works don't save you, external things don't save you.

And so the Jews needed to understand they were mistaken, that circumcision, their birth and all of these things, their possession of the law, would save them or would give them their righteousness needed to get to heaven. And so Paul is saying you're not a Jew if you're one outwardly. Get your mind off of externals.

Religious sinners, get your mind off of externals. You're not going to heaven because you go to a Baptist Church. You're not going to heaven because you go to a Bible Church or Community Church. Perish the thought! Get your mind off of the externals. You're not going to heaven because you gave \$200 in the offering plate last week, because you took communion, because you lit a candle, because you prayed on a set of beads. Whatever other external things we want to throw in there, the point is, that's not what saves. There's an outward and an inward quality, don't focus on the outward, focus on the inward. What is going on in terms of where your trust is placed? Not how you're externally doing things. And the Jews mistakenly trusted in these things.

Paul's saying the physical privilege was only an advantage if the Jews kept the law perfectly, or if they understood God's way of righteousness. And that's why later on in Romans Paul will say, “Not all Israel are of Israel.” That's what he's saying there. Because not all physical descendants of Abraham put their faith in the Messiah like Abraham did. There's a distinct group. You could be a physical descendant of Abraham and never put your faith in the coming Messiah, and you would spend eternity in hell.

And so spiritual descendants of Abraham can be Jew or Gentile as Paul is alluding to in this passage. But remember what he's doing here with the religious sinner, he's basically knocking out everything that they're depending on in terms of their external righteousness. He's showing them that they don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven.

And then finally verse 29, *“but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”* Now Paul's knock doesn't give the details yet. He's kind of holding off, he's still building his argument. In fact, what we see here is that when he gets done with chapter 2, he's going to anticipate some questions that these religious sinners have, and he's going to address those questions in the first section of chapter 3, we'll get to that in the next section.

But his point is that a true Israelite is one who is impacted internally, through belief. Where's their trust? Who are they trusting in? What do they believe? Who are they depending upon to get to heaven? It's not by this external privilege, the law keeping, their position, their physical birth or circumcision, etc. This was an Israelite who was not trusting in the cutting off of a piece of the flesh from his body but was separated unto the Lord in his heart and in his thinking. This is an Israelite who saw in the promise of Genesis 3:15 Jesus Christ fulfilled. Who saw in the prophecies of Isaiah 53 in

Isaiah and Jeremiah, and all of these prophetic scriptures in the Psalms, saw the Messiah, the one who would be crucified, the one who would die and the one who would rise again, and put their faith in that Messiah. That's what Paul had done as he met the Lord on the road.

And so he was saying a true Jew, or a true child of Abraham, or a true inwardly circumcised person is one who puts their faith in Christ, and that's really where it's at, that's where righteousness is at. And so he's going to continue to build on that.

And so in the next section as we look at chapter 3, Paul's going to anticipate the question, look at that very first question in chapter 3, verse 1: "*What advantage then has the Jew?*" and the question almost comes out like, "Well who even cares if we're Jews anymore? I mean what was the purpose of all that?" is kind of the idea. And Paul's going to kind of systematically work through, answer their questions, and again, we're gonna get to his conclusion in verse 9 for this section, although he goes on and describes it further.

Verse 9, "*What then? Are we better than they? Not at all, for we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.*" And then he goes down in verse 19 and says, "*and all the world may become guilty before God.*" And that has been the whole purpose of this first section of the book of Romans is to get us there. Paul is building his argument to say, "Nobody is innocent. Everyone is guilty, nobody has the righteousness needed to get to heaven." And then he just kind of systematically works his way there.



# CHAPTER 10

## Natural Objections

### Romans 3:1-9

We're gonna continue our study in the book of Romans, and you know just to kind of really briefly summarize, (and I've told you this before as we study through this book) there are times where we want to get into the details, into the the weeds, so to speak, and look at individual trees. And there's also a time we're gonna back up and really consider the forest, where we've been, what's going on, what's the main point, and here it is up to this point in time: God requires righteousness to get to heaven. We've got to understand that. And not only a righteousness that He grades on a curve, but His perfect righteousness. So, we've got that kind of played out.

Now what Paul has been doing the last three chapters is simply, systematically, categorically showing us that no man or woman on the face of the earth has the righteousness needed to get to heaven. What he's doing is he's giving us the bad news, and in this section and the next section, he's going to take the coffin that he's been building for all of mankind, and he's gonna drive that final nail in. Now he's only gonna do it halfway in this section, and we'll get the other half in the next section, but by the end of the next section, it's gonna be flush with the coffin. It's sealed, mankind does not have the righteousness needed to get to heaven nor can they provide it or gain it for themselves. And so the good news is when we get toward the end of chapter 3, we're gonna see God's method of providing man with the righteousness needed to get to heaven, and it's found in the gospel.

This is a spoiler alert because we don't mind sharing the solution to the problem. We're not trying to get ratings and drive you back like your favorite television shows do, week to week like you're hanging in balance. We're just gonna put it out there: Jesus died for your sins and rose again so that you don't have to be good enough to go to heaven. You can trust in the merits of the perfect son of God who paid the penalty for you on your behalf. God accepted that payment on your behalf, all you have to do is believe it.

How do we know God accepted it? Because He raised Him from the dead. This is all historical, verifiable fact. That's why when we talk about the gospel, it's good news. News is reflecting something that's happened already. It's not something left for you to do, it's something that's already been done, and Jesus Christ paid it all just like the song says. And so that's where we're at in the book of Romans, we're going to get to the good news here at the end of chapter 3. But over the next two sections we're gonna painfully watch as this final nail is driven into the coffin for mankind and their righteous efforts, or righteous leanings in terms of providing righteousness on their own.

So, as we start this week in Chapter 3, really starting in verse 1, we're gonna work our way (Lord willing) through verse 9. But what we're going to see in the passage today is - remember where we've come from. At the end of chapter 2, we just finished this section on the religious sinner. And remember there's no amount of religion, there's no denomination, there's no church, even *this* church that can save you. No church can save you, no religion can save you, no spiritual disciplines can save you, no catechism, circumcision, the communion, anything ritualistic can save you, that's what Paul's been driving home to the Jewish religious mindset here as we end up out of chapter 2.

And so the Jew needs to understand this as Paul goes into Chapter 3, he's going to anticipate some objections by the common Jew. The religious Jew of his day is gonna have some objections to

what Paul is saying. And Paul, having come out of that camp, knows what they're thinking. And so he's gonna ask four rhetorical questions in these first nine verses, and then answer the questions for them because he knows what they're thinking.

Hearing what he's been saying, like I said last week, when Paul told the Jew, "You don't get there because you're a son of Abraham, you don't get there because you possess the law, you don't get there because you're circumcised, you don't get there because of any of those things," the religious Jew of the day would have fallen off his chair. "What? What are you talking about? And that's kind of where we lead-in in chapter 3.

So, let's pick up in verse 1, "*What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the Oracles of God.*" And so Paul asks this question, "What advantage then is it of being Jewish?" The Jews thought, "Well I had an advantage. I had the law, I had circumcision, I was a son of Abraham, boom I'm getting in." That was the mindset of the religious Jew of the day. And so Paul's saying what's the advantage? He anticipates these questions.

In fact, we're gonna see four questions in this section, most common in the minds of the Jewish objector at this point. And basically, the deal was this: if physical descendancy wasn't good enough, if physical circumcision wasn't good enough, and if having the law was worthless if they did not *keep* the law - remember they had to keep it. How well? Ninety percent of it? Did he go down to seventy-five percent? No, it's perfect. In fact, James 2:10 tells us what? If they kept the law in every point and yet offended in *one*, they were guilty of breaking it all.

So, it had to be perfection. Perfect obedience, perfect keeping of God's law, and that's why when people say today, "Well I'm just gonna live by the Ten Commandments," that's not gonna work for anybody. Because if you lie or have ever told a lie, you're guilty of them all. It means you're as guilty as a murderer in God's eyes when it comes to perfect righteousness. And see the Jew needed to understand that all of these things, all of these advantages that they had were worthless if they didn't keep the law.

In fact, Paul had just come out of chapter 2 and said what? If you break the law, if you're not a keeper of the law, you're just like a Gentile. It's like you're being uncircumcised. Don't trust in your circumcision to get you to heaven. And as I mentioned last week, the Jewish mindset was simply this: that when they showed up to the pearly gates and if Abraham was gonna let them in, he would let in every circumcised male, they would automatically get in, that was the mindset of the Jew. So, Paul's saying don't trust in your ritual, don't trust in circumcision, don't trust in any of these things.

And so the mindset here of this question is if they were condemned like everyone else for breaking the law, then what good was it to be a Jew? That's the question that Paul is posing here. Do they have an advantage? And the answer to the question he says in verse 2: "*Much in every way!*" Yes, they did have an advantage. What was their advantage? Well, he goes on to say, "*Chiefly because to them were committed the Oracles of God.*" They did have an advantage. What was the advantage? Well, they had the very word of God, they had God communicating with them, they had special revelation.

Now is that the only advantage that the Jew had? Romans 9:4-5, they had many advantages. Romans 9:4 says this, "*who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*"

And so what we see here, what the emphasis is, and you see that word '*chiefly*', this is where they're especially advantaged. They had the Word of God. The God of the universe actually communicated to them many things. Now He didn't just communicate to them natural revelation through creation and through an inner witness of the conscience like we saw back in chapter 1, but for

the Jew He specifically communicated with them. What did He communicate? Well go all the way back to Genesis 3:15. God was gonna send a promised deliverer.

What else did He communicate? He communicated that the wages of sin is death, that when you sin it requires a death penalty, and there's no way to get out of that unless the death has been paid. And so he gave them the visual aid all through the Old Testament of the sacrificial system, the innocent lamb dying in place of the guilty man, and then eventually he prophesied in Isaiah 53 that this coming deliverer would bear the sins of many.

We see all the prophetic scriptures of this Messiah pointing to Jesus Christ being born in Bethlehem, being born of a virgin, all of these specific prophecies as God narrows it down, this is the advantage that the Jew had. No Jews should have been confused or misled as it relates to how one was made righteous with God, and how God was gonna take care of the righteousness issue, because it was all found in their Bible, the Old Testament. It's all found in special revelation. That should have been an advantage, and it was an advantage to them. Many of them had missed it, and that was Paul's point here.

In fact, we see that as you look through the Old Testament, they were entrusted with God's Word not only for themselves, but also to be a light to the Gentiles around them. And we see this in multiple places, we'll just read a couple if you want to jot it down, but Deuteronomy 4:7-8 says, *"For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason may we call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"* And also in Psalm 147:19-20, *"He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them."*

You know, I remember growing up, and a couple of times in my life specifically I remember being on a baseball team. And I remember being one of the better players on the baseball team, and I remember thinking as I was sitting on the bench one time, my coach was sitting next to me. And you know, that's kind of a cool thing as a young man, and it's kind of a nervous thing because you don't want to say anything that's gonna embarrass you. And you really can't be yourself, because normally you're in the dugout goofing off with your teammates really not paying attention to the game.

But he sat by me for some reason one day, and he began to share with me insights into the game. He began to share with me, "Look how the pitcher does this," and "Watch, I know he's gonna throw a curveball." And sure enough, he'd throw a curveball. I'd go, "Wow, that's incredible!" And then he would show me other little insights in and around the field, and you know, I remember thinking, "Wow, he's giving me this special coaching in real time, and I'm starting to learn the game better than I ever knew it before."

And see, this is what the Jews had. They had the God of the universe in their ear, whispering, speaking, communicating to them, giving them the answer to these issues. And that's why Jesus is flabbergasted when he talks to Nicodemus, the most religious Jew probably of the day, and He says, "You must be born again," and Nicodemus is like, "What are you talking about?" And Jesus says, "You don't know these things? You're a teacher of Israel, you're a rabbi among rabbis, and you don't know these things?" Why was He saying that? Because it was in their word. It had been entrusted to them. It was in their Oracle's as Paul identifies here. So, the Jews were greatly advantaged with the Word of God.

Now it's interesting because as we go into verse 3, they understand that Paul answered this correctly. They know that they were advantaged because they had the Word of God but notice how the mindset of a good debater is. What do good debaters do?

In fact, I'm so tired of watching political talk shows because the second somebody gets pinned that what they said was false or the person they support was false, what do they do? They know how to spin. I mean they've got spin moves, they've got stiff arms, and they're just getting out of everything! And it's like, how did they do that? How did they answer a question without answering the question? And then how does the person asking them the question let them off the hook? But this is what good debaters do.

And so the Jew says, I think at the end of verse two, "Okay, you got me Paul. You got me. Yeah, we don't keep the law, and we were privileged, you're right." But a good debater then comes back and says, "Well let me sidestep that answer by objecting to something else." And that's what they do here in verse 3, we see he says this, "*For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?*" And so Paul is anticipating this question. Now, notice the objection. "What if *some* don't believe?" That's the question, he's really ready to admit that some don't believe, but not all.

And what he's saying is if that's the case, then what you're saying Paul is that the unconditional promises that God made to Abraham will be nullified. That God, due to the unfaithfulness of some, the unbelief of some would literally rip up His contract. Is that what you're saying, Paul? You see how they sidestepped personal responsibility and now put it out there in the hypothetical? "Okay, what are you saying here? We're gonna get judged now, and so that's gonna make what God has promised unfaithful."

You know what he's saying is this, he's arguing that God must keep His promises whether the Jew is a sinner or whether a Jew is righteous. This is the argument of the objecting Jew. "See, even if we're sinners, Paul, God has to remain faithful, God's got to let us in." That's the mindset of the Jew. And so Paul sees this subjection, and we've got to remember this is true. God made *unconditional* - mark that word down - unconditional promises to Abraham and his seed involving a land, involving a seed, and involving a blessing. Let's read those together back in Genesis chapter 12, starting in verse 1.

*"Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

And so what God has promised unconditionally to the nation of Israel is a land, a seed, and a blessing. Now, two of those promises have been fulfilled, if you will, completely, and that is the seed. Paul identifies the seed that Abraham is talking about, it's none other than Jesus Christ, we see that in Galatians. And we also see that the blessing has been extended, because in Galatians 3:8 Paul says that this blessing, that this was God preaching the gospel through Abraham. In you, in your seed, all nations of the earth would be blessed. And so we see in the future, we believe too since these are fulfilled and that they're unconditional, that one day the Jewish people will dwell in the land, the full scope of the land that God has promised them. We believe that will happen one day.

And so the Jew is saying, "Wait a minute, what about all of these unconditional covenants? Are you saying if some don't believe, we're not even going to get those? If we're going to be held accountable for our sin, you're saying that God is going to be unfaithful to us to fulfill His promises?" And what they missed out on is that individual unbelief is what is held accountable here. The promises to the nation corporately are going to go through because God is faithful.

In fact, when you think about the history of the nation, notice the generation coming out of Egypt who rebelled. The 10 spies gave the bad report, two gave the good report, what happened? Did God then not fulfill His promises to the nation? No, He still took them into the promised land. He still took that nation into the promised land. But what happened to the individuals who didn't believe,

everyone over 20 years old? They died in the promised land as a result of their unbelief. And so you see this personal accountability, this personal responsibility, but you also still see the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises to the nation, and that is what Paul, I believe, is referencing here.

And so in verse 4 he says, "*Certainly not!*" - God is faithful - "*Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That you may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged.'*" And so Paul's answer is very clear: certainly not! God is not unfaithful, God will never be unfaithful, perish the thought. Don't ever say that God won't be faithful to His promises, He'll remain faithful to His promises to Abraham and Israel in spite of the nation's unbelief. Now is He gonna hold individuals responsible for their unbelief? Yes.

In fact, do you know there's only one thing that can send somebody to hell? This is very important, because the church gets a bad rap in our day, because the church is accused of saying that homosexuality is the unforgivable sin. Or that drunkenness is the unforgivable sin. Or that smoking, or that going out to a nightclub and dancing, all these things that we think or that we hear that are so bad, that these are all unforgivable sins.

You know, I've had many people I've talked to that have been unbelievers and they think, "Well you think I'm going to hell because I'm smoking this cigarette." That's not how you go to hell. It's really simple. It's actually so simple that many people will say, "There's no such thing as a free lunch." Well that may be true, but there's such a thing as free salvation. There's such a thing as a free gift of righteousness, of eternal life, of forgiveness of sins. That's true because that's biblical, that's how God orchestrated it, and it's really simple.

Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins or not? That's the issue. If you reject God's provision, you'll spend eternity in hell. That's what the Bible teaches. That's the only thing that can send somebody to hell. We need to get our minds off of all these sins, as if we're gonna try to clean up the world one sin at a time, running around the tree just trying to cut off all this bad fruit, and start sharing the gospel with people. That's the only thing that can save people. People quit abusing alcohol and still go to hell because they've never believed the gospel. They've rejected God's solution to our righteousness issue. That's the issue here, it's unbelief.

And so Paul is clearly saying that God is going to remain faithful to His promises to Abraham and Israel, in spite of their unbelief, and that every individual is going to be held accountable for their decision with what to do with Jesus Christ. Is Jesus Christ your savior or is He just a good teacher? See, the Bible calls Him a savior because as the angel said, and it's so simply understood, He saves people from their sins. See, saviors save. If the Bible calls Jesus the Savior, it implies that you and I need saving. We've got something wrong with us, we can't make it on our own.

Has anybody ever felt the experience of drowning? I remember once, I was a grown man, I mean we had kids, we were out swimming in the lake, and I just swallowed some water. Like, mid stroke. And I can swim, I'm not impressive by any stretch, but I could float for a little bit anyways, and probably get around and move. My feet I can never get above the water for some reason, but I can survive. But I swallowed some water, and I have never been so frightened in my life. I have never been so out of control in my life. Has anyone ever experienced that feeling? And you know, that's not a good feeling, is it? I mean, literally your life flashes before your eyes.

But I remember the feeling as I'm flapping around in the water, just trying to get my breath, just trying to stay above water, I remember another friend of mine was right there, and you know what he said? "Stop!" Because I was about to knock him out trying to save me. He said, "Stop! Quit!" And I just listened to him because I was out of breath anyways, I had nothing left. And he literally just swam up

behind me, and just held me above the water for a couple seconds, let me get my breath, and he said, "Okay, are you alright?" I said, "Yeah." He put me back down and then I swam back to shore.

You know and for many people, they need to understand when it comes to the gospel, you need to quit trying. You need to quit trying to be so good to force God to accept you into heaven, that will never work. And that's Paul's whole point coming out of this section, is nobody is ever going to be good enough to get there. Stop trying, trust the Savior. That's the message of the gospel.

And you know for the Jew, God is never going to be able to be accused of any wrongdoing or unfaithfulness, and for the Gentile that's the same truth. God is going to be faithful to His promise, and one of the promises that He's made to you and I, in this age and day, is that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you'll be saved. John 3:16: "*Whosoever believeth on him will not perish,*" you don't have to face the death penalty, but you have eternal life. That's a promise that God has made that He'll be faithful to fulfill. And that's one of the things we also have to understand as to God's faithfulness.

Now it's interesting, I don't know if your version shows this in verse 4, but many of you will have that last couple of phrases in italics. Do you see that in your Bible? What Paul is doing there is quoting from the Old Testament. He's quoting from Psalm 51, and those of you that are familiar with that Psalm, you know who wrote it, it was King David. And you know when he wrote the Psalm, it was after he committed the sin with Bathsheba. This was his confession Psalm, recognizing that what he did was wrong.

And so when David wrote this, and as Paul is quoting this section, David knew he was a condemned sinner. He wasn't trying to justify himself in front of God. In fact, what he was saying is, "God you're right, I was wrong. God, I should have never done that, and when I did it, I was wrong." And he is saying that even on the plane that I'm a Jew, I'm the anointed king of Israel, I'm circumcised, I've got the law, I'm a son of Abraham, I'm purebred, whatever else that he might claim to, he said, "You know what God? Individually I deserve judgment. You would be just in judging me, because I'm wrong, you're right."

And individually David wasn't claiming, "Oh well, God's just gonna have to let me in because I'm a Jew. He's gonna have to let me in because I've got the law. He's gonna have to let me in because I'm circumcised." No, David understood this individual accountability, and this is why Paul quotes it here. He gives it for the Jew to quote there, and what's interesting is because now the religious Jews - and again, Paul is anticipating their questions - they're gonna bring up the objection.

Now I want you to see how they take David's words and spin it. It's just like watching certain cable news shows, they spin things. They start spinning it, and before long you're like, "Okay well, what was he really trying to say here?" Let's read verse 5. "*But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)*" Jump down to verse 7, because it's really the same question twice. "*For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?*" And notice at the end of this verse and in verse 5, that there's a parenthesis there that says, "I speak as a man." And this is Paul giving the Jewish objectors' viewpoint from a human perspective.

And notice the argument here. The argument is really simple, that David when he sinned, he sinned in order that God might be justified. It's an age-old argument. And people misunderstand this all the time when we preach the gospel of grace, and they say, "Okay, if I'm saved by grace then that means I can live any way I want to. And if I'm saved by grace, if I sin and God's grace covers my sin and that brings Him glory, well then guess what? If I sin more, then God's grace is gonna have to be more and that will bring Him more glory."

See the faulty logic there? See the MSNBC spin job on that one? Or be careful, sometimes even Fox News - I know that might be hallowed ground. But you see the spin job there, it's like, "Hey well, the reason David quoted this is because now that David sinned, God's justified. Now that David sinned, God can be glorified. Because there's a clear distinction between my unrighteousness and God's righteousness, therefore, let's sin more, because it's gonna make God's righteousness stand out more." See the twisted logic? And really both questions are reflecting the same thing.

We see this word, "demonstrate" in verse 5, that our unrighteousness *demonstrates* the righteousness of God. The word means *to set forth with or to stand together with*. It'd be like if you're a little concerned that your car looks dirty. So, when you go into a parking lot, you just find a dirtier car to park next to, and then your car looks clean. That's kind of the mindset. "We're gonna bring it right alongside so that it demonstrates God's righteousness." And that's kind of the mindset that's communicated here.

And then having reviewed the lack of righteousness, that's where Paul's been going these three chapters, Paul says that it stands in stark contrast to God's righteousness. He's been making that chasm wider and wider, because many people think, "Oh yeah, I'm kind of there, I just have a couple more good works to do in my life and I'll kind of be there, the scales will tip over in my favor." And Paul's saying, "No man, there's a chasm." And he's trying to describe that it's a wide, wide chasm.

And so some might say, "My sin makes God look good. My unrighteousness makes God look righteous. My unfaithfulness makes God look faithful." So, the mindset is I'm really doing God a favor by sinning because I'm just enhancing how good He looks. You see, that's the argument that we're finding in these verses. So, if that's the case, Paul says, "Is it really fair or just for God to inflict a judicial sentence or wrath on mankind since nobody's perfect? In other words, is that really fair? Because all we're doing by sinning is bringing God more glory. That's not fair." This is the objectors speaking. Paul anticipates this objection, and that's really the mindset here.

Now what's crazy about this is that the Jews believed this: "*how then will God judge the world?*" You know, the Jews had no problem knowing and understanding that God was gonna judge Gentile sinners. And as comical as that is, each one of us has no problem pointing the finger at somebody else and saying, "Of course God's gonna judge that sinner!" We just laugh, "Of course he's gonna get his. Of course she's gonna get hers. Look how evil they are!" And the Jew had no problem recognizing this.

And so what Paul is gonna do is flip their logic on them, because if this accusation were true, then all sin, including Gentile sin, would not be exposed to God's judgment. See, he was contradicting something they knew to be true, that Gentiles are gonna be judged, and Paul is saying, "Wait a minute, if this is true of you, that you can just keep on sinning and it exalts God's righteousness, and then he won't judge you, that's got to be true of the Gentiles also." See, he twists their logic around them, and the mindset is, "You know better than that. You know God's gonna judge the world, so if He judges the Gentile world for sin, He's also going to judge you, individually, unbelieving Israelite for your sin.

And that is Paul's point here. Because if God does not use His righteous standard, or if He had no standard at all, how would He justly judge the world? How could He fairly or justly judge the world? If He hadn't provided a conscience, if He hadn't made creation in such a way that it spoke of His eternal attributes, if He hadn't given special revelation in the law to the Jew, how can He judge the world? That would be unfair, there'd be no standard given. If you've ever worked for a boss like that, you know how that feels. Well, how do you do good? How do I please this person? How do I do this, how do I do that?

So, God doesn't do that. The implication is that God would not be able to, because no standard is set. The implication is if this was really true, that sinning a bunch and party time like it's 1999 was true, then we would just glorify God, so thus He wouldn't judge anybody, right? That's the implication

here, and Paul's saying that's not right. And not only that, but God's righteousness is the standard and this was revealed (as I mentioned) in natural revelation and more specifically in special revelation. God to the Jew revealed that there was a righteous standard, they saw it every day in their daily life with the animal sacrificial system. God is a whole and just God, He will punish sin, but He also makes a provision for the sinner.

You've got to come to God in God's way: it's always been by grace, through faith. It has always been God's method of salvation, not you getting a calculator out, getting your legal pad out, jotting it down, getting with your friends, getting a whiteboard, having a brainstorming session on how we're gonna reach God, that's not how it's ever worked. It's only ever worked by the way God has revealed it should work, and that is by grace, through faith in this coming deliverer, and now the Deliverer whose name is Jesus Christ, who died for your sins and rose again. And so this is what we're talking about here in terms of the standard.

And verse 7 I'd already gone over, but this is the same question all over again from verse 5: *"For if the truth of God is increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?"* That's verse 7 and it's very similar. Basically, again, if God's righteousness and truth is made to stand out more through my unrighteousness and lies, is that really a bad thing? That was the mindset of this Jewish objector, this debater who was squirming to get off of the hot seat, to get the finger off of their chest. So they're trying to slide in and out, and these are the questions that they're objecting to: Why should man be judged as a sinner if his sin actually exalts God's truth, or exalts God's righteousness, or brings glory to God? That's the question that's posed.

And then in verse 8, it's interesting because this is where the questions from verse 5 and verse 7 naturally end up. It's basically, "Okay if that's true, let's party. Why is living a righteous life even a value? Why is being a Jew even an advantage? Why would you even come to church if this is true? Why would you even care about the way you lived if this is true? Because the more you sin, the more God is glorified, and hey, you're really doing God a favor by doing that. So, get after the debauchery, right? Go after the licentiousness because that's gonna bring God glory. That's the natural outflow of this.

Look at verse 8, *"And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'? - as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just."* You know if Paul really agreed with the question posed in verses 5 and 7, then he really would have taught that bringing more evil would have brought about more righteousness, that doing sin would have brought God more glory, but that's not what he taught.

In fact, Paul's saying this at the end of this verse, he says that their condemnation is just. Paul's saying if they believe that we really teach that, and we really did, then them condemning us would be right. Because that is not the method that God teaches in His word, that you just do more sin, it brings Him more glory, so just go for it, have a party. That's not the method. This is the Jewish objector trying to get off of the hot seat.

What's interesting is, as we look at the verb tenses here, *"slanderously reported"* and *"affirm"* are both present indicatives, which means that Paul was being accused of teaching this right now as he wrote it. When Paul came to town and people said, "Hey, do you know this guy, Paul? What's he all about?" They would say, "Yeah, he teaches, 'do evil so good can come'. He teaches, 'live any way you want to. You can get saved and you can just live any way you want to, and God is glorified in it all'. And that's what he's teaching."

You know, what's interesting about that whole topic is that if you preach the gospel of grace, that's what you'll get accused of as well. If you preach true grace, biblical grace, that God saves based



on His unmerited favor, you'll get accused of this as well. You'll get accused of being antinomian, you'll get accused of preaching cheap grace.

But I'm just going to tell you this, if God can save a sinner that sins a hundred times, He can save a sinner that sins 600 times. See, because the sinner with a hundred sins didn't deserve it any more than the sinner with 600 sins. But once you get up to the thousand range... oh man you're probably not good enough. No, that's the whole point! Grace gives you something you don't deserve. Nobody deserves heaven, nobody deserves eternal life. So, you can be the chief of sinners like the Apostle Paul, or you can be the vice president of sinners - like maybe some of us are - and you can still be saved by the grace of God, because it's all given and undeserved.

So, what about sin in the believer's life? You know, that's where people say, "If you teach grace, people are just gonna go sin and live any way they want to." Not if you teach biblical grace. And that's why if you haven't been in Sunday school the last few weeks, you're missing out, because we're talking about grace needed to live the Christian life. See, so many people think the Christian life is about what you do, and what you don't do, and thus you're spiritual. That's not biblical. The law of God doesn't teach us to live righteously and soberly in this present day and age, the *grace* of God teaches us that.

How do I know that? Go with me to Titus chapter 2. Starting in Titus 2:11, "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us,*" - now I'm gonna stop you there, because I want you to see it in your own Bible, because typically when you see it in your own Bible you remember. That's why. What's teaching us? It's the grace of God that's teaching us. Okay so what is the grace of God teaching us? Well, it's brought salvation to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ, but what is grace teaching us? Verse 12, "*teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,*"

See, if you and I teach true grace, the grace of God as found in the scriptures, we are going to teach people to live righteous lives on the basis of the empowering Holy Spirit, through the grace of God. That's the key to living the Christian life. I will tell you this, that's the *only* way to live the Christian life successfully. If you want to live by the law, if you want to live by legalism, if you want to live by a list of do's and don'ts, I'll guarantee you one thing: you will fail. You'll fail! You will relate more to Romans 7 then you will to the abundant life in Romans 8, which we'll get to when we get there. You'll relate to what Paul says, "The things I want to do, I can't do. The things I don't want to do, I keep on doing." And if you want to live your life by the law, and through legalism, and through a list of do's and don'ts, that is gonna be your Christian experience.

I used to have a friend that would walk into a group of Christians and speak, and he was a country boy, so he'd say, "How y'all doing this morning?" And they'd be just like most groups would, "Yeah. Hey. Woohoo." You know, from the back row, and he's like "Thanks mom!" And he used to say, "The joy of the Lord is your strength!" Are you walking, are you living in victory, or is it hard to get out of bed every day? It's a struggle, because you know that as you go to work that day, all that awaits you is just cups full of failure to drink, and just sipping from failure all day long. See if we teach the true grace of God, the grace of God is gonna teach us how to live righteous lives, a righteous lifestyle, how to make decisions that honor and glorify and please the Lord.

And so when people hear the message of grace, they begin immediately to declare, "Oh that means you can just live evil and then good will come!" No, they don't understand grace. Because grace is the only thing that can teach you how to live righteously once you're saved. But before you worry about living righteously, you've got to do something with the Savior. You've got to be wired for sound. We're not about just cleaning up lives. Like the old country pastor Jay Vernon McGee said, "*Let's be more worried about catching fish than cleaning out the fishbowl.*" And that's the mindset we need to have.

What does an unbeliever need to hear, that they need to quit drinking, or that they need to put their faith in Jesus Christ? That's the message they need to hear. That's the only message that can save them. And then as we begin to teach them the grace of God, God will work on areas that are destroying their fellowship with Him. One of them might be drunkenness, it might be other areas. But we preach the gospel, we preach Christ crucified, we preach Christ risen from the dead. That's our message, that's the message of the Scriptures.

And so Paul was saying clearly this was not his message. He's not saying go do evil so that good may come, but again, this is typically how people misunderstand the grace of God. This is how people misunderstand God's method of declaring man righteous. We didn't come up with this, we didn't invent this doctrine at Grace Community Fellowship, this is a scriptural teaching.

We're gonna see it clearly when we get to the end of chapter 3, when Paul in verse 21 says, *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."* And that should be a huge, "Glory, hallelujah!" Especially those of you who have ridden this train on the highway to hell in the last three chapters. Which basically says any kind of sinner - religious, moral, or immoral - you're on the same broad road that leads to hell, there's only one exit, and it's found in the gospel.

And so Paul concludes this section in verse 9, and let's read verse 9: *"What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin."* So, verse 9, *"are we better than they? What then?"* And this is Paul's way of really introducing his conclusion to the argument. He's gonna fully conclude when we get down to verse 20 - see that word "therefore" in verse 20? - that's where he's gonna fully conclude this whole argument about the lack of righteousness for mankind. But this is a way that he starts to conclude his argument, and he says, "What then? Are we better than they?" Okay, so is who better than who? What's he talking about here? Well, I believe contextually he's talking about Jews. Are Jews better than Gentiles because of their privileges? I think contextually that's what it's saying.

But I think it could be applied to anything, like this concept of the moral sinner that we looked at back in chapter 2. "I'm going to heaven, I'm righteous, because I'm better than they. I'm good enough to go to heaven because I'm better than my neighbor." And we liken that to somebody in an intensive care unit saying, "I'm healthy because I'm better than the person next door." No, you're not. You're in intensive care! You've got just as big a problem as the person next door. You don't have health, and in this case, you don't have righteousness.

And so he's saying are we better than they? Are Jews, even with all their privileges, better or going to escape God's judgment over and above the Gentiles? Paul does not view himself as better than them in terms of obtaining God's righteous standard. Why? Why not? Because look at that very next phrase: *"Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they're all under sin."*

See, everybody's in the same boat. Everybody is in the same exact situation, whether your profession is a mechanic, an engineer, or if you're a pastor, or you're a missionary, or you're the pope. It doesn't matter what position you are, we're all in the same boat. We have no righteousness, we need it, God is willing to provide it, will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and obtain it? The moment you do, God himself, the Creator of the universe, will declare you righteous. You will become the righteousness of God in Christ. That's an unchanging position, and that's how you get it.

And so Paul is saying here that he has previously charged. Now the question is, when did he previously charge? When did he tell Jews and Greek that they were all sinners? Well, we've been looking at it in the last three chapters. He systematically and categorically went through every category of sinner, and basically came to the conclusion that we're all guilty. Why is that? Because God judges on a perfect

standard. God judges us based on not just what we see, but what? What goes on in the secrets of our heart. God sees everything. God is impartial, and God will give people exactly what they deserve.

The problem with most people is they don't think they deserve hell. But they agree God's just, they just think for God to be fair, He's got to give me heaven, because I've really tried hard. And see, that's not the biblical message. The biblical message is that nobody is good enough. We need a righteousness that's other than ourselves, outside of ourselves, and that's something that only God provides.

According to Paul, he noticed that both Jews and Greeks - in other words, all people - are presently (there's a present tense verb there) under sin. Look at verse 9, "*For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.*" And what does under sin mean? Well under sin, I think, has a couple of different meanings we can consider. Basically, it just means that you're beneath or under sin as a dominating force or rule, as well as the consequences of being in that position. Now a little bit, maybe easier said, it means to be exposed to everything in the package of sin including its weight, including its responsibilities, including its consequences, we're under this concept of sin which carries with it everything that we get as a result of being under sin. All the consequences that come from our position of a sinner and actually committing acts of sin.

So, this position is then borne out by the fact that everyone is a lawbreaker, and we see that in Galatians 3:21-22, which uses this phrase "*has confined all under sin.*" The Scriptures confined everybody, because as you look at the scripture, the scripture doesn't lie. In fact, we're going to see that the scripture doesn't lie in the next section, because what Paul's gonna do from verses 10-18 is quote the scriptures.

And he's going to show that his conclusion is just, it's biblical, it's coming straight out of the Old Testament Scriptures, and he's gonna use a couple of words a lot of times, like "none" and "all", and we'll see kind of how he uses that and puts it together. And so we're gonna see the final nail in the coffin of mankind's righteousness, it's going to be driven flush in the next section.



# CHAPTER 11

## Condemned

### Romans 3:10-20

Turn with me to the book of Romans chapter 3. It's kind of a dreary section today, but I don't know what to say other than what a lot of great theologians say, "It is what it is," and sometimes the truth is not a pretty truth. The good news is that we're going to get some good news soon, and Paul is kind of working his way there.

The big conclusion to this section that we are in comes in verse 20, it's the "therefore", he's making his conclusion, and the section we're going to look at today we'll culminate, we'll get to verse 20. But the section is basically Paul's last hammer swing into a nail of the coffin on mankind's righteousness. And today he's gonna nail it flush, it's gonna be closed. And the verdict is gonna be that mankind has no righteousness to speak of, nothing good enough to get them to heaven, and Paul is gonna nail that coffin shut this morning.

Paul had made a very bold statement in verse 9, let's read verse 9 again as we kind of get a running start into our section. He says, "*What then? Are we better than they? Not at all.*" - and here's his bold statement - "*For we have previously charged,*" - when did he do that? Well, he had been doing it in the last three chapters - "*both Jews and Greeks that they are,*" - some under sin. Is that what your version says? No, it's, "*all under sin.*"

And what you're going to see in this section is Paul is gonna build off of verse 9 now, and he's gonna give us Old Testament scriptural proof that this is true. Not just what he's been sharing in the last three chapters that's true. But now he's gonna go back to the Old Testament and say, "This isn't something I'm making up. This is something that's been true because God's character is unchanging, God has always required righteousness to get to heaven, and He's always required perfect righteousness to get to heaven. This is not something new and made-up."

So, he's gonna go through verses 10-18, and your Bibles may have them all in italics, that means these are direct quotes from the Old Testament. If you are taking notes, you'll want to jot down Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3, because that's really a repeat of verses 10-12, and then as we go along, I'll give you the other references. But you've got to see that Paul is now proving his final statement from verse 9, and he's proving it from the Old Testament Scriptures. And so that's what we're looking at today.

As we read through, I want you to notice a couple of words. They're small words but they're key words. These are the all-encompassing words that many times we don't feel comfortable using, because we don't have full and accurate knowledge sometimes of a situation. I remember teaching math and I would teach a problem or a type of problem, and I would have students say, "Mr. Clark, is that always the way we're going to do that?" You know, always is an encompassing word. Your students want to know that because they feel like, "Man, if I got that figured out, I'm just gonna get hundreds in this class." And you know as their teacher, sometimes I just have to say, "Well that's how you do it most of the time, not always." And we won't make these all-encompassing terms sometimes because we're just not sure if there's an exception to the rule out there.

God has no problem making these all-encompassing terms, and those terms are "none" you'll see here in our passage, and "all." God can say "none" and "all", because God's not going to be surprised by some example on the other side of the world and go, "Oh, I forgot about him. I forgot about her." See, God can say "none" and it means *none*. It even means it in the Greek for Greek scholars, it's the

same word. "All" means *all*. God can do that because God is God. God knows everything, God is all-knowing, all-powerful, He's got it all figured out, so He's not surprised by any exception to the rule, because no exception to the rule about what Paul's about to say exists. And that's the point.

So, as we go into verse 10, what we're gonna see is that no one is righteous. In fact, what we're gonna look at in verses 10-12 is that humanity's nature, by nature, is deplorable before God. And so let's look at verse 10. He starts with a phrase, "*As it is written:*" - again indicating that he's quoting from the Old Testament - "*There is none righteous, no, not one;*" And so as we look at that phrase "as it is written", we've got to understand that what we're now looking at is not mankind's perspective. Mankind's perspective we've been looking at in the last 3 chapters. One category of sinner says, "I don't need righteousness, God doesn't exist, I don't really care." The two other categories say, "Oh yeah, you need righteousness, but I'm gonna get it the way I want to get it." The moral sinner through morality, the religious sinner through religion, and now we're gonna look at God's estimation of humanity.

"*As it is written,*" this is God's viewpoint. In fact, if you go to Psalm 14:2, you're gonna see that it says, "*The Lord looked down from heaven,*" that's what we're looking at here. God's perspective on man. And it's not pretty. It does not paint a pretty picture. This is the depth of depravity, and this is God's view on the situation.

Now I want you to notice as we go, the repetition of the word "none" in verses 10-12. He uses it in four points, indicating the universality of Paul's point. Really quickly, "there's none righteous" verse 10, "there's none who understands" verse 11, "there's none who seeks after God" verse 11, "they have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable", and then that final phrase in verse 12 "there is none who does good, no, not one." You see the all-encompassing terms that God is going to use here? And so we see this word "none".

Now the other thing we're going to see is that this word "is" - when he's describing there *is* none righteous, there *is* none who understands - it's present tense. It indicates that right now in an ongoing, continual manner, nobody has these qualities. So not only does no one have it, but the point is no one's ever going to have it. No one ever had it. This is an ongoing state of every human being, and again, it's not pretty.

He goes on to say, "*There's none righteous, no, not one.*" There's that "none" again. Again, there's no one person in the human race that could say, "Oh yes I am!" It was like an old friend of mine who was just a total jokester, and he would do stuff in the middle of church service. It was almost embarrassing to sit next to him. But he had a friend one day that fell asleep during the sermon. And right in the middle of the pastor's sermon, he nudged his buddy and said, "Hey man, the pastor just asked you to close in prayer." And the kid gets up and starts praying, and the pastor is kinda like, "Okay let's let him go." And he would do stuff like this. Poor guy, I'm surprised he didn't get kicked out of the church.

So, another time the pastor said, "The Bible never says," whatever he was teaching. "It never says this, it never says that." And the guy said, "Oh yes it does, in second Hezekiah." Which doesn't exist, that's the whole point. And it really caught the pastor off-guard, as if he had missed a verse, that he had missed that exception to the rule of what he was saying. And you know what this is telling us, is that God's not gonna miss it. There's no exception to this rule, there's none righteous, no, not one. There's no one that has the righteousness needed to get to heaven.

If what Paul said in Romans 1:18 is true - do you remember that verse? Let's read it really quick. If this is true, then we've all got a big problem. This is the reality of the situation that we're seeing, because in Romans 1:18, Paul writes, "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,*" Now put those two together, you and I have a problem. Let's be honest with ourselves. Let's not sweep that one under the rug like we do many things in our lives.

You know, every year during tax season, I procrastinate. Because I don't even want to find out if I have to pay the government any more money. I feel like I've already paid them enough, you know? But you know, there are certain things that we put off. We cannot put this truth off. If there's none righteous, no, not one, and God's gonna reveal His wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, we have a problem, we need to own it, we need a solution.

And if you don't know the solution, if you're here and you don't understand God's provision for righteousness, the gospel is a beautiful message for you. You don't have to clean up your life, you don't have to make a commitment, you don't have to give money to the church, you don't have to join a denomination. Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again so that God could provide you the righteousness that you lack, pay the death penalty that you owe, and give you eternal life if you'll simply believe in Him. That's the message. That's the good news. That's why we remember what He did, because we are in such a horrible state as shown here as Paul continues to work through these verses.

He goes on to say that man doesn't understand. Look in verse 11, *"There's none who understands,"* mankind, in other words, doesn't get it. We just don't get it. God says, "You can't be good enough." And we say, "Well we're going to try harder then!" No, you're missing the point.

It's like when I used to coach, and I had a kid who wanted to play basketball and he was 5'6" and he told me he's gonna play center for the Boston Celtics someday. And I just told him, "You're not. That's not gonna happen. I love you, you play hard, you work hard, you listen. 5'6" people don't play center for the Boston Celtics, it's just not gonna happen." They don't get it, right? Mankind doesn't get it. "You're not good enough, you'll never be." "Well, I'll try a little bit harder tomorrow." No, that's the problem. You can never be good enough. You got to get it. This is what the Scriptures teach, this is God's perspective on mankind. There's none who understands.

This word is an interesting word because - follow me here - "understands" means *the comprehending activity of the mind which entails the assembling of individual facts into an organized whole seeing the proper relationship between them.* Now for those of you that that's just too many words in the English language, let's simplify: it's like having a thousand piece jigsaw puzzle and trying to put it together blindfolded. You can get some pieces and you can kind of feel around and say, "Okay that's got a flat edge, so you know, that probably goes here, here, here, or here." But in terms of putting it together, not being able to see it, not being able to fit it all together, and in total futility in trying to do that. How frustrating that would be! And that's what he says about mankind.

Natural man does not put together the incredibly dangerous and precarious situation they're in before a holy and just God. That's why many times when people hear the gospel for the first time they'll say, "Oh, I'll get to that later." "Let me think about that, I'll get back to you." "Yeah, I was gonna do that maybe just later in my life as I got a little bit closer to death. You know, I don't want to wreck my life. I don't want to ruin my life with all this holiness. I just want to do that later." They don't recognize the dangerous situation. I mean, we're not guaranteed even the rest of today, let alone tomorrow.

Now mankind is also not pursuing God. We see this phrase, *"There's none who seeks after God."* And this word "seeks" just means *to seek out or search diligently.* To really pursue, if you will, God. But this doesn't imply an inability. It doesn't say that mankind *can't* seek after God, because there's other scriptures that implore mankind to seek after God. The point that we're saying is it's a description of the continual state of man, that if left to themselves they will not seek after God. They will not pursue God. And so what ends up happening is versus focusing on man pursuing God, the Bible teaches that God is the one who pursues man.

In fact, John 6:44 alludes to this truth. This is just a description of the way mankind is and continually is. So, in John 6:44 Jesus says this, *"No one can come to Me unless the father who sent Me draws him;*

*and I will raise him up at the last day.*” You see, unless God is doing the drawing, mankind if left to themselves will not pursue God.

Now the question then becomes, “Well who does God draw?” And that's where you kind of have these deviating lines of theology, known as Calvinism and Arminianism, and all sorts of stuff. But let me just show you, flip over to John 12 with me. John chapter 12:32 where the same word “draw” is used here as well. And in John 12:32, we see who God draws. And let me tell you, it's not just the elect. It's not just a certain group of people. Because if we interpret the Scriptures literally, we have to interpret “all” to mean *all*.

John 12:32, “*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*” So, is God pursuing you? If you have not put your faith in Christ, is He pursuing you today? Yes, He's drawing you. And you know, one of the ways that He's doing that is through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. We read about this in John 16 where He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. See, righteousness is something that the Holy Spirit is trying to convict each and every one of us of, that we don't have enough of, or the right quality of, or the type that God would accept.

So, the days of trying harder, and doing better, and doing more, and working harder, and straining, and striving to get to heaven should be over for you. There's no way you can do it, no one's ever gonna be good enough, but praise the Lord we've got a Savior who was good enough, who stepped in the path for you and took your penalty for you.

See, that's the gospel. That's the good news, and God has made a way that His death can count in your place, and you can become the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. That's the answer. That's the solution to this issue.

And so as we go on in verse 12, we see again this concept, this description that they have *all* turned aside. Now notice the switch here in the descriptive words. He went from “none” to “all”. None are good, none have what it takes, none seek after me, and *all* have turned aside. Again, these all-encompassing words here, this switch. And so this word “turn aside” just means *to avoid or to bend something away from a straight position to a reclined position*. It came to mean overtime to *swerve away from piety, to swerve away from virtue*. The idea is that they literally bent out of the way to avoid what was being confronted upon them day after day, that they weren't good enough.

So, what were they turning aside from? Well, I think from our context and what we've studied so far, they're turning aside from God's righteousness to their own righteousness. That was the problem. They're turning aside from what God said about their issue to their own understanding of what the issue was. And they comforted themselves - you can even see that word, it's kind of the idea of a reclined position - based on what they thought it took to get to heaven. And you know, the idea too, if they turned it implies that they once had the truth and they left the truth.

How do we know that's true? What else have we seen in Romans? Well, we see back all the way in Romans chapter 1 that they do what? Verse 18: “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*” What do men do again? They suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They hold it down, they turn from it. They have all turned aside.

That “have all” includes you and it includes me. We've all done that. That is our natural bent, to go away from the light. Our natural bent is to go our own way. That's also what Isaiah 53 teaches, we have all gone our own way. That's the point. This is why humanity has a problem, and Paul is just proving it over and over again from Old Testament Scriptures.

He goes on to say that mankind has together become unprofitable, or you might say useless. Now it's an interesting verb tense here because they haven't *made* themselves useless, but based on the way that they've reacted, based on their actions, the base of how they've dealt with truth, uselessness



has been enacted upon them. Worthlessness has been enacted upon them if you want to say it that way. So, it's a passive voice.

And this word “unprofitable” is an interesting word in the Greek, because it was used in the Greek in culture concerning rotten fruit. Rotten fruit, something that was just really, really bad, something that was useless. Other examples spoke of spoiled milk, that's this word here. And so as we read it back again, all of mankind has become unprofitable, like rotten fruit, like spoiled milk. That's the image that he's conjuring up here.

I remember as an 18-year-old young man playing baseball in Mesa, Arizona, and I had this roommate. Now my roommate was from California, so I don't know if maybe he just thought to eat a little bit better than I did, but at 18 I'm still living on quarter pounders, Big Macs, bacon, bacon on everything, bacon juice on everything. I was not really thinking too much. My metabolism hadn't slowed down, I was just pumping it down, putting on muscle. I don't know how I was doing that; I don't know how God took the metabolism of my body and did what I did, but I was playing at a very high level, I was playing professional baseball.

But my roommate, he actually was a fruit buyer. He would buy fruit, stuff it in our little refrigerator in the hotel room we were staying at, and one week he didn't eat a piece of fruit. And somehow it had slipped back in a crevasse in our refrigerator. And I'm telling you what... has anyone ever smelled rotten fruit before? It smells like death warmed over like in the microwave, it's bad.

And we literally thought we had a rodent that had crawled into our room and died. And we kept thinking, “Man, it's right over here by the refrigerator.” But we never thought to look *in* the refrigerator. We were looking under it, we were trying to get the hotel to give us another room, and then finally as we went in to clean out the refrigerator, we found the culprit. And I can't remember what piece of fruit it was, but it looked bad, and it smelled like death warmed over. And Paul is saying that mankind has become like this rotten fruit. Smelly, stinky, worthless, useless, especially as it relates to our own righteousness.

He goes on to say, “*There's none that does good, no, not one;*” Again, we see this repetition of none. Now you know, it begs the question, “Wait a minute, don't some people do good things? What do you mean *none* do good? Don't some people do really good things?” That should be a question we ask ourselves. In our eyes, man's eyes, this may very well be the case. There's a lot of philanthropy that goes on around the world, a lot of people sacrificing for the good of others. But what we've got to remember is this is from God's perspective. In God's eyes, nothing that man does is acceptable.

What does Isaiah 64:6 say? It says all our righteousnesses - not all our un-righteousnesses - the best things you can do, the best things I can do, are like filthy rags. That's God's estimation of our righteousness. It's like taking your three-year-old's painting that they do in Sunday-school class and trying to compare it to a professional painter. And not the Picasso stuff, I mean like really good art, like people that actually have talent. And I'm sure I'll get an email about that; I just can't appreciate that type of art! My mind is not wired that way, I've actually got to know what I'm looking at.

But it would be like taking the righteousness of a three-year-old's painting and comparing it to perfection. Obviously, it would fall way short, and that's the point. So, when Paul is giving God's perspective on this, remember this is God's perspective. No one does good. Because if God views all your righteousness and all my righteousness as filthy rags, that means it's not good. “Filthy rags” in Hebrew is “menstrual rags”. I mean he used the word to describe how putrid and gross our good deeds look to God, so he held nothing back in his description.

And as we move on to verse 13 and 14, we've looked at the nature of mankind being deplorable to God, but now we're gonna look at our tongue, our speech being disgraceful before God. There are

some really gross pictures out there of strep throat in people's throats, and it's really nasty, but mankind's throat is human decay. This is what he's saying here, look at verse 13: *"Their throat is an open tomb;"* in other words, this word "open" is interesting too, because it means *to open again and again*.

Now why do we put lids on tombs? What's one reason? It's gonna stink. That's bad news leaving a tomb open, that smell is gonna fly through the air. But notice he's saying that mankind's throat is this open tomb that just opens, and opens, and opens. Has anyone here ever been stung by words from somebody else? Yeah, you don't have to look too far around to see heads nodding up and down. Well, we're also gonna learn that there's poison like asps under our lips. This mouth is a dangerous body part. James deals with it as well.

There's another reason that in the East they don't leave tombs open, because sometimes people will actually fall in tombs in the middle of the night, in the dark as they're walking around. So, they've gotta close them up. But in this case, the throat is something that just opens, and opens, and opens. And you can cut your tongue off, you can put your hand over your mouth, and it still is going to keep opening up wanting to express something of hatred, and you can see that in humanity. Its opening reveals or exposes a grave of rotten bones, human decay, and again, this is a description of man's speech.

With their tongues we see that deceit is practiced. We see that under our tongues or in our lips there's a snake den that you don't even realize. Now all you have to do is be out in the world, all you have to do is work in the common day world, all you have to do is be around other people to see that this is true. You don't need much exposure to see that mankind knows how to do damage with their mouths, with their throat, with their tongue. They've got poison under their lips to sting people.

Unfortunately, it happens in our marriages, doesn't it? Unfortunately, it happens as we raise our kids, doesn't it? Unfortunately, it happens when we relate to one another as friends, doesn't it? Unfortunately, it happens in the workplace, doesn't it? Have you ever been the recipient of a tongue lashing from a superior? I have. I was in my 20s and I literally felt like crying, and I was a tough guy. You know, lifting weights, I thought I was a pretty tough guy til I got that tongue lashing. The mouth can do some damage.

This practice of deceit that he mentions describes a continual action in the past. So historically what he's saying is this has been the way that mankind has always spoken. Again, to give you some more detail, this word "practicing deceit" really has this idea of luring somebody into a trap, luring them by bait so that you can catch the prey. And it's so interesting because deceit or lying is always about self-preservation.

As a young man - I hate to even say this because I know someone's gonna bring this up another time and make fun of me. But that's okay, I'm just getting it all out there - my nickname growing up in my family was "John the Con". Because I could talk my way out of anything, I could lie, I could manipulate.

And we used to wake up on Saturday mornings, and we'd have a list of - my mom was a sergeant in the Air Force, and I mean she was sergeant Clark, that was kind of the deal when it came to anything - chores for my brother and I written out on Saturday mornings for us to do. And do you know by the end of the day, I had convinced my brother to do 80% of those chores? Part of that I think was that my brother just got tired of arguing with me, and he just wanted me out of his hair - he was my older brother. Part of it was that he's a really good brother.

But the point is this, that even to this day, do you know that when I'm accused of something, when I'm accused of wrongdoing, when I'm accused of wrong motives, do you know what my first inclination to do is? Lie. Protect myself. Self-preservation, make myself look good, make somebody else look bad, because if I can do that, then I still look good.

Now, I'm throwing that out there, but I'm challenging you too. Because I'm assuming there's other sinners in here just like me that have the same tendency and you see that exposed in your life. And you know, this shouldn't be surprising to us, because this is the way we naturally respond, and think, and react. We want to look good, so we'll practice deceit in order to do that.

We go on to see, "*The poison of asps is under their lips;*" this is just a deadly species of snake, and just describes the amount of hurt lying in the mouth of sinful mankind. Then we go on to verse 14, and we just see that our mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Our mouth is stuffed full, that's what this word means. Stuffed full. It's not like you took a little bite, you were being really polite.

You know what one of the hardest foods to eat for me is, and to try to maintain some sense of decorum? It's popcorn. Because I just want to take a whole handful and jam it in my mouth all at once. I just take a handful and stuff it in my mouth and it's usually dripping down my clothes. I usually wait until the lights go out in the movie theater so no one can see me, again, trying to maintain an image, and then I just stuff it in handfuls at a time.

But you know that our mouths - according to verse 14 - are full of a couple things? Cursing is one. Bitterness is another. It means to be stuffed, it's a present tense, it means it's constantly, continually stuffed. Have you ever been shocked by something that came out of your mouth? Well, this should take the shock away. Our mouths are full of this if we're not walking by means of the Spirit of God, this is what's gonna come out.

You know, one of the most embarrassing things to hear is when your kid for the first time says a cuss word, and Mom says, "Why did you say that word, and where did you learn it from?" And they say, "I learned it from Dad." Wow. Talk about being in the doghouse for a while. That's embarrassing. I'm embarrassed that things like that can come out of my mouth because I spent years sowing to the flesh and speaking that way, and so occasionally things will come out. Isn't that embarrassing? Isn't it embarrassing for the kids to hear that coming out of our mouths? And yet this explains why our mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

What's also interesting is this does not just stay in one socio-economic graphic. This is not just people who make less than \$20,000 a year, this is not just describing people on welfare. This is true of a ditch-digger, this is true of a PhD college professor. If you hang around them long enough, this is what you're gonna see coming out: cursing and bitterness.

See, this is a mankind issue. This isn't a certain type of person issue, and those of you that work in the world, in a secular job, you know exactly what I'm talking about, because this is where the conversation goes at every coffee pot meeting, every business meeting following, this is where it goes. And then everyone shows up in the conference room with the president with their suits on, their buttons buttoned, their ties tied, and they put on a show for the president, and as soon as they leave, back to the gutter. Cursing and bitterness is stuffed full in man's mouth.

And then we finally move on to the section of action, verses 15-18, our actions, humanity's actions, are despicable to God. Verse 15, "*Their feet are swift to shed blood;*" "Swift" just means *sharpness*, *keenness*, and also means *eagerness*. Isn't this something? I mean, have you ever thought about violence?

I almost witnessed violence yesterday at a high school girls basketball game. And you talk about eagerness...the parent of the other team came to *our* side in the stands, sat behind us during the fourth quarter, and yelled obnoxiously for his team just to start a riot, it seemed. And you know what, deep down, I wanted to start a riot with him. Deep down, I wanted to take the guy outside and say, "What are you doing, this is youth basketball, why are you taking this so seriously?" And then I wanted to put my fist in his nose. And I'm just being honest, that's deep down how I wanted to react.

But you know what, it illustrates this point. We're swift, we're eager, we're jumping at the chance - especially men I think, there's this... I don't know what it is, you know "oo-rah" kind of deal - but we're eager to pursue violence, and this is descriptive of mankind.

The other thing we see is in verse 16, and this is really a sad commentary, but true. *"Destruction and misery are in their ways;"* This word "ways" just means *paths or roads*, and it's got this idea that destruction - which means *crushing, a breaking into pieces* - misery - which means *afflicting or causing distress* - do you know that these are the roads that mankind travels constantly?

Now they don't intend to do that, right? Because what they intend to do is go out on a Friday night, drink, party, meet people, hang out, have fun, and drive home. They don't intend to jump behind the wheel of a car and run into a family of four and take their lives. They don't intend to then get caught at the scene with a blood-alcohol level higher than the legal limit. They don't intend then to appear before a judge and to be sentenced to life in prison for manslaughter. But you know what? That's the road they're walking. That's what's in the path that they're taking. And you could insert anything.

The most foolish and reckless thing that I've ever heard of in my life was done by a young man, he was between 16-18. He's up in his room, he's on the second floor, he's working on school, he has to go to the bathroom. The decision normal people make, non-reckless people make, non-foolish people make is to get up from your bed and go to the bathroom that's right down the hall from your bedroom. That's not the decision this young man made. He climbs out his second-story window, walks around on the roof, and goes to the bathroom off the top of his roof. Now as he's doing that, he loses his footing, he falls, and breaks his neck. True story, but it illustrates this perfectly.

When you walk this foolish, worldly path, destruction is right there in that path. It would be like if you're a hiking guide on a big mountain and you told someone, "Okay, there's a fork in the road. If you go that way it's really dangerous, rocks are falling, you may slide off into the canyon. This way is really safe." "Okay great, thanks!" and they take off down the path. That's the mindset of mankind. This is what's true of where mankind's idea of righteousness leads them. Destruction, crushing, breaking to pieces, anguish, misery. And so we see that that is the path, these are the natural outcomes of the path taken by mankind.

Verse 17 he says, *"And the way of peace they have not known."* Anybody can watch the news and see that we have an issue in society with peace. Mankind's methods don't lead to peace. Peace is the opposite of war and dissension, and it describes the state of rest. Do you know that the Society of International Law at London, they've taken statistics, and in the last four thousand years of human history, there's only been 286 years of peace despite 8,000 peace treaties on record? Now that's just counting groups of people in nations. This is not talking about individual skirmishes or tribal conflicts that occur maybe where people aren't aware of it. That's a testimony of this verse. That is a statistic that bears out the truth of the word of God. The way of peace, the road of peace, mankind does not know.

And then finally in verse 18, we see that mankind has, *"no fear of God before their eyes."* Which is crazy, because mankind will fear human judges, mankind will fear the police, they're gonna run from the police, they're afraid of a policeman, but they're not afraid of the God of the universe. They don't even stop to consider what the God of the universe requires and how He's gonna execute justice. But this is probably the route (I think) of all the actions that we've just been reading about here in the last few verses. It's a constant and continual state of mind that there's no fear. And you know it's because of this lack of fear that mankind does not realize - they either don't realize, or they don't care, or they think they've got it under control - that they can get a righteousness acceptable to God. We've looked at that.

The immoral sinner doesn't care. Blow God off. The moral sinner and religious sinner says, "Yeah, I care, but I'm gonna get it my way. I got this all figured out. You know, me and God, we got this figured out. I'm gonna take care of it." And that's their mindset. And both of those approaches to the righteousness issue are wrong.

And finally, we get to the conclusion of this passage, verses 19-20. So, the conclusion is simply this: mankind has no defense. Mankind cannot defend themselves. Let's look at verses 19 and 20. *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

So, verse 19, Paul probably brings the Jews back in. You see this phrase, *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says for those who are under the law,"* is referring to Jewish people again. Why does he bring them back in? Probably because their response he anticipates after he just went through verses 10-18 is, "Oh yeah, those dirty rotten Gentiles." Again, this self-righteous, "Oh yeah, the Gentiles should be judged." And so he brings them back into the equation to pronounce condemnation on all, lest they forget what he said back in verse 9, that they're all under sin. Now they're starting to feel good about themselves, so I think he anticipates that response from the Jews again.

And then he says this, *"that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."* And again, we've got some all-encompassing terms. *Every* mouth. Not just *some*, not just the really bad people, but *every* mouth in all the world. And so again, this guilt is all-encompassing. Now Paul uses an interesting word here, it's the word "that". You see the word "that" in front of "every mouth"? It's what is called in Greek a *hina clause*, and *hina's* just the word translated "that", and it gives us the purpose. Why does God use the law, or His word specifically, to expose the sinfulness of mankind? Well, the text tells us He does it for two reasons.

We're gonna see in verse 19 that the first purpose is that *"every mouth may be stopped."* Now why does Paul go to the mouth? Well, the mouth is the instrument by which people justify themselves. And when we talk about the word "justify" - we're gonna be nailing that term into the ground over the next couple months, because we need to know what it means to justify oneself - it means *to declare righteous*. And most people, they will get in front of a magistrate, they will get in front of their parents, they will get in front of an authority, and what do they attempt to do? Justify themselves. Declare themselves righteous. "I wasn't wrong. It was their fault, it was his fault, it was her fault, it wasn't me. In fact, it was really *your* fault because you told me I could do this, and-" and they try to justify themselves and declare themselves righteous.

And so what we see from the scriptures, specifically what we've looked at here in verses 10-18, but also the law of God - the Ten Commandments - nobody can justify themselves. Nobody can honestly say, "Yep, I'm righteous. I've got it. I'm gonna be there." Because the law prohibits that. So obviously the Scriptures are specifically God's law or tools to show that mankind cannot justify themselves. They can't declare themselves righteous.

We've only got one opinion in the courtroom that matters, and guess what? It's not the witness. It's not the attorney. It's not the people watching the court proceedings against you. It's the man with the gavel. The man that can say guilty or not guilty, righteous or not righteous, and so the only opinion that matters is God. So, when mankind appears before God's Great White Throne Judgment and they're judged, they will have nothing to say.

Has anyone ever been caught doing something red handed? In the act, no defense? Well see, that's what's gonna happen when the God of the universe judges people, because the judge is also the star witness. Because He's seen everything, He knows everything, nothing's gonna be hidden from Him.

If the judge and the star witness are the same person, you have a problem. That's an issue. Because there's no talking our way out of that one.

The second purpose that we see in verse 19 is that *“all the world may become guilty before God.”* Again, clearly all of mankind will be guilty before a holy God. This is all-encompassing. This is Paul's conclusion. And so we finally see the “therefore”, let's look at verse 20. *“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”* Again, this is Paul's big conclusion to this entire section. And what he basically tells us is God is not going to declare anybody righteous based on their keeping of the law.

And yet, when you think about how most people think in terms of what it takes to get to heaven, this is exactly where they go. People go to church every Sunday with the Bible under their arm, Romans 3:20 tucked in the Bible that they're carrying, and they will come out of church on a Sunday and say, “I gotta keep the law to go to heaven.” Doesn't that just break your heart that this truth is so clearly taught? How do you read that and come up with, “You gotta be good to go to heaven.”? How do you read that and say, “I've got to keep the law. I've got to do better. I've gotta try to get there tomorrow because I'm not there today. But man, tomorrow my good works will outweigh my bad, and then I'll slightly go over.”? How can you read that and not see God's got a totally different method of declaring you and I righteous. It's in the gospel. We're gonna see it as we go forward in verse 21.

You know what's interesting about this word is it's future tense, it's an indicative mood, it means it'll never happen, it's a mood of fact. *No one* will ever be declared righteous or justified before God based on the keeping of the law, there's no exception. There's no one going to be raising their hand at the back of the class, “Oh yeah, what about me God? You forgot about me.” It's not gonna happen. There's no exception. And so we need to understand this truth.

Now why the law then? Well, *“by the law,”* - according to verse 20 - *“is the knowledge of sin.”* When you have the law and you break it, then you know you've broken the law. It gives you the knowledge that you are a law breaker, it's designed to show you your need. Galatians calls the law “our tutor to bring us to Christ”, the one that leads us to Christ showing us our need for a savior. And when one knows the law, then one is cognizant, whether they break it either through omission or commission. And you know the law is good, but it does its job mercilessly. It just tells you what's right and wrong. It's not trying to comfort you, “That's okay, do better next time.” No, it just says, “Wrong. Guilty.” It's merciless in the way that it enforces the truth.

And you know, the law has always been likened to a mirror. If you look in a mirror in the morning and you see dirt on your face, what do you do? Well normal people clean their face, they just use the mirror for the purpose. But you know what abnormal people do? Dirt on my face? Shatter the mirror. That stupid mirror. How dare it show dirt on my face! Or some other people might even take the mirror off the wall and try to rub themselves clean with the mirror. Is that what the mirror is used for? The mirror just reflects what's true of you.

It'd be like going to a doctor's office, and they put a thermometer under your tongue, and it comes back with a high fever, and you take that thing and just chunk it against the wall. Is it the thermometer's fault that you have a high fever, or does it merely reflect what's true of you?

And see, that's the purpose of the law. The law was designed to give us the knowledge of sin. But the law is not something that we now take off the wall and clean ourselves up with, and that's how many people approach salvation. And as ridiculous as that sounds, there are thousands, millions, possibly billions of people that are doing just that today. This very morning in churches all over the world, they're taking the law, they're taking the mirror and they say, “Yeah, I've got some dirt on there. Let me clean it off.” In fact, if you did that with the mirror, what would it do? It'd smear the dirt worse

and then it would ruin your mirror where you couldn't see anything clearly anymore. And so you see, the law was not designed to be given to justify us, God's got a much better solution.

There are really only three responses to the truth that we've been studying the last few weeks. Response number one is indifference. "Who cares? This is ridiculous. Why are my parents making me come every Sunday, this is just crazy. Why am I even showing up at this place? I don't even like this message, I'm gonna keep doing what I'm already doing. I don't care." Indifference, that's one possible response.

One possible response is pride. "Yeah, some people might need some help, but not me. I'm a pretty good person. Yeah, I know what Paul's saying, but he's talking about them over there." And so there's pride. And many times, what's so sad and ironic, is most people that fall into that category are not even confident in the good works that they've done. They've got this confidence in the future that they're gonna really start getting it into gear and doing the good works that they know they should be doing. And that's where their confidence is: they've got the mindset, "Well tomorrow I'll start that." You know, it's like starting a diet tomorrow, right? After I wolf down this pizza or whatever.

And so many people have this indifferent response, many people have this proud response, and my hope is that each one in this room has a response of humility that says, "I'm in big trouble. If this is true, if what the Bible teaches here is true, I'm sunk. I'm dead in the water. I've got no chance of getting to heaven." And the question should be: does God have a way to provide the righteousness that I need? Does God have a plan? Would He do that for me? Am I too bad, am I too far gone, or would God actually care enough to do something for me?

Well let me encourage you friends, in verse 21, see that word "but"? That's God's comment on this whole situation. It is hopeless, *but* God's got a plan. *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."*

If you are one of those people here today that knows that you don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven, verses 21 and 22 are your lifeline. You can put your faith in the Savior, and guess what the Savior does? He saves you. You get His righteousness credited to you, the righteousness you couldn't earn or deserve on your own. God says you become the righteousness of Him in Christ Jesus simply when you put your faith in Him.





# CHAPTER 12

## But Now...

### Romans 3:21-25

Let's go ahead and turn to Romans chapter 3. We've had a lot of bad news up to this point. But what's really sweet is when we get to verse 21, we've got this phrase, "but now." That's a big deal right there. That "but now", that contrast is going to be a huge deal for us.

But before we get in, to kind of salivate and give us an appetite for what we're about to read, I want to put up a quote from a commentator that I read this week that I really enjoyed, and he said this: "*this section,*" (the one we're about to study) "*is the very heart of the book of Romans. For this reason, all Christians ought to memorize verses 21-26. If someone should ask me, 'If you could have just six verses out of the Bible and all the rest be taken away, which would you take?', I would select these six verses. All of God's gospel good news is there, and in a way found nowhere else in the Word of God.*" And that's written by a guy named Alva McClain.

I tend to agree with him. As a Bible teacher, when you get to a passage like this, the temptation is just to open it, read it, and go home. Don't mess it up. It's kind of like a waiter. Their one job in a restaurant is to get the food from the kitchen to the table without spilling it. And I feel that way this morning as we embark on this passage. And so my goal is not to spill the food. Because it's all right here, packed in here, and it's all keyed off of this little phrase here, "but now."

As we've been looking in the book of Romans, Paul has completely shown up mankind, but now God is gonna show out. And that's what he's been doing, he's been setting up this contrast that nobody's good, no, not one. In fact, look at chapter 3 verse 9 he says, "*What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written, 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there's none who understands.'*"

None, none, none, all-encompassing, nobody's good enough. That's the conclusion of the first three chapters of the book of Romans. "*But now...*" see, the bad news is that you can't get there on your own. The book of Romans (as we've stated before), is that God requires righteousness to get to heaven. We've been looking in the first three chapters that states nobody's got that righteousness, and now we're gonna find that a righteous God who demands righteousness is also a God who provides righteousness.

That's the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and starting in Romans 3:21, Paul is going to complete his thought that he started all the way back in 1:16. He says, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*" And then notice this next phrase in verse 17, "*For in it,*" - in what? In the gospel. In this good news concerning Jesus Christ. "*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed,*"

And so Paul has just finished building his case that nobody's got the righteousness that they need, not the immoral sinner, not the moral sinner, not the religious sinner. It's not by coming to church that you get the righteousness of God. It's not by doing good works that you get the righteousness of God. In fact, we noticed back in Isaiah 64:6 that all our righteousnesses are like what? Filthy rags. And it gets even worse, those are menstrual rags in the Hebrew. This is dirty. So, God's not collecting dirty laundry.

You know, you've seen those signs, "Your mom doesn't live here, clean up after yourself." Or "Your mom doesn't live here, do your own laundry." That reminds me of a joke that Carrie told me one day. Somebody posted on Facebook, "You know, I wonder what we're gonna have for dinner tonight,

I wonder who's gonna do this laundry, I wonder who's gonna do this.” And then the lady said, “Oh yeah, then I remembered, I'm the mom.” And you know, God isn't collecting dirty laundry. You and I are not going to impress God by how hard we've tried to keep His law, how many good works we've tried to do, how many times we darken the door of a local church, how much money we gave to a church ministry or any of those things. God has a wholly different way of taking sinful man and making them righteous, and that's what we're gonna look at today.

And so he says, “*But now,*” and we're going to see that in verse 21, let's read it. He says, “*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*” and so we're gonna see a couple of descriptions here about God's righteousness. How does God make man righteous? It's completely different than what man thinks. Man thinks, “Well yeah, I broke the law, but I'm gonna really try hard going forward to stop doing those things. I'm gonna stop drinking, I'm gonna stop cussing, I'm gonna stop getting angry at my wife and kicking my dog, and I'm gonna start going to church.” And that's how man approaches it.

It's almost like a diet. Guess when they typically want to start it? Tomorrow, right? Don't start diets tomorrow, it doesn't work, you've got to start them right now. But that's how mankind typically views righteousness to get to heaven. “Well, I'll just work on it.” They've got this concept that if I do a little bit more good than bad, then God is forced to accept me. And we've already studied in the book of Romans that's not how it works. God doesn't judge on the curve like your favorite high school teacher used to do. He judges and His standard is utmost perfection.

And so God's righteousness is going to come apart from the law. In fact, this word “apart” is really a strong word. It means *absolutely apart from, absolutely away from*. God is not even touching the law as a requirement for you to get to heaven. You know why? Because you and I can't keep the law. Unless we boast and think that we can, just think about how many times you've told a lie in your life. That's just one of the Ten Commandments. How many times have you stolen? Everyone's like, “Oh yeah, when I was three years old, I stole a cookie.” No, you've stolen more than that. Because you steal time, you steal things from work, there's lots of things that we steal.

And you know, God says don't commit adultery. You say, “Oh, I'm safe on that.” But Jesus says that if you look at a woman with lust in your heart you've already committed adultery. Because we learned back in Romans chapter 2 that God is going to judge us not based on what we see or what we promote or what we put out there, but based on what? The secrets of our heart. What goes on in the dark? What goes on when nobody else is looking? And see that's the standard.

We also learn in James 2:10 that even if - and that's a big fat if - you kept the whole law in every single point and you stumble just one time, then you're guilty of that particular sin, right? Is that what James says? No, he says you're guilty of all. “So, you're saying I can keep the whole law, and if I lie one time, I'm just as guilty as a murderer in God's sight?” Yeah, that's what the Word of God says. That's what Paul has been building up to.

So, we need a righteousness apart from the law, because if we want to get to heaven based on our ability to keep the law, we are toast, literally and figuratively, we're toast. We're in big trouble. And so God's righteousness has nothing to do with mankind keeping the law.

In fact, look at verse 20. In chapter 3, he says, “*Therefore by the deeds of the law,*” some flesh will be justified? Or does your Bible say “*no flesh will be justified*”? See, this is all encompassing. There are no exceptions to this rule. “*No flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” And all the law did was function like a marriage, it showed us that we're sinners, it showed us we had a need, but just like if you have dirt on your face, you don't take the mirror off the wall and clean yourself up. The

law was not designed to clean yourself up, we need something apart from the law. We need God's righteousness, and praise God; it's apart from the law.

You don't want to be judged according to law. The law has no grace involved in it. It sees black and white, you are guilty or not guilty, and it's not a curved judgment. You don't want anything to do with the law as it relates to getting to heaven. So, praise God, His provision is apart from the law, and we need that.

Trying to keep the law is like jumping out of an airplane and instead of grabbing a parachute, you grab a bag of concrete. That's what trying to keep the law to get to heaven is like. It's gonna take you there a little bit quicker and just assure your arrival as somebody that's gonna be guilty before the judgment seat of God. So, it's apart from the law. Praise God that His righteousness is apart from the law.

And then we see that God's righteousness is revealed. Notice in verse 21, "*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed,*" We look at the verb tense in the Greek, and it has been revealed and it remains revealed. Have you ever seen a show where they say, "Okay we're about to show you something. Look at it really quick, because you're only gonna see it for two seconds." And they pull something back and then they shut it, and then they start asking you questions about that.

In fact, I heard that's one of the ways that they interview Secret Service agents. They'll show them a picture of a building with people walking around on the street, let them look at it, study it for a minute, shut it up, and say, "Okay did you see the family on the sidewalk, what was the mom wearing? What color shirt was she wearing? What color hair did the baby have in the stroller? No, not on the left side of the street, on the right side of the street." And they're testing their ability to comprehend. This is not how God revealed the gospel. What we see in the verb tense is that He revealed it, and it remains open. He pulled back the curtain, and He's leaving it open.

God is not trying to hide His method of righteousness from you and me. He is openly, conspicuously leaving it open so that every single one of us can know what it takes to get to heaven and know what His solution is to get to heaven. He's not trying to hide it from us. He's not trying to hide the acceptable way of getting to heaven or being made righteous from us.

It's not like the old middle school dances. He's not like the middle school girls that stand out in the corner, and they're leaving girls out of the conversation, hiding, laughing, and trying to keep it hidden. There's no secret handshake to get into heaven. It's not Fred Flintstone and the secret handshake at the Moose Lodge to get into heaven. It's nothing like that! God has revealed His method of righteousness. God wants everybody to know. We want to shout it from the rooftops, and whether or not people accept it or reject it, that's up to them, but God is not hiding it from anybody.

You know, everybody asks the question, "How could a loving God send anybody to hell?" They're asking the wrong question. "How can a just God let anybody into heaven?" That's the question that needs to be asked. See, we missed that point, but God is not trying to hide it. In fact, we know from 2 Peter 3:9 He wants *everyone* to be saved, He wants *everyone* to come to repentance, a change of mind, an understanding that they need the righteousness that only He can provide.

And you know what the problem is with moral people and religious people? They don't want God's righteousness. They want to get there on their own. That's the problem. And Paul said, "Don't do it that way. Don't approach righteousness that way, this is a serious issue, you don't have enough to get you there." And now we're hearing about what God is providing. And you know what, He wants everybody to know. He's not hiding it. This isn't a secret club, this isn't a secret handshake deal, He wants everybody to know how to get to heaven, what His righteousness is all about.

And then third, verse 21 we see that His righteousness - that last phrase - "*is being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.*" In other words, God's way of righteousness is not some new invention that Paul came up with. This is not going to be superseded by somebody that gets an additional revelation and says, "Oh no, God's not working that way. Now He's working this way." This was God's way from the beginning. This has been testified, witnessed to in the Old Testament, and by the way, present tense participle there, it's *presently* being testified from the Old Testament. That means that if all you had was an Old Testament in your hand, you could preach the gospel to people because it testifies. It testifies of God's method of righteousness. How does He take sinful mankind and declare them righteous? The Old Testament testified of it.

In fact, Paul says that God's righteousness as witnessed in the Old Testament can be obtained through the gospel. This is how you get it. 1 Corinthians 15 gives the clearest explanation of what the gospel is that we preach. If you want to turn there with me you can, 1 Corinthians 15 starting in verse 3. And we've looked at this before, but notice this repeated phrase starting in verse 3: "*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins,*" - and then notice this phrase - "*according to the Scriptures,*" what scriptures is he talking about there? He's talking about the Old Testament. See, this gospel that we preach has its basis in the Old Testament, it's found there. This isn't some new thing that Paul came up with.

Continuing on in verse 4, "*and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,*" we see that phrase again. So, was Christ's death prophesied about in the Old Testament? Yes. Was Christ's resurrection prophesied about in the Old Testament? Yes. And that's what Paul is saying. The Jews in this case with their religion had gone off and they thought, "Okay, how I'm made righteous is I'm circumcised, I'm a child of Abraham, and I keep the covenant. I'm in. I'm in." That was the mindset. They had missed the whole point. God's righteousness doesn't come through nationality, it doesn't come through ritual, it doesn't come through religious observance. None of those things is how you get God's righteousness, and the Old Testament has testified about this all along the way. And that's Paul's point here.

And so we get out of verse 21 and we move on to 22, and here it is. Here's the answer. How do you get God's righteousness? And you've got to say, "Well, if it's not according to law and He's revealed it, and it's been witnessed in the law and prophets, it's got to be a lot tougher than keeping the law, right? I mean God's standards have got to be higher than that. I know we're not perfect, but give me something to do, God! Just give me anything to do and I'll do it! Tell me to run around this church 50 times and do 50 pushups." I would probably have a heart attack at my age if I did that, but I would try to do it if that's what it took to get to heaven. Just give me something to do.

And you know what God's message is gonna be? Stop working. Stop trying. Stop making an effort to save yourself. And you say, "Oh that sounds like a backwards approach to religion." And you know what, it is. It's flipped upside down. Because if you take every other man-made religion in the world besides Christianity, their message is you've got to *do* something or *stop* doing something to get to heaven. Christianity takes that and says, "No. God has done it all."

See, we have a relationship with God, we've got a teaching that says everything that needs to be done for you to go to heaven has been done. Stop trying to do and trust in what God has already done. See, it's a totally different approach than what religion teaches across this land.

And so we see in verse 22, "*even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.*" We're made righteous with God on His terms. His terms are very simple: stop working, stop trying, stop making an effort, and trust in the very thing that I have approved, that I have accepted on your behalf, trust in the finished work of Christ. This is why the gospel is so important because the

gospel is that Jesus died for *you*. Jesus died in *your* place so that *you* wouldn't have to die. And then how do we know God accepted His death on your behalf? Anybody could say, "I'm gonna die for the world. I'm gonna die for you. I'll take your hit." Anybody could say that, how do we know God accepted His sacrifice for us?

Well, we also read that God raised Him from the dead. God put His stamp of approval on Jesus Christ, He will accept His death in your place, for your penalty. The question is, will *you* accept His death in your place for your penalty? That's really the question. And the Bible calls that faith, trust, rely, rest in Jesus Christ. Will you simply collapse in trust in the one the Bible calls the Savior? What do saviors do by definition? They save you. Jesus is called a savior, that means He can save you.

By the way, if the Bible calls Him a Savior, what's that also imply? You and I need saving. That's just the implication. If He's a savior, that means we need to be saved from something. And so the Bible simply implores us that Jesus paid it all, will you put your faith in Him? And the Bible says that when you do that, you come into God's righteousness. We'll talk about that in a little bit more detail here in a second.

But read verse 22 with me again: "*even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.*" The means by which we obtain God's righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ. That is a simple message that gets so mixed up and so confused in our day. Notice that it says *faith*, it doesn't say I'm going to give my heart to Christ. It doesn't say I'm going to give my life to Christ. It doesn't say I'm going to pray a prayer. It doesn't say I'm gonna walk an aisle. It doesn't say I'm gonna stand in the back of the church and do jumping jacks until I pass out. Because that's just as biblical as everything I just said before that.

Because did you give your heart or your life to Christ, or did He give His life for you? What's biblical? What's God gonna do with your dirty old heart and my dirty old heart anyway? He doesn't want that, and that's not even the message of the gospel! The gospel has nothing to do with you, it has everything to do with Jesus Christ.

On a day in history 2,000 years ago, when He went up the hill by Himself, bearing the sins of the world, died on the cross, was tortured, was buried, and rose again the third day, that's the gospel. You're not even in that equation. We're simply told to believe that, to trust that. So to walk an aisle, to pray a prayer, to give your heart, to give your life to Christ, ask Jesus in your heart, all of those things are not faith. Faith is *ceasing* from activity and trusting in the work of another. Faith is simply resting in what Jesus Christ has done for you versus trying to do more yourself.

That's why God's way, coming to Him through righteousness, is so confusing for many people because they say, "Well surely there ain't no such thing as a free lunch. Surely, I've got to do something for this. Surely, He wants me to run around the church, put tables away, put money in the offering plate. Surely, He wants me to do this and stop doing this." Surely, surely, surely. And God is trying to convince us through the gospel that all has been done. Will you simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? It's a simple message, a very simple message. And although it's free to us, it costs God everything. It cost Him the life of His dear Son.

And we see this phrase in this verse, "*that the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ comes to all.*" That means it's available to anybody. That means you and I cannot out-sin the grace of God. There's only one chief sinner, and he was the Apostle Paul, and he died, so everyone else is at least a vice chief or under him, right? He called himself the chief sinner. But there's no sinner too bad, in fact if you are a sinner this morning, you qualify for salvation. You may realize it more than the person that's not such a "bad sinner" by our cultural standards, because they're going to be trusting in themselves, often they think they're good enough.

But you know this is true of anybody. This is how a sinful Jew is saved, it's how a sinful Gentile is saved, it's how everybody is saved. Nobody else gets in any other way. And if you want to say that's intolerant, if you want to say that's exclusive, I agree with you, it is. But it's not my message. It's the message of the Bible. Jesus said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me."* That's just the message of the Bible. If you don't like it, okay. Don't get mad at me. I'm not creating this, I'm not making it up, it's found in the Bible.

And as you understand Paul's argument in the book of Romans, you understand why He's the only way. You understand why that's the only solution. It'd be like in Noah's day saying, "Yeah, I think the way I'm gonna survive this flood is I'm just gonna climb to the top of the tree and hang on." That wasn't gonna work. The only way of salvation in Noah's day was to get into the ark, have God shut the door behind him. In a similar way today, the only way to be saved is to come to God His way, through His provision, and believe on what He's done through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a very simple message.

You can turn in your Bibles if you want to 2 Corinthians 5:21, again, talking about the righteousness of God. You know what's so interesting about this verse, let's read it, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* Whereas Romans tells us the means to gain the righteousness of God is through faith in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:21 kind of explains how He does it. It's a really interesting exchange, but 2 Corinthians 5:21 is the great exchange. It's God taking our sin and putting it on Jesus Christ to bear the penalty for that sin for us.

We're given the righteousness of Christ - notice how the text words it there - we become the righteousness of God in Him. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, God places you in Him. That's the message of righteousness. That's why you can take this to the bank. This is why if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you can know right where you're seated today, a hundred percent sure that you're going to heaven. Why? Because God has placed you in Christ, and when He sees you, He now sees His son.

Is there anything wrong with Jesus Christ? You think there's anything at fault with Jesus Christ? God the Father says, "I wish He was a little bit more like this..." No way! Are you kidding me? And so the moment you put your faith in Christ, God places you in Christ and your righteousness is such that it's the same as Jesus Christ. He *is* your righteousness. He doesn't just give you His righteousness, He *is* your righteousness. You're completely identified with Him, never to be changed again. That's a permanent position that you and I have the moment we put our faith in Christ.

Isn't God wonderful? Isn't God incredible the way that He put this together? Nothing confused Him, He didn't have to sort this out, He didn't have to go through and get His partnership up there and go through contingencies, "And we'll make sure we've got this covered, and this." No, He's got it all figured out. He knows how to get you there; He knows how to save you. And so this is the method by which we obtain righteousness, the righteousness of God.

The other thing we're going to see is when we get into chapter 4, He's never changed His method by making man righteous. So many people when they view the Old Testament say, "Well yeah, they got saved by keeping the law. We get saved by grace." "Oh yeah, that was the Old Covenant, this is a new covenant." No. Nobody got saved by the law, nobody got saved by good works, not even in the Old Testament. Everybody that's ever been saved has gotten saved the same way we get saved today: by grace, through faith in the coming Deliverer. That's the deal.

We'll look at this a little bit more closely as we get into chapter 4, but Paul is gonna give two Old Testament examples to prove that God has been saving men this way for all time. This isn't a plan B for God. "Plan A didn't work out; I better figure out how to right this ship." No! He had it all figured out from the beginning, and so we'll see that in chapter 4.

Now why is this important? Here's why it's important: all of us have sinned. Nobody has another way to heaven. Nobody has another opportunity. We all need God's righteousness. We see this verse in verse 23, we use it a lot, but just to point out, *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Not just your neighbor that blows leaves on your lawn, the guy that you wish would move or something. Not just him, he's not the only one that deserves hell. We've got to understand that we all deserve hell. But praise God, He wants to give you a heaven you don't deserve and save you from a hell that you do deserve. And so many of us don't think we deserve hell, but when we look in light of the scripture and what it teaches, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

When we look at this whole concept of "have sinned", it's what they call an indicative mood in the Greek, just the mood of fact. In other words, nobody could debate this point. This is like the law. Nobody could say, "Oh yeah, I've never sinned." Now people may try. Have you ever talked to someone like that? I've talked to people who say, "I *know* I've never sinned!" And I'm like, "Yeah, you just lied to me." But the point is when we say "sin", they've missed the mark. It'd be like an archer missing the mark. Not only missing the bull's eye, missing the mark. That describes all of mankind, that we have sinned.

For the first time, my family owns a pool. And those that have owned pools, that's a blessing and a curse, you know exactly what I'm talking about. This time of year, what I have found interesting and didn't know before, is that if you don't get out and scoop the leaves up quick enough off the top of the water, they go down to the bottom of the water, and they're a little bit harder to get down there. And that's a struggle, and I literally can only go out about thirty minutes at a time, because I get so frustrated because they're floating away from me, and dirt particles, but I'm trying to do the best I can.

But in the terms of God saving people, He had to go down and scoop us all off the bottom. Don't kid yourself to think, "Oh yeah, well He saved me, but I was one of those leaves on the top." No. He was going to the deep end for all of us, if you will. Because this says all have sinned and we've all fallen short of the glory of God. And you know not only have they sinned, not only have *we* sinned past tense, but this "falling short" is a present tense. We're presently falling short of the glory of God.

Because "*fall short*" just means *to be last or behind, inferior, or to lack*, I get this image in my mind: if we all went down to the tip of Florida, and all took a running jump to jump to the Bahamas, we could do that all day. And I might be able to jump farther than you, and somebody else might be able to jump farther than me, but how many of us would reach the Bahamas in one jump? 0. That's the point of this verse right here. You could swim back to the shore and say, "I was close, I'm gonna go do it again." And you could just keep doing it, but you're gonna continually fall short.

God does not want you to try to get to heaven based on your own merits. He is trying to convince us, persuade us that you cannot get there. But it's not to judge you and laugh at you, "Ha ha, you can't make it!" It's to say, "Now that you recognize you can't make it, let Me give you the solution. Can I provide you with the solution? I want you to spend eternity for Me, but you've got to come to Me My way. Let Me take care of your sin problem, let Me take care of your righteousness problem. I did that through the gospel. I did that through My Son, all you have to do is believe in Him. Will you trust Jesus Christ alone to be saved?" And that's God's message to us in the gospel.

And so verse 24, it brings up a good question. For those who are thinking people, you've probably thought this thought before, or maybe as I point it out, you'll say, "Yeah, that's a good point," but here's the question: how can a righteous God save an unrighteous man and still remain righteous in doing so? Have you ever thought about that? In other words, how can God - who the Bible says He's *just*, that means He's a perfect judge - how can God execute justice on lawbreakers and still let you and

I go free? Have you ever thought about that? That's a conundrum. I mean, it would be for us, it wasn't for God. God figured it out.

As parents I know you relate to this. You've told your child, "If you do that one more time, then..." And you go overboard with the consequence, like, "You'll never leave this house again!" Like you're gonna follow through on that one. You know, parents do stuff like that all the time, don't we? "You won't eat ice cream until you're 18 years old!" Or whatever. We come out with these outrageous punishments that we have no intention of following through, and you know, God doesn't do that. When God says the penalty for sin is death, guess what the penalty for sin is gonna be? Yeah, that's really simple. He doesn't mince words, He doesn't equivocate, He doesn't go back and forth on what He decides.

And see, death not only talks about or explains why we die physically, but it also explains a separation, an eternal separation, an eternal death that the Bible refers to as a second death in the lake of fire. So, we're talking about serious business, and each one of us that has ever broken God's law, that's the sentence that we deserve. And because God is just, He has to give us that sentence.

You know, imagine going into a courtroom, being caught red-handed for a crime, and then just asking the judge, "You know, judge, I've been caught red-handed, I know I'm guilty, but please forgive me, I'll never do it again. Let me go." How's that gonna work out for you? Has anyone ever tried that defense? I tried it as a kid. Not to bring up my speeding issues again, but I tried it with a speeding ticket. "Hey judge, I'll never do that again." And it didn't work for me. But it's not gonna work with the Judge of the universe either.

So how does God declare somebody righteous? How does He legally and fairly aboveboard declare somebody righteous? Is He a type of judge that's got a back door in heaven and if you pay enough into the church, He's gonna let you slide in and just commit a miscarriage of justice? In fact, how would you feel if a lying, thieving, adulterous murderer was caught red-handed in the act, and some human judge just let them off because they paid enough money, knew the right people, said they would never do it again, they were sorry.... How would you feel about that judge? Especially if that person had perpetrated those acts against somebody you loved? We'd be calling for that person's head, wouldn't we? We'd be lying in wait probably to bum-rush that guy with some friends. That's exactly how we would approach that.

So, God is gonna remain just, but God is also perfectly loving. So how does He put all this together? Look at verse 24. Verse 24 says, "*being justified freely by His grace,*" - now notice this next word - "*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*". It's important to point out that the word "*justify*" here is in the passive voice. And you know why that's important? Because on Judgment Day either God is going to declare you righteous, or you've got no hope. Nobody is going to be able to talk their way into heaven or prove themselves to God, declaring themselves righteous.

In fact, when we go back to Romans 3:19, notice what it says: "*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be,*" - what? - "*stopped,*" closed, shut up. Nobody is going to be able to declare themselves righteous on that day. We need the God of the universe to declare you righteous. And guess what? If God declares you righteous, what can anybody else say about that? I mean, they might say, "How could God save a sinner like John Clark?" I've got the same question too. How can He? But all I know is what He tells me right here: that if I put my faith in Christ, He declares me righteous. Wow! Do I deserve it? No.

We're gonna look at these three descriptions here, but how does Paul describe this concept of justification? Well, the first thing he describes is justification as a free gift. That word "freely" there means *gift* in the Greek. It's a gift. It's something given undeservedly without cause. Has anybody ever



had to pay for their own Christmas gift when you were a child? Did mom and dad - along with your Christmas gift - also slide an invoice across the table to you? No. Why not? It's a gift! Gifts are free to the person receiving the gift. Who does it cost? The person giving the gift. See the gift is free to the person receiving the gift.

So, this means that to be declared righteous by God, it's a free gift when somebody simply believes on Jesus Christ. Now who paid for it? Jesus Christ. We're gonna see He did that through His redemption. But you get it for free. It's a free gift, you don't have to do anything to earn it, you don't have to do anything to deserve it. And we see the second description backs that up as well.

Verse 24, we're justified freely, but we're justified freely by His grace. Again, grace is similar to the word "freely", it means that you get it, you don't deserve it, God is determining to give you something that you don't merit, you don't earn. He's not gonna slide an invoice across the table and say, "By the way, if you want to keep it, you gotta start doing this."

You know, imagine if that happened at Christmas - your mom and dad, they give you a bicycle as a little kid, and you start riding around the neighborhood for a couple days, you're having a blast on that thing. I remember those days riding bicycles around the neighborhood, it was fun! Ramping it up, trying to hit bumps so you can get some airtime.

But imagine two days in if your folks said, "Well, here's your payment plan." My payment plan? For a gift? And yet many people, that's exactly how they preach the gospel. It's free but you've got to do something. But it's still free. Okay you know, I'm not the most educated man in the world, but that's a contradiction. I don't care if you're speaking out of both sides of your mouth and it makes sense to you, free means free.

Free means you don't have to do anything to get it, free means you don't have to do anything to maintain it. Free means free. This isn't the way we set it up, this is the way God set it up. You know why? Because if you had to do anything to earn it or deserve it, you would fail, and nobody would go to heaven. He had to do it this way. That's the beauty of the gospel.

No, nobody deserves it. Yes, your neighbor who's horrible doesn't deserve it, but neither do you! You are a leaf on the bottom of the pool just like your awful neighbor, just like your awful coworker, just like your awful boss, just like anybody else who's awful in your life. And I know that list and number seem to grow by the day in our society, but everybody doesn't deserve it, nor can they earn it, nor can they maintain it. I don't care how hard they try! It's a free gift, it's given by God's grace, you will never on your best day deserve this free gift.

Now here's where it really gets interesting, and we'll get into it a little bit, but we're justified freely by His grace verse 24 tells us, and it's through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus. And so we see that justification, our declaration of righteousness in God's eyes, is through a paid price. God's demands for righteousness were met in His Son.

Take us back to the courtroom now, and as you're standing there guilty before a judge, he pronounces the sentence guilty, the penalty is death. Imagine if somebody came in through the courtroom, stood in front of you and took your place, and paid the penalty. See, the penalty still has to be executed, but God has figured out a way - and I hate to even say that, because it wasn't like it confused Him, He knew what He was gonna do. But what God has done is He has taken Jesus Christ - His perfect son, who didn't have to die for any of His sins because He was perfect - to die for the sins of the world, and Jesus stepped in front and said, "I will take His penalty for Him." And as a result, God can let you go free. God can let you off if you will.

But it's not because He just forgot about your sin, no, there was a penalty paid, you just don't have to pay it. Jesus paid it for you, and that's what we see in this word "redemption." Jesus paid the

redemption price, and the reason that God can justify the one who believes on Jesus is because He paid this price.

This word “redemption” is an interesting word in the culture, it means *to let go free for a ransom*. It was used in the slave markets of the day where they would hoist these slaves up like cattle, and like you would expect, if you were looking for a strong worker in the field, you'd want to see their muscular structure, you'd want to see if they looked healthy before you put in a bid to buy them. And most people that bought slaves, they bought them for a purpose. You know what it was? Buy them, take them home, work them to death, and then go buy another one. That was the deal. Work them to death in the slowest way possible so I can get the most out of my money. That was really what they wanted to do.

But occasionally, an owner would “redeem” a slave. And the way it worked, it was very similar to how the process started with any kind of purchase of a slave, but they would actually take a slave off the slave block, pay the price for them, bring them out of the slave market, undo their chains and say, “You are now free to go.” *That* is redemption, that is the word that we're looking at here.

In fact, Paul throws a preposition on the front of this word, really to give it a little bit more emphasis, meaning *to ransom away from*, with the idea of never going back, and this is what Jesus did for you. This is what Jesus did for me. He redeemed us out of the slave market of sin and set us free. Set us free from the penalty that was really due to us. And the reason we needed redemption is because we were under this death penalty. There was a payment that was due, the question was, “Are you gonna pay it, or are you gonna let somebody else pay it for you?”

God has devised a way that somebody else can pay that for you. His name is Jesus Christ, He paid it with His own blood by dying on the cross and rising again. And so the question becomes, “Are you gonna accept God's payment method, or do you want to pay it for yourself?” And don't treat this like a lunch date. “Well, I'm not gonna let Him pay for me, I'm gonna pay my own way.” Because if you pay your own way, you're not gonna have enough. You're gonna be short. Let God pay for it! Let God's solution be your solution. Let God's idea be something that you tenaciously believe in, don't come to God in your own way, that's not the way to be saved.

And so he goes on to say in verse 25 that God is satisfied with Jesus's work on the cross. Verse 25: “*whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,*” Let me introduce this verse today and we'll pick up here in the next section, and Lord willing we'll finish the chapter.

“*whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness,*” and we'll get into a lot more detail next week, but let me just tell you basically what this verse is saying. Propitiation, they say it's a five-dollar word, this is probably like a twenty-dollar word, this is big. This is a big word, and if you've never seen that word before, it might not really ring a bell. But what it means is *satisfaction*, and it's probably the best way to describe it. In other words, God set forth Jesus Christ as a satisfaction for payment. You could use it as a verb: God was propitiated, He was satisfied with Jesus's work on the cross.

And so what we're gonna see is that God set forth, this word “set forth” has this idea that He put Him in full public view. He wasn't trying to hide how He was gonna deal with the sin problem, He put Him in full public view, He put Him up on a hill, He put Him up on a cross for every man to see. He crucified Him in full public view. Why did He do that?

We're gonna get to the end of this verse, “*to demonstrate His righteousness,*” and that word “demonstrate”, I want you to keep this in your mind. And God was pointing that day on Mount Golgotha, Mount Calvary to His Son. God was demonstrating His righteousness that day when Jesus died for your sins and rose again, and God is pointing His finger continually saying, “Look there, look

at that man. That's where I dealt with sin, that's where I can provide righteousness, right *there*." And that's what we're gonna look at in the next section as we continue our study.



# CHAPTER 13

## What Is God Pointing At?

### Romans 3:25-31

Turn with me to the book of Romans, chapter 3. We kind of left off in mid-thought last week, and I'm sorry about that. I didn't quite get to where I wanted to get, to kind of end in a nice clean way, but the great thing about that is it gives me a chance to review. It gives us a chance to kind of build up and see where we were going and where we're gonna go today.

Let's just kind of get our big-picture hats on for a second and look at the book of Romans. God requires righteousness of each one of us to go to heaven. And it's not a grade on the curve type of righteousness, it's a perfect righteousness, it's a righteousness that's equal to His. And Paul is systematically going through the first three chapters to show us and to prove to us that nobody, no, not one, not even you, not even me, we don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven. We've got a big problem. That's what Paul is saying.

In fact, if you look at how he closes the section in chapter 3 verse 20, it says that no one will be justified in His sight based upon the law or based upon doing good, based upon getting religious, based upon trying to put it all together and earn our way there, nobody can do it. That was Paul's conclusion. Here's the beautiful thing about what God did though: God provides righteousness in the gospel. God provides righteousness where He did all the work, and you simply have to believe that His work was enough. You have to simply believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again, and if you believe that today, what we've been looking at is that God Himself will declare you righteous. That's what we need, and that's what the book of Romans describes, and this is what God provides through the gospel. And so we're gonna see, and what we looked at in the last section, and the title of the message today is, "What is God Pointing At?"

I used to have friends growing up, and there was this big thing at the lunch table where you'd be talking to them, and they'd start touching their face. And what do you think you naturally do? You're eating at a table, and someone keeps touching their face, you think they're telling you something's on your face, so you start kind of wiping it off, and then they start laughing because you didn't have anything on your face.

And so when people point at things, you naturally look. You know if I said, "Look right back over there!" most people would look. And so today, we're gonna look at "What is God pointing at?" What does God point His finger at? And this passage is going to tell us.

Look in verse 25, it says this toward the middle of the verse, "*to demonstrate His righteousness.*" Verse 26, the beginning of the verse, "*to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness,*" that word simply means that God's pointing His finger. How is God pointing His finger? What is He trying to demonstrate? How is He trying to demonstrate His righteousness? What's He pointing at this morning? We're going to look at what God is pointing at, and we're going to see that God took care of man's sin penalty on the cross of Jesus Christ.

And not only did He take care of it, but He took care of it in full public view, because God has His high standard, and He's not like some judge that's gonna go into the back room and deal in a back alley and let people pay their way, or merit their way, or earn their way to heaven. He's not gonna just say, "Well, I like you, so I'm gonna let you in, but I don't like you, so I'm not gonna let you in."

God takes care of it in full public display, He executes His justice, and yet He's devised the way that He can still accept sinful man to heaven. We said last week the wrong question to ask is, "How can a loving God send people to hell?" The right question to ask is, "How can a just God let sinful people in heaven?" That's the right question to ask. And see, our passage today is gonna answer that. Because in full public display God put forth and showed forth His justice, and yet He also showed forth His love, and He did it all on the same day in human history two thousand years ago. He did it on a hill called Golgotha, when the son of God, Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God was nailed to a tree, and on that day, He paid the penalty for your sins, and my sins, and the sins of the entire world. And see, God put it out there for all of us to see, and God is pointing His finger at it.

Do not trust in your own righteousness, trust in God's method of making you righteous, trust in God's method of declaring you righteous, because on that day when you appear before the Judge of the universe, you want Him saying you're righteous. You want Him making that declaration on your behalf. You don't want to be defending yourself. You don't want to be saying, "Oh yeah, but I am righteous because I helped an older lady across the street," Or "I bought groceries for somebody," Or "I sat in church every Sunday!" Going to church ain't gonna save you. But God, the God of the universe has devised the way that He can declare each one of us righteous.

And so as we look at the cross and this public aspect of what He did and what He accomplished on the cross, the cross shows us that sin does not go unpunished. You cannot go to heaven just by saying, "Oh God, I'm sorry, please forgive me." That's not how it works. Try that in a court of law.

I had an opportunity years ago - this is before I was in full-time ministry - to go speak at a homeless shelter in downtown San Antonio. And I loved it! Anytime at that stage in my life I got to speak, and someone actually cut me loose and gave me a microphone, I was pumped! Because I didn't get that many chances.

So, I go down there, I'm working with the translator, because you've got half the crowd that only speaks Spanish, I speak English, so I'm kind of getting my flow with the translator and I'm just giving the bad news. You know, the first three chapters of Romans: no one's righteous, no, not one, and people are starting to get uncomfortable in their seats. I mean, I can visibly see this, I don't know if they were getting uncomfortable because they had to listen to me or that the message was hitting them, but I think for one guy the message was hitting him.

There's about 50 or 60 people in the room and this one guy raises his hand in the middle of my speech. Now, those of you that do any public speaking, that's a gamble right there. You don't know what's gonna come out, you don't know what can of worms you're gonna go open. So, I wasn't a very experienced public speaker, and even if I was, I tried to ignore the guy for a little bit, because I just figured eventually he's gonna put his hand down. But no, he's like Stretch Armstrong, I mean he just kept going up and up and up, and he just kept turning in his seat.

So finally, I was like, "I can't ignore this guy anymore," and it made it even more awkward because I'm waiting for the guy to translate in Spanish, so I'm sitting there looking this guy in the eye. So finally, I get to a point where I'm like, "Ok, I've got to call on this guy because he wants to say something." I said, "Yes sir, what would you like to say here, do you have a question?" And he said, "Yeah, I just don't like what you're talking about, because all we have to do to go to heaven is ask for forgiveness." And that was his concept.

And you know, I've heard that many times over the years, do you know that's not even a biblical concept? And I'll tell you why, because when you ask God for something, or you ask anybody for something, the implication is they can say yes or no. That's the implication of asking a question. Whereas God says in the gospel, "I've provided a way for you to have forgiveness, will you believe in what I've

already done?” And so asking for forgiveness is actually a subtle form of unbelief. It's a subtle form of saying, “I don't know if He's made provision for my sins or not.” And so this whole concept of asking forgiveness, it doesn't even work in a court of law.

And this is what I explained to the young man that day: imagine you get caught red-handed for a crime. You appear in a courtroom, and the judge is getting ready to sentence you or pronounce the verdict, and you say, “Judge, please forgive me, I'll never do it again. I'll be better going forward.” What's the judge gonna say? “You broke a law. And the law dictates that there's a consequence, and so the penalty must be enacted.” Even in our court system you can't say, “Oh forgive me, I'll never do that again,” let alone the perfect Judge of the universe.

And this is why the gospel is so important because the penalty for sin is death. There has to be a death. And so God, in order to give us confidence, in order to give us security and assurance, He publicly crucified His Son so that you and I will always know that God executed justice. There was a death paid for your sins and my sins. You don't ever have to wonder about it, because God didn't pull it off in some back-alley somewhere. He didn't pull it off at Uncle Joe's pizzeria in Chicago, back in the back room that's dark. He did it in full public display, He put Him up on a hill, He put Him up on a cross, and He said that's where I dealt with it. See, God in His justice showed us all. He's pointing at what Jesus Christ did, He put it in full public view.

And so let's get into the text, verse 25. We're gonna look at these first couple phrases, “*whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,*” And so verse 25, we see this big word “propitiation”, and we kind of talked a little bit about that last week, but this word “propitiation” basically means that *God is satisfied as it relates to sins penalty.*

And as I was just detailing, God put Jesus Christ before us in full public view. He set it up so we could all see it. In fact, this word “set forth” or “demonstrate” has the idea of proving something out, He's pointing with an effort to prove it out to you and to me that He took care of your sin. You never have to worry that God's gonna come back for more. You never have to worry that God got the cost wrong and said, “Oh I need another 51 cents. Sorry, I forgot to hit the tax button.” Or something like that.

God took care of the full cost, Jesus paid the full price on that day 2000 years ago, and He put it out in full public view. And this word “propitiation”, although a long word, is very important because it means that God was satisfied in what Jesus did for you. See, God's satisfied, the question becomes on a personal level are *you* satisfied? Or do you think it's Jesus plus something? Do you think, “Well I better do something just in case Jesus didn't do it all in case God slaps me an invoice when I appear at the judgment seat, “You're 51 cents short. You should have been doing good works, you should have been doing this.” Do we believe that, or are we gonna believe what the Word of God says when God says He's satisfied with what Jesus did?

Are you satisfied? That's the question. That's the million-dollar question, because that's the only thing that can send somebody to a hell that they deserve and keep them out of a heaven that they don't deserve. What will you do with Jesus Christ? Will you believe in the provision God has made? And that's the message of the gospel.

And you know as we look at this word “propitiation”, it's an interesting word. I've got to delve a little bit into the Old Testament here, because this word “propitiation” was actually used of the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat that sat on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament. And it was this mercy seat - which is represented by two angels overlapping, you can read about that in the

Old Testament - that represented a covering of the Ark. And you know what's interesting about that, is it covered a couple of things in the Ark.

As you read, you'll get this in Hebrews 9, you'll also read about this in various passages in the Old Testament, but one of the things that was in the Ark was a pot of manna. Remember manna? They were supposed to pick it once, just the amount for the day, and then on the sixth day so that they weren't picking manna on the Sabbath, they could pick two. But what would happen if they picked more than one day's worth on one of the days they weren't supposed to pick it? It would rot, it would mold, it would stink. So, God had this incredible way.

Well, they started to do what? They just loved manna, right? It was just *Whatchamacallit* bars all the time, they just said, "Yeah, candy bars, let's eat this for 40 years!" No, they started to complain. They started to complain early. And so God would give them meat until the text tells us it was coming out of their nostrils. So, this pot of manna sitting in the Ark of the Covenant represented their failure. Their failure to trust God, their rejection of God and His promises.

You know what else was in the Ark of the Covenant? It was a wooden stick that had flowers growing out of it. Aaron's rod that budded. Do you remember what the story was behind that? In Korah's rebellion they had challenged, "Okay Moses and Aaron, why do you guys get to be the top dogs? We're Levites too, we can do what you do. Why are you guys' God's spokesperson? Why can't we be it?" Well God didn't take too kindly to them challenging His authority. And so after He killed Korah and His family and also swallowed up another few thousand of the Israelites who had followed them in the rebellion, He told each tribe to get a rod and to pull it out, and Aaron's rod was what budded. And so that went into the Ark of the Covenant. Again, another rejection of God's Authority, another failure on the part of man.

And you know what the third thing was in the Ark of the Covenant, The Old Testament tells us? The Ten Commandments. The two tablets of the Ten Commandments, which by the way, was the 11th through the 20th technically. The first ten were broken, remember that? No, it was still the 10th. Sorry, bad joke. So, the first 10 were broken because of the idolatry, when Moses came down, he slammed those on the ground and shattered them.

So, the Ten Commandments were also put into the Ark. Now why is that significant? Because what does the law tell us? Does the law tell us how good we are, or how bad we are? Does the law make us feel good, is it a YMCA feeling, everybody gets a trophy? Or is it you lie, you're a lawbreaker. You coveted, you're a lawbreaker. You stole, you're a lawbreaker. And James 2:10 tells us if you keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, it's like you've broken them all. And so all of these things that sat in this Ark of the Covenant were all designed to remind Israel of their failures. Not their righteousness, but their failures.

Now back to the mercy seat. One day a year, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies, and after he took care of his own sin through his sacrifice, he came in and offered a sacrifice for the people, sprinkled blood on top of the mercy seat, and what that represented now is that as God looked down on the sins of His people, He no longer saw their failures, He saw His provision for their failures, and they found mercy that day.

Not only that, but it also gets better. The goat that was killed, his blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. They had a second goat that stayed alive, and after they sacrificed for the sins of the people, the high priest would go out and lay his hands on the second goat and symbolically transfer the sins of the people on to the head of the goat, and then they would send him out into the wilderness never to come back again, illustrating this concept of having their sins taken away.



And you know what the two goats of Leviticus 16 and what this mercy seat was pointing to all the time was exactly what Jesus Christ did. See, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, God no longer sees your failures, your penalty, the things that you deserve, your lack of righteousness, He now sees Jesus Christ.

And whereas in the Old Testament we needed two goats to illustrate this, Jesus Christ really represents both goats. He represents the one who was sacrificed, whose blood was shed for you, and He also represents the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He represents that second goat too. And so as Paul is discussing this idea, this concept of propitiation, he is talking about Jesus being our mercy seat, the one who shields us from God's wrath.

Now how does He shield us from God's wrath? Because He's the one who stepped in and paid the penalty for you, and He did this in full public display. This is how God took care of His justice and also showed His love at the same time. This is how it all happens; it comes together in the gospel with these two things, and Jesus not only covered our sins as the mercy seat did, but Jesus Christ took away the sins of the world. Something that the blood of bulls and goats could never do, it can only cover, Jesus paid for them and took them away, and that is a hallelujah if I've ever heard of one.

And so we look at this concept of God demonstrating His righteousness. Look at verse 25 again, "*whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness,*" now again, why did God do this? Why did He demonstrate or put Him in full public view? He wanted to prove it to us. He wanted to show us, He wanted to convince us that He had taken care of this so that we would never have to worry about this again.

When you put your faith in Christ, you can be eternally secure, you can be eternally convinced that Christ paid for all your sins, past, present, and future. And so God is literally pointing to the death of Christ. This is His way of saying that Jesus and His death fulfilled His righteous demands of perfection, fulfilled His execution of justice, Jesus paid it all. Jesus' last words on the cross were, "It is finished," and that's exactly what He meant. It is finished, it is paid in full, I've paid the full penalty, and He did it in full public view. And that's really the essence here of what Paul is writing, is that God demonstrated this or pointed His finger toward Jesus Christ as a result of proving out His righteousness. His righteous demands were met.

Now we get into this next phrase in verse 25, "*because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,*" and so it begs the question, "Wait a minute, if that's how we get saved, how did the people in the Old Testament get saved before Jesus came? If that's when God demonstrated His righteousness, then that must mean that nobody before him could get saved." Is that what he's teaching? And so we see this concept of this forbearance. God in His forbearance had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

God saved on credit. Let's talk about what that means because it's important to understand. When he says "forbearance", it's a word that means *temporary long-suffering*. And so as it relates to the penalty for sin, you're gonna see that God in the Old Testament was long-suffering as it related to executing this penalty. You might say that He temporarily suspended the penalty that the Old Testament Saints deserved, because they weren't sinless either. They're very sinful, all of them, and that's why they all died. That's the proof that they sinned, death is the penalty for sin. But what God did is temporarily suspend His wrath on these Old Testament Saints. Why could He do that? Why *did* He do that? That seems potentially unjust. That seems potentially bad. And it gets worse, because he says, "He passed over," and the word means *to bypass or to wink at*.

You know, sometimes you do that when somebody's running late. The other day I was at the bank trying to go in, and they closed at 12:00, and I got there at 12:01. And the guy was there getting

ready to lock the door, and he winked at me, kind of let me in. He shouldn't have, if he was doing it according to law, but he winked at me and let me in.

So, you say, "Wait a minute. God passed over the sins, why did God temporarily suspend His judgment, why did God wink at? (Which is what the word means)" And this is why: because He knew that Jesus was gonna pay the full penalty for their sins as well. See, Old Testament Saints had their sins paid for the same way New Testament Saints had their sins paid for. It didn't happen before their lives, it happened after they had lived. And so God was looking forward to that day, and the way that He saved Old Testament Saints is the same way He saves you and I today. In fact, we're gonna see that proved out in chapter 4, that God's method of saving sinful man has always been by grace through faith, it's never changed, nobody has ever been saved by keeping the law. This is God's manner of righteousness.

This is how He takes sinful mankind and declares them righteous through the work of Jesus Christ. Now they didn't know Jesus's name, but they were looking forward for that promised Deliverer that was promised back in Genesis 3:15. They were looking forward to the One that would deliver them from sin. And all of the animal sacrifices, the elaborate temple and Tabernacle system of animal sacrifices, all pointed forward to the day when God would pay the entire debt for mankind. And so He was still just in passing over their sins, because He still executed justice on their sins, He just didn't do it immediately, that's what the end of verse 25 teaches us. These temporary animal sacrifices all pointed to the final sacrifice of Christ.

And so we get into verse 26, and again, we see God pointing His finger. Verse 26: *"to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."* Again, God passed over executing judgment on the sins previously committed at that time, and He was right in doing so that He could point His finger, He could demonstrate His righteousness on a day in history when Jesus died for the sins of the world.

Jesus paid the penalty that even the Old Testament Saints sins deserve. So, the cross is the biggest proof that sin does not go unpunished. Sin has to be punished. God is a just judge, punishes sin, and He did it on this day in human history 2,000 years ago when He sent His son who did not deserve to be punished for His sins, since He did not have any of His own.

What do the animals represent all throughout the Old Testament? The innocent dying in place of the guilty. Jesus was innocent, He had no sin of His own that He had to pay for. He was the just One who died for the unjust ones. He was the righteous One who died for the unrighteous ones - that's you, that's me. Jesus Himself paid the penalty when you and I could not pay that penalty ourselves, or we could, it would just take us eternity to pay it off in the lake of fire. And so Jesus took it.

Look at verse 26 again, *"to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."* See, God is just in His method. God is completely right in the way that He dealt with your sin and my sin. God is completely right in the free gift of eternal life that He can offer to each one, because He took care of the sin problem the right way. He took care of the sin issue, the penalty, the righteousness, He did it all, He took care of it completely, He didn't leave anything out. And again, this is not some sort of sneaky politics or back-office justice, this isn't something that He hid and He's only letting us in on a secret handshake. He put this out in full public view so that each one of us can see the evidence and otherwise be convinced or persuaded that what He did was enough.

And see that's the question, if you're sitting here today and you don't know whether or not you're going to heaven, you don't know whether or not that you can know that your sins are forgiven, all you have to do is understand what the Word of God teaches in this case, and that is simply this: God is satisfied with what Jesus did for you. Are you satisfied with it as well? Will you trust in God's provision

alone? That's the million-dollar question for anyone who does not know whether or not their sins are forgiven.

And we know because God executed His full wrath on Jesus that He will no longer have to execute it on anyone to whom Jesus died in their place. They will not have to face the wrath of God because Jesus faced it for them. And so we see this beautiful truth that when one puts their faith in the finished work of Christ, God can be totally just, totally right, totally perfect, and He can still declare that sinful person righteous based on what Jesus did. That's the beautiful message of the gospel.

So, verse 27, a natural question follows. He says, *"Where is boasting then? It's excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith."* And we're going to see that Paul, starting in verse 27 and through the end of the chapter, he's gonna ask six questions. And he asked these questions not because he's confused, he's asking these questions as a teaching aid to clarify what he just taught. First question is simply that: where's boasting? Since mankind can't attain the needed righteousness or obtain it on their own, how can they boast about it? If they can't obtain it or attain it, how can they boast about it?

When I played sports, I used to lift weights. And one of the things I liked to do was bench press. Does everyone know bench press or is at least familiar with it? Lay down and you kind of lift the bar up? And so occasionally you get some heavy weight on there and you need to get somebody to spot you. And most guys in the gym, they know because they need it too, so you can even ask strangers to come spot you. And those of you that have spotted somebody, you know as they go to lift the weight bar, many times they can't get it up on their own, but it doesn't take too much to get the bar up, you just kind of put your finger up, it doesn't take a lot of strength. It's not like you're yanking at 400 pounds and they're expecting you to do that, because they're kind of working with you and you're lifting it up.

So, you know what's interesting, is I was in the gym one day - this cracked me up - there was a guy over there lifting on the bench press. And I had not been watching what he was doing, I was working and doing my own workout. Well, I look and he says, "Hey, can I get you to spot me?" and I said, "Yeah." He's just an average-sized looking guy, and he's got all these plates on both sides of the bar. And I was like... man this dude must be a stud. I mean, I couldn't believe how much weight he had on there.

And he's like, "Yeah, would you spot me?" And I was like, "Yeah, sure." So, I'm thinking just like I always do that he might need a little bit of help. Well, this guy takes the bar off and it goes down like a sack of concrete. I thought it was gonna break his chest! He could get it off the bar, but he couldn't get it off himself. And I literally was trying to lift up about 300 pounds myself, and I couldn't get it off the guy and I had to have two other guys help me get this bar off of him. It was the craziest thing I've ever seen! I'm like, "Why did you do that?"

But you know what would have been even more crazy is if he would have got up from that bench and started giving us all high-fives and saying, "Yeah, did you see me lift that? Man, did you see me get that up?" And I'm gonna say, "Man, were you even here? Did you black out? Did you forget what happened?" And of course he wouldn't get up and boast! Of course he wouldn't say, "Oh I did my 1%, y'all did the other 99, but I did my 1." You know, and then flex. Of course he wouldn't say that! He knows if we had left that bar on him, he was done! We'd have been reading his obituary the next day. And yet, so many times when it comes to salvation, we want to boast about our 1%.

"Oh yeah, I walked an aisle." How'd you get saved?" "Oh, I walked an aisle." Did you walk an aisle, or did a Savior die for you two thousand years ago? Did you raise your hand or did a Savior die for you two thousand years ago? It's like drowning, you're swallowing water, and you give a nod to the lifeguard, so they see you, and then you get to the shore, and they say, "How did you get saved?" "I got

saved because I nodded.” What? No, you got saved because a lifeguard dove in and saved your foolish behind. That's how you got saved.

And we sit here, and we laugh, but so many times as it comes to eternal salvation, we want to boast, we want to brag, we want to say what *we* did, how *we* started going to church, and how *we* started reading our Bible, and how *we* stopped doing this, and *we* started doing this. And yet we take the focus and the finger off of where God's finger is, and God is over here pointing back to the cross of Jesus Christ, and you're pointing at yourself. Wow. How tragic. I pray our fingers all point to the same place.

“How'd you get saved?” “I got saved because Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose again.” “How do you know you're going to heaven, a hundred percent sure?” “Because Jesus Christ died for me and rose again.” “How do you know that you're eternally secure, that God won't ever judge you again because of your sin?” “Because He publicly crucified Jesus Christ on my behalf, in my place. He died for my sins, and He rose again. That's the only way I know. And if Jesus Christ isn't good enough, I've got no hope. If He's not good enough, neither am I.”

So, where's boasting? The only boasting is in what He did for me. There's no boasting on my behalf, and that's what Paul goes on to say. Where's boasting? It's excluded. It's shut out. It's closed out fully. In fact, Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us the same thing, right? It's not of works, because if it was, if it was of *one* work, what does man focus on? We're gonna boast about it. We're gonna boast about what we did and not boast about what Jesus did.

Completely shut out. Why is boasting excluded or shut out? Because the only way we can be saved - now mark this - the only way we can be saved is when we give up and we trust in the merits of another. See, the whole concept of faith says that I'm not looking inward, I'm not looking to myself to provide the answer anymore, I realize I don't have the answer, I realize I don't have the resources to provide the solution, and so I'm looking away from myself. I'm looking to somebody else and what they did for me. That's the whole concept of faith. Faith says it's not *me*. I'm not trusting in me anymore; I'm trusting in somebody else.

The second you look away from yourself, the second you look away from yourself to Jesus Christ, you lose the ability to boast. You can no longer boast, or you're like the guy that we yanked the bar off and saved his life and he said, “Oh man, did you see how much weight I pushed up?” Give me a break! Are you kidding me? Faith looks to someone or something else to solve a problem that you cannot solve yourself. Boasting looks inward, boasting points to something different than what God is pointing at, and trust me, you want to be pointing your finger the same place God is pointing His finger. That's how you can know, that's how you can be assured.

And so in the area of God's righteousness, we look to His provision. We stop looking at anything we can do; we trust in the provision that God has made through Jesus Christ. He can meet our deepest need. And look at verse 28, he says, “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*” Now Paul is making a conclusion, but like most preachers and pastors, he goes on for a few more verses. You know, you try to conclude, then you've got more to say. That's kind of how Paul does too. But he's wrapping up his argument here that a man is justified by faith. He's declared righteous by faith, apart from doing anything. Because when you start putting it together, it is so funny how we naturally gravitate back to doing something.

I find this very interesting as I teach my kids, and I teach them about this whole concept of justification by faith. Put your faith in Christ, that's what saves you. Put your faith in Christ, that's when God declares you righteous. Put your faith in Christ, that's when you receive forgiveness of sins. And then I teach them and teach them, and then I ask them, “So do you have to go to church? Do you have to keep going to church to be saved?” And you know naturally, until they get used to the way I question

them, they're like, "Oh yeah, I guess you do." "So, you have to read your Bible to be saved, don't you?" "Oh yeah, I guess I do." And it's such a great teaching opportunity, it's like, "No, what didn't you understand before? No, you don't have to do anything."

And naturally we want to get justified by faith, and we want to slap in a deed. We want to slap in a work. "Well, yeah I got saved by that, but then I started living a good life, so that was probably part of the equation as well." That's not part of the equation for justification. I'm sorry. It's apart from the law, it's apart from good deeds, it's based solely on the work of Christ. And so when we talk about being declared righteous in God's sight, we're talking about what Jesus did 2,000 years ago on a day in history. Not what you do, or you continue to do. That's not justification. Justification is a moment in time where God slams the gavel down and He says, "You are righteous."

And as we saw in the last section, righteousness is not something that He gives and takes and passes back, it's a righteousness that's found - as we said - *in Christ*. So, if Christ is righteous and you're *in Christ*, you are righteous the moment you put your faith in Christ. See, God is taking care of all of this. He has put this in such a secure way that we can trust Him for it.

And so what we're going to see is that Paul concludes, there's an emphasis there, we're *forced* to conclude. Why are we forced to conclude? Because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Nobody can get saved any other way. This is the conclusion, and Paul uses an accounting term here that he's going to use eleven times in Chapter 4. It's this idea of writing it down, counting it down, God has counted you as righteous, and so we'll look at that in more detail in chapter 4 when we get there. This word "count on" means *to write down, depend upon it, reckon*, you'll see it translated multiple times.

And so verse 29 and 30 he says this, "*Or is He the God of the Jews only?*" Again, remember he's asking these questions to clarify what he's been teaching. "*Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.*" And so why does Paul ask this question in verses 29-30? Well, he's making the point that both Jew and Gentile are declared righteous the same way.

In fact, he's going to go into great detail in chapter 4 talking about how Abraham was declared righteous. The father of the Jewish faith, he's gonna show how even Abraham was declared righteous by faith, and he's also gonna show how David was declared righteous by faith, these two big shots in the Jewish religion in their thinking. Because the mindset of the Jew like we've said before was, "I'm Jewish, I'm circumcised, I embrace the law, I'm in." That was their mindset, that's how they got saved. And Paul's gonna say, "No, no, no, Jew and Gentile get saved the exact same way, and that's when they put their faith in Christ. It's based on the finished work of Christ." And so Paul is very quickly dispelling this concept that there's two ways or two different types of salvation.

And then in verse 31, we see this idea of being rendered inactive as it relates to the law. So, Paul asks a very good question in verse 31. In fact, it's this question that launches him off into chapter 4. This is the question: "*Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.*" It's a good question. So, what went on before? What was that all about? Why did we even have the law? I mean, we just throw that out now, right? It's worthless, right?" That's what that word means, it's useless, it's worthless, it's void, it no longer applies. Paul says, "Certainly not!" And so was the law rendered inactive or made void through faith? This word just means *to be idle, to render inactive or means to be useless*.

And so what Paul is saying is, "Do we just disregard the law now since man is justified by faith alone and not law keeping? Should we just throw it out?" That's kind of his concept there. In other words, is there not still value to the law? Is there any basis behind the law that God had set up and

established, and the penalties and the regulations, is there any value or basis or should we just throw out the whole thing? That's his question here. His answer is an emphatic *no*. No, we shouldn't. But why?

Now as a precursor to when we get to sanctification, I will tell you this: the law is not there. Let me backup. The law could not make you holy in justification and cannot make you holy in sanctification. The Christian is not to try to live by the law to be holy or righteous. In fact, we're going to learn again of God's provision, how the Christian can live righteously, and I'll give you a hint: it's in Titus 2:11, and we're gonna see it in Romans 6, 7 & 8. It's as you walk by means of the spirit, and it's as the grace of God teaches you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously in the present age, it's not the law of God.

Now that was a precursor, so let's get back to this context now. But the emphatic answer is *no*, but why? I think this is a strong question. He says in verse 31, "*On the contrary, we establish the law.*" The idea behind "establish" is to cause to stand, to set or place in a position, to hold it up, to uphold it, to fulfill it, if you want to say it that way. And see, this is what we've got to understand, that God's method of making man righteous completely supports the law.

Because what does the law say? The law says perfect obedience, and for a lack of perfect obedience or perfect righteousness, death. And what did Jesus Christ do? He fulfilled the law. He lived in perfect obedience, the law's demand was death, He paid it for us. And so we're not throwing out the law or saying, "Oh no, God changed His mind. He's doing it a different way now." He's not some little kid that's gonna go home with His ball because He's changing the rules.

Years ago, I was watching some kids, and I was playing with a four-year-old girl, so I don't even know why I cared about her game and the fact that she was changing the rules on me as we were going. But at some point, I wanted to win. I wanted to beat her! Don't ask me why, and I've grown up since then, I've matured a little bit. But it was so infuriating, even with this four-year-old changing the rules along the way. "Well yeah, but you can't go over there." "Okay, well I won't go over there anymore." And then she goes over there! "Well wait a minute, you just told me I can't go over there." "Yeah, but I can." See that's how that works, and in her mind that was logical. In my mind I was getting really frustrated!

See, God doesn't do this. God doesn't say, "Oh yeah, here's My law, here's My holy righteous standard, here's the penalty for sin. But let's just do away with that, let's figure out how to save you apart from the law." Because what that implies is, "Oh boy, a contingency I didn't realize existed. So let me get rid of that and go over here." No, that wasn't how God did it at all. He completely established the law in the gospel. He didn't throw out the law, He didn't change the rules, He completely established the law. You know why? Because the law's righteous demands for sin required death. It required death for the ones that broke them. Did God not deal within the confines of the law when He crucified His Son? Yeah, that's exactly what He did. He died for all of us lawbreakers. He paid the penalty that the law required.

We also see that the law demands perfect righteousness, and God also provides His righteousness in the person of Jesus Christ. So, the two issues we had that were keeping us out of heaven: we had this penalty that we could not pay, and we had a righteousness we could not obtain or attain or earn. God took care of both of those in the gospel. See, He established the law, He fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law in Jesus Christ. And so what's great about this section is when we talk about justification, God is perfectly just. The law is not nullified, He didn't change the rules midway through the game, He kept them, but He actually fulfilled the law. A perfect God can take imperfect people and make them righteous. This was truly a perfect plan.

Now in the next few sections we want to show how this concept of faith righteousness establishes the law. We want to show not only that, but we're going to take a journey through the Old Testament and show how the Old Testament has been testifying to the same truth over all these thousands of years. That there's not some new message, some new method, some adjusted thinking on the part of God, that God has always declared man righteous in the same way.

And so we're gonna take a three-week break from the book of Romans, work our way through the Old Testament, and show how the Old Testament testified and did these same things. We're gonna see how clearly this faith righteousness establishes the law. We're gonna see back in Romans 3:21 how this faith righteousness has been witnessed by the law and the prophets.





# CHAPTER 14

## Establishing the Law Part 1

### Romans

We're gonna continue our study in the book of Romans by not going to Romans. Yeah, go figure out how that works. But there's a couple of things that we wanted to see as we come out of chapter 3, and I think it's just worthwhile to maybe deviate for about three weeks and then we'll come back to our verse-by-verse study in Romans.

But to give you just a quick preview of where we are going here these next three weeks, there's really two concepts we want to look at. And I'm drawing these concepts from Romans 3:31, and Romans 3:21. And so the first concept that we want to see is this concept of faith righteousness. In other words, you can become righteous in God's sight, the righteousness equal to God's righteousness, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ and what He did for you. And what did He do for you? He died for your sins, and He rose again. That's the gospel, that's the good news that we preach. In fact, we've got no other message than that. That's our message here, and that's the message of the Bible.

We're gonna see that faith righteousness in Romans 3:21 is apart from the law, but what we're gonna look at the next couple weeks is how it's witnessed about in the law and the prophets, how it's witnessed about in the Old Testament. See, God didn't just come up with a plan B and go, "Oh man, the Old Testament, that didn't really work out. Let Me figure out what we're gonna do in the New Testament now. Let Me turn the page, let Me get to my contingency plan." That's not how God worked.

In fact, God throughout the Old Testament was working to this day where He would reveal His son who would come and pay the penalty for the sins of the world, and God knew this all along. And so we're gonna see how the Old Testament witnesses in a couple of areas. We're gonna see that the Old Testament is very clear that the penalty for sin has always been death, we're gonna see that even from the beginning.

And by the way, if the penalty is death, then guess what penalty has to be paid? It's not a trick question, it's death. It's not good works, it's not church attendance, none of those things can get you into heaven. If there's a penalty and God says it's a penalty due, then death has to be the penalty. Death has to be paid. So, we'll see that played out in the Old Testament.

We're also going to see that God promised a Deliverer from sin and death, and that's going to be testified about all throughout the Old Testament. In fact, when you think about what the Old Testament is about, we're gonna get a promise of a coming deliverer in Genesis chapter 3, and the rest of the Old Testament is about how God brought about that promised Deliverer. That's what the Old Testament is about. And so it testifies of this concept of faith righteousness even in the Old Testament.

And then we're gonna see that God, clearly through the Old Testament, will accept a substitutionary atoning death. And again, we're gonna see lots of death in the Old Testament, but it's got a purpose. This isn't just some random death, this isn't a hunter that's going out and killing as many deer as they can, there's a purpose for this, there's a substitutionary atoning death. And so that's the first concept that we want to look at, and that comes right out of Romans 3:21 which says, *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,"*

The second concept that we're gonna look at is what we covered last time, which is found in Romans 3:31, that faith righteousness establishes the law. And that seems contradictory because many people view the Old Testament and they say, "Well yeah, people in the Old Testament were saved by

the law,” or “People in the Old Testament were saved by doing sacrifices,” or “People in the Old Testament were saved...” and whatever they want to insert, but largely it has to do with keeping the law or not keeping the law. And what Paul is gonna tell you and what Paul is gonna go on to say in the book of Romans is that's not true. That's not how anybody has ever been saved.

In fact, God's righteousness has to come apart from the law, because the only thing the law can show you and show me is that you don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven. That's the only thing the law can do. It functions very efficiently, very effectively, it makes no mistakes, it's like a mirror, and it shows us that we all have a sin problem, we all have a righteousness problem. And so it has to be apart from the law.

But what we're going to see is that this faith righteousness concept doesn't side pass the law and doesn't try to avoid the law. God developed and devised a plan that met and established the law. And how do we see that in the Old Testament? Well, we're gonna see that God's perfect, righteous standard as revealed in the law is not compromised, and it's perfectly upheld. This is not like when you and I as parents tell our kids, “If you do that one more time...” Have you ever said this: “If you do that one more time, you're never coming out of your room again!” And no one keeps that consequence, I mean, we all realize sometimes that as it's coming out of our mouths, we should have just shut that down a couple words ago, because that's not how it's gonna work out.

But see, God doesn't do that, He doesn't say, “Oh, nevermind, I went too far. Never mind, I really didn't mean that.” God is gonna perfectly uphold His law and the righteous standards. There's no sleight of hand, there's no magic going on. God is gonna completely not compromise His law and uphold His righteous standard perfectly.

And then we're gonna see that the justice that God demanded through His law is perfectly fulfilled in the gospel. See, this is the beauty of the Bible. When you've got one author, God, Who knows everything, Who's all-powerful, He can write this in such a way that it doesn't contradict itself. It actually fits together like a glove. He puts the puzzle pieces together. And so as we look at these two concepts this week, we want to see that faith righteousness is testified about in the Old Testament, and we want to see that faith righteousness - this idea that you can be made righteous in God's sight through faith alone, in Christ alone - establishes the law, establishes what we find in the law.

And so to do that, we need to go back to the beginning, and hence where we read in Genesis this morning. So, turn with me to the book of Genesis, we want to just start at the beginning, and the next three weeks we want to walk systematically through the Old Testament. Now, this isn't going to be a comprehensive study of the Old Testament. In fact, I know that I'm gonna leave lots of details out that are important. But in terms of stringing together this continuous story that we see Paul referring to in Romans, we're going to take key events and key concepts and just build the story. We're gonna tell God's story as best we can here over the next three weeks in terms of how this faith righteousness is established and witnessed in the Old Testament.

And so when we see Adam created, he was created unique amongst any person in the world, because he enjoyed a unique friendship with the God of the universe. Very unique, nobody else on earth, him by himself, him completely innocent, him trusting, if you will, every decision that he made to the goodness of God. Trusting that the information that he got from God was accurate.

It's like I have never had one of my kids while we're in the car one day say, “Dad, where was I born?” “Oh, you were born in Texas.” Or “You were born in Rockwall County.” Or “You were born in Virginia.” And I've never had any one of my kids say, “Well, I'll tell you what, can you drive over to the courthouse right now and prove that to me?” Why not? Because kids take my word for it. You know, I used to joke and say I'm gonna take a white piece of paper and just teach one of my kids that

it's blue just to have fun with them. Because they would trust me. And they would get into arguments their whole life and say, "No, that's blue because my dad told me it's blue!"

And so Adam had that kind of a unique relationship with God. God told him what things were, Adam believed it. Everything Adam learned was directly from God. He had this unique relationship with God. We see that Adam had some unique tasks. Look at Genesis 2:20, "*So Adam gave names to all the cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.*"

So why is a giraffe called a giraffe? Because Adam named him, and all the other animals. This is a unique relationship that he's got with God. We see that Adam also tended and kept the Garden of Eden, look at 2:15, "*Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.*" Now we know at this point the curse had not happened, so this was probably pretty easy. You know, plant the seed and it grows. That's my type of farming! I tend to kill everything I try to plant. But in this case, Adam was tending and keeping this garden that God had created.

We gather just by inference in Genesis 3:8 that God walked amongst him as a friend. We see this verse is after the fall, but we see this concept that, "*they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,*" and so we sense there from inference that that probably happened, that God was spending time with Adam and Eve instructing them. And so there was a friendship there, there was an intimacy, if you will.

And then we see in Genesis 2:25 that Adam was naked and not ashamed. Look at verse 25, "*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.*" And this just gives us a beautiful picture of not hiding anything. Just being completely transparent, being completely open with God, and not having anything to be ashamed of. Nothing to hide, just completely transparent and open, as it were.

And then we see that God provided Adam with the helper Eve, and He made all of the garden available to them except for one tree: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And here enters in our first law, if you will, our first rule, our first command that we find in the Bible. They could eat of every tree they wanted except for one of them. That was the test, that was the rule here.

And as you think about that, God was very good to them. God was extremely good. In fact, we were looking at creation this morning in Sunday school, and that phrase is repeated over and over again, "God saw it, and it was good." "God saw it, and it was very good." Everything was in place for man and woman to enjoy not only a relationship with one another, but fellowship and relationship with the God of the universe.

Well, we all know the story, because there was a problem that arose. And God not only said, "Don't eat of this tree, but if you do there's going to be a consequence." And so we find that consequence in Genesis 2:16-17, and the consequence is death.

In fact, let's read it. Genesis 2:16-17, "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'*" Now one of the things that we want to put in perspective here is that remember, at this point in time Adam and Eve had no experience with death. Never seen it, never had a loved one that died, never seen an animal that died. They didn't have a concept of what death was. But they understood it was something they didn't want; they do understand that. In fact, you can kind of tell that in their response. But they didn't have a concept, no experience with this.

And then we come into chapter 3, and we see that they disobeyed God by eating the fruit. And so we're gonna see the consequence of this decision play out. Let's look at those verses as we continue to study here. Chapter 3 verse 1 which says this: "*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of*

*the garden'?"* Now you notice how he spins God's words, and that's exactly what he's doing. He's deceptive, he's cunning as verse 1 tells us. That's not what God said. God, in fact, said the opposite. "You can eat of any tree, *every* tree except one." But he spins it, "has God said you shouldn't eat of every tree?"

Verse 2, "*And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"* We don't know where Eve picked up, "You shall not touch it," that wasn't in God's instructions, He said, "You shall not eat it." We don't know, I mean there's been speculation. Maybe Adam was the one that received the direct instruction from God to not eat of the tree, and as he passed it along to Eve he might have said, "You know Eve that tree right there, we're not to eat of that tree." And I'm just imagining here, but Eve said, "Which one is it?" And he said, "That one right there. Don't eat of it. In fact, Eve, just don't even touch that thing. Just stay away from it." I mean, who knows, that might have been how it went down.

But for some reason she adds that here, and as soon as she does, the serpent comes in and takes control of the conversation. She says in verse 3, "*but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"* Then verse 4, "*Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'*" And here's the interesting thing about this whole interaction here because Satan questions something here. It's the first time it's been questioned, it's the first doctrine that he questions in the Bible, what's the doctrine of? The doctrine of sin's consequence.

See, Satan is still to this day trying to convince people, "Oh, you're not gonna die for your sin. You won't go to hell." In fact, we looked at that in Romans 1, didn't we? People are suppressing this truth. They know it, they know a God exists, they know He's got a righteous standard, they're holding it down, they're suppressing it in hopes that one day they won't have to face Him. It's the ostrich in the sand approach: let me put my head underneath the sand and hope it doesn't come true. Or just blatantly deny that God exists and that they won't face Him and His righteous judgment one day.

But notice Satan here, as early as the garden, he's already questioning this doctrine. And what did I say one of the testifying things in the Old Testament was as it relates to faith righteousness? It's this idea that sin produces death, the penalty for sin is death. That's been going on since the beginning of time. We see it here in Genesis, and that is the one thing that Satan questions here in his interaction with man and woman. "You won't surely die. That's a bald-faced lie!" Look at verse 5, "*For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened,*" Is that true? That was true. Their eyes were gonna be opened, they would know good and evil. And then he goes on to say, "*and you will be like God,*" that's not true, that's false. Then he says, "*knowing good and evil.*" That is true.

And you'll see that he mixes truth with error, truth with error. Nobody ever comes in and says, "Hey, listen up. I'm about to share false teaching with you today. Hey, get your pen out, I'm about to tell you a bunch of lies, just write these down so you can be misled." Nobody does that! They always come in with a little bit of truth, a little bit of error. A little bit of truth, a little bit of error. They learned it from the master of deception, which is Satan himself.

And so verse 6, we know the story. "*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*" And so we see that they eat of the tree, and they're gonna face the consequence of death. So we kind of see this play out.

Now what's interesting is in the midst of all of these curses, as they are found out - in fact, Adam hiding in the trees is like the little kid that says, "Hey, I didn't know, Mom and Dad. I didn't eat the cookies." And they've got chocolate all over their face. I mean the evidence was there: they had covered

themselves, they were hiding from God, they had never done that before, and in the midst of all of these things going on, God pronounces a promise. God makes a startling promise. And His promise is that there's gonna be a coming Deliverer who's gonna crush this serpent, Satan.

By the way, an interesting fact, we were teaching the Old Testament to the pastors in Liberia two weeks ago, and everyone knows who the serpent is, right? The serpent is Satan. But you know what's interesting about that is Genesis 3 actually doesn't tell us that. It never indicates who he is, it just always refers to him as a serpent. We don't get this information until all the way back in Revelation 12:9 where we finally get the identity of the serpent as Satan. So obviously we're taking the whole counsel of the Word of God and reading back what we understand, what's been revealed, but just kind of an interesting factoid there.

In Genesis 3:15, the Lord is speaking to the serpent here and he says, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."* And the word there "bruise" really has this idea of crushing. And so it's really this picture that we have. If you could picture a poisonous snake, and you trying to go over and kill it - by the way, I wouldn't recommend killing a poisonous snake by stepping on its head, get a shovel and chop that head off! - but it kind of pictures this concept. This Deliverer was gonna step on the serpent's head, that serpent was gonna take a bite out of His heel and bruise His heel, but as he did that, He would crush the Serpent's head.

And so we know from biblical revelation as God has progressively revealed Himself, this refers to Jesus and the work that He would do in crushing Satan, in handling the problem that sin caused, which is death, a lack of righteousness.

We're going to see that God, even back in Genesis 3:15, had this thing all figured out. When Paul says that the Old Testament witnesses to faith righteousness and that the faith righteousness establishes the law, we see it as far back as Genesis 3:15. And so rather than changing the rules, or miscarrying justice, or saying, "Adam and Eve, never mind. I spoke too soon. You won't really die because of this, I'm gonna handle this in a different way." God mentions His plan for dealing with it.

See, God doesn't hide things. In fact, what did we learn in Romans 3:25? God is pointing His finger right there at a public day in history when Jesus died for the sins of the world. It was a day in history. It was 2,000 years ago, it was an *actual* day in history where the Son of God *actually* got nailed to a cross, and *actually* died and paid the penalty for our sins. And then He *actually* was buried, and He *actually* rose again on the third day. And God did it all in public view. Not hiding, not miscarrying justice, not doing it in a back office where nobody can see it. He made it explicit for the entire world to see, that He might be lifted up, that all men may see what God did in terms of dealing with the sin problem. But it all started right here in the promise back in Genesis 3:15.

And so we see that this promised Deliverer is going to deal with sin and its consequence, and its consequence is death. Now more to come on this later, but as mentioned, the seed of faith righteousness is sown here. God's solution for sin's consequence and man's enemy is the Promised One. That means that His solution to sin's consequences is not your problem. It's not something you have to figure out, it's not something you have to put together, it's not something you have to work really hard at to get it done. God is saying even right here in Genesis 3:15, *"I'm going to make the solution for you. I'm gonna provide a provision for you."*

And so this whole concept of looking to somebody else, looking away from myself to God for the solution is sown right here in Genesis 3:15. And so when we talk about faith, remember that faith looks away from yourself to God's provision. Faith doesn't have one eye on God's provision and one eye on myself. That's not true biblical faith, because now I'm resting in what God is doing, and I'm

resting in myself, thus by definition I'm not resting completely on what God has done or provided. And so we see even this concept of faith righteousness is sown right here.

But before we go on, we've got to define "death". What is death from a biblical perspective? Well death simply means *separation*. By its very nature it means *separation*. We're going to look at three kinds of death here, in fact, some of them are very familiar to you. Physical death is the one we're most familiar with. When you go to a funeral and you have an open casket funeral of a friend or a loved one, you know that your friend or loved one is not there. Now their body's there, but they're not there. And physical death is where we have separation of spirit from the body.

And this is, again, the one that we're most familiar with. When we think of death, we typically think of physical death. But understand as a general definition, it just means separation. Here in this case, it's separation of spirit from the body. This type of death happened to Adam about 900 years later. So, the consequence of his sin was death, and he experienced the physical death aspect of that consequence 900 years after they ate from the tree.

If I was to rip a tree branch off of a tree, and set it up here right now, it would still look very green, very alive. In fact, if it was a tree that had sap in it, your fingers would get sticky, it would still have sap running through its branch. And would you say that it was alive or dead? Well, it's dead. How do I know it's dead? Because it's separated from its life source. Now it may not look dead, but it's in the process of dying. And so that day when they ate of the fruit, they started the process of physical death, and it culminated 900 years later.

But another aspect of death that we would look at is this concept of spiritual or relational death, and its separation of God for mankind. And we see that this is even illustrated in the fact that they hid from God. They tried to remove themselves from God's presence after they sinned. And so they experienced this kind of death immediately, it happened immediately when they removed themselves. Isaiah 59:2 says that our sins have separated us from God. That's a death, that's a spiritual death as the Bible talks about.

So, this word "death", "you shall surely die," it's a loaded word, in the sense of having multiple aspects to it. And probably the third one is the one that we want to pay attention to the most, because in the third one we talk about what the Bible refers to as the "second death", and this is the death that occurs after one dies physically. And this is when man is separated from God forever, for eternity in the lake of fire. Again, the place prepared for Satan and his angels. And this is the one that everyone of us can avoid, because God's made a solution to take care of this death penalty.

Now, we're still gonna face physical death. We're all part of that ultimate statistic, you know, 10 out of 10 people die. You're gonna be part of that statistic, I'm sorry to say, and so am I. 10 out of 10 people die. But in terms of this "second death" this is something that we can avoid, and this is something that the promised Deliverer that He mentions in Genesis 3:15 is going to take care of for us. Again, God doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. And as it relates to Adam and Eve, this was their destiny. If God didn't intervene, this is where they would end up. And so we see death as defined biblically.

Now when we look at this, we see a big dilemma, and we describe it that way for us. Because how can God say He's going to do something in terms of a consequence in penalty, and then how can He not do it? How can He not carry that out? And so for the human mind, this is what it looks like to us, we're like... *what in the world?* How's this gonna work out? But God has got this all figured out. In fact, we know that if He's completely just - and He is - He's got to judge sin. He set up a rule, and this is just simple: He set up a rule, it was broken, and now in order to remain just He's got to execute or carry out the consequence. Period. He's got to do that.

Even human judges, judging on human law, if they don't judge according to law, they're viewed as impartial, they're viewed as unjust. In fact, many of them who are elected to office, when we find out some of the shenanigans they've been pulling, we don't elect them back in the office! We put somebody else in there because we want somebody to judge to the letter of the law. What was the intent of the law, we want them to judge according to that. And God, the perfect Judge of the universe, judges that way. He's gonna give everybody what they deserve, and this creates a dilemma, because then nobody could be saved. Or could they?

The other "balancing act" if you want to say it that way, is that God is completely loving. He's completely just on one hand, but He's completely loving on the other. And he's not more just than He is loving or more loving than He is just, He's completely balanced in these areas. So based on that, He doesn't want to destroy Adam and Eve, He loves them. Even though they disobeyed Him, even though they broke His command, He still loves them.

So how is God gonna put together His love and His justice? And we see an indication even here in Genesis as to how He does this. But the question becomes: how can God remain just and punish sin as He should, but still love and not destroy the one who sinned? That sounds like a dilemma from a human perspective because we say, "Oh, you can't. That's a mindblower right there. I don't know how to figure that one out."

And then our million-dollar question is really two parts, and we can insert our name in here, "How can Adam get rid of his sin with all its consequences, death, and gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness so he can be accepted back into His presence?" And see, we've got a huge dilemma here. Adam and Eve know they've got a dilemma because what do they do in the story? They try to cover their nakedness. They try to start making provision for what they know is wrong relationally, and they start to put on these fig leaves. And so they clothe themselves up.

We know that God rejected their efforts at covering up their outside appearance. Their outward appearance was completely rejected by God. That is not how you deal with the sin problem, and so many people are trying to deal with the sin problem in similar ways today, except we put religious hats on it.

We say if we come to church, if we do good works, if we do this, if we quit doing this, then God is going to be forced to accept us. If we do enough good works that outweigh our bad works, if we even get baptized - I mean, baptisms in the Bible, right? - and we read our Bible and we pray, we do all of these things that we hear about in the Bible, even those things will gain us acceptance with God. And see, that *doesn't* gain us acceptance with God, because what did God say in Genesis 3:15? "I'm gonna provide the solution for you. I'm gonna send you a promised Deliverer and I'm gonna take care of your issue for you."

See, outward fig leaf sowing rituals - which is all religion is, it's just a fig leaf sewing party corporately - that's not going to take care of the issue. That's not going to take care of the consequences of sin. People can have fig leaf sewing parties from today until the day they die and that won't take care of the issue. God has to take care of the issue, and God has devised a way.

And even back in Genesis, He begins to show us what that way is gonna look like. Instead, God's solution involves something different: death, just as justice demanded. It's so interesting, we get so caught up and so distracted, but if we just keep it simple, God keeps it simple for us. The penalty for sin is death, so what penalty has to be paid? Death. It's just really simple. It's like one plus one equals two, it really, really fits together. There's no sleight of hand here, if God says there has to be a death, then there has to be a death. Period. And that's why good works, last time I checked that's not death. Try that when you're on death row. "Oh judge, I'm just gonna live my life doing good works." No, my

man! Death is the penalty, so you're gonna have to face that penalty with your death. In the same way death is the penalty, a death has to be paid.

Now I want to get into Genesis 3:21, because this is where I believe we see the solution. God is gonna kill an animal. There's gonna be the death of an animal in the garden, and God is gonna clothe Adam and Eve with the skins from that animal. Now how do I know there's a death? Okay, so let's look at Genesis 3:21. It's really subtle, and the reason it's subtle is because God just continues to reveal progressively more details of His plan. But looking back, Genesis 3:21, *“Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”* And you say, “Wow, that's a big leap, John. How do you see death there? That's crazy!” Well, here's how I see death there, and here's where I would understand that here in the scriptures.

We just got out of Genesis 1. Remember how God created the world? How'd He create the world? Perfect. He created it out of nothing, He spoke it into existence. Now I want you to notice that word in verse 21, “made” the word, *“made tunics of skin.”* That is a word that indicates that He took something from something that already existed. Now could God have spoken clothing into existence? Yeah, He could have spoken an Armani suit onto Adam. No problem for God. He *could* do that, but He didn't do that. He didn't just speak clothing into existence. What that word “made” indicates is that He used something that was already created, and He made it from something that was already in existence. Well, He tells us what He made: tunics of skin. And so just deduction says it's coming from an animal.

And again, we get further explanation. If that was the only thing we had in the Bible, I'd think that's kind of a stretch. But we get further explanation as we go through the Old Testament that the Old Testament is testifying to something here. And what the Old Testament is testifying to is simply this: there's a substitutionary atoning death.

See, when God says the penalty for sin is death, God is now letting us know that He's going to accept a substitute death in our place. Now that's very important, because as it relates to the promised Deliverer as we'll see - and I'm getting way ahead because I'm just getting excited. Some of this stuff I want to keep until like the third week, some of this stuff you already know. But it's hard sometimes because when you see Christ in something you just want to talk about Christ - is that even through this promised Deliverer, God is showing that He's going to accept a substitutionary death on our behalf, and we're going to see the Old Testament just testify to this over, and over, and over again.

And so we see this in the life of Adam and Eve. In fact, we gain further knowledge later that Hebrews 9:22 says, *“without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness of sins.”* And so all this massive religious teaching that's been taught over the centuries about, “Well, if you pay this much money, you're gonna get forgiveness of sins.” “If you crawl on your knees for 18 miles up this hill on shards of glass, you're gonna get forgiveness of sins.” Or whatever other penance that people come up with. Forgiveness of sins doesn't come except through death. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

So, God is putting all this stuff together even as early as Genesis chapter 3. And that's why when Paul says that the law and the prophets, the Old Testament, testify to this manner of faith righteousness, he means it. He's not just making this up! In fact, I think this was probably his message as he went into Jewish synagogues each place that he traveled from town to town. “Your Messiah had to die, He had to suffer.” And then he showed them why and then he said, “Oh by the way, this Messiah, He's been here. His name is Jesus Christ. Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified on a cross, was buried and He rose again. And if you don't believe me, there's all these witnesses, let me tell you who you can talk to. They've seen Him, we've seen Him.” And that was the message that he preached.



Now we see that a new era began, which really impacts you and I and everyone else who has lived since then, and that is this removal from the garden and the sin nature that comes with this place of death that Adam and Eve were now in.

So, we see that God drove Adam and Eve from the garden. He expels them from the garden. Part of the reason was that they had eaten from the tree of life, and they would have lived in their sinful state forever, and so it was an act of grace to drive them from that. But notice where all of their children were born: they were born outside the garden. Genesis 5:3 tells us that like begets like. In other words, sinful man reproduces sinful man. And to prove that out, just go one generation and you've got a murder. You've got the first murder of human life one generation from Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel, which we'll look at their story next.

But here's another thing to consider, and when we get to Romans 5, we'll bring this out in a lot more detail, but consider this: the law wasn't even given yet. The Mosaic law had not even been given. But guess what we start to see in Genesis? From the very beginning, in chapter 5, shows us death. Everyone died, except for Enoch, but everyone died. And so what does that tell us? That sin, this position of sin, now produced death. Even though they weren't breaking a law like Adam had broken. It wasn't like they were all sneaking back into the garden and taking a bite off the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus they had death. But now they were in a positional state. Adam produces sinful man, and now they will pay for their consequence of sin.

And so it's not as if they needed help, because now we see Cain, and because he's a sinner now he commits acts of sin, he murders. And we're gonna see that the generations following didn't get much better, but Cain and Abel also teach something as we relate it to the Old Testament. Genesis 4, let's start in verse 3. *“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.”*

Let me stop there because Cain was not thumbing his nose at God. Cain was a religious man. Cain was actually bringing an offering. If he was irreligious, he'd be like, “Go ahead, Abel. Yeah, I'll catch up with you later. Yeah, you go sacrifice, I'm gonna stay here.” That's not what he did. In fact, when you look at what he brought and how he had to bring it together, I would venture to say he put more work into his offering than Abel did, more effort. Because when you take in the fact that he plants the seed, he waters it, he cultivates it, you know, maybe he fertilizes it, I don't know what he had access to in those days or what he knew. But he planted the seed, he watered it, he took care of it, he harvested it, he prepared it, and gave it to God. Cain worked harder than Abel did.

And we're gonna see how that goes for him, because God doesn't want you and I to work hard to get to heaven. He wants you and I to *stop* working so hard and trust in the One who already did the work necessary to get you there. Jesus paid it all. Jesus died on the cross for your sins. Jesus rose again. See, Jesus has done it all. And so we need to quit working. Some of us need to understand that we don't work or earn our way to heaven. And if we want to go the way of Cain who worked really, really hard, we'll see what the outcome is for him.

Verse 4, *“Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And it's desire is for you, but you should rule over it.””*

Cain's sacrifice was not accepted. Judging by the events, and again, we're putting together progressive revelation over time, it seems probable that God had provided some instruction as to what an acceptable way would be to bring sacrifices and what wouldn't be. Now how do we get that from Genesis 3? Well, turn with me to Hebrews 11:4. Because the writer of Hebrews makes an interesting

comment, or an interesting observation here as it relates to Abel, all the way back in Genesis chapter 4. And he says this: *“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”*

There are a couple things we want to notice there: Abel offered his sacrifice by faith. And what we're gonna see when we jump back into Romans chapter 4 is that everybody, of all time, has been saved by grace through faith. That's the message of the Bible. That has not changed since Genesis three, Genesis four. We're saved by faith, that's where faith righteousness comes from. It comes from the very beginning, nothing's changed over time. We're gonna see that in the life of Abraham. Paul's gonna bring that out in Romans 4. We're gonna see that in the life of David, Paul's also going to be bringing that out in Romans 4. But it's in the life of every saved person in the Old Testament, Noah, Enoch, anybody you want to name, they got saved by faith through grace. That's how people got saved.

But notice as we talk about faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. He had faith, and when we talk about faith, it's one of those things in our culture you've just gotta fight against the definitions of the culture sometimes, because people just say things and they don't know what they mean by them, and so it breeds a lot of confusion.

And so some people will say if they're delivered from a dangerous storm, “Well my faith got me through.” And you kind of start viewing faith as this nebulous like force, like a Star Wars kind of thing or something. But remember, biblical faith has to have an object on which to rest. So, if Abel, by faith, offers a sacrifice and he's resting on some truth that God has given him, he's trusting in something that God has told him. And so when we look at this idea that God probably gave some instruction, I think that's pretty much backed up in Hebrews 11:4, that Able, *by faith*, trusting in some kind of revelation from God, offered this sacrifice.

Now why was his accepted and why was Cain's not? Well, I believe that God was consistent in His message saying that man's sin debt could only be paid if there was a death. Did Cain's offering experience a death? I guess you could say if the fruit died, I don't know. But in terms of a life and blood, in Hebrews 9:22, *“without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness.”* There wasn't a qualified death in Cain's offering. Abel brought an animal. By faith he trusted God's word, and this animal provides this illustration of what we're gonna see going forward. Because the question becomes, “Why animal substitutionary sacrifices?” Why was that such a thing in the Old Testament?

Well, I believe why that was such a thing is simply this: God is illustrating, He's giving us visual aids all throughout the Old Testament as to *how* His promised Deliverer was gonna take care of the million-dollar question. *How* would God take care of man's sin debt, and *how* would God provide man with a righteousness equal to His own? He's going to do it through the promised Deliverer, and these animal substitutionary sacrifices, they simply pointed to the work that he was going to do. And so when Jesus showed up on the scene, and John the Baptist pointed over to Him and said, “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” See, John had made that connection. John understood what the Old Testament was testifying about.

And so we see a couple of illustrations in the animal sacrifices. We see the illustration of substitution. Normally man would die for his own sin. But based on certain future events, i.e. the promised Deliverer dying for the sins of the world, God was saying He would accept an innocent animal's death in the place of man as their substitute. And what is the entire Old Testament about? Animal sacrifice, one after another, again, illustrating that the penalty for sin is death. The Old Testament testifies to that all the way throughout.

See, Abel deserved to die for his own sin, but God in His mercy allowed an innocent animal to die in his place. Now why did He do that? Because one day He knew what the promised Deliverer was

gonna do: die in Abel's place and actually *pay* for his sins. Not just cover them up temporarily but *pay* for them so He could wipe them away. And so we see that first reason, an illustration of substitution and the animal sacrifices.

And then the second illustration, this word "atonement", which just means *covering*. This shed blood would cover man's sin temporarily. And so what it represented is God looked down from heaven, He saw that they were trusting in His provision through this shed blood of an animal, and it just provided a covering. But it didn't take care of sin as we learn in Hebrews. It didn't take away the sin, it simply covered sin temporarily, but through the work of Jesus Christ that God knew was coming, He saved them on credit. We looked at that in Romans chapter 3.

And so based on God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice and His rejection of Cain's offering, it's safe to say that God did not accept Cain's offering because it didn't shed blood. His offering didn't shed blood, it didn't represent what God was showing as it relates to the promised Deliverer. Again, remember what the penalty of sin was? It was death.

And so Cain had his own ideas. Cain had his own fig-leaf-sewing-party, except this time it had graduated, now it's a religious offering. And what we're gonna see is over the course of the Old Testament, there are fig leaf sewing parties going on everywhere and at all times. And it just changes faces, it just changes approaches, man is always trying to figure out the answer to this question on their own, and God from the beginning wants us to trust in what He has done, and He's going to show that as we continue this study the next few weeks.



# CHAPTER 15

## Establishing the Law Part 2

### Romans

We're going to continue our study in the book of Romans, but as you recall, we took a little bit of a break last week, and the break really simply revolves around the Bible. The Bible is a big book. It's 66 books, it's thousands of pages long. And I would venture to say if some of you took a classic that you've read over the years, maybe *Gone With the Wind* or some other classic book - my kids are reading through *To Kill a Mockingbird* right now, so that kind of takes me back to my middle school days - that nobody could understand any of those books if they just jumped around and looked at different chapters week by week. Flipped it to the front, flipped it to the back, flipped it to the middle, then flipped it to the front, flipped it to the back, flipped it to the middle, and then flipped it three-quarters of the way through. And unfortunately, so many times that is how we conduct our Bible study. And then we wonder why there are many things that are hard to understand, because at times we haven't looked at the story in the manner or the way that God has reported the story.

And so we started to look at a couple of concepts last week as we're in our study in the book of Romans, but there were a couple of verses in Romans chapter 3 that caused me to think about jumping out of Romans to go through God's story. What is God's story? Because somebody would come into the book of Romans, and they're listening to Paul write this down, and he says that the way you're saved is by grace, through faith, you don't have to do anything to be saved, that God has done it all. And that God has a manner of making man righteous and it's not by doing good, trying harder, getting religion, going through the rituals, counting different things, lighting candles, none of those things can make a man righteous. God says that a man is made righteous solely on the basis of faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That's God's plan.

And some may have accused Paul at that time saying, "Wait a minute, here. What about the Old Testament, Paul? You can't just make up a new way to get saved. I mean, we've got this Old Testament." And they wouldn't have even called it that, they would say, "We've got the Hebrew Bible, what are you talking about? This is new, this is a new way to get saved, this is a new way that God is making people righteous. You can't just discard the Hebrew Bible." And Paul says, "No, that's where I'm getting it from. This is a consistent message all the way through."

And so we jumped out of Romans because Paul says a couple of things, and we want to see how the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible communicates these concepts that we find in Romans. And the first concept, this is reviewed from last week, is this concept that faith righteousness - in other words, the righteousness that you and I need to get to heaven - comes on the basis of faith. That means that we are trusting in the work of another. We're not trusting in our works; we're not trusting in our ability to be good. You know, I can't even trust in my ability to remember to take the trash out on a weekly basis, let alone do something that would secure my eternal salvation. Thank the Lord for my wife, she's very good at reminding me about the trash.

But I can't expect her to be there to remind me of everything that I need to do to be eternally saved. That's why God doesn't want it to depend on you, He wants it to depend on His Son. He wants to make that provision for you and for me. So, this first concept, faith righteousness, looking away from ourselves to somebody else, is apart from the law. That means that you don't have to keep the law. In fact, I'll let you in on a secret: you *can't* keep the law! That's the whole point of the law is to show you

that you don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven. But God has provided a righteousness which is apart from the law. And notice this next word, it's witnessed about by the Law and the Prophets, which is a synonym for the Old Testament. We find that in Romans 3:21. And so there were a couple of ways that we looked at how this was witnessed through the Old Testament.

And you're gonna see this consistency in the Old Testament, and the first consistency is that the penalty for sin is death. It's been this way since Adam and Eve in the garden. That's never changed. And so, this is going to sound like a trick question but it's really not, it's straight forward, no sleight of hand here: if the penalty of sin is death, then what must be paid? Death. See, I mean, that's  $1+1=2$ , that's easy. And yet so many times when we see the penalty of sin is death in the Bible, many people, over many years, have gone about different ways to devise how to handle that penalty without death. And that's every religion that's ever been created in the world, trying to handle this penalty without death. Good works, whatever those might look like. Good deeds, religion, rituals. That doesn't take care of the death penalty.

Imagine if a man on death row in our court system is sentenced to the electric chair, and he tells the judge, "Hey, instead of the electric chair, how about I just do a bunch of good deeds the rest of my life?" "Well, no that doesn't work. Because the penalty is death, therefore a death must be paid. That is a consistent truth communicated in the Old Testament.

Another consistent truth we find all the way back in Genesis 3:15: God promised a Deliverer. God promised that He's gonna provide a solution to sin's penalty, which means He's not expecting you to provide a solution. He wants to provide it for you, and He promised that all the way back in Genesis 3:15. So right here in Genesis 3, right at the beginning, this seed of faith righteousness is sown. In other words, looking away from myself, looking to the merits of somebody else to gain a righteousness that I could never produce on my own, it's sown right here, because God is saying, "I'm going to have to send you a Deliverer to take care of this." And we looked at that last week.

What's another consistent thing that the Old Testament witnesses to? God has a means; He has a way to accept a substitutionary atoning death in your place and still execute His justice. His justice is not compromised in this way, and yet this is an opportunity for death to be paid, but you don't have to pay it. A substitute can pay that penalty for you. And so we see that this is simply an illustration all throughout the Old Testament of how this coming promised Deliverer was going to take care of this sin problem once and for all.

This is why when you go to the Old Testament, you flip to the beginning, you flip to a quarter way through, you're like, "What are all these animals getting killed for? This is bloody, I mean look at all these animals getting slaughtered in sacrifice!" You know why? God is giving us a visual aid; He's showing us how and what His promised Deliverer was going to do to take care of the sin problem.

Because the sin problem has two problems: we've got a penalty that we cannot pay, it's called death, and we've got a lack of righteousness that we would never qualify for heaven. And in the gospel, in Jesus Christ, God took care of both those issues. Jesus died for your sins. He died the death that you and I deserved. He is the one who paid that penalty. He is the one who was your substitute. And He was perfect, He lived a perfect life, He was God in the flesh. And He didn't stay dead, He didn't stay on the cross, they took Him off the cross, they buried Him, and He rose again three days later. That's what we're celebrating next week.

By the way, I hope that's not a once-a-year celebration for you. I hope that it's just cycled in your mind, every day of your life, that you've got a Savior, you've got a promised Deliverer who not only died to pay for your sins, but He rose again, He conquered death. That's why He can promise you

eternal life because He knows how to conquer death. He conquered it! And He can take you with Him to live with Him forever. And so we see even these concepts communicated in the Old Testament.

The second thing that we saw, and the reason we jumped out, is because of Romans 3:31. Because it says that this type of righteousness, faith righteousness, not you doing it on your own, but you trusting in the work of another actually establishes a law. And faith righteousness is not some end around, not some trick play that God threw in in the New Testament because, "Oh man, I really messed that up in the Old Testament, I better figure out a trick play." Those of you that know football, it's not a flea-flicker, it's not a double reverse. God had this all figured out from the beginning. This was God's plan to save man by grace through faith in the work that the promised Deliverer was going to do. That was His plan, that's always been His plan, and that's what Paul was saying here, that this concept of faith righteousness establishes the law. It does not skirt God's righteous judgment; it takes it head on and meets His requirements of justice.

And so we see that this concept of faith righteousness establishes the law, because God's perfect and righteous standard as revealed in the law - which we'll look at briefly - is not compromised and is perfectly upheld. We also see that the justice demanded by God's law is perfectly fulfilled. What does the law require of a sinner? Death. What did Jesus do for you? He died. He died for you; He died in your place. And so we see the law is completely established by this concept of faith righteousness.

And now as we looked last week, what has happened over the course of time is that as mankind has been confronted with the issue of sin, they've had multiple what we called last week, "fig leaf sewing parties." Remember, Adam and Eve when they sinned and they fell, they sewed fig leaves up to cover themselves, to make themselves right with God and God would not accept that. Cain and Abel had their own version of a fig leaf sewing party. Cain brought a sacrifice that did not shed blood, we looked at that last week.

We could go through every story of the Bible and see fig leaf sewing party after fig leaf sewing party, people trying to take care of this issue of sin and righteousness on their own. "Let me just cover up," and you know every religion that has ever existed in the world is a fig leaf sewing party. That's all it is. It's sitting around our righteousness sewing machines and trying to put together a covering that will be accepted by God on the day of judgment. And that will never happen, every fig leaf sewing party ends up and results in disaster.

In fact, do you know at the lake of fire, the Great White Throne Judgment of God, He is going to pull out our works, and He's gonna judge us based on our works. He's going to pull out all the fig leaf sewing parties that we've ever held, if we're not a believer in Jesus Christ, and He's gonna judge us and He says, "That covering is not good enough."

And so He's going to illustrate through the Old Testament what His promised Deliverer was gonna do. But everyone from the fall forward was born outside of the garden, everyone was born in a position separated from God, everyone was born with a sin penalty of death hanging over their head. This is why even Abel - who we don't find anything negative about recorded in the Bible - even Abel had to offer an animal sacrifice, even Abel deserved to die, even Abel deserved to spend eternity in the lake of fire.

He was separated from God. And we know that the penalty of sin demands payment and its death in three aspects. Physical death, which we're all very familiar with. But we also have spiritual death and eternal death, and death (as you'll recall) is defined as separation. In physical death our spirit is separated from our body. In spiritual death we're separated from God. In eternal death we're separated from God for eternity. And so death just communicates separation.

And so the penalty of sin is death, and it's death in all three aspects, and we see this even from the fall and going forward. That's why when we get to Romans 3, Paul gets to the end and he says, "All mankind is guilty, all have sinned, there's none good, there's none righteous," We may say, "Well, that's a good person." But according to God's standard, there's none good, none good enough to go to heaven, no one righteous enough to get there on their own. I don't care how many times we go to church; I don't care how many times you get dunked in water, I don't care how many rituals that we go through, that is not going to be enough. Nobody is good enough, that's what the Bible teaches. Those are all fig leaf sewing parties. Those are all our methods of taking care of this issue, and God wants to take care of the situation.

And so the question for God becomes this, "How can God remain just and punish sin as He should, but still love and not destroy the one who sinned?" See, when we look at the character of God, He's completely just but He's also completely loving. And He's not more just than He is loving, He's not more loving than He is just. This is where a lot of imbalances in the character of God come out in our culture when the question is asked, "How can a loving God send someone to hell?" The better question, and I've said this a number of times, is how could a just God let anyone into heaven?

See, that's really the question. How can a just God not execute justice on law breakers? And you might say, "Well I'm not a law breaker." What?! Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen something? You're a law breaker. You're a sinner. That's what the Bible says. And so that's not a comfortable message, but we're here to communicate truth, not build a kingdom. We're not building a business here to gather more people in, to make money, and to build bigger, we're here to communicate truth. Because we think it's that valuable to do so.

Adam and Eve tried to cover up with fig leaves. Cain tried his own version of a fig leaf sewing party, a sacrifice that did not shed blood, a sacrifice that did not take care of the penalty of sin which was death. And so this million dollar question, this two part question that we're answering as we look through the testimony of the Old Testament is this: how can Adam or man get rid of his sin with all its consequences and gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness, so we can be accepted back in His presence?

And as we looked at in the last section, God gave a beautiful visual aid pointing to the final work that His promised Deliverer would do. This visual aid was a substitutionary atoning death of an animal, and it was through this death that Adam and Eve were made acceptable to God, based on the final work that the promised Deliverer would one day do. It wasn't a fig leaf sewing party. God illustrated through the death of an innocent animal how He would eventually solve and deal with the ultimate sin problem via His promised Deliverer. And from Cain and Abel we learn that an offering for sin must shed blood. For God's justice to be unharmed there must be a death.

God is an excellent communicator. He's not like the middle school girlfriend that some of us had where you're trying to figure out what's going on in her mind. What does she mean when she says this? And to be fair ladies, I know guys are just as bad. So, the middle school boyfriend that you're trying to figure out what's going on in his mind. This isn't the way God works. God communicates and what He says, He means. So, when He says the penalty of sin is *death*, that's what He means. We take Him at face value. There's got to be a death that's paid.

And what we're going to find is that the truth of the Bible is this: either you can pay that death, or you can let Jesus pay your death for you, that's your two options. You want to face the death penalty on your own, you want to trust in your good works, you want to trust in the life that you lived, you can do that. God gives you that choice. But you'll face the death penalty on your own, you will pay that, and it's an eternal death consequence. In other words, you never pay it off.



It's like having a mortgage but not thirty years, forever, you just never pay it off. Or, you can believe what God said, that Jesus can step into your place and die the death that you deserved for you. He can die in your place as a substitute. And so all throughout the Old Testament, this is the visual aid that God puts together.

Now, as we move forward in our story, we don't want to just stop in Genesis 3, because the Bible has a lot more to say about this. And so we're gonna move briskly and quickly, Lord willing, if I don't get too long winded. But we're gonna move quickly through the Old Testament, and what we're trying to put together is that these concepts remain: the penalty of sin is death, there's a promised Deliverer coming, and God illustrated what the promised Deliverer would do through animal sacrifices. God establishes the law via faith righteousness because what we have is somebody that pays the penalty that the law requires. And so as God promises a Deliverer, He further funnels this Person down so we can recognize Him when He comes.

And so at a point in time in Genesis 12, God chooses a man to build a nation through. And it's through this nation and through his lineage that this promised Deliverer would come. Abraham was 75 years old when God called him away from his family to a country that He would show him. He said He would make a great nation out of him, and He would bless him, and that all families of the earth would be blessed through him. Let's look at Genesis 12:1-3, which basically says exactly what I just read.

*"Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"*

And reading back into the Old Testament from the New Testament, Paul says in Galatians that this is the first preaching of the gospel, if you will. This message that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him directly refers to that promised Deliverer promised back in Genesis 3:15. And so God is now funneling His promise, He's now working through a man, He's going to build a nation, He's going to work through his lineage to bring about this promised Deliverer from Genesis 3:15 to take care of the sin problem.

We see that God promised Abraham many children. His children would be as numerous as the stars. And although everything contrary seemed to be true, in fact, the years were gaining on Abraham. You know, you hear this phrase, "Your biological clock is ticking, you better start having kids." People will say that. Their biological clock might have been turned off, I mean, that's how far along they were. He gets to about 100 years old and Sarah, his wife, gets into her 90's before they have children, and all of these things are working against them, and yet Genesis 15:6 says this: *"And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."*

See, and right here, we have this concept that Abraham is looking away from himself for the righteousness needed to be acceptable to God. He believes God. We know from John 8 later on that Abraham was looking for this coming promised Deliverer planned in Genesis 3:15, and so his faith was in this coming Deliverer. And God, on the basis of that faith, trusting in His eventual solution to the sin problem, credited him righteousness. And this is exactly who Paul's going to go to in Romans 4 when we continue our study there, to show that this is not a new concept, that God has always been in the business of saving people who will simply put their faith in Him, in His provision for sin.

And so we see that in the life of Abraham, right here in Genesis 15:6. At the ripe age of 100, Abraham and Sarah, his wife, she was in her 90's - think about that ladies, those of you who've given birth. That would be a tough proposition - but they gave birth to their first son, truly a miracle. And it was through Isaac and then through his son Jacob, and the continued lineage through this family that

God brought this promised Deliverer. This promise that He made back to Adam and Eve, that her seed, the promised Deliverer, would crush the serpent's (Satan) head, yet he, Satan, would bruise His (the promised Deliverer) heel.

And God is fulfilling this promise through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, on to Judah, and so on and so forth, all the way down in history and spoiler alert - Jesus Christ is Him. We see that played out in Matthew. And that's all the way back to the beginning. This is God's story; this is us trying not to pick it up midway through the book and trying to figure out what was going on.

But you know Isaac is a perfect substitution illustration. We say that God was illustrating substitutionary atoning sacrifices all throughout the Old Testament to show us what the promised Deliverer would do. Well, here's a beautiful one: Isaac. Isaac was a young man, but he too was born separated from God. Isaac also deserved to die. Isaac had a sin debt. Isaac needed to take care of his sin issue as well, so the fact that he was going to die shouldn't be a shock to us. Now the way it was going to happen was a little shocking. Because God tells Abraham to kill his son, and I want you to notice the wording that He uses. Now this is the son that they waited 25 years for. He's waiting, he's waiting, he's waiting. He's doing some other things as he's waiting, but we don't have time to get into that.

But he's waiting, and finally Isaac is born. And yet we see in Genesis 22 that God instructs Abraham to kill his son. Verse 2 says, *"Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'"* And so we read the story that Abraham rises early, he obeys God, Isaac goes with him, Isaac bears the wood for the offering, and Isaac kind of looks around and says, "Boy, this isn't adding up, Dad. I see the wood, I see the fire, where's the sacrifice?" And even in Abraham's mind right there, he says, "God will provide the sacrifice." Abraham knows who the sacrifice is at this point, but in his thinking, God's going to provide the sacrifice.

And so he takes Isaac up, and he begins to tie him to the altar. He begins to thrust the knife down to kill his son and he hears a voice from heaven. But Abraham was trusting in God's goodness to provide a solution to death. He took the knife to plunge it into Isaac. We gain insight into Abraham's thinking. You always wonder what was going through their minds?

You know, as my kids have done really dumb and crazy things over the years, part of me as a parent was like, "What was going through your mind? What were you thinking about?" Hypothetically, if you took a pair of box cutters and cut your thumb, I mean, what were you thinking about? What was going through your mind? No, just kidding. I'm going to tell you what was going through my son's mind: the same thing that was going through my mind as a teenager when I did almost the exact same thing. So, like father, like son.

But you wonder sometimes in biblical stories, what was going through their mind? What was Abraham thinking about this? We get this insight in the book of Hebrews. And you know what Abraham reckoned in his mind? God promised me Isaac. God's good. God told me to kill Isaac, so I guess if I kill him God's going to raise him from the dead. That's what was going through Abraham's mind. So, he has no problem by faith slamming this knife down into his son, killing him, because he's trusting in the goodness of God, he's trusting in the promise of God. This is a man who not only believed God and got credited righteousness, but this was a man who went on with God and walked by faith.

We know God calls from heaven to stop Abraham, and it was God who provided a substitute for Isaac. As He stops Abraham He says, "Look over in the bush." He sends a ram who gets caught with his horns in the thicket and He says, "There's the substitute. That ram is gonna die in Isaac's place." And if the ram had not died that day, Isaac would have died. But again, we get this beautiful picture, the

Old Testament testifying to this concept of substitutionary atoning death, the lamb dying in place of Isaac.

As we go on through history, we see that that representation represents exactly what Jesus did, except whereas Abraham got to keep his son, God gave up His Son for the ultimate penalty. And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, went through and paid that penalty for you and for me. But it's, again, a beautiful picture of the substitutionary work of our promised Deliverer that God was illustrating throughout the Old Testament.

Now we leave Abraham, and we fast forward a few generations, and we look at this time in Egypt. We've got Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob had a son named Joseph who was sold into slavery, and then he became second-in-command in Egypt. Great story, we don't have time to go through how he got there, but he becomes second-in-command in Egypt, he moves his family there to protect them from famine, and then we know that years later, Exodus 1:8, that the Israelites were made slaves by a king who did not know Joseph.

Ironically enough, this whole time period in the nation of Israel's life was prophesied to Abraham back in Genesis 15, God told him that his people would be slaves in a country for 400 years, and so that's exactly what happened. And at the end of that time, God sends Moses to communicate these ten plagues to Pharaoh to let his people go. The last of these plagues is what we want to focus on. It's the most intense out of the ten, and it's come to be known as the Passover. And what God did is He informed the Israelites of this: the firstborn child in every house would die that night in Egypt. And every firstborn animal in Egypt would also die, and they would die at the Angel of Death's hands. That's what was communicated to the nation of Israel.

Now was God wrong in saying this? No. God in His justice could wipe out every single one of us the moment that we sin. It's because of His mercy that He doesn't do that. It's because of His love that He doesn't do that. But that's what we deserve, that's what the Bible says: When you break the law, the penalty for sin is death. That should happen, right? Immediately.

So, God in His mercy, He could do this every night if He wanted to. But He doesn't do this, He provides a way of escape, it's known as the Passover. For those of you that like clean houses and clean doors, this probably would not have worked out well for you, this is kind of dirty and gross. But what He did, is He designed a way that an animal, a lamb, could die in the place of the firstborn.

And so He went through some specific instructions. In fact, they're very specific. We don't have time to read through them all, but they're found in Exodus 12:1-46 if you want to look through them. But the first thing this lamb had to be is a male. It had to be without blemish, you couldn't just take ol' gimpy leg that can't get around and go, "Hey, let's just sacrifice gimpy leg, because he's not gonna make it anyway!" You couldn't take one of the lambs with a disease and say, "He's about to die in the next week, let's just sacrifice that guy." No, it had to be a perfect lamb without blemish. The lamb had to be sacrificed at the appointed time. It had to be sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the month, it had to be sacrificed at the right time of the day, at twilight. All these details. The blood was to be shed, the blood was to be applied to the doorpost and the lintel. They were to stay inside the house until morning, so sacrifice the lamb at twilight, apply the blood and stay in the house until morning.

And then finally, we were told that they were not to break any of the bones. So why does God go through this much detail? Well, you're going to see why in the next section when we talk about the promised Deliverer, who was a male, who was without blemish, who was sacrificed at the appointed time, who shed blood, who did not have any of His bones broken. See, this was a visual aid pointing forward to what Jesus Christ would do on the cross. They wanted to break His legs, but He had already given up the spirit. They said, "Aw, He's already dead, we're not gonna break His legs."

This is God's story, He put this thing together, that's why it fits together so perfectly. And we see this in the Passover. And so when the Death Angel saw the blood applied to the doorpost, he would literally pass over, that's where the name comes from. He would pass over that house, why? Because judgment and death had already fallen on that house, in the form of a substitute. The substitute had died in the place of a firstborn. God is a just God, and He was bringing judgment on sin, but as a God of love, He was also mercifully providing a way of escape for the Israelites. This is a continuous theme in the Old Testament.

So, when Paul says the Law and the Prophets witnessed this, he's telling the truth. He's not just creating a new way to get saved, this is what the Old Testament teaches over and over and over again. In fact, I'm sure by this time, at this point in this message, it's getting repetitive for you. That's good! I want it to be. It needs to be repetitive for us. We need to be able to trust the God of the Bible, what He says is going to save us from an eternal damnation, save us from the penalty of our sins, provide us with forgiveness of sins, give us eternal life as a free gift, not for something that we earn or deserve, but something that He provides for us when we trust in the finished work of His Son.

See, that's what we're looking at here. Yes, it's repetitive, but yes, this is what God's been doing through history, it's pointing forward to this day, and Jesus Christ - you look at the time scale that we live on, B.C., A.D., - and Jesus Christ *is* the focal point of human history, and this is why. Because He's God's focal point. That's who God is occupied with. That's who God the Father is pleased with, is Jesus Christ. And so He wants us to be occupied with the same Person.

There was a death in each household that night, either the firstborn died, or a lamb died in place of the firstborn. Again, the Old Testament witnessed to the fact that the penalty of sin is death, and that God would accept a substitutionary atoning sacrifice. And now we move on to the giving of the law and its introduction. And again, we're going to move through this quickly. But as we know from history and from the Bible, God brought Israel out of Egypt. After the Passover they were brought into the wilderness, and He wanted to rule over them in a theocracy, no human king. He was gonna provide a human king, but in His timing. And it was gonna be this promised Deliverer, I believe. That's who He was going to provide was Jesus Himself.

But He further reveals His holiness and His righteous standard in the law. He does not now depart from all these years of illustrating what the promised Deliverer would do, His provision of sin, He does not depart from that now and say, "Okay, well we're going to try the law for a little bit and see how well you keep it. So that you can earn and merit your way to heaven by keeping My law." No, He introduces the law for a simple reason: to clearly define sin, to clearly define His holiness, to clearly define His righteous standard so that each one of us would know that we don't measure up. We can't get there, we need what God is providing, Genesis 3:15, this promised Deliverer, we *need* Him.

The law wasn't designed to say, "Oh yeah, I can get this done now. I don't *need* the promised Deliverer from Genesis 3:15 anymore. I've got the law, and I'm just going to walk around and just keep it all day long. I'm just gonna go through the list and just keep this law and get my way to heaven." That's not why God introduced the law. It's for the exact opposite purpose as we see in the New Testament, and we'll look at that here in a second.

But in Exodus 19:1-6 God makes an offer, He says, "I've carried you on eagle's wings, but now I want to make a covenant with you. And if you'll keep my commandments, I'll be your God, you'll be my people, we'll be close." And Israel says, "We've got it. Anything God says, all that He says we'll do. All of it." And by this time in history, it's only been three months since they left Egypt, and they've already complained - *big* complaints - *twice*. They've got no shot!

And you know, it's like giving somebody the Ten Commandments and saying, "Keep these to get to heaven." And they say, "No problem, I've got it!" In fact, I've had many people tell me over the years, "Oh yeah, the way I'm going to get to heaven is I'm gonna keep the Ten Commandments." Are you kidding me? Those are the very commandments that are going to *condemn* you and show that you're not worthy of heaven, that you can't get there on your own. Those are the very things that are going to condemn you, and yet Israel responds that way.

And then in Exodus 19:10-19, we see God break off the string of these holiness visual aids. The people were to wash their clothes to separate themselves, there was a boundary line at the base of the mountain that said if anyone touched it they're to die, even if your animals run out over there! So you've got a dog that wouldn't listen to you. Anybody ever had a dog run out, not listen to you, run down the street? That dog would have died on that day. He probably would have run right into the bottom of that mountain...boom, gone! And I've had dogs where I would have said, "Glory, hallelujah! Finally! I don't have to take care of that thing anymore or chase him around."

But we're talking about a holy God. Separate from sinful people, not able to reside in the presence of sin. We get a picture of God's holiness here as He's about to reveal the law. And you know how the people responded? They trembled. They were afraid, thunder and lightning. And that should cause each of us to tremble before a holy and righteous God. Not that we're going to show up to heaven and start negotiating with God, as if God's gonna let us in because we're just going to talk Him into it. Are you kidding me?

This is the picture of God we have to understand, because then the question we're always going to be asked is, "How can a just God let a sinner like me into heaven?" Have you ever asked yourself that question? Or have you been on the flip side, "Of course God's going to let me in, I'm pretty good!" Man, that's not the Bible at all. That's called pride. In fact, the originator of the sin of pride is a guy you might recognize by the name of Satan. You don't want to be on that side, trust me.

We want to understand the holiness and righteousness of God, and that's what the law produced. And the law is black and white. In fact, in our day and age, you wonder if anyone believes in black and white anymore. Everything's just so loosey-goosey. But the law's black and white. The law says, "Don't do this, and if you do, you die. And if you break this, the penalty for sin is death." The law makes no exceptions. The law is black and white, it carries out its justice, and all the mathematical minds in the crowd, all the accountants are saying, "Hallelujah! Finally, something is black and white!" Well God's law is unmercifully black and white. It condemns. That's all it does, but praise God He's also a loving God.

And so although He gives the Ten Commandments, we see that He expects nothing less than perfect obedience. That's the measure by which somebody can earn their way to heaven, perfect obedience. In fact, we learn later that if they broke just one of the Ten Commandments, they were guilty of breaking the whole law, they could not pick and choose. So that means if you've ever told a lie, you're just as guilty as someone who's murdered somebody, according to God's estimation.

So, we're talking about a perfect standard. A perfect, righteous standard that God gives to say that you and I don't have a chance. You know, that promised Deliverer thing that He did way back in Genesis, that's looking better and better as we go through the Bible, because now people actually had a knowledge and an understanding of how they were breaking God's law. It was clearly defined, clearly delineated to them. And they should have shuddered in their boots because they're going to have to face a holy God. We're going to have to face a holy God one day.

And the question is, do you want to face Him in your own fig leaf that you've sewed and put together and tried to figure out how to get there? Or do you want to get there by pointing to the Man

at His right hand and saying, “I’m here because of that Man. Because of what He did for me, because of the fact that He died in my place. And if Jesus Christ isn’t good enough, God the Father, I don’t stand a *chance*. Every hope I have is in that Man seated right there.” That’s the message. That’s what we want to be trusting in. Not in ourselves, not in a church, not in a pastor, not in a man, we want to trust in the God-Man Jesus Christ, who did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Remember, if man’s righteousness does not equal God’s righteousness, the relationship cannot be restored. And so in the gospel God has also devised a way to credit Jesus’s righteousness to us, He actually becomes our righteousness, and we’ll talk much more about that as we continue in the book of Romans.

We see that God’s purpose for the law is clearly defined in Romans 3:19. It’s to get you and I to stop justifying ourselves. “Yeah, *but...*” doesn’t work at the Great White Throne Judgment. There is no, “Yeah, *but...*”. The law shuts you down because the law shows you and I that we’re red-handed. We’re guilty, red-handed sinners, there’s no defense, there’s not even a reason to talk or defend ourselves. That’s what the law is designed to do. It’s like a mirror with a dirty face, it points out that your face is dirty, but you don’t use the mirror to clean your face. It just points out, it reflects, it tells you what’s wrong. And again, the results of not keeping the Ten Commandments or sinning are death. Again, a consistent message all throughout the Old Testament.

And now we move on to the Tabernacle. We’re moving through the Old Testament, but again, just seeing a lot of repeated concepts that God wants us to see as He goes on. And so we look at this Tabernacle that He sets up in the wilderness as they’re marching in circles for forty years, and then on into the Promised Land, this temporary dwelling of God. And so this was an elaborate visual aid designed to help man understand what God was doing to mend the broken relationship. Notice there’s only one way into this Tabernacle. There are not multiple ways, they can’t come in any way, they’ve got to go through the door.

And notice the first piece of furniture they met was the Brazen Altar. Again, substitutionary atoning sacrifice, the first step in approach to God. And so as the person entered, the first thing that they saw was this Brazen Altar. We also know that in the holy place there was a curtain that separated the most holy place from the rest of the furniture in the holy place, and this is where God’s presence dwelt during this time. He dwelled in a pillar of smoke, a cloud coming out of the back of the Holy of Holies. And so they could visually see that in their approach to God, they had to come through the entrance, they had to come through an atoning animal sacrifice to approach God.

And interestingly enough during this time, the Ark of the Covenant was inside the Holy of Holies, and nobody could go through the curtain and view it except for the high priest, one day a year. And so again, we see the separation between God and man, we see what sin has done in the relationship between God and man, but we also see that on the top of the Ark of the Covenant was something called an atonement covering. A mercy seat, where the high priest sprinkled blood. Again, an atoning sacrifice. Without the shedding of blood there’s no forgiveness of sins. He sprinkles blood on the atonement cover once a year to basically illustrate again what the promised Deliverer was going to do for the sins of the people.

And so again, we see this visual aid, death is the penalty for sin, substitutionary atoning sacrifice. We see this continually pointing to what the promised Deliverer was going to do. In fact, we see a more permanent structure developed once the nation of Israel gets into the land, it’s the Temple. And so it was built in Solomon’s time, and these animal sacrifices went on, again, illustrating *what* and *how* the promised Deliverer would take care of the sin problem for man. How would He do it? What would He do?

Again, all of these animal sacrifices illustrated that, and a part of the value of a visual aid for the sinning person, was that they actually had to lay their hand on the animal's head and kill it. And they understood then probably better than now that the penalty for sin is death, because every time they brought a sacrifice, they were the one who put their hand on the animal's head signifying that their sin was transferring to that animal, that as a result of that, the animal would now die in their place as their substitute.

It was just a clear visual aid for them every time they brought a sacrifice, that sin produces death, *my sin* produces death, this animal is dying in my place as an innocent substitute. This animal doesn't deserve to die, but they're dying in my place. I deserve to die. All these things were clearly taught through this visual aid. And so it symbolized again, this sin, man's sin, transferring to this animal and the animal dying as a substitutionary death.

One more example: the brazen serpent. You know, we haven't talked about this concept of faith. We've mentioned it with Abraham, but this idea of faith righteousness, this idea that as you put your faith in Jesus Christ that you're saved from hell that you deserved and placed into a heaven that you will never deserve. You're delivered from sin's penalty, so you're saved. But we have a very interesting physical illustration of this also in Israel's wandering in the desert, and that's with this brazen serpent.

Some of you know the story, but the Israelites were wandering around in the wilderness, they began to grumble about life in general, they kind of had a habit of doing that. Not unlike most of us probably, as we traverse this life, there's a lot of things easy to grumble about. But as a result of this, God sent a judgment. He sent venomous snakes among the people, and many Israelites died that day. We see this story unfold in Numbers 21. Now what's great is the Israelites realize that this punishment was due to their sin. And so they came to Moses, God's representative on earth for them at that time, and they asked for deliverance from the snakes. Notice that they're looking away from themselves for deliverance.

You know, they might have tried to deliver themselves one way. If I'm out in the wilderness and a poisonous snake bites me and I've got someone with me, I'm gonna be like, "Hey man, can you suck the poison out?" You've seen the movies, right? I mean, that's how you handle poisonous snakes. You start devising ways, I'd probably do the Mr. Miyagi with the sand, I mean I would try everything, right? And maybe they had done that by this time, maybe they had tried to deliver themselves, but they realized that they weren't able to solve the issue.

So they go to Moses, and again, this is that concept of faith righteousness, looking away from themselves for a solution to their problem. And so God gives Moses a solution. He devises a merciful way to deliver the Israelites. And the way that He does this is He instructs Moses to make a bronze serpent, put it on a pole, and He instructed the people to look at the serpent. As Moses holds it up, they're to look at the serpent. They're not to crawl over to the serpent, they're not to run laps around Mount Sinai, they're not to promise to not complain anymore or promise to do better, they're simply to look at this bronze serpent that Moses created.

And guess what? If they looked, they lived. They were healed. Whoever didn't look, died. That was the issue. The issue was will you trust in God's provision? Will you trust in God's provision for these snake bites? And so whoever looked, lived, whoever did not look, died. With this look the individual was expressing faith in the Lord, trusting God's way to deliver him from this snake bite. Trusting Him to be true and faithful to His word, trusting in His way of deliverance, and guess what is a perfect illustration? Turn with me to John chapter 3.

You say, “Wow, why did God send poisonous snakes? Why did He do this? Why did He set up this weird way of this bronze serpent being lifted up and people looked and lived?” Because God is telling a story. God is driving human history to this promised Deliverer, and you know one day that story was going to be meaningful for a different reason.

As Jesus is talking to Nicodemus here, which by the way, Nicodemus was the most religious man probably that ever lived, at least he was the most religious man of that time probably. A Pharisee, a keeper of the law, and Jesus tells him, “Everything you’ve got, and you’ve done, Nicodemus, isn’t enough. You’ve got to be born again.” And you know in Jewish culture there were like six different ways to be born again, and we don’t have time to get into all that, but Nicodemus was born again four of those six ways. And so when Jesus says, “You’ve got to be born again,” he’s like, “Wait a minute, I’ve already been born again, and again, and again, and again, what other way is there? I’ve got to climb back in my mom’s belly?” No, no, no, you’re missing the point. And what He was saying was, “Nicodemus, you’re not good enough to go to heaven. You need a deliverance outside of yourself.”

And so what does Jesus go to in John 3:14? He goes to the story of the brazen serpent. He says in verse 14, *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

You see, the Old Testament testifies to faith righteousness. And the connection here is very simple to see: Moses lifted up the brazen serpent on the pole. Whoever looked at it, lived, whoever didn’t, rejected God’s plan of deliverance or method of deliverance, they died. And in the same manner, Jesus Christ has been lifted up on a day in human history in full public view, 2,000 years ago on a hill called Golgotha, He was nailed to a cross, He died a criminal’s death, He paid for your sins, He paid for my sins, He paid for the sins of the world.

And now the Bible says this: will you look to the Savior? Will you place your faith in the one who died for you? That’s how the people in Moses’ day were saved from the snake bite, and that’s how you and I can be saved from the penalty of sin. Did you pick that up in verse 16, *“that whoever believes in Him should not perish,”* you don’t have to face the death penalty. You will never have to face the death penalty. Why? Because Jesus faced it for you, Jesus took your death penalty for you.

So, if you believe in the sacrifice that Jesus made on your behalf, God says you’ll never face the death penalty, and He also gives you another promise in verse 16: you have everlasting life. And if you have something that lasts forever, can you ever lose it? No. And that’s a promise from the word of God, and that’s a promise from the God of the universe, the Judge who will declare people guilty or innocent at the end of time. He has told you the way to get there. He said, “Believe on my Son, believe in what He’s done for you. You won’t face the death penalty and you’ll have everlasting life.”

Now I wonder if there’s anyone here today who’s never done that, who’s never put their faith in Jesus Christ. The beautiful thing about it is God has already done it all for you. You don’t have to walk up to this aisle, you don’t have to join our church, you don’t have to get your checkbook out, you don’t have to raise your hand or say a prayer, all you have to do, in the quiet confines of your seat right there, is transfer your faith from whatever you were trusting in to get you to heaven on to the One who died for you and rose again. The one that God promised all the way back in Genesis 3:15. Will you simply put your faith in Him today? The Bible says if you do that you won’t perish, and you’ll have everlasting life.



# CHAPTER 16

## Establishing the Law Part 3

### Romans

He's risen; He's risen indeed! What a great day to celebrate that. Turn with me to Luke 24 as we get started. I want you to imagine what it would feel like in Jerusalem that day to have the leader that you had followed for the previous three years, and to hear the news that you had heard, to hear that He had been crucified, to hear that He had been buried, and then to hear that some of the women and Peter had gone to the tomb and found the tomb empty, and not knowing exactly what was going on, and that's what faced these two men on the road to Emmaus.

Emmaus was a village about seven miles from Jerusalem, so they're on their way home from the weekend's events, trying to put these things together, and they get a visitor on their walk home, a stranger, at least to them at the time. And we see that this stranger began to ask them questions, and they say this in verse 17, *"He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?'"* You get an insight into their emotional state at the time, these two men were sad. They were sad to know that this Man that they had followed, this Jesus of Nazareth, that there was some confusion as to what was going on with Him.

And so Jesus, who was the stranger disguised to them, He began to explain, and we get all the way down to verse 27, and it says that Jesus began at Moses and all the prophets. That's just a way to say the Old Testament. He went through the entire Old Testament, *"beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."* And they went all the way home, and notice what happened in verse 30: *"Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were open and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight."*

And I love what they say next, see they recognized Jesus when He prayed, and notice what they say next. As Jesus had journeyed them through the Old Testament pointing out how the Scriptures testified to Him, in verse 32, *"And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the scriptures to us?'"* And how excited were they that day? Verse 33, *"So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem,"* - now that's a subtle comment in the text, but that's seven miles. Walking. Not in the Honda Accord, right? Not in a Toyota Camry, not on a motorbike, anything like that. Seven miles! They had just walked seven miles. Their hearts burned so much they said, *"We got to go back and tell people about this message."*

You know, I think what's interesting about this is in verse 27, again, going back to that, that Jesus began at Moses and all the prophets, *"He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."* One of the beautiful things about the Bible is that God is consistent from beginning to end. This is why Jesus could go to the Old Testament and preach Himself from the Old Testament, and that's what we've been looking at the last few weeks.

We see that God has had one story from beginning to end. God has one story that He's trying to communicate with you and with me. He's not trying to hide the way to heaven from us, He's not trying to make it difficult, He's not trying to make it hard. You don't have to learn a secret handshake, you don't have to go down a secret alley, you don't have to go through a back door, He's communicating it clearly, and it's been one story consistently over time, with no deviation, no change. Man has been saved by grace through faith in the finished work, the substitutionary atoning death of a promised

Deliverer. That's the message of the Bible from start to finish. That's how Abraham got saved, that's how Adam got saved, and you know what, that's how you and I get saved today.

We see God goes through great effort to repeat, to restate, to remind mankind throughout history of this one way. And we see that testimony in the Old Testament, this repeating, reminding, restating of this one way, and He does it over, and over, and over again. How many times does it take your children to learn something once you've told them? Well, they're probably like my children, they learn the first time, right? You just tell them one time and they get it. No, my children are more like two times, right? No, try seven, eight, some we're still waiting for that final number to drop, I don't know when it's gonna sink in.

But you know, God is very careful in the message that He communicates, and He does it over, and over, and over again, and God is consistent. You know, God is consistent in a way that you and I are not consistent. You don't believe me? How's your new year's resolution going? That's just four and a half months ago. We can't even be consistent for four and a half months. For some of us it didn't take four and a half hours, you know, we had that leftover pie there on New Year's like, "Forget this diet thing! Oh, that's for the birds, we'll do that next year." And so you see this consistency in God. You know, how hard is it to be consistent? Well for God it's not hard to be consistent. There are no contingencies in His plan. He put it all together from beginning to end, and He stuck to His plan.

You know the other thing that's great is this one way that God speaks about over and over again, it's not subject to somebody else's opinion. You know, He's not subject to the latest fads. It's not going to be replaced, it's not going to be repealed, it's not going to be revised, it's not going to be refurbished, it's not going to be tweaked up to meet the common culture of the day. God's one way is not subject to change. He's put it together perfectly from the beginning, it needs no revision. It's not like a medical care system, it's not like a governmental system, it's not like any of those things that always get repealed, replaced, revised, refurbished, fixed, and corrected, and then messed up, and then fixed and corrected, it's not like that at all. God has been consistent from the beginning; this one way does not need any change.

And in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as we'll look at today, God has gone through great lengths also to prove to you that His one way is infallible. That His one way actually takes care of the sin problem that you and I both have. All of us have this issue, and God's one way deals with it so perfectly, and the resurrection is the testimony to that. Now to base it all down to some fundamental things, God really gave us some consistent themes in the Old Testament, and this is a consistent theme throughout the Bible.

First, the penalty for sin is death. If we don't get that out of the Old Testament, if we don't get that out of the Bible, we're missing the boat. The penalty for sin is death, this never changes, God is consistent on this front. Why? Because God is completely holy and completely just, and He will never cease to be completely holy and completely just. So, in terms of consistently executing justice on lawbreakers, God is consistent with this. You never have to wonder where God is on certain issues.

I remember as a kid growing up - and my dad's here today, and I don't mean to embarrass him - my dad believed in corporal punishment. Not capital punishment, because I'm still here - if he did believe in that, I wouldn't be here this morning, I guarantee - but he believed in corporal punishment. And I remember sometimes as a kid going home and not knowing if my mom had told my dad yet what I had done at school that day, and not knowing if it was safe to go near him or to avoid him, because he may not have been given the knowledge yet. And so some days, I'd walk by and I didn't get swatted. My mom kept it from him for some reason, and I obtained mercy, and I didn't get any corporal

punishment. But some days he knew what had happened, and I remember those days well, those days stick out to me a little bit more than the others.

But you know, God never misses a bit of information. See, God never changes. God is consistent because He is holy, and He's always holy, that's who He is. He is just, He's always just, that's who He is. And so God remains consistent in that the penalty for sin is death. Here's another consistent thing that we see: God wants to provide a solution for this penalty. See, that's the beautiful thing of God. Because not only is God holy and just, but He's also love.

And so what we see throughout the Old Testament is although there is a penalty for sin, God wants to provide the solution for that penalty. He doesn't want *you* to provide the solution, He doesn't expect *you* to provide the solution, He wants to provide it *for* you, and He's done that from the beginning of time, this never changes. Because God is love. God wants to provide this solution, He doesn't want to see anybody destroyed by His justice, and these are the two truths that run simultaneously throughout the Bible. These were probably some of the things that Jesus was communicating to His disciples on the road to Emmaus, these two truths running parallel with one another through the scriptures.

So how does God do this? How does God put this penalty that cannot be changed with His solution that He wants to provide for those who have broken His law? Well, we go on to see the consistency of God, He promised a solution to sin's problem by sending or promising a coming Deliverer. One day, this coming Deliverer promised all the way back in Genesis 3 was going to take care of the solution for sin and its consequences. God promised that all throughout the beginning, and He spends the rest of the Bible testifying and witnessing of what this coming Deliverer would do for you and for me. This coming Deliverer would defeat Satan, He would crush the Serpent's head and He would provide God's solution for man's problem. He would be God's loving solution; this Person would be God's loving solution. But notice again, God wants to provide it for man. He's not expecting man to engineer a solution on his own.

And so the entire Old Testament provides this testimony, and the entire Old Testament provides these visual aids of what this coming Deliverer would do. The Old Testament doesn't have to be a confusing book when we see it in light of God's story. What is God doing? He's revealing what this coming Deliverer would do, He's providing visual aids all throughout the Bible to show what He would accomplish on our behalf, and what He would do to take care of sin's problem for good.

So, what were God's visual aids? Well simply put, the penalty for sin was death, and so there was a lot of death in the Old Testament. The good news was that God had devised a way that a substitute could pay the penalty for a guilty person. An innocent substitute could pay that atoning sacrifice, and God began to introduce this concept all the way back in Genesis of a substitutionary atoning death of an animal. See, God could rightfully execute His justice, He wouldn't have to compromise His justice because somebody was paying the penalty. The good news is that the law breaker didn't have to pay that penalty, an animal could pay the penalty in their place. And so we see God introduce this atoning substitutionary death.

We also see through this substitutionary atoning death that God in His love could let the law breaker go free. Why? Because they had put their faith in God. They had put their faith in God's coming Deliverer. And so we see man is saved by grace through faith, and that the animal sacrifices pointed ahead to what this final, coming, promised Deliverer would do one day and take care of man's sin problem forever. God illustrated through the death of innocent animals how He would eventually deal with the sin problem via His promised Deliverer.

So as God is consistent - we see this over, and over, and over again throughout the history of the pages of the Bible - we also see that man is consistent. And man has a million-dollar two-point

question if you want to say it that way: how can he get rid of his sin with all its consequences? And secondly, how can he gain a righteousness equal to God's righteousness so he can be accepted back into His presence?

See, man has got a dilemma. Mankind has known this at some level. Now, if they could explain it this way over history, I don't know if they would explain it this exact way, but they knew something was off in their relationship with the Creator. And so man became consistent in how they began to deal with this two-part question. And they got consistent in trying to solve the sin problem on their own. They began what we've termed "fig leaf sewing parties," and so you see that man is consistent in trying to solve the sin problem on his own.

In fact, this is the explanation and the reason for the development of every religion in the world. It's their fig leaf sewing parties. Religion only tells you, and engineers, and comes up with their own ideas on how to deal with the sin problem, and God doesn't *want* you dealing with the sin problem. He wants to provide the solution for you, God wants to deal with the sin problem on your behalf, and He wants you simply to trust the way in which He's dealt with sin.

Religion approaches it the exact opposite, "Let me tell you what I'm gonna do to deal with my sin problem. Let me tell you how I'm gonna be good enough, how I'm gonna light enough candles, how I'm gonna get wet enough with water, I'm gonna get sprinkled, immersed, I'm gonna go through every ritual known to man to beat this sin problem, and we're missing the whole point of the Bible. That is not the answer to the sin problem. God wants to provide the solution, and God has provided the solution to man's sin problem. He's done that through His promised Deliverer, we know Him better by the name Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again 2,000 years ago on a day in history, when everything that God had planned from the beginning of time was executed by Jesus.

Jesus bore the brunt of our justice, so there's no need to have a fig leaf sewing party. There's no need to make an effort to try to come to God and make yourself acceptable to God, because you'll never do it! And this is what man has been consistent with through the beginning of history, the long and distinguished history of all the fig-leaf sewing parties.

Adam and Eve started it by sewing fig leaves together as coverings for them when they sinned in the garden. Cain with his offering came to God in his way. His offering did not shed blood, but he put a lot of effort into growing the fruit and the produce of ground to bring to God, and yet effort wasn't good enough. God was not looking for Cain to come up with the solution, God wanted to provide it for Cain.

We see the people of Noah's day, they didn't even care. The text tells us in Genesis 6 that their thoughts were only evil all the time, they weren't even thinking about God, approaching Him or having to face Him one day in judgment. The people of Babel said, "Hey, we'll make a tower that reaches to heaven. We want to get to heaven; we'll just build a tower, and we'll get there. And if this God tries to destroy us with a flood again, we'll just go up on top of the tower and protect ourselves from ever being destroyed again. Huh, what do you think about that, God?" And they thumbed their nose at God and said, "We'll get there our own way." You know the old Frank Sinatra song, right? "I did it my way." Well, they did it their way, and it didn't work out too well for them, because God doesn't want us to do things our own way. He wants to provide a solution that only He can provide, and yet we see this history of fig leaf sewing parties.

We see the Israelites and their birth privilege. The Israelites began to trust in the fact that they were Jews, to trust in the fact that they were circumcised, to trust in the fact that they had the law. God doesn't want them trusting in themselves. God doesn't want *us* trusting in ourselves, coming to God in our own way. And so the Israelites too needed to look away from themselves. We see the Pharisees, as

a history of fig leaf sewing parties go on, they begin to develop rules and different barriers around the law of God. They began to create a whole new system of more difficulty, and they began to live in good works.

We looked at one of those men last week briefly, Nicodemus, who was one of the most religious men in the world, who had kept these outer layers of law. If the law said, "Don't touch this," Nicodemus would just stand far away from it, I mean he wouldn't even get close to it. And that's how the Pharisees viewed the law of God to not break, and they began to trust in their good works, and God didn't want them to trust in their good works, because good works will not save you. Ephesians 2:8-9 says it's *not* of good works, it's *not* of yourselves, implying that God needs to provide the solution, and He does so in grace.

What about us? What about you? What have you implemented that would fall into the category of a fig leaf sewing party that you're conducting in your own place of thinking and worship? What about you? Were your parents Christians? Is that why you think you're going to heaven? Is that enough? Was one of your parents a pastor? Do you have pastors in your family? Is your uncle a pastor? Is your uncle a priest? Is your uncle a monk? Is that what gets you into heaven, is that what you're trusting in today?

Are you depending on the fact that you try to live the best you know how? Yeah, you don't keep the ten commandments perfectly, but you're trying. You're making an effort, I mean, you get up early, you pray, you come to church, I mean you're in church on Easter Sunday, you come other times of the year, is that what you're trusting in? See, the problem with that is you're trusting in yourself. God wants to provide a solution for you, and it's like you telling God, "No, I got this. No, keep your solution, God. Keep your son and what He did for me. I got this, God. I'll take care of it, God. I've got a good sewing machine, I've got good fig leaves, I got this covered. Just leave me alone."

You know, that's what religion does. The deception of religion is it makes you feel like you're getting closer to God, and all the while it's causing you and I to depend upon ourselves. The very thing that will take us away from God, many times that's what religion does to us. See, God wants to provide this solution. Your solution is not found in a church. Your solution is not found in a man. Your solution is not found in all the spiritual disciplines that you engage in. Your solution is found in God's solution. He's a person, His name's Jesus Christ. That's God's solution. And Jesus did something 2,000 years ago, and He executed the solution, He died for your sins so that you don't have to pay the penalty for those. And God raised Him from the dead saying, "I agree with what Jesus said when He said, "It is finished."" God the Father said, "Amen!" It's done. He paid it in full.

And so why do we want to trust in our own fig leaves? Why would we want to trust in our church membership? I don't even care if you're a member at *this* church, that doesn't get you into heaven. I don't even care if you come close to this church on Sundays, like in the same zip code, that doesn't get you into heaven. That's not God's solution. God's solution is found in a person, and His name is Jesus Christ.

So, what is God's desire for you? It's really simple: you're done. Quit trying to get there on your own and start recognizing that God wants you and I to look away from ourselves for the solution. If you begin to look away from yourself, you know what you're saying by that? You're saying, "I can't help myself. I don't have enough resources to get myself there."

I love it when I'm teaching my kids, or as I watch sometimes Carrie teaches the kids this, and I can't remember who I taught what and who she taught what, it starts to all come together, but teaching your kids to tie their shoes. Isn't that something? You need a great deal of patience to wait for them to learn, don't you? And you've got some kids that are just gonna tackle it, and they'll stay there for two hours until they figure that thing out. And then you've got some kids that it's like they don't even want

to learn, they just flip it over and go, "Okay, Dad, why don't you take care of the rest? I can't figure this thing out."

And it's this idea that at some point, each one of us needs to come to a place where we say, "I can't do this, I need help." Some place like my kids came where, "I can't put this last loop, I can't figure out this bunny ear. Dad, I need your help. I need you to do something for me that I cannot do for myself."

And it's the same way in salvation. God desires for you and I to stop looking inward to try to provide a solution, He wants to provide it, and He's done that in Jesus. Looking away from ourselves to God for His solution is called 'faith', simply put. That's biblical faith, looking to God to do something for us that we could not do for ourselves, and He did that in the work of Christ.

Faith is trusting in the work of another. See, we look away from ourselves, we're trusting in the work of another when we realize that we cannot do the work ourselves, we can't accomplish it ourselves. This is giving up on your own version of the fig leaf sewing party, trying to provide the solution on your own. You and I will never be good enough, we're not good enough today, we won't be good enough tomorrow. Even if we try to stay up 24 hours today engineering a way to be better, it's time to give up. It's time to bend over, it's time to take a deep breath, and it's time to look to the One who did the work for you that you could not do for yourself, and to simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Just like you're resting in a chair right now, the Bible wants you to rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. He paid it all, that's what the Bible teaches.

And you know that all throughout the Old Testament, men and women were saved this same way when they put their faith in the future coming Deliverer, the One who would come and completely take care of the sin problem. And today as we look back 2,000 years ago, we're believing on the same coming Deliverer who's already come. We're looking back in the past at a historical event that happened 2,000 years ago on a hill called Golgotha.

And I want you to think about everything that we've covered in the Old Testament. Because God pointed repeatedly, over and over again. If you don't like repetition, then you probably don't like the Old Testament or the Bible in general, because God has no problem repeating, and reminding, and restating truth so that we get it. Because for many of us it takes eight, nine, ten, a hundred, a thousand times before it finally sinks in as to what God is saying. But He repeatedly pointed over and over again to this coming Deliverer, that He would die a substitutionary atoning death for mankind. He would pay the penalty that God required so that He could set those who believed in Him free from that penalty.

That's the message of the Bible over, and over, and over again. In fact, this is what all the Old Testament examples that we've covered in the past few weeks stated, isn't it? Adam and Eve sinned, they deserved to die for their sin. In fact, that was the announcement that God made, that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die. And so they deserved to die, that was the punishment for their sin, but God executed the death sentence upon an innocent animal in their place and He clothed them Himself. See, God provided the solution for Adam and Eve. Now we know through history that everyone now born following Adam and Eve were born outside the garden. They were separated from God, they were born into a position of death, of separation in their relationship to God.

And thus, we see Cain and Abel. Both deserved to die for their sin, and yet God accepted a substitutionary death of an innocent animal in Abel's place. But notice that He did not accept Cain's sacrifice of fruit from the ground. And we covered this last week, but who put forth more effort, Cain, or Abel? Well, Cain did. Have you ever planted fruit in the ground? I am horrible at planting; I don't

have a green thumb to save my life! I wish I could just flick a seed over into a pile of dirt and fruit would grow out of it. I'm horrible at that, even when I try to do it the right way, I kill it!

So, to put together this sacrifice, Cain put together a lot of work. He planted the seed, he tilled the ground, he watered it, he cared for it, he kept it, and then he made the effort to harvest it. It took time for him to put this together, and so when he brought the sacrifice, he put in a lot more work than Abel, who simply went out to his flock and said, "Okay, this lamb has no blemish, let me take this one. This one's gonna die in my place." So, it's not about effort, it's about God's solution. See, the reason Cain's sacrifice wasn't accepted is because his sacrifice didn't shed blood. His sacrifice didn't meet the penalty of breaking God's law, which was death. And yet the animal did, and so Abel was looking to God's solution by faith.

We see the story of Noah and the ark. He deserved to die for his sin, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and God had Noah build an ark. Noah trusted in God's Way of deliverance for him, and he built the ark. There was only one door in that Ark, and God sealed it after Noah and his family got in.

As we just work through the Old Testament stories, Abraham too deserved to die for his sin, but Abraham believed the Lord, he was looking forward to the coming promised Deliverer, and God credited righteousness to his account. How do we know that? Well, John 8:56, as Jesus is talking to a group of Pharisees, He says this: "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*" See, Abraham was looking forward to this coming Deliverer.

We see Abraham's son, Isaac, deserved to die for his sin. In fact, he was pretty close to dying physically, wasn't he? He was placed up on an altar, strapped to the altar by his own dad. And as his own father came to jam the knife down and kill his son according to God's instruction, God provided a substitute, a ram over there in the bushes. See, Isaac looked to God's provision. Abraham looked for God's solution so He wouldn't have to kill us, and see, God is about providing a solution to man's problem, not man engineering and figuring out their own solution.

And then we have a big illustration in the Passover, the firstborn children in Egypt deserved to die for their sin, both Egyptian and Israelite children. Why? Because they're born sinners. And so when you're born a sinner, you commit acts of sin that require this penalty of death to be enacted. That's a never changing truth in the Bible as we see carried out throughout. We saw that God would accept the substitutionary death of an innocent lamb in their place. The blood of the lamb was to be painted on to the doorpost and lintel, and when the angel of God saw the blood there, the text tells us that he passed over. He just passed over that house. Why? Because death had already fallen there, the penalty had already been paid at that house, it was just paid through the blood of an innocent animal, not the life and the blood of the innocent firstborn, or the guilty firstborn.

And so we see this beautiful picture, but remember the details? There were some details in this Passover, and Paul goes on in 1 Corinthians to call Jesus 'our Passover Lamb', he's the one that makes this connection. But notice these details that were fulfilled, these parallels that were fulfilled in the Passover lamb. Remember that the Passover lamb could have no defect?

The Bible's telling us that Jesus was sinless, He had no defect. We know that the Passover lamb had to be a male, and Jesus was a man. We know that the lamb had to die in the place of the firstborn, Jesus died in our place, the Bible tells us. We know that the Lamb's bones were not to be broken, Jesus's bones were not broken.

In fact, they wanted to break His bones, remember the story? They wanted to get these bodies off of the cross, the Jewish leaders went to the Roman authorities and said, "We need to get these bodies

off the cross because we're getting ready to enter into our Sabbath time." And they said, "Okay well, one way we can speed up death is we can break their legs."

Because if you remember the torture device that the Romans used in crucifixion, they would nail their victims to a cross by their arms and feet, and they would put them in such a way that the only way they could breathe is to push themselves up on the nails to take a breath, and then they would let themselves back down. And imagine if every breath you had to take today, you had to push up in excruciating pain on nails through your wrists and through your feet, and that's what they did in crucifixion. And eventually the victim would die choking on their own blood, asphyxiation.

And so to break their legs would render them incapable of lifting themselves up to breathe, and they would just die right there, choking on their own blood in asphyxiation. And yet as the soldiers came to Jesus to break His legs they said, "Ah, He's already dead. Well let's test it, let's jam a spear in His side," and blood and water came out and they said, "Yup, He's dead." And so His bones were saved from being broken, a picture perfect example of the Passover lamb.

And so wherever the Death Angel saw the blood applied, he would pass over that house, and now God provided a way for His judgment to pass over us. See, God wants to execute justice, He's got to execute justice. But He has devised a way that He has executed justice on His son so that you and I don't have to face it. See, God doesn't want to execute justice on you, He doesn't want to send you to hell. He's devised a way that He can pass over judgment on you. Whoever puts their faith in Jesus, God's judgment will pass over them, and that's why when we see the beautiful picture of Jesus in this Passover lamb, we also know from history that Jesus died on the very day that the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the temple. And not only did He die the very same day, but He died at the very hour that the temple lamb was offered in the temple.

See, God gave us a great visual aid. That's why when John says at the beginning, as he records the words of John the Baptist, he said this about Jesus, "*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'*" - *John 1:29*. Do you think God is consistent in His message? Do you think God is trying to convince us of His plan and this one way, the solution He wants to provide for you? Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Going on into the Old Testament, every Israelite deserved to die for their sin, especially after the introduction of the Mosaic law, which just gave us a clear example and a clear standard to show us that we *don't* have the righteousness needed to get to heaven. All you have to do is spend a couple minutes with the law of God, all you have to do is spend a couple minutes with four of the Ten Commandments, let alone the other six hundred and nine.

Ever told a lie? You're a law breaker. You're a liar. So am I. I've got one finger pointing at you, and I've got four coming back at me. This isn't accusatory, it's just to say this is the truth of what we're up against. Have you ever stolen anything? You're a thief. So am I. Jesus says if you've ever looked at somebody with lust, you've committed adultery. If you've ever been angry with somebody, John goes on to say if you've ever hated somebody, you're a murderer. Did you know you're guilty of murder if you're angry or hated somebody? That's God's standard.

See, nobody measures up, we all deserve to die. And so the Israelites saw this even more clearly, and so the temple and the tabernacle system show them this visual aid that their coming Deliverer would one day die a substitutionary atoning death as they saw hundreds, thousands, even millions of lambs in the Old Testament, who died as a substitute for millions of guilty lawbreakers throughout the Old Testament.

And then we come to the final Lamb. Jesus says in John 19:30, these are His last words from the cross, the very last thing He says, "*So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!'*" and



*bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.*” This word, translated as a phrase, “It is finished,” translates one word in the Greek. You’ll hear it said a couple of different ways, it’s “*tetelestai*”. And I just want to bring out some significance to this word, because there were three uses of this word that I think were extremely significant, and the fact that Jesus shouted this.

You know, many people would look at that phrase and say, “It is finished,” as kind of a whimper, like, “It’s finished, and I guess I didn’t make it. I guess I didn’t get off.” But I think you’re gonna see as we look at these meanings, that I think it was more of a victory cry. I think He knew what He was saying, and I think He knew the manner in which He was saying it.

The Greek word “*tetelestai*” was used in Jesus’s day by a servant who would report to his or her master upon completing a task. “The job that you gave me is finished.” Job well done. And they would come up to their masters and say, “Tetelestai.” The job you gave me is completed. The second meaning I think that’s significant, is it was an accounting term used in the day. What it would do is signify the completion of a transaction when a debt was paid in full. In fact, they had debt in that day, or mortgage payments, or whatever you want to say, and they would have this word, “*tetelestai*” written across their statement of debt, basically saying this loan, this debt had been paid in full. And so we would see that word recorded at this time in history.

And then I think the third one is significant as well. “*Tetelestai*” was used in the selection of a lamb for sacrifice in the temple. The flock would be searched, and upon finding an unblemished lamb, one would say, “Tetelestai.” The job was finished, the sacrificial lamb had been found. So, they’d be out walking amongst the flock, and when somebody finally found a lamb that was unblemished, they’d yell, “Tetelestai! I got the lamb that’s gonna work for the sacrifice.” And so a quick summary, Jesus literally shouted, “The work you gave me is completed. The debt is paid. The sacrificial lamb is found.” This is what He yells as His victory cry.

But how do we know that God agreed with Him? How do we know God the Father agreed with this victory cry? Well, God gave His stamp of approval on what Jesus did, and He did it by raising Jesus from the dead. That’s what we celebrate today. This is God’s stamp of approval, what history bore out, what the Old Testament Scriptures bore out, that God was gonna send a promised Deliverer who was going to finally take care of the sin problem, and by golly, He did.

And by golly and by God’s grace, Jesus Christ did it all. He paid it all. He completed the work that God had sent Him to do. He was the sacrificial lamb, and God approved of His sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. Jesus said, “It is finished.” And God the Father said, “Amen! You’re right, Son. It is finished. You did it all.” This was proof that God’s promised Deliverer set out and accomplished what God had promised all the way back in Genesis 3:15.

Through Jesus Christ, God has provided the only permanent solution to man’s sin problem. And so it begs the question, will you trust in God’s solution? Or do you have your arm up saying, “No, God, I got this. I can light a few more candles, I can go to church a few more times. No, God, I think I got this covered. I don’t need You, go help somebody else that’s a lot worse off than me.” Or do you believe that God alone has the solution, and that God has provided the solution in Jesus Christ, and that He’s convinced you, sought to convince you that His solution is all He will accept by raising His son from the dead? Do you believe that?

It’s your move. Jesus has paid it all, God has accepted His payment on your behalf, and now the question is: what will you do with that information? Will you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone to save you? Do you believe that God’s solution is the only solution you need? Are you gonna continue to hedge your bets, are you gonna continue to balance your eternal destiny with one foot on Jesus, a little bit of

weight, maybe more weight on Him and maybe 10% weight on your good works? God wants you depending solely on His solution, that's where He's looking, He wants you to look at the same place.

Now there might be someone here who for the first time understood that message. Maybe you've heard it before, maybe you've heard it a million times, maybe you've heard it a few times, but maybe it made sense today, and you, today, want to put your faith in Jesus Christ. The beautiful thing about that is because Christ has done it all, there's nothing left for you to do in terms of response other than believe God. Take Him at His word and trust in Christ. You don't have to walk up here, you don't have to shake my hand - my hands are probably dirty, I've got five kids, I don't know when the last time I washed them. You don't want to shake my hand, that's not gonna get you anywhere - there's no altars up here, there's no benches up here, you don't have to raise your hand, you don't have to do push-ups in the back, you don't have to do jumping jacks, you don't have to pray a prayer. You can simply, in the quietness of your heart, put your faith in Jesus Christ. Do you believe that Jesus died for you and rose again, and that that's God's solution for your sin problem? The Bible says if you believe that, you have eternal life, and you'll never face the penalty of death.

And so I want to encourage you today, as we lift up and exalt Jesus Christ, that's the reason we meet on Sunday. We actually believe this message that He's our only solution, and He's our only way to heaven. And if you believe that for the first time today, I will just ask you to do me one favor. Would you tell me about it? Would you just let me know? I would rejoice with you, along with the angels in heaven - as the Scriptures tell us.

# CHAPTER 17

## Hard Work Doesn't Pay Off

### Romans 4:1-5

Join me in the book of Romans, chapter 4. You all have heard this phrase before, “Hard work pays off.” You've heard this phrase, and you think of people that maybe you've known or read about. I think of Thomas Edison who, growing up, his teachers said he was too stupid to amount to anything. We find later on that he was fired from his first two jobs, they said he was being non-productive. And then we also know in history that as he created the light bulb that he failed his first thousand attempts to create the light bulb. And we would say, “Well man, hard work pays off. Keep on truckin', Thomas Edison!” And he did. He kept on going. In fact, when they asked him what it felt like to fail a thousand times, he said, “I didn't fail. Inventing a light bulb just had a thousand steps.” And he had a really good attitude about that.

And so we hear this a lot in our culture, and we value those who work hard at what they do and have a good work ethic. But you know it's interesting, because in the area of salvation, this is not the case. In fact, it's the exact opposite of what we would naturally think in our society and culture, hard work does *not* pay off. Hard work will hinder your salvation. If you try to contribute something to your salvation, it won't pay off, it will land you on the exact opposite side of the line that you want to be on. You could say salvation is more like quicksand: the harder you try, the more work you do, the deeper you sink into oblivion.

And it's interesting, Google's dangerous. Because you start reading, and then you read another article, and then you read another article. And so I can't remember what article I was in, and this long string of articles I was reading about quicksand, but you know one piece of advice for somebody that is caught in quicksand is to lean back and relax. Isn't that a beautiful picture of salvation? And this is something that Abraham learned.

As we go into Romans chapter 4, we're coming out of Romans chapter 3, and so there's a context of what we're looking at this morning, and Romans 3:31 says this: *“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”* And what Paul has just gotten done explaining is that you and I can obtain God's righteousness not by working hard, but by trusting in the work that Jesus Christ has already done. And see, we needed that, because as we follow the flow of thought in the book of Romans, in the first three chapters we saw that nobody was righteous. Entire humanity was guilty before God, religious sinner, moral sinner, immoral sinner. It didn't matter what type of sinner you were, the point was made by Paul, and the point was made with a resounding conclusion that all are guilty, everyone's mouth is shut, no one can justify themselves, nobody has the righteousness needed to get to heaven. That's a problem.

And so the mind of natural man says, “If I recognize that I don't have the righteousness needed to get to heaven, I better start working at it. I better start trying.” And God's gonna say, “No. Don't think the way natural people think. Don't think that you've got to start lighting more candles, and coming to church more often, and cracking your Bible open more often, and praying more, and just trying, and striving, and working harder, because that is not the way to salvation.”

And so Paul is now going to give us two Old Testament examples in chapter 4. He's going to start with Abraham, and he's also going to use David. Why those two people? Because if anyone could

boast about good works getting them into heaven, it was those two men in the Old Testament. And so as he explained justification, this idea of being declared righteous by God through faith at the end of chapter 3, he's now going to illustrate that for us with these two Old Testament examples, and we're gonna see that hard work in the area of salvation doesn't pay off. Hard work does not pay off. Instead of trying harder, God wants us to trust Him, and that's a different concept.

And so chapter 4 verse 1, we see this concept that Abraham stumbled onto something. Verse 1, *“What then shall we say that Abraham our Father has found according to the flesh?”* And so we're going to see, as I mentioned, that Paul is going to provide two examples in the Old Testament of men who were justified by faith. Just the same way that he's describing here in Romans 3, they too were declared righteous by God. And remember when we look at that word “justification”, (and I'll say this a hundred times or more over the next couple of chapters) the word “justification” means *to declare righteous*. In the issue of eternal salvation, the only person's declaration that matters is God Almighty, and that's what we're looking at here in Romans 4.

How does God declare somebody righteous? How does God justify a man? Well, what we're gonna see is that Paul is gonna say it's never changed throughout history. God has always declared man righteous on the basis of faith, never on the basis of works. And he's going to use these two men - these two that were held in the highest esteem by the Jews of the day - as the example of justification by faith in the Old Testament.

Now it's interesting, you see that phrase in verse 1, *“What then shall we say that Abraham our father,”* that phrase *“our father”*, which definitely has a Jewish connotation to it. This would have been something that a Jewish reader would have latched on to and said, “Yeah, Abraham, our Father, the one we own.” And you know that there were Jewish rabbis in the day that taught that Abraham was justified by obedience? That's what they actually taught. They taught that he was justified by obedience or justified by doing good works, and we're gonna see that Paul is going to blow that idea out of the water. That is not true, regardless of what the culture of the day taught. Abraham was not justified by obedience; he was not declared righteous via good works.

And so Paul kind of words it a certain way here, he says, “What has he found?” And that's this word here that we want to look at, it means that he found something without seeking it. He met with it, he lighted upon it, as you might say maybe in a British setting. He basically stumbled into it. And you think about how did Abraham stumble into it? Well, we know from the scriptures that Abraham's family was polytheistic. Abraham, when he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, his dad was worshipping many gods, just like every other family on the face of the earth at that time. And so his mindset, in order to get justified between a god, or many gods, or whoever he decided to worship in this area, was to do good things to appease this God, to buy their favor, to merit their goodness toward him.

And so he was not even looking for this mindset, in fact, I will venture to say that no man given the opportunity will come up with the concept of faith righteousness on their own. Every man, every religion, every tribal, mystical, spiritual approach to a god or to a higher being in the world that's ever existed is always salvation by works. What must I do to appease, what must I do to please, what must I do to obtain, what must I do to merit my god's favor. That's what mankind comes up with.

Now it gets refined over time, and that's why you have distinctives in different religions like Mormonism, you've got other distinctives with Jehovah's Witnesses, you've got other distinctives in Buddhism and Hinduism, whatever “ism” you want to name, whatever denomination you want to throw out there too, you know, that's why we don't do certain things that maybe a Methodist Church would do, or an Episcopal Church would do, or a Catholic Church would do, and that's because when you get to the bottom line of what men try to do to please God, it's gonna involve works. This is why Abraham

wasn't looking for it, because that's not the natural way to think. Grace is not something that any man will come up with on their own, it's a divine thought, it's a divine solution, as we looked at the last couple of weeks found all throughout the Old Testament.

And so Abraham discovered something as it related to the flesh and obtaining God's righteousness, and it happened at a point in time with the results continuing. The point in time came in Genesis 15:6, which Paul is going to quote in verse 3. And it's the day that God said, "Look at the stars and number them, so shall your descendants be." And Abraham believed God, and God credited righteousness to his account that came through faith. And Abraham stumbled into that or he wasn't looking for that, that's how he found it.

And so we move on to verse 2, what about Abraham? Could he actually boast, did he have something to boast about? It's interesting that Paul uses this argument here, because in verse 2 we read simply this: *"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God."* That's an interesting "if" there. We've got to look at this a little bit closely, because Paul is developing an argument, and his argument is simply this: this "if" is what we call in the Greek a first-class condition and what he's saying is *if* Abraham was justified by works, and for argument's sake, let's assume that he was.

So, he's making an argument saying that Abraham was justified by works, let's assume that he was. What's the conclusion there? Well, the conclusion is that he could boast about it. Especially Abraham! We're talking about *Abraham*, this great example. If *he* could be justified by works, and let's assume that he could, he would actually have something to boast about, he was that exemplar for everybody else. But it begs the question, "Wait a minute, I thought Paul's whole point here was that a man is justified by faith alone. So, what's he talking about here?" He's saying, "Oh, let's assume that he's justified by works, and if he is, he has something to boast about, so what is Paul talking about here? And when could Abraham boast of justification by works?"

Now remember, we want to back up for a second, because we want to keep in mind that when we talk about justification, we have to define what type of justification we're talking about. Generically, the word means *to declare righteous*. And typically, when we talk about justification, we're thinking about what it takes for the God of the universe to declare us righteous. But there's other ways that people are justified or declared righteous.

In fact, James 2:21-24 tells us that Abraham was justified when he offered Isaac his son on the altar. Let's go to James chapter 2. Because if you do any floating around, or you've done any Bible study over the years, typically when you get to Romans chapter 4, someone will want to talk about James 2, because it seems that they're contradictory. What Paul's saying in Romans is contradictory to James. Hold on a second. If we're justified by faith, James says we're justified by works, how can those two ideas fit together?

Well, James 2:21-24 makes this argument: *"Was not Abraham our Father justified by works" - or declared righteous by works - "when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" Or complete, you might say. Verse 23, "And the scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."*

And you know, this work of him sacrificing Isaac, it was an incredible work! I mean, if you could boast about something, this would be it. In fact, Paul is saying Abraham actually had something to presently, right now, and continually boast about, that's the verb tense that he uses there. But there's a key phrase that comes up there at the end of verse 2, and we can't leave this out when we're looking at this understanding. He has this ability to boast. If he's justified by works, and let's assume that he is, he can boast.

But then it says, "*Not before God.*" You see, if he can boast about it but not before God, the implication is that he could boast in front of somebody else. Who would that be? Well, I think by implication he's talking about man. Abraham can boast before man. Abraham can boast that he is indeed righteous, based on the good works that people saw.

And so we look at this concept of justification, and Paul is really setting up his argument here for the people who think, "Well yeah, it's faith, but it's also something else." "Well yeah, I see what you're saying, Paul, but wasn't he also justified by works before God?" And Paul is gonna say, "No. There's a justification before God, that's faith alone." Because all God needs to see is faith, and that happens in the heart, that happens in the mind, that happens internally, and the moment God sees it, God declares somebody righteous. The moment somebody transfers their trust from whatever they were trusting in before to Jesus Christ, who died for them and rose again, God declares that person righteous. That's justification by faith.

Justification by works on the other hand, is something that men do. Something that if I see my neighbor come over and mow my lawn, and bring me a meal, and cut my hedges, and clean out my pool, - and if anyone would like to clean out my pool, let me know, I got a job for you - but if I could see that, I would tell you my neighbor's a good man. My neighbor's a good person. How do I know that? Is it because my neighbor's been in his kitchen at night saying, "Boy, I should go over and help out John Clark. I really want to go over and help out John Clark." And he just talks about it in his kitchen? Or is it because I see these works? It's because I see him doing these things.

And so Paul is clearly talking about man here. And in order for men to justify other men or to declare them righteous, they've got to see good works. I don't know what's going on in your heart. I don't know what you wanted to do, or had the desire to do for me, but when I see you come over and put the gas in the mower and push it, and the blades are actually getting cut, I would say, "Wow, this is a good man. Thank you!" And so men justify other men when they see good works. But in order for God to justify or declare us righteous, He's just got to see faith. And He sees the faith the moment you put your faith in Jesus who died for your sins and rose again, the finished work of Jesus Christ.

And so when we talk about justification by faith in Romans 4, this is what we're talking about, how does God declare man righteous? We can talk about how men declare man righteous, that's James 2, when James is actually encouraging believers (people who are already saved) to live out their Christian life. Because what good is it, what profit is it to other people if you just sit in your kitchen and go, "Yeah, I see their lawn, it needs to be mowed, I should get to that sometime." That's how most of us live our life, don't we? "I should get to that sometime." "Oh yeah, I should have done that. Maybe next time I'll think about that." And we sit there, we have these internal conversations with ourselves when James is saying, "Hey, if you believe this, follow through. Follow through and let them see your good works." As Jesus said in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, let them see your good works so then they'll glorify who? Your father in heaven. It brings glory to God when people see our good works.

But this is not what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about justification, a declaration of righteousness before God. And so when we look at justification, really I believe that scripture talks about a couple of times, I just put two up here, there's actually probably a third one, and that's self-justification. That's the one you want no part of, because that doesn't work out well for anybody.

At the Great White Throne Judgment there's going to be people trying to self-justify themselves. As God opens up this book with their good works, they're gonna be like, "Yeah, see God, I was good! I mowed, I did this, I lit candles, I went to church, I read my Bible, I did all these good things!" And they're gonna point, and God's gonna say, "All your good works are like filthy rags." That's what Isaiah

64:6 says. All your righteousnesses, all the good things you did, on your *best* day what you had to offer is a filthy rag. Imagine what our sin must look like to God, if that's the case.

But as we look at these two types of justifications, we're looking at justification by faith alone. This is what we're looking at in Romans 4. And so just to contrast or make a distinction, in this justification, this declaration of righteousness, God is the justifier. God is the one who makes the declaration. The justified one is an unsaved man or unsaved woman, someone who puts their faith in Christ and His work alone. Not one work can contribute to this. This is crucial to this section today. Not one work, not one good work, not one act of obedience can contribute to this justification. In fact, good works will hinder this justification, that's why Paul in verse 5 as we get there, he's gonna say, "Stop working. Stop trying, you're burying yourself further when you do this." And lastly, justification is invisible, and it's only seen by God.

And then we've got the second type of justification that we talked about. The justifier is actually mankind. The one who is being justified is a believer in Jesus Christ who does good works in conjunction with their faith. These faith-based works lead to the believer's growth and spiritual maturity, and these are visible works that mankind sees because they cannot see our faith, they can see what we do.

And so when we talk about, "What is Paul talking about, what is James talking about?" I believe Paul is describing this justification by faith alone: how are we justified in God's sight, how does God declare us righteous? And James 2 is talking about how we're justified in the sight of men. Now, if you're gonna get one of those right, get the first one right. It's not to discourage the second one, it's not to discourage going and doing good works for other people and living a life of good works pleasing to the Lord, but if you're only going to get one of these right, get the first one right. And that is justification by faith, that's God declaring you righteous the moment you put your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

See, if you try to add a work to that, what you're saying is what Jesus did was not enough. If you try to clean up on Jesus's work... to give an example: if you know somebody and they make a perfect bowl of stew, a perfect bowl of chili, a perfect bowl of soup, and you show up to eat it, and you go grab ketchup from the kitchen, and you squirt it into the mix, you're gonna get slapped in some homes! That's insulting! Don't tell me you accept the stew as is while you're squirting ketchup into the mix.

And that's what many people do in the area of salvation. Yeah, Jesus took care of most of it. Jesus took care of some of it. Jesus took care of the good bulk of it. No, Jesus paid it all! Jesus took care of everything. That's how you're justified by faith in the first version by God, is when you stop trusting in your ketchup squirts, your saltshaker, your whatever, and you trust in the way that God has provided a solution. See, God is satisfied with what Jesus did for you, are you satisfied with Jesus? That's how you're justified by faith. You look away from yourself and you put your faith in the solution that God has provided.

Verse 3, what does the scripture say? So, Paul makes an argument, and then he's gonna back it up by the scriptures. In fact, verse 3 says this: "*For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'*" So, Paul goes to the scriptures to prove his point. In fact, this word "for" gives us the reason why Abraham did not have anything to boast about before God as it related to his own righteousness: because he didn't do anything to get it. He simply believed God, and God gave it to him as a free gift. So, there's nothing to boast about there unless he's boasting about God, but he's not boasting about himself and what he did.

You know, we've used this example a few times, but it's like the person who's drowning, who's saved by the lifeguard, and when they get out of the pool, they give credit to their nod. As they're sinking and going under, they nod to the lifeguard to come get them and they say, "Yeah, my nod saved me."

Are you kidding me? The lifeguard saved you! He's the one that jumped in, he's the one that risked his life, he's the one that dragged you to shore, he's the one that pumped the water out of your lungs, the lifeguard saved you, not your nod. And so when we talk about being saved, Abraham wasn't boasting about anything he did, if he boasted in anything, it was the fact that he was trusting God's solution, he was trusting God's Word in this case.

And so Paul appeals to the scripture specifically in Genesis 15:6, which says that, "*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*" You know it's interesting because the word "say" here, "what does the scripture say?" It's a present tense. He doesn't say, "What *did* the scripture say way back then?" But what does it say right now to us? What is it presently saying to us? And what we're gonna see is that the same way Abraham got justified by faith is the same way you are justified by faith. You're declared righteous in the very same way that Abraham was declared righteous.

We see that Abraham believed God at a point in time, and at that very point in time God reckoned him righteous. He didn't say, "I'm gonna count you righteous if you behave the next 20 years. I'm gonna count you righteous if at the end of your life, you're still walking with Me, then I'll put that stamp down in your account. I've got this check, Abraham. You can see it says righteousness, but I'm not going to sign it and put it into your account until you show Me that you're gonna shape up, and if not I'm gonna ship you out." That's not what He says at all.

The moment Abraham believed, God credited righteousness to his account. Right at that moment, the very same moment. There was no effort here, there was no action, if you will, this was an attitude change. Abraham believed God, he was no longer trusting in himself, at least not until the next chapter if you know the story in Genesis. Because Abraham's life did not look like a saved man from Genesis 16 all the way through Genesis 21 until he gets to Genesis 22, which is where he actually sacrifices Isaac.

You know, he gets his nanny pregnant, has a child out of wedlock, he tries to pawn his wife off as a prostitute, all this happens after he gets justified by faith. So, he wasn't acting righteous, but in God's estimation, God had determined he was gonna declare righteous Abraham who simply believed in Him. We see this word "accounted", it's an accounting word. It's kind of a fun Greek word to say if you like learning Greek words, "*logizomai*", kind of a fun word to say. This word is actually used 11 times in this chapter.

And so when we talk about accounting, we're talking about an accounting system that matters. This is God's accounting system. Just like when you do your taxes, I mean, I would love to write in there that I'm getting a \$5,000 return this year, but the IRS has something different to say about that, and probably does for you too. And see in the area of our secular society, the only accounting that matters is the IRS. What do they say? What does the law say? What does the authority in this area say? Not what I think. I mean, I think I should get more than five thousand dollars back, you know, sign a petition for me to help me out with that! But it doesn't matter what I think, that's the whole point.

And in this area of righteousness, God's accounting is the only one that matters. Not a pastor, not a priest, not a monk, not a bishop, not anybody. Nobody's opinion matters except God's in this matter. And so this word "accounted" means *to count on, to reckon upon, to value, to esteem*. You might even say it this way: the idea communicated by this word is to write it down, to count upon it, depend upon it. It'd be the equivalent of if somebody could get into your checking account and *logizomai* account a million dollars to your account.

That means they would write a check, sign it, put it into your account, it's yours. That's what it's saying. And you need to write it down. And God wrote this down for Abraham, and you know what? He'll write it down for you the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, that's why Paul is using this



example. It's God's accounting system, and if God calls you righteous, what can any man say about that? Nothing. They can try to say something about it, but it doesn't matter what they think about you, it only matters what God thinks about you.

And see, God has a high enough value for the work of Jesus Christ to say, "If you believe in My Son, I will declare you righteous. Period." Nobody else has the microphone. That's a mic drop right there! When God announces it, He drops the mic, no one else can pick it up and say anything different. That's it. That's a period. And so we're gonna see that Paul is really emphasizing this in this chapter.

In fact, when you think of your bank account before you got saved, how much righteousness did you have in your account? And the answer from Romans 3 is: nothing. The moment you put your faith in Christ, you have the riches of heaven and righteousness written down in your account by the only One that matters. That is a beautiful truth, and that's what the gospel provides.

Again, this was an accounting term of the day, we'll see that Paul uses it 11 times in chapter four. We just see the moment Abraham believed, God wrote it down into his account as righteousness. And it looks something like a ledger - before you were saved all you had was this left side of the account with nothing in it. In fact, for many of us that may be what our checkbook looks like sometimes. I remember when Carrie and I first got married it definitely looked like that. And I don't know what we were thinking, one time we had about eight dollars I think in my checking account, and we said, "Hey, let's go for ice cream!" Rent was coming, but ice cream, \$8, let's go spend it! So, we've learned a lot since those days, but this is where all of us are before we get saved, and the moment we put our faith in Christ, we get Christ as our righteousness.

As second Corinthians 5:21 says, we become the righteousness of God in Christ. Christ becomes our righteousness. That's why God can declare you righteous, that's why it's an unchanging declaration, because the second that Jesus can't be righteous is the second you can lose your salvation. And since He can't become unrighteous, you can never lose your salvation, and your righteousness is bound up in Him.

Now we get into verse 4 and 5, and Paul is going to really drive home his point that he's making here, so let's read those as a unit and then we'll look at those individually. Verse 4: *"Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."*

And you know, many people don't have a problem when you talk about believing in Jesus Christ. When they have a problem is when you say that's *all* you have to do. Because most people say they'll add anything to Jesus Christ, that's no problem. They don't even mind adding Jesus to what they already believe. And they say, "Well yeah, definitely Jesus. But also..." Whatever. Fill in the blank. There are a million things to fill in the blank.

And this probably would have been the mindset of the Jewish listener in Paul's day. "Yeah, we know that we know Genesis 15:6, we understand that that's part of our history, that's part of our law, but wasn't there something else? I mean, didn't there have to be something else? I mean, you can't just believe. That's too easy."

You know, it's like my father-in-law used to always tell me, "There's no such thing as a free lunch." I had actually never heard that before him, but that's a pretty common phrase. "There's no such thing as a free lunch." In fact, what happens when somebody calls you on the phone and says, "I've got something free for you." You're like, "Garbage!" There's no such thing as a free lunch. And again, this is an area that based on our culture, based on our secular society, based on the way we're raised, based on the way our society functions, we're trained to believe that there's no such thing as a free lunch.

And so we say, “Well, salvation surely must be that way too. I mean yeah, I believe in Christ, but I’ve got to do something else. I’ve got to be willing to do something else at least, right?” And that’s the mindset we have. Now Paul is going to shoot that down, because what he’s gonna say is that there’s two ways to approach this thing: grace, which is all gift, and works, which is all debt, you earn it. And you can’t have a gift and earn part of it, just by definition those things don’t go together.

And so we see in verse 4, he says this, *“To him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.”* So, notice that this one who’s working, or the one who’s seeking to be justified by works can’t receive these wages via grace by definition. Probably an easier way to say it is if one works, then one receives wages owed to them, according to debt. In other words, if you go to work and you work a job, you don’t go to your employer on pay day and say, “Thank you for the gift of my wages.” No, you’re like, “Give me that paycheck, that’s mine. I earned it.” In fact, many of us go back and we check and make sure they got everything right because we don’t want to be cheated out of something that we worked for, something that we earned.

It reminds me of when I was playing minor league baseball with the Rockies, and at the beginning of every spring training they had the entire minor-league system together, all the young men in the minor leagues, and we would all run the 60-yard dash in what they called “The Dash for Cash.” Now, when you’re only making eight hundred and fifty dollars a month as a minor league baseball player, when they put a hundred-dollar bill out there for the Dash for Cash, you’re praying your offseason workouts paid off! But I knew I was kind of toast.

I was fast for my size, but you know, we had Terry Jones in Triple-A. And Terry Jones was a young guy, and he probably weighed a buck fifty soaking wet, and he had world-class sprinting speed. There was no way I was gonna beat Terry Jones. And then there was another young man who was my age, we were 19 at the time, and he was from New Jersey, and he was a state high school sprint champion, his name was Gary Gordon. And then there was this no-name Dominican kid named Angel Cespedes.

And as we’re standing around betting - of course, we didn’t have money to bet, we were just kind of verbally betting on who would win, none of us had any money - and we all had our money on Terry Jones or Gary Gordon. And it was really interesting to watch this race, because we kind of knew who the top three were gonna be, and so everyone just ran for fourth place and under, and then we would all watch the top three.

And so the general manager of the organization, he got at the end of the 60 yard line and he held out the hundred dollar bill, and these guys were back there running toward it. And I remember to this day, little Angel Cespedes - a no name kid from the Dominican Republic, a hundred dollars would probably have supported his family for a couple of months in the Dominican Republic, that’s how poor he was - I remember he beat those two world class sprinters. And as he ran by - it was the funniest thing I’d ever seen in my life! - he ran by the guy who was holding the money and he almost stopped right on the dime, and he ran right over there and snatched that hundred-dollar bill out of his hand and put it right in his pocket.

See, Angel understood this concept, he *earned* that. He beat the two fastest guys in the organization. This is Paul’s point, *“To him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.”* And I still to this day picture Angel just snatching that hundred-dollar bill, “That’s mine! I earned it.” And we understand that concept, that’s what Paul is trying to communicate here.

And so in the same manner, nobody who receives a gift according to grace has to work for it. Because if you work for it, it’s debt. If you don’t work for it, it’s grace. It can’t be the same thing at the same time.

You know if you have to pay for a Christmas gift, it's not a Christmas gift. It's something that you're paying for, it's something that you're earning, it's something you're contributing to. If you have to pay for a birthday gift, it's not a birthday gift. It's something that you earned, it's something that you merited, it's something that you bought according to debt.

And so when we see that, we've got to understand that in the area of grace that the work has already been done. There's nothing left to do. The meritorious work, the payment, so to speak, has already been done by Jesus Christ. So, there's no work left to do. If you insinuate that there *is* work left to do, you're spitting on the work of Jesus Christ. You're saying it's not enough, and you're in full disagreement with the God of the universe that put His stamp of approval on what Jesus did by raising Him from the dead. God said that's enough, Jesus said, "It is finished," and God said, "Amen. It is. It's done. I accept that payment on behalf of everybody."

It cannot be, "Jesus did 99 percent and I did 1 percent." That is a salvation by works. That is, "I don't believe Jesus did it all, let me kind of clean up the mess that He left behind, let me kind of pick up the pieces that He dropped." You know, like carrying laundry from one room to the laundry room, and you drop a couple of small pairs of socks on the way, "I better pick those up because Jesus didn't know He dropped some things." That's not it at all. Jesus paid it all, do you trust that or not? Are you gonna try to earn your salvation, are you gonna work for it or not?

And Paul is gonna tell us in verse 5, "Stop working." In fact, let's read verse 5 again, and he says this: "*But to him who does not work,*" - and if you don't mind writing in your Bible, if you're okay with that, underline that. That's important - "*To him who does not work, but believes,*" he's making a point here, there's a contrast here. Believing is not working and working is not believing, they're distinctive from each other. You're either doing one, or you're doing the other. One way will land you in a heaven you don't deserve, and one way will land you in a hell that you do deserve. Are you working today or are you believing? There's only one way to heaven, and Paul makes that distinction very clear in verse 5.

Paul gives the contrast "*to the one who does not work*" or the one who stops working, you could say, as it's a present tense participle. One who stops working. For many people this is exactly where they need to start: stop working, stop trying so hard, stop doing what everyone has told you to do. You know, there are some people who are so sincere about wanting to be saved that if you told them they literally had to go to Jerusalem and crawl up to the old Temple Mount on their knees, and cry at the Wailing Wall and stick a note in between the stones, they would do it. They would be that sincere, they would mortgage their future, they would cash in their 401k if you told them that's what they needed to do to go to heaven.

And yet, the answer is much simpler than that. You can get saved in Newnan, Georgia. You can get saved in Grace Community Fellowship Church. You can get saved just outside these doors, you can get saved down the street, you can get saved in your own home, in your own apartment, you can get saved in your own bedroom, because the work has already been done. The question is, do you trust in that work? Do you trust that Jesus died for you and rose again? See, it's all been done, and you can get saved anywhere if you'll stop working. When you work, you're trying to provide a solution to the sin problem that God has already provided a solution for. God's already provided the solution, the question becomes: will you trust in what He's provided?

The sad thing for many is the very thing that these folks are working for, this righteousness that would make them acceptable to God, that very thing is unattainable in the manner by which they're going after it. That's what's sad. Many people are pursuing righteousness, they've got a genuine heart, they're sincere about wanting to get to heaven, and so they are working their tails off, because hard work pays off right? That's what we believe, that's what we've been taught, that's what our culture says. And

in the area of salvation, hard work *does* pay off, but it's the hard work that Jesus Christ did on your behalf so that you wouldn't have to work. It's a free gift of God's grace, and so this is the message to those who are working hard today.

And notice that next phrase, it's a beautiful phrase because he says, "*To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies,*" who, the saintly? Does He justify good people? Or does He justify ungodly people? Does He justify the ones who are promising to clean themselves up, or did He die for sinners? "*While we were still sinners...*" as Romans 5:8 tells us. See, we've got a God who can declare righteous the filthiest sinner that has ever lived on the face of the earth. He can take a filthy, rotten, dirty sinner and He can declare them righteous the moment they put their faith in Christ. Why? Because Christ died for the sins of the world, past, present, and future. And then they are bound up, united with Christ and the righteousness that Jesus Christ has is theirs. That's what God has put in place as a solution.

And so we see this phrase, "*but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly,*" notice the contrast here, faith is not a work. In fact, faith by definition is ceasing your work. You're trusting in the work of another, you're looking away from yourself. The ungodly person is the only type of person that God saves. He only saves ungodly people, and if you don't see yourself as ungodly, you need to read back over Romans chapters 1-3, because Paul made a strong case that each one of us, you, me, anybody that you can think of that's ever lived on the face of the earth, we're all in that predicament.

Now, God doesn't want to leave us in that predicament. He's made a solution so that you don't have to stay in that predicament and face that penalty, but it's your choice. Will you stop working and will you trust in the finished work of the Savior? Faith is trusting in the work of another, realizing that what one is after is unattainable in our own strength. In fact, you might say assistance has to come from out there, because we can't do this ourselves, and that's exactly what the gospel teaches.

And then finally we notice this: it's God who does the justifying. Go back to verse five, "*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly,*" See, it's God who declares people righteous, and it's that declaration of righteousness that gets people into heaven. You know, if we went on a man-on-the-street-interview and just interviewed people all along the road in Newnan and up into Atlanta, and we put a microphone in their faces and asked them one question, "Do you want to go to heaven?" I would say 95%, 99% of the people would say, "Yes." And then if you ask the second question, "Do you know for sure you're going there?" That percentage is going to drop way down.

Why? Because people are not sure how much good work they have to do to get to heaven, and the good news of the gospel is: stop working. You're in quicksand, the more you try, the harder the effort you make, you're gonna keep sinking, and sinking, and sinking until finally you will physically die and face the judgment that you've been working so hard to miss. Because God's already taken care of it all.

You know, it reminds me of a story of a Christian evangelist, his name was George Needham. And he was in town for an evangelistic sermon at a church, and a lot of his friends in that area said, "We need you to visit this guy. He's rich, he's socially prominent, he's been showing some level of spiritual interest, and we need you to go talk to him. We think he's ready to hear the message you have to say." Well, when George Needham showed up, this guy was very busy.

And so Needham apologized for the intrusion, and he asked the guy - he could tell he was really busy - "Can I just ask you one question?" And the guy said, "Yeah, I got time for one question. Just ask me one question." And Needham said, "Are you saved?" And the man said, "No, but I'm trying to be a Christian." And Needham said, "How long have you been trying?" And the man said, "For 12 years I've been trying." And to that the evangelist responded, "Permit me to say that you have been very foolish, and you're no closer to heaven today than you were 12 years ago." And then he walked out.

And he went to the service that night, and as he preached a sermon, he saw the man step into the room in the back. And that was enough to clear his schedule, at least that night. The comment had challenged him. And he walked in, and he wanted to talk to Needham afterwards, and he told this to Needham, he said, "I have been very foolish indeed wasting 12 precious years of life trying vainly, when salvation could have been mine by simply trusting."

And so that is the question before us today, are you trying or are you trusting? Are you trying to get to heaven on your own, or have you put your faith in Jesus, God's solution for your sin problem?



# CHAPTER 18

## God's Accounting System

### Romans 4:6-12

We're continuing our study in the book of Romans, and sometimes in the study of a book of the Bible it's good to quickly take a big 30,000-foot view again. Because you can kind of get lost in the weeds, you can get lost in the details, you can kind of start to wonder like, "Okay, why is Paul just continually repeating himself?" Because you kind of get to this point in the book you're like, "Okay we got it, we get it, we understand."

But I want to remind you that Paul viewed his ministry very similar to a master-builder. And he realized that what he was building was not a little shack in the back that wouldn't be exposed to tornado-like winds and would just be sitting back there as a temporary structure; what Paul was in the process of building was a superstructure called the church. It was the church that Jesus Christ while on earth said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." And Paul as a wise master-builder wanted to lay foundations that could support a superstructure. And so he took great care and great time to do that.

And as we look at the book of Romans, remember that one of the purposes for Paul writing the book of Romans was to record a systematic and detailed presentation of his gospel. This is important because as he begins to teach on the Christian life, if you and I don't have a proper foundation, we're not going to be able to build on top of it. And this is why Paul is going to such great lengths, almost painful lengths, to really prove out what we've looked at so far, and that is that God is righteous, you and I are not righteous, we need God's righteousness and He's provided righteousness in the gospel. And he's going through great lengths to say that the way that you get the righteousness of God is through faith.

Because if you come to the fifth chapter of the book of Romans, and the sixth chapter of the book of Romans, and the seventh chapter of the book of Romans, and the eighth chapter and so on and so forth, and you still think after Paul's done that you can get to heaven by asking Jesus into your heart, you've missed the whole message of the book of Romans. If you still think that you can get to heaven by committing your life to Christ, or believing and being baptized, and being "communion-ized", and being catechized, or whatever "ize" you want to add to it, if you still think that's the method by which you get God's righteousness then you've missed the point.

And see, Paul is a wise master-builder, he is preaching the gospel to believers at Rome because he doesn't want to get into the truths of Romans six, seven, and eight and so on until he knows that the foundation has been laid so that he can build on it like a wise master-builder. And so as we get into chapter four, chapter four could probably be preached in one Sunday. It's a pretty simple message, and the message is this: you get saved when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, and it's always been that way through the Old Testament.

But I want you to know that Paul is hitting all sorts of different angles here to prove, not only to his Jewish readers that they can be saved by faith, and that their forefathers were saved by faith in Christ, but he's also now convincing Gentile readers that we get saved the same way. See, you don't have to become Jewish to get saved. You don't have to come to a Jewish ritual like circumcision to get saved. You don't have to obey the law to get saved, because even Jews didn't get saved that way, and that's gonna be his point here as we dive back into Romans chapter four.

And we're gonna look at God's accounting system. Remember I told you in the last section about this word "*logizomai*", "accounted", God wrote it down on your account. It's a financial term, it's used eleven times in the fourth chapter of the book of Romans. And the section that we're going to look at today, verses 6-12, that word is used five of the eleven times. How does God account or write righteousness on the account of man? Don't you want to know that? Don't we want to be sure of that if that's what it takes to get to heaven? Don't you want to know what God says you need in order to be credited righteousness to your account? And this is the passage that we look at today.

And so turn with me to Romans chapter four, and starting in verse six, we're gonna see that the first words in verse six are the words, "*Just as David,*" so he's building off of what he just said about Abraham, and remember what he said about Abraham last week, that in the area of salvation hard work does not pay off. You cannot work your way to heaven, you cannot try to get to heaven. In fact, what does God say specifically and directly? You need to *stop* working, *stop* trying, and start trusting in the work that Jesus Christ performed on your behalf. That's the message that Abraham understood. Verse five, "*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted,*" - there's God's accounting program - "*for righteousness.*"

Verse six, "*just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:*" and so we see this concept in verse six, "*just as David,*" tying in David as well, and David's gonna be the second Old Testament example that Paul gives, basically proving out, hitting it from a different angle, that nobody's ever been saved by doing good works. Nobody's ever been saved by trying harder, everyone who's ever been saved in the history of mankind has been saved in one way, and that's when they put their faith in God's solution to the sin problem.

And so we're gonna see this in David, now why does he use these two men as examples? Well remember that Abraham and David were pillars of the Old Testament faith. But I believe he uses them for a different reason. See, Abraham did not even have the Mosaic law when he was justified or declared righteous. Abraham was not even circumcised when he was declared righteous, he was justified or declared righteous when he put his faith in God and His word, in His solution for sin's problem.

But what about David? David, in contrast, did have the Mosaic law. David, in contrast, was circumcised when he got saved, because those things had already been enacted for the Jewish people. And guess what? David was justified or declared righteous the same way Abraham was. And this is Paul's point, I believe, in bringing these two men up.

And so what we're gonna see is David's gonna describe what he calls the happiness of men, the blessedness of men being justified or declared righteous in this way, by faith alone in Christ alone. I love what the amplified version says here, when he says that they're blessed, it goes on to say that they're blessed and happy, they are men to be envied. Wow.

Have you ever met somebody or talked to somebody that didn't know for sure that their sins were forgiven? Have you ever talked to somebody that's not a believer who may think that you get to heaven based on your good works? That person is not to be envied, and I'll tell you why: they don't envy themselves, because they're always concerned about whether or not they've done enough to get them there. They don't live a life of peace; they live a life of worry because they don't know for sure. And so blessed and happy, and to be envied is the man who knows based on the testimony of the Word of God that his sins have been forgiven. And that is a blessed place, and this is what David writes about.

In fact, I really love what he says there in verse 6, because Paul describes the "*blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes*" - there's our accounting word again - "*righteousness*", and notice that last phrase, it is "*apart from works.*" We have to get that into our heads when we preach the gospel, *it is apart from works.* It's apart from works to *get* saved, it's apart from works to *stay* saved. If you get saved by



grace, that's doing something that you didn't earn or deserve in an unmeritorious way, you don't stay saved by doing works. It's a gift when you receive it, it's a gift twenty years after you receive it, salvation is a free gift. Salvation is completely free. Why is it free? Because Jesus paid for it all. He did it *all*, He finished the work. And so that's the message that we celebrate when we look at the gospel.

In fact, when you look at God's accounting system, He will write down on your ledger righteousness that you could never get on your own the moment you put your faith in what Jesus did for you, that finished work on the cross where He died for your sins and rose again. That's how God accounts it. And if I came to you today and I said, "Look, don't file your taxes yet. I know a loophole in the IRS tax code that can get you five thousand dollars, they will account that you earn and deserve five thousand dollars." Who wouldn't take me up on that offer?

And in the same way, if I can tell you how God, the God of the universe, can take a sinner like you - a person who makes mistakes, a person who fails, a person who is not proud of everything that you've done in your life - and account righteousness to your account, and it's through faith in Jesus Christ, why wouldn't you take that offer? That's an eternal life proposition that you'll never have to pay for your sins and that you'll spend eternity in relationship and fellowship with God. Who wouldn't take that offer? What a beautiful message, and blessed, happy, to be envied is the man that understands that message.

In fact, if you introduce works - notice that phrase, "it's apart from works," you've got to stop working - you introduce uncertainty into the equation. Even if it was something simple, like if there was a big button up here and God said, "All you got to do to go to heaven is you gotta hit that button every decade on January 1st right at 12:01 A.M. All you have to do every 10 years is hit that button." You know, I might get it the first six or seven decades, but I'm gonna forget. I can't even remember to take the trash out at my house let alone push a button for salvation.

If there was one thing I had to do to get to heaven, I just introduced uncertainty into the whole mix. See, God doesn't want you to be uncertain. Why not? Because He took care of it all. He personally took care of it all. Jesus paid it all. So, there's no uncertainty, it's got to be apart from works. Otherwise, if it had any kind of work involved, we would screw it up, we wouldn't do it right, we would forget, we would take it lightly, whatever you want to say, and then we would take credit for it on top of it. Which is just a shocker in some ways and not in others. But we see that it's got to be apart from works.

So, what does David say? Well, in verses 7-8, Paul is going to quote what David wrote in Psalm 32, and he's gonna say three things about this blessed man, this person, man or woman, who has found that they can be credited or accounted righteousness by God simply through faith. Verses 7-8 say this, "*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.*" So again, Paul is quoting David from Psalm 32, and he's gonna say three things about the man who is justified or declared righteous by God from faith.

See, even David understood this, a Jew under law, a Jew circumcised, was not trusting in his possession of the law to get him to heaven. He was not trusting in his foreskin that was cut off when he was eight days old, he wasn't trusting in that to get him to heaven, he wasn't trusting the fact that he was Abraham's seed to get him to heaven, he wasn't even trusting in the fact that he was the king of Israel to get him to heaven. He wasn't trusting in any of that stuff. He was trusting in God. He was trusting in God's provision. And so he writes this faith righteousness understanding all the way back in Psalm 32.

And so the first thing he's going to say in verse 7 is, "*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,*" The word "forgiven" means *to dismiss, to push away, to push out, to send forth, to send away*. But we see the first reason or the first way that this man is blessed who understands faith righteousness is their lawless

deeds have been sent away, have been dismissed. Just a quick technical point: because this is in the aorist tense, which is a point in time action that's been accomplished, it's past tense, it's already happened, it indicates that when a person puts their faith in Christ, their sins are sent away. Dismissed, completely forgiven at a point in time. That means that God is not going to bring up sin to you again in the area of eternal salvation. He doesn't bring it back up. Those have been forgiven, those have been dismissed, those have been pushed away.

And so we've got to understand that our sins and their penalty are dismissed at the point in time a person is justified by God through faith. This means that even if you sin after you believe, Jesus has died for those sins, there's no penalty left to be paid because Jesus paid it all. Did Jesus die for all your sins? Yes. We would theologically say yes, the Bible clearly teaches that. Does that mean He died for a sin you're going to commit 30 years from now? Yes. That fits in the category of "all". Very simply and logically, He's paid the penalty for *all* sin. So, David understood this, and he describes this blessed man in this way that his lawless deeds are forgiven.

The second way that he describes this man in verse 7 is as a man "*whose sins are covered.*" He says covered, meaning *to cover over*. Metaphorically used for forgiveness of sins or to pardon, especially in the Old Testament time. Because remember during the Old Testament time that sin was covered by an atonement covering, it was a substitutionary death of an animal. And it just simply covered sin, it didn't take away sin, it was a temporary covering. Why was it temporary? Because it was pointing forward to the One who would completely pay the penalty, the One who would completely take away sin.

And so we see David in his understanding of the day was accurate. In fact, I love what the amplified version says here, it says, "*Blessed is the man whose sin is covered up and completely buried.*" I love it! It's just got this finality to it. God, looking ahead to what Jesus Christ would do in taking away sins, could declare someone righteous if they were trusting in God's provision for sin. And then the Old Testament time it was this atonement covering for the animal. We learn from the Old Testament that the animal blood did not take away sin, it simply covered it, but we also learned in John 1:29 that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God who came to take up and carry away the sin of the world.

And so Hebrews 10:1-4 tells us the same thing as we just kind of read through that. "*For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?*"

In other words, if the offering of the animals would have sufficed and provided final payment, why did they keep offering them? Well, because they didn't take away sin. "*For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.*" And notice this next phrase, "*For it is not possible,*" - you could substitute the word "impossible" in there - "*that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*" But you know what can take away sins? What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. See, the Lamb of God and His sacrifice can take away your sins, and that's the blessedness of the man who understands God's accounting system.

And then I think you're gonna love this next point, I like it, verse 8 says this: "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.*" Now, we've been talking about God's accounting system, where God credits or writes down righteousness on your account. There's a different aspect to His accounting system that David brings out here. Not only will the Lord account righteousness to your account, but guess what else He doesn't write down on your account or He takes away? Sin. The same word "impute" is our word "*logizomai*", so not only will the Lord put down on your ledger righteousness, but He will not put down or reckon to your account sin and its penalty.

In fact, Paul was so emphatic about this, and David as he spoke it, that he uses a Greek double negative here. And this is important, this is significant because this is not how they did everything. You

can negate words in the Greek with one of those two words, “*ou me*.” You can just do it with “*ou*”, or you can just do it with “*me*”. When you put them together, it's not like English where if you have a double negative, it makes a positive. I don't know if you've ever talked to somebody that speaks in double negatives, it's really hard to kind of figure out where they're going. It's like, “There's no way to do nothing about this.” What? Does that mean we *can't* do something, or we *can* do something? And that's a double negative in English, but not that way in Greek.

What it means in Greek is an emphatic way to say, “It will never, no not ever happen.” In other words, “I'm telling you the truth, and I am guaranteeing you this will never, no not ever happen.” To whom the Lord shall never, no not ever impute sin to your account, or write down sin on your ledger when you put your faith in Jesus Christ. So in man's justification, not only is righteousness recorded on our ledger, but sin and its consequences are removed from our ledger to never appear again. How's that for security? How's that for just resting in the finished work of Christ and knowing that it's all been taken care of? It just causes worship, I hope, to spring up from your soul, to know what He's done and the fullness of what He's accomplished. It's incredible!

And so we move on now, and in fact, what Paul is gonna do is move back to Abraham. Now, we're talking about this beautiful thing, about being declared righteous by faith, but who can be justified by faith? Because all he's using up to this point is Jewish examples. So the Gentile might think, “Well wait a minute, do the Jews have this monopoly on justification of forgiveness? I mean, all you're bringing up is all these Jewish examples.” And the Jew is probably sitting back and saying, “Well wait a minute, I know what you're saying Paul, but surely circumcision helps. I mean, come on, you can't tell me that circumcision has no value. I get believing in Jesus, I'm okay with that, but isn't it believing in Jesus plus circumcision? Come on, Paul, that's got to be in there.”

And so Paul is anticipating this argument from both sides, and he goes on to say in verse 9 and 10 simply this: “*Does this blessedness,*” - this position to be envied, the man who's justified by faith, has his sins forgiven - “*Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only,*” - that's a synonym for a Jewish person - “*or upon the uncircumcised also?*” - that's a synonym for a Gentile person - “*For we say that faith was accounted,*” - there's our accounting word again - “*to Abraham for righteousness.*” Now notice what Paul is gonna do here in verse 10. He's gonna set up his argument because he says this: “*How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.*”

And so you see Paul is anticipating a question now: when do you get justified? Is it just Jews that get justified? Don't you have to be circumcised before you can be justified? And he's talking about timing. And so some might now think that justification by faith is only for the Jew. Or, since Paul is using Abraham as an example of justification, some of his Jewish audience may have overlooked the timing of Abraham's justification. “Well of course he was justified, he was circumcised!” They might have thought, “Of course he's declared righteous, he was Jewish!” And Paul is reminding them that Abraham did *nothing* praiseworthy, he contributed to his righteousness in no way, not even through a ritual that God had ordained. And so he is kind of working through this argument.

Now timing is everything in the area of justification, especially for Abraham since Paul is using him as his primary example, and the timing is everything and the timing is simply this: the Bible teaches that Abraham was accounted righteousness when he put his faith in God. But now the question becomes, did that happen before or after he was circumcised? Really easy answer to that question, because all you have to do is flip back to Genesis and you see that Abraham was declared righteous by God in Genesis 15:6, which is 14 years before he was circumcised in Genesis 17. So, when was he justified, before he was circumcised or after? Well, clearly before he was circumcised. So, circumcision had no part, no contribution to him being declared righteous by God.

And so Abraham, again, did not have that distinct mark of Jewish circumcision when he was declared righteous by God through faith. In fact, you might even say he was more Gentile at that point than he was Jewish. Now that wouldn't have sat very well with a Jewish reader, but the truth of the matter was that his righteousness was declared to him before he was circumcised.

Now let's move on to verse 11 and 12, because I think it answers the question, "Well, why circumcision then? What was the point of circumcision?" And again, you remember Paul is dealing with both Jewish and Gentile readers, and for the Jewish reader, they're thinking, "Well then what was the point? You just basically shot out this very important part of our upbringing, which is circumcision on the eighth day, so what was the purpose for it then? Why even do it then?" And so Paul is gonna explain that.

And what he's going to explain in the process is something that's very important for you and for I, and this is where we come into the picture, because Abraham's fatherhood is not a physical fatherhood in God's estimation. And you know, a lot of times our kids sing a song in Sunday school, "Father Abraham had many sons..." and we march, and we're excited about that, and you know that even if you're not a Jew with Jewish heritage, you can be a child of Abraham, and that's what the Scriptures teach, and that's what these verses here teach.

Now the Jews never thought of it that way. The Jews thought you had to have a physical lineage all the way back up to Abraham to qualify to be his child, and they took great pride in that position. And so Paul is about to just knock them over, if you want to say it that way, in what he's about to say. Because we've got to understand that Abraham was not justified because he was circumcised, he was circumcised because he was justified. We've got to keep that order in play here.

And so as we look at verse 11, let's read it, "*And he,*" -speaking of Abraham - "*received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also.*" So, notice that Abraham did indeed receive circumcision, but it was not to obtain righteousness. That's what Paul is putting forth there. Circumcision is described in two ways, and one of the ways being described is not to get righteousness. This had nothing to do with his righteousness. In fact, it's described in a couple of ways here.

The first way it's described is as a sign. A sign means *a mark, a token, something that's designated, something that's distinguished or known*. We use signs in our day to point to something. This sign points over here, this sign points over here, and sometimes you get signs, and you don't know what they're pointing at.

We were hiking on a mountain trail in the Blue Ridge Mountains last week, and we came up to a sign on the path, and I couldn't tell what arrow was going where. I didn't know if we were going down the hike that took us 7.1 miles down a road we didn't want to go, or if it was actually taking us where we were trying to go, because the arrows were all off.

But circumcision here was assigned to point to something, and in Abraham's case, it was a sign to point to his faith. This seal of circumcision was a sign to point to his faith. You know, one thing we know about circumcision even as we read through the Old Testament history, is it was a distinguishing feature of a Jew. It distinguished the Jewish people from every other Gentile people in the world. It was designed for them to be a light to the world. They had the Oracles of God, they had the Word of God, they knew the God of the universe, they knew how to approach the God of the universe, and they were designed and set apart distinctively by using this sign of circumcision as having the way to the one true God. And they should have stood out that way, and Abraham's circumcision functioned in this way.

Now unfortunately, for most of Jewish history it hasn't functioned this way. In fact, this sign has been more of an exclusive seal, an exclusive club that they've kept Gentiles away or pushed them out. You see this illustrated in the Gospels when they refer to Gentiles as dogs, not worthy, I can't eat with them, I can't touch them, not this idea that this was a sign of their faith in God and His solution to the sin problem.

We see that this circumcision was also referred to in a second way in verse 11, it was referred to as a seal of the righteousness of faith. And when we look at seals, we know that seals were an instrument for sealing letters or books, and they were really designed for the sake of privacy, the sake of security, it guaranteed the contents. It was very important, especially in those days when battles were being fought. If a general sent an order to another general by courier, if that seal was intact then the reporting sergeant knew that he was getting the right message from the general. But if that seal had been tampered with, you couldn't trust the contents, you didn't know what was going in there.

And so figuratively this idea of seal came to represent a promissory token, a pledge, or proof that what was inside was genuine. In Abraham's case what we see specifically is that God had credited righteousness to his account, that his faith was actually both a sign and a seal of the genuineness of the fact that he was trusting God for his righteousness, not trying to work it out on his own. And so this became a visible sign guaranteeing Abraham possessed God's righteousness.

And you know what, circumcision should have represented that for every single Jew. It should have represented that, should have been the seal, should have been the sign for every Jew, but unfortunately as we see throughout history, that act itself became more significant, and they began to trust in their circumcision to save them. And that's why when you get into the gospels, you get Jesus meeting with one of the most religious Pharisees of the day, and you get John the Baptist whose message was just ripping Pharisees apart, he was criticizing them and hardcore saying they needed to change their mind. Why? Because they were doing this very thing.

"What? I'm circumcised. I'm a child of Abraham. Of course I'm getting into eternity, of course I'm getting into the kingdom!" And that was the Jewish mindset, they were no longer believing or trusting in God's provision for sin, they were trusting in a piece of skin that was cut from their bodies when they were eight days old, that's what they were trusting in. And so circumcision was never designed to give somebody righteousness, but rather be a seal and a sign that one *was* righteous, that one *was* trusting in God. And so because God justified Abraham when He did, this is the beautiful thing, Abraham is qualified to be the father of all who believe. He justified him before he got circumcised, so he was uncircumcised when he was declared righteous. That means you and I as uncircumcised Gentiles can also be declared righteous the same way. David was justified after he was circumcised, so that means every Jew is justified the same way, and that's the whole point of Paul's argument. This is why he's going through great lengths to prove this.

Now why was Abraham qualified to be the father? Because Abraham was not circumcised when God credited righteousness to his account. In fact, this is an important announcement in verse 11, because Paul is very clear. Every Gentile, every Jew, every person on the face of the earth who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will gain God's righteousness. Notice at the end of verse 11 Paul says, "*that righteousness might be imputed to them also.*" That's you and me, in the Word of God, he's speaking to us. That's how we get righteousness too. And you see, he's using Abraham as an example because Abraham was justified when he was still uncircumcised.

And remember, if you jump back up to verse 5, remember this: you and I are not told to start behaving, or start cleaning up our act, or to be a good person and do ordinances to be saved. In fact, go back to verse 5, "*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly,*" So when do you

and I get justified? After we've cleaned up? After we become a good person? After we've done an ordinance like baptism, circumcision, anything you want to throw in there, is that the key to being declared righteous by God? Or does He justify ungodly people like you and me without any promise to clean up? There's no promise required, we're ungodly.

In fact, we go into Romans 5 and we see in verse 8 that, *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Not after you promise to clean up. Not after you promise to get baptized. Not after you promise to get circumcised, in this case with Abraham, but while you're still a sinner, while you're still ungodly. And that's the message of the gospel, and Paul is clear, this is how you and I can be declared righteous in God's sight as well.

Now verse 12, as we conclude, says this: *“and the father of circumcision to those who are not only of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.”* So just like Gentiles can be justified the same way Abraham was, because he was justified when he was uncircumcised, Paul wants his Jewish audience to know they are justified the same way when they believe, not when they cut off a piece of skin. That's not the method by which to become righteous and he wants his Jewish listeners to know that. Stop trusting in your circumcision, stop trusting in your heritage, stop trusting in your religion, stop trusting in your good works, and come to God the way that Abraham your father came to God, which was by faith. And when you believe God, God will write righteousness down to your account and He will never write sin on your account again. And Paul is emphasizing this for his Jewish listeners.

Jews are physical descendants of Abraham, but that was never good enough to gain them a righteousness needed to enter into heaven. They needed a spiritual birth, and we see that in our little friend Nicodemus in John chapter 3. He needed a spiritual birth, his physical birth wasn't enough, his heritage wasn't enough. And Paul is just coming at this same concept over, and over, and over again from different angles to persuade, to convince us, so that we are confident in God's salvation.

But then he says this, *“in his footsteps”*. What does he mean? How do you, as verse 12 says, *“but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised,”* how do you walk in the steps of the faith? Well, the word “walk” here just means *to stand or go in order, to advance in rows or ranks*. I think what we would say is they need to follow in Abraham's footsteps. What did Abraham do to get the righteousness of God? Well, he trusted God. He quit trying and he trusted. He believed God, and God wrote down righteousness to his account. And so that's the same exact way that we obtain righteousness, as we walk in the steps of faithful Abraham.

And so again, we conclude today's message and just say Paul is laying a foundation. He's repeating himself, he's coming at this thing from different angles, because by the time we get to the superstructure, you and I have to be clear on this. Because also, Colossians 2:6 says, *“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”* And so if there's any lack of clarity in your foundation as to how you get saved, there's going to be fog in your mind as to how to live the Christian life. It will not connect or make sense because the same way that you got saved by faith is the same way that you and I are to live by faith. And when we start to get into the details of how that looks, that's when the fog sets in for many, because they've never taken the time to navigate the book of Romans, the first four and a half chapters, and get solid on their foundation.

And so I appreciate your patience in doing so. In fact, what we're going to see in the next section is Paul is going to approach this from a different angle. Now he's gonna tell us that Abraham was justified before the law. Okay well that's easy to see, because he's justified in Genesis 15, and the law is not given until Exodus 20. And so we're gonna see that he's gonna emphasize that. And then as we finish chapter 4, Paul is going to get us into Abraham's mindset. What was he thinking?

We're gonna see that Abraham uses this word, "was persuaded." See, he was confident that what God said, He was also able to perform. And I think the other thing we need to take away from this today is that the same way that Abraham got righteousness is the same way you and I get righteousness. And Abraham didn't walk the aisle of a church. Abraham didn't ask Jesus into his heart. Abraham didn't commit his life to God, he didn't ask Jesus to come into his life, he didn't make a promise, he didn't even get baptized. He believed. And see, this is written for our understanding because this is the same way that we get saved today.





# CHAPTER 19

## Hand in Glove Fit

### Romans 4:13-18

You all remember the trial of the century, the OJ Simpson trial back in the 90s. And from all intents and purposes, it looked like OJ was guilty. In fact, I remember leading into the trial thinking as a young man, "There's no way this guy could be found innocent with everything that's coming against him." But one of the turning points in the trial, you may remember, is he had hired a team of experienced lawyers and Johnnie Cochran was one of those lawyers. And you remember the image probably still to this day of OJ trying to slip on the glove, and really acting like it was just not gonna fit. And one of the closing statements from Johnnie Cochran was, "If the glove does not fit, you must acquit." And that phrase right there resonated with many of the jurors, and they found him innocent.

Today we're gonna look at a different kind of hand in glove fit, and to do so I want to read a very familiar verse to you before we jump into the book of Romans, it's found in Ephesians 2:8-9, and the verse reads this: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."* And the hand-in-glove fit that I'm talking about this morning is the glove of grace, and the hand of faith fitting into the glove of grace.

And see, when we talk about eternal salvation, nothing else fits with grace. Because as God gives righteousness as a free gift, as He gives eternal life as a free gift, the only thing that goes with grace is faith. Because the second God were to require something for that free gift, it would no longer be free, it could no longer be grace, and thus the hand does not fit into the glove.

And so we've been looking at this in the book of Romans, if you'll join me in chapter 4, we're gonna pick up in verse 13. And see, one of the things we've gotta remember with God's method of salvation is God wants to save sinners. He does not expect sinners to save themselves, to be good enough, to try hard enough, to be religious enough, to light enough candles, for there's no amount of candles on this earth that you can light to go to heaven.

There's no amount of confessionals you can go to and pour out your guts for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, there's no amount of that that can get you to heaven. In fact, what we've seen in the book of Romans is that if salvation depended upon you in any way, *you could not get it.* Romans 4:5 - stop working, start trusting. The work has been completed, will you trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ who died for your sins and rose again?

We're going to look at a section today that on the surface is a little bit confusing, because you're trying to follow Paul's argument and you're wondering why he's going here. So let's just kind of get a ramped up start to this section. The book of Romans is very simple, and we've done this 30,000-foot view, but let's go over it again. God requires righteousness, man does not have righteousness of their own. We see that proved out in the first three chapters of the book of Romans. Everyone's guilty, no one's got it, everyone deserves to go to hell. Not a happy-go-lucky message there, not a positive feel-good story so far. But in Romans chapter 3, we read in verse 21, *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."*

And see, if your salvation depended upon *you* keeping the law, you would go to hell. Period. Because the law is exacting in what it demands, one break of the law requires a penalty. And with a holy and just God that enforces that penalty, doesn't grade on the curve, every one of us are lost the second

you and I were in that nursery however many years ago and we told a teacher “No!”, or we stole a toy from another kid, or we stole crackers, or we stole a cookie out of Mama's cookie jar. That right there is enough to send everybody to hell because James 2 says if you violate the law in one point, yet you keep all the rest of them, you're guilty of them all. And we've been over this before, but Romans is teaching us this.

And so in Romans chapter 4, Paul basically answers the question, “How does this establish a law? Is this at odds with salvation in the Old Testament?” And he's using two Old Testament examples, Abraham and David, to show that men have always been saved by grace through faith, that hand has always fit in that glove. It has never changed, there's never been another method. Even when Jews were under law, they were not saved by keeping the law, the law merely showed them that they were not good enough and they needed a savior.

The fact that Jesus is called a “Savior” implies that you and I need saving. If He wasn't called a savior, that would imply you could do it on your own. You could get there on your own, and you better buck up, and you better try hard, and you better stay up late at night, and pray, and work, and ritualize yourself into heaven. And you can't do it, that's what the Bible teaches.

And so we find ourselves in the middle of Romans 4, starting in verse 13. And really 13 in this next section builds off of verse 12. And so as we kind of get a running start here, let's read verse 12 and then we'll move into verse 13. Verse 12: *“and the father of circumcision to those who are not only of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.”* And we looked at that last time, that Abraham himself was justified by faith and he was justified by faith before he was circumcised, he was justified or declared righteous by God by faith before the law was even in existence.

And the reason for that is so that he could be the father of everyone, Jew, Gentile, whoever came to God in God's way, trusting in God's solution, which we find is revealed in the New Testament pages as being Jesus Christ the Son of God. He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for your sins in your place, and the death that you and I deserved, He paid it. And He didn't stay dead, God raised Him from the dead three days later, accepted His sacrifice on your behalf, and *everyone* is saved that way. *Everyone* has been saved that way from the very beginning of time. Nothing has changed. God has always had one glove called grace, and He's always had one hand called faith and it fits together, hand in glove fit, and there's nothing you can squeeze in between that.

And that's why when people say, “Well yeah, but you've got to do something. Yeah, trust in Jesus, but you've still got to do this, and you've still got to maintain this, and you've still got to read your Bible, and you've still got to go to church, and you've still got to stay away from the seven deadly sins.” Whatever those are, as defined by whatever group you're in. Some people would define that as wearing pants on Sunday or not wearing a tie as a deadly sin that might send you to hell.

And see, any time you add something to the response of faith, that hand does not fit the glove anymore. Because it cannot be by grace *and* works, they can't go together, because either it's a free gift, or it's *not*. There's nothing in between. And if it's a free gift, then God can guarantee that you'll keep that gift for eternity. See how that fits together? Because if it's not free, you have to earn it, well then there is a continued payment for that, and you better get to work, and you better figure out what that payment is. Now the Bible is not going to help you there, because the Bible says it's free, but if that's what you believe, you've got to go find something to do to maintain or earn that gift. The second you earn a gift, it is no longer a gift. The Bible says salvation is a free gift.

And so we move on in verse 13 which says this: *“For the promise,”* - and notice that word “for”, it's building off, it's giving us further reason why Abraham is the father of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. In fact, you're gonna notice “for” in verse 13, you're gonna notice “for” in verse 14,

you're gonna notice “because” in verse 15, and then you're gonna notice that “therefore” in verse 16. He's building an argument, we're kind of picking up in the middle of an argument, but he's proving his point why Abraham is the father of all those who believe.

And so in verse 13 he says, *“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”* So, this promise that Abraham received was not through the law, was not through merit keeping, was not through do-gooding, it came through faith. Righteousness that comes from God through faith.

Again, this “for” gives us the reason from verse 12, that Abraham is the father of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. We know from Genesis 12:3 that God promised that in Abraham, in his seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Paul later tells us, “God preached the gospel through Abraham.” And you're like, “Whoa, where? I didn't see Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. How did He do that?” Well, it's through this verse, *“in Abraham all the families of the earth shall be blessed,”* And all the families of the earth, do they have the ability to obtain the blessing of God, righteousness by faith the moment they put their faith in Jesus Christ? Yeah, that's available to whosoever.

In fact, Paul said in 1 Timothy 1 that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He didn't come into the world to save good people, He didn't come into the world to save religious people, He didn't come into the world to save non-tattooed people, He didn't come into the world to save people that had short hair, and cleaned it up, and tightened up their bed so tight that a quarter could bounce off of it. That's not who He came to save. He came to save sinners, and so if you understand that you're a sinner, you qualify for heaven. Congratulations! You qualify for heaven, and because you have a Savior, you know that He can save. That's what the Bible teaches.

And so God promised that in Abraham all the families of the earth shall be blessed. He also promised in Genesis 17:4 that Abraham would be a father of many nations. And so Abraham's inheritance, if you will, the fact that he would be an heir of the world was given to him and these promises. Through his seed, he would be an heir of the world. And I think that's finally and fully realized in the Millennial Kingdom when we see his seed, Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham ruling and reigning over the world. I think we'll see obviously the fulfillment of that at that point.

But you know what's interesting about those two promises? They were both based on God's unmerited favor. They were both based on God's grace, grace being defined as giving him something he didn't deserve. Do you know that when God called Abraham out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham was a polytheist, he was worshipping many gods. We get that from Joshua, that his father was a polytheistic man, that everybody in that time worshiped many gods. So, it wasn't like He looked at Abraham and said, “Oh, there's something meritorious in this guy. Let Me choose him.” No, He called a sinner! He was a pagan, he didn't have the knowledge of the true God, and yet God called him. All of this was on the basis of God's grace, and that's what Paul is showing here.

And you know what Paul is gonna say now, he's going to say, “If you, Jew, or you, Gentile, think that the law is what merits your way to heaven, then you'd have to wipe out everything that happened before that. You would have to make void this faith righteousness that the Bible teaches. God credited righteousness to Abraham's account when he simply believed God.” We see that in Genesis 15:6.

So as we move on to verse 14, Paul is writing this, and notice this is almost like a legal treatise. He's making a defense, it's a systematic defense, and remember contextually, way back when we started the book of Romans, one of the reasons that Paul writes the book of Romans is because he's not sure if he's ever going to see this church. He's going back to Jerusalem, there's some headhunters after him, not the good kind of recruiting headhunters trying to find him a job, but literally headhunters looking

to take his head off, put him in the ground six feet under, and so he didn't know if he would get to this church, and so he systematically writes an argument for the gospel that he preached.

And we're starting here in the first five chapters talking about salvation from the penalty of sin, but when we get to chapter 6, we're gonna start talking about salvation from the power of sin, and that's where each one of us lives in our daily life. And see, just as God has made a provision for salvation from the penalty of sin, God too has made salvation from the power of sin possible in your daily life. And we're gonna see what that provision is once we move on to chapter 6.

But the question that Paul anticipates here as we move into verse 14 is, "Why *couldn't* this inheritance come from the law? Why couldn't it? You just said it couldn't, that he is gonna be the heir of the world, not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Why couldn't it have come through the law? Show me that, Paul." And so that's what he does in verse 14. He's actually going to give us two reasons showing us why this inheritance could not come through the law. Verse 14 says this: "For if those who are of the law are heirs," - reason number one - "faith is made void," - and reason number two - "the promise is made of no effect." And so this "for" continues to develop his argument, we've got these two reasons, let's look at them.

Reason number one, he says that faith would be made void. Because if only the Jews were heirs, then the means by which Abraham gained righteousness would be made empty or fallacious. Remember, he gained righteousness from God the moment he believed. That was before circumcision, that happened in Genesis 17, that happened two chapters later and a number of years later. And we've got to understand that what Paul is trying to get at, and to show, and to prove, over and over again, is that faith and law are contradictory principles. Law says you must *do* something, faith says you must *stop* doing something. Law says you've got to keep this and keep that, faith says you need to trust in the work of another, you need to stop working.

See, they're contrary principles, they don't go with one another, they don't fit in the glove when you try to jam all of that together. And that's why when you talk to people about the gospel and they believe, "Yeah, I've got to do this, and I've got to do that, and I've got to do this," And I say, "That's all great, what about Jesus?" And they say, "Oh yeah, Him too." It can't be Him too. It's Him alone or it's your works. And the question becomes what do you want to trust in to get you to heaven? Do you want to trust in Jesus alone, or do you want to trust in your good works?

I don't know about you, but I've seen my life. There's no way I want to trust in myself. There's no way I want to trust in my ability to be good. I get exposed on a daily basis of how un-good I really am. And if it's not manifested in actions, it's manifested in my thinking. And I think many of us would agree that if we put your thoughts up on the PowerPoint screen from last week, you may never set foot in this building again. I definitely would turn in my resignation; I'd be so embarrassed. We don't want to trust in ourselves, friends. We want to trust in Jesus Christ who died for us and rose again, who paid that penalty on our behalf.

He uses this word, "make void", and the idea that's carried with it is *divesting oneself of rightful dignity by descending to an inferior condition*. You know, what would have happened if this is true, if you could gain righteousness through the law, or you could gain an inheritance, if this promise was to Abraham through law keeping, what it would do is invalidate the faith that he had prior. It would supersede it, this law keeping would have trumped faith righteousness, and not in the presidential sense, I mean like overtaking it and making faith invalid because now law keeping would be the new sheriff in town, the new way to get righteousness. And so it can't retroactively invalidate the way God made Abraham righteous, and that's the point.

And Paul's saying that's why if you try to make law the basis for your salvation, or Abraham's basis for inheriting the world, then you destroy the faith righteousness concept, you invalidate it, you retroactively go back. And so if faith righteousness was not true, then Abraham's faith would have been retroactively made void, and every other person's faith since that time would have also been made void. That would mean that you and I are not saved by faith if this was true. And so Paul is clearly saying this is not true. He's made the heir of the world not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

And then we go on to reason number two, and reason number two is simply this: the promise is made of no effect. It's like having a sign that says, "Sign not in use." Or having a sign that says, "Don't touch the edges of the sign because they're sharp." What's the purpose? This is useless! And what he's saying is if you could get righteousness through the law, then this faith righteousness is useless. It's been superseded. Because if only Jews were heirs, only those who are under the law were heirs, then the promise of righteousness by faith to Abraham would be made of no effect. And if God did offer inheritance through law-keeping, then you know what? His promise would fail because no one can keep the law.

See, God can only promise things that He can guarantee to come true. And if it depended on you and I for God to fulfill His promise, forget about it! The promise is not coming true. He couldn't make a promise like that because you and I are the variables in the equation. And quite frankly, just give us enough time and we know we will screw it up. Just give us a few minutes. Some of y'all might last 30 minutes. We will find a way to screw it up!

And so for God to make a promise, it has to be on the basis of grace. It has to be this method that He is going to give us something we don't deserve, freely, according to the finished work of Christ, that He can guarantee eternal life. He doesn't hedge His bets in John 3:16, He doesn't say, "If you believe and continue on, then I'll give you eternal life. If you believe and you read your Bible, if you believe and you light candles, if you believe and you're baptized, if you believe and you come to church, then I'll give you eternal life."

Or He doesn't say, "If you believe and you behave for 20 years, I'll convert temporary life to eternal life." He doesn't say that, He just comes out and says it, lays it on the line. He can make that promise. Why? Because He can fulfill it in His grace. You didn't earn it or deserve it when you put your faith in Christ, you're not going to earn it or deserve it 20 years from now, and you're not gonna earn it and deserve it the last breath that you take on this earth. It's all by grace.

And see, the only response he's gonna tell us in verse 16 that goes with grace is to trust Him. Believe Him. Believe in what solution He's provided, that's the only thing that fits. God is confident in Jesus Christ. God the Father is totally satisfied with what Jesus Christ did, He proved it by raising Him from the dead. The question becomes: are you satisfied? It's not Jesus Christ plus I'm going to try my hardest. What that says is that Jesus Christ is not enough. If God is satisfied with Him, why aren't we? And those of you that are satisfied with Him, rest in the finished work of Christ and know that your salvation is secure, that it's eternal. When God said, "I promise you eternal life," He's guaranteeing it because He's giving it to you through and by His grace.

And so we see this beautiful truth. And as we go on with reason number two, this word "made of no effect" means that *it's rendered inactive, it's rendered idle, it's rendered useless*. If faith righteousness was not true, then the promise of righteousness to Abraham would be rendered useless and would be ineffective for anyone else since him. You see, this is why the inheritance can't come through the law. A summary reason for what Paul just said is because nobody can keep the law. Nobody would merit that righteousness. And so it has to be via promise, it has to be via faith, it has to be via grace, that's the only way the hand is gonna fit the glove, and the only way it's gonna happen.

And in verse 15 he tells us this truth, he says, *“because the law brings about wrath;”* - Why can't people of law-keeping and do-gooding be heirs? Because the law brings about wrath - *“for where there is no law there is no transgression.”* Why would faith be made void, and why would the promise be made of no effect if the Jews were heirs by law? Well, this is why it would be made void. Because the law is mercy-less. The law is not merciful, the law is mercy-less.

I joke about speeding all the time, but do you know that a police officer can give you a ticket if you're going 1 mile an hour over the speed limit? And yet what would happen if you got pulled over and you were going one over, you had it on cruise control, so you knew you were going one over, and the police officer stopped you and wrote you a ticket? You know what every one of us would say? *“Come on, dude/dudette! One mile over? Are you kidding? Where did you go to police officer school? I get at least 10 miles over before you can write me a ticket!”* Not true.

What's the law say? 55, 70 depending on what road you're on. So that means on a 70 mile an hour road and when I go 71, I'm breaking the law. Now, we have some wonderful police officers in our area, and one is sitting in the back, so they don't typically waste their time when you're going one over.

But you know with the law of God, it's either perfection or not perfection. One over, one mistake, and the law brings about wrath. The law has an exactness and intensity about it, it does not bring a righteous standing before God, that we can be assured of. It brings about wrath, it carries out its task. In fact, you could say the law has the exact opposite effect. Many people running around this world today think that they're going to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments, and it just frightens me to death when I hear people say that.

The Ten Commandments were not given as a standard for us to live up to to get to heaven, they were given as a mirror to show you you *can't* get there. You don't have the righteousness needed, you're not good enough. And so the law tells us that nobody can keep it perfectly, and it brings about or produces the end goal of what laws do, it exacts justice, it punishes lawbreakers, it announces a penalty for breaking the law.

And so we see in verse 15 that the law brings about wrath. And then he makes this comment: *“where there is no law there is no transgression.”* What does that mean? Well basically, without the law there's no clear violation, and thus no clear penalty. But with the law, the violation and its consequences are clearly spelled out. So, for the Jew to say, *“Yeah, we want to be given righteousness through law merit and law keeping.”* Paul's saying, *“If that was the case, you guys would be last in line. Because the law is clearly defined, you've clearly broken it.”*

And not only that, but to know a law and to break it any way is worse than not knowing a law and accidentally breaking it. Because that's called transgression. That means you've looked a law straight in the face, like *“Wet paint, don't touch,”* and you said, *“I'm gonna touch that sucker.”* And you've looked the law right in the face and said, *“I'm gonna do it anyway.”* And that would be the Jews position. So they're clamoring and begging, *“No, it's law-keeping, it's law-keeping!”* And Paul is saying, *“You don't want it to be law keeping. Trust me. Because if you break the law now, you're a clear violator of what you know. That's not the way.”*

And so Paul brings us to a great *“therefore”* in verse 16. It has to be according to grace by faith. Verse 16, *“Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.”* And you see that last phrase, *“who is the father of us all,”* really tying up what he started to mention back in verse 12. He's showing he's the father of us all, there's only one way of salvation. It's not to be a Jew, it's not to try to keep the law, it's not to be circumcised or any kind of ritual, it's to come to God the same way that Abraham came: trusting in God's solution for his sin problem. And so we see that in verse 16.

And so “therefore” really summarizes the argument that Paul was making the last few verses. Simply put, the righteousness acceptable to God, the righteousness that can get you to heaven, comes only via faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's it. Summary point, and then he goes on to say “that” in our phrase. Notice the statement - “therefore it is of faith *that...*” “that” is a *hina clause* in the Greek, meaning it is a purpose clause. So it gives us this idea “in order that”, “for the purpose of”, so “that” is literally: “in order that faith is the only response that accords with grace”, God's unmerited favor. It has to be by faith for the purpose that it could be according to grace.

Now why is this important? Because if you're saved in any other way, God can't guarantee it. You're on your own. Good luck, do the best you can to the end of life, be like most of the people in the world and say, “Well when I die, I hope I can go to heaven.” You know, I think of Steve this morning, and I remember the times that I had with him in the hospital, and I just remember - and some folks spoke of it yesterday - I just remember his confidence that he was going to heaven. And I believe the same thing Steve does, but I just remember why he was so sure. He was resting on the finished work of Christ. I never heard Steve say, “Yeah, if you only knew me John, you'd see how many people I helped over the years.” That's not what he was trusting in.

But did he help a lot of people over the years? If you were here yesterday, I've never seen so many chairs or so many people in this room before. They were backed up to the doors, people were standing against the wall, all impacted by this man's life, and yet that's not what he was trusting in to get him to heaven. He understood that in order for him to be one hundred percent sure that he was going to heaven, it had to be by grace. He was trusting in God's solution and God's provision for his sin. He wasn't trusting in himself.

And so Paul makes the same point here. See, law-keeping and do-gooding is in accord with the law, and it requires the just penalty for any failure. So, it doesn't matter how much good you do, because the second you break it you are no longer perfect. And so in order for this hand to fit into the glove, it has to be by grace. God has to give it to us as a free gift, because if he didn't, no one would go to heaven. This is the only way, and that's why Jesus says, “I'm the only way,” and people say, “Christianity is so narrow, you're so intolerant.” I'm not doing it on purpose. It's the solution God came up with! I'm not trying to be intolerant; I'm trying to be loving.

If all the bridges are knocked out over an impasse and there's one that remains, why wouldn't I tell you about that one bridge? Why would I say, “Yeah, go walk off that bridge, you'll probably make it the same way.” No! It's out, it's burnt, it's cut. There's no way across this ravine except this one way, why in the *world* would I keep that to myself? Why in the *world* would I not tell people about that? Why in the *world* would I say, “Yeah, it's probably okay.” It's not okay! That's what God says, it's not okay. There's no other way.

I know that the first five chapters of Romans get very repetitive but understand this: this is why. This is important stuff, this isn't just church on Sunday, this isn't just come and fill our notebooks and go home. This is a message that changes eternal destinies, and there are people all around you, all over this world in your life today, that are walking on to bridges that are torn out in the middle. And we're just letting them go, aren't we? I don't know why we do that. Is it fear? Probably some.

But we want you to be convinced of this message, Paul wants you to be convinced of this message, and that's why he spent so much time on it. This is not something we just talk about on Sunday, this is not something that we just talk about occasionally, this should be our very life. This should be our life. Because the seriousness of what awaits people that head down other bridges, they don't recover from, folks. They don't get a second chance. It's appointed unto men once to die, and then after this the judgment.

So, to go visit a man who's dying of cancer in his hospital room, and him to tell me he's a hundred percent sure he's going to heaven because of what Jesus did for him, I rejoice in hearing that news. That's a hundred percent certainty based on the Word of God, based on the work of Christ, because he knew he wasn't good enough. And see, that's true of each one of us.

And then he goes on to say in verse 16 - which is exactly what we've been talking about - *"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed."* Notice that, *"the promise might be sure."* God can keep His promise. Why? Because God is the one doing it. Nothing depends on you. You stopped working, you've trusted in the work of Christ, you've said what he has done is enough. Did He pay it all, or did He not pay it all?

I believe He paid it all, and so I'm trusting my eternal destiny to that One. The One that's seated at the right hand of God as we sit here today, the One who ushered Steve into His presence last Sunday face to face. That's the one I'm trusting in, that's the One I'm persuaded can save me from my sin problem. I know one thing for sure, I can't do it. And the second thing I know for sure, Jesus can. Those are the two truths that I'm banking on.

And so Paul says that he gives this according to grace by faith, that the promise might be sure to the seed. You know, there's only one promise keeper. There's lots of promise makers and promise breakers. Getting saved is not about you making a promise to God, it's you believing the promise that God has made to you. You're not promising God anything. Guess what? We've talked about this before, we can't even keep our New Year's resolutions for 12 months. That's called a promise and a promise breaking.

God wants us to trust in the promise He made to us, the promise that says if we believe we won't perish, we won't have to face the death penalty. Why? Because Jesus faced it for us, in our place, on our behalf, He died for you and died for me. And what's the second promise? You have everlasting life. See, God can make that promise sure to us because He's giving that promise by grace, not based on anything that you have to do.

Again, the method is the only method that can save both Jew and Gentile. It has nothing to do with yourself. Your nationality, your ability to go to church, your heritage, your law keeping, your works, your denomination. I mean, we've been through the list, none of that as it relates to your salvation depends upon you.

Verse 17, this is amazing grace, isn't it? It's interesting, I've talked to people over the years and asked them, "What does grace mean? You've heard the word, we sing it in church, you've heard it on the radio, what does grace mean?" Many people that we sit down across from at the survey evangelism and ask them, "What does grace mean?" Over 90 percent of people don't know what it means. They don't even understand it. Isn't that sad? That's tragic because that's how we're saved.

We've got to understand that God's grace is defined as His unmerited favor, God giving us something that we don't deserve. And that's very important to understand in salvation, because if God gave everybody what they deserved we would go to hell. That's what we deserve. Again, not a positive feel-good message there, but the biblical truth. That's what everybody deserves. But God in His grace can give us something that we don't deserve based on the finished work of Christ. And so this is truly amazing grace, it's the only way it can be.

And as we move on to verse 17, we see that God's reckoning is true. Verse 17, *"(as it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations')"* And so Paul again tidies up his argument here by quoting Genesis 17:5. And then he goes on - notice that that first phrase is in the parenthesis - and the continuation of verse 16 reads something like this: *"Abraham, who is the father of us all in the presence of Him*



*whom he believed - God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;*" And so we see Abraham's status as father of us all is based upon God's reckoning of it, and it's true in His sight.

Now, understand that God's promise to this man, being the father of us all, came when this man was 99 years old. He had one son at this point. Now, being fruitful like we are in our day, typically by the time a guy is 99 years old, number one, he stopped having children. But even in that day, let's say that he could continuously have children, technically he'd be having children from the time of probably in his 20s on, for 70 years. And so you would have had tons of children, and this promise that he would be the father of many nations would have made a lot more sense. He could have looked around and said, "Oh yeah, I have all these children." and it would have made sense. It wasn't that way, at the time he had one child.

And not only that, but he also kind of weaseled his way into that one child. That didn't actually happen the right way, that happened through Sarah's handmaid, Hagar, she had Ishmael. And yet God makes this promise. And this is really interesting in verse 17, notice the verb tense here, he says, "*God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.*" So, God is verbally telling him, according to this verse, that He has made him the father of nations, not that He will make him. See, God is already calling something that's been done that he can't see yet as done. God is calling something as though it were, even though it hasn't happened yet.

And so what we're gonna see is how does Abraham respond to that? And we're gonna see that through the next few verses, even building in the next week. But this reckoning of Abraham, of righteousness to Abraham, was done in full open display in the sight of God and the world.

This is a God who gives life to the dead, He literally makes dead people alive. And what we're gonna see specifically as we go forward is that God is gonna open Sarah's dead womb that could not produce life, and He's going to produce life out of her womb. And that's what we're gonna see really in the next section. This is the God who calls those things which do not exist as though they did. God knows and has control over the future.

And so in verse 18, we see the start of this next section where God's promised to make him a father of many nations, it hadn't happened yet, and yet we're gonna see the mindset of Abraham. How did he view this promise? So, we're just gonna start this section today and then we'll pick up and finish out this section next week. But look at verse 18, "*who,*" - speaking of Abraham - "*contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."*"

And so we see this phrase that there was no reason to hope for Abraham. Again, he's 99 years old, he looks down the line, he's got one son, kind of came about that the wrong way, and he's got no seed. And yet God is saying, "I'm gonna make you the father of many nations." And so he had nothing visibly to trust in, other than God's word, that's all he had.

And we're gonna see here, starting in verse 18, what his mindset was. Well first of all, we get this phrase that it was contrary to hope. And hope biblically means *confident expectation*. And Abraham had no reason to look around and confidently expect that God was gonna fulfill His promises. He had one kid, so he didn't have any reason to be confident and expect that the outcome of God's promises would indeed happen. Everything in the natural realm suggested what God was promising could never happen.

In addition to having only one child, when Isaac was born, Abraham was a hundred and Sarah was ninety. Ladies, how many of you would like to give birth at 90 years old? No takers? It was an impossible situation. He pushed them - if you will - to the brink of knowing that the only way it could happen was God fulfilling His promise. The only way she could get pregnant was if God miraculously gave life to her dead womb. And so He pushes them to that brink. So, everything in the natural realm

did not give Abraham confidence or inspire hope. In spite of this natural confirmation in hope, Abraham believed God. There was no natural confirmation.

And so what we're gonna look at the next couple weeks is really the nuts and bolts of what he was thinking when this promise was given, how God would fulfill it. We're gonna see his mindset as we look at the section next week, but I'll summarize it for you: he was fully persuaded that what God promised He could perform. That's what it came down to. Versus everything he could see, full confidence in the Lord and what He had promised He was able to perform. Abraham placed his trust and confidence in God to do exactly what He said he would do, and based upon this, Abraham became the father of many nations in reality. It was promised to him by grace, and it was fulfilled and confirmed later on in history. And so next week we'll look at Abraham's mindset and how he trusted the Lord.

What's also interesting, is then Paul breaks off in his argument, and lets just jump ahead to verse 23, because there's a reason that Paul is going through this. He says, *"Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."* And see, the reason he's going through this and showing that this is the reason, and the way Abraham was saved, is so that you could also be fully persuaded and confident that that too is how we're saved.

# CHAPTER 20

## Are You Persuaded?

### Romans 4:19-25

We're continuing our study in the book of Romans, and we're actually gonna finish chapter four today, and then we'll kind of get into chapter five in the next section. But you know, in studying the passage this week, it reminded me of the times where you watch movies. And growing up, my family very much enjoyed movies. That's something that my family did a lot of together, either in the movie theater or at home when the first Betamax came out. Does anyone remember the Beta? Does anyone remember VHS? That was even after Beta, and then we went to the CDs, the DVDs, and now Blu-ray, and I don't know what else, I guess they're streaming them now.

So, we've come a long way, but we used to enjoy entertainment, and one of the things that I used to find interesting in movies and TV shows is when you're watching the movie, if the only thing you had was dialogue of the story between two different characters, many times you missed out on a lot of subtleties. But remember those movies where you would actually get into the mind of a character? It was usually them talking to themselves, giving you some insight into what they're thinking as all these events that you're noticing are going around. And what's interesting today, is we're gonna have that ability to get into the mind of Abraham. What was he thinking when God made this promise? What was going on in his mind, what was he considering? And we actually get that recorded for us here in Romans chapter 4.

And before we start the lesson today, what I want to show you is this: in Romans 4:18, the very last phrase, which says, *"according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."*" That's Genesis 15:5. Now put your finger on verse 18 and now jump down to verse 22. It says, *"And therefore, "it was accounted to him for righteousness."* That's Genesis 15:6. In between those two verses are part of what we're gonna look at today, verses 19-21, and that's gonna give us the insight. Because in Genesis 15:5 God made a promise, Genesis 15:6 Abraham believed the promise, and as a result he was accounted righteousness to his account. Now what we're gonna get in verses 19-21 is what Abraham's thought process was when he believed.

And so that's really the set up for today, and the question for us is: are you persuaded? Abraham, as we're gonna find, was persuaded. And the question for you today is are you persuaded? Another way to ask that is do you believe? What do you believe? What are you trusting in? And we'll see what Abraham was persuaded about as we read. And what we're gonna see in these three verses is Abraham's thought process, and we're gonna see five descriptions of this thought process.

So verse 19 we're gonna see this first phrase, he says, *"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced" - or fully persuaded - "that what He had promised He was also able to perform."*

Strong faith is not about the person exercising faith, strong faith is about the right object. This person in the picture on the screen had strong faith that that chair could hold her up, but she didn't know this little jerk was behind there pulling it out. And so her faith could have been the strongest faith in the world, but because the object wasn't there, it was weak faith in that sense.

And so when we look at Abraham in verse 19, we see this first description. He's not being weak in faith, and what it's really saying there by definition is that his faith was not without strength, it was

not powerless. There was something to his faith, but what we're gonna find is the thing that was really impressive about his faith, was the object upon whom he was resting in. That determines strong faith or weak faith.

I can have all the faith in the world that this tree out here will save me. I can hug it, I can manicure it, I can trim its branches, and I could just be hugging and trusting in that tree. But if the Bible never tells me that that tree is my Savior, I've got weak faith. And if I'm trusting in a church to save me, the Bible's never called a church your Savior. The Bible calls Jesus Christ your Savior. And see, if you're trusting in a church to save you, you have weak faith. It doesn't matter how much, we're not talking about quantity, we're talking about what is the object of your faith.

And so when Paul describes that Abraham was not weak in faith, he's basically saying Abraham had the right object. Abraham had a strong object upon which to rest. In fact, as we've seen in this chapter, this is the only acceptable response to God's solution for righteousness. It's faith in God's provision through His Son Jesus, who died for us and rose again.

As we look at chapter 4, you'll find either "believe" or the word "faith" used 16 times just in this chapter, and if you ever wonder if God is giving you a sign... you know, we walk through life saying, "I wish God would give me a sign." As we've studied through Romans 4, hopefully this is enough of a sign for you. There's no other way to be saved. There's no other way to have eternal life, there's no other way to have your sins forgiven, you need to stop working, you need to start trusting. Jesus paid it all, do we believe that or not? That's the issue, and Romans 4 brings that out greatly just in the repetition of this word.

And so why was Abraham's faith not weak? Well, because as we read last week, Abraham's faith was in the God who gives life. Abraham's faith was in the God who calls things into existence as though they were, even though they don't exist. And we're gonna see a very practical thing that happened in Abraham's life, as it relates to child rearing, where if he just took at face value what he could see, what he could feel, what he could sense, if he could just take an inventory of the resources at his disposal, he would have said, "No chance. I don't believe it. You're lying to me." But we're gonna see that he doesn't do that. We're gonna understand his thought process as we work through this.

We see that the object of Abraham's faith was not sick or weakly, and thus Abraham's faith was not sick or weakly. See, the value of his faith lied in the value of his object. What or who was he trusting in? And as we observe communion today and as we preach the gospel, we're not just preaching the response. I'm not preaching just faith to have faith. That's not the answer to sin's problem. The answer to sin's problem is found in a person. His name is Jesus Christ, and in what He did, the work that He accomplished, that's what we preach, that's the solution.

Now the response to that solution is to agree with God and say, "Yes, He did it all. I'm trusting in Him alone. He died for me in my place, paid the death that I deserve, and God raised Him from the dead. God accepted His death on my behalf, and that's the solution." But we're not preaching a response, we're preaching the gospel. The gospel is Jesus Christ, Him crucified, Him raised again. That's what we're preaching, that's the message of God, that's the power of God unto salvation according to Romans 1:16. That's the message we preach. We're not just preaching a response.

And so when we look at Abraham not being weak in faith we've got to understand that the underlying reason his faith is not weak is because his object is not weak. His object is strong, his object accomplished what He set out to accomplish. Jesus Christ paid for the penalty of the sins for all the world, to those who believe in Him, they get the credit for it. Now they didn't do anything, because Jesus paid it all, but they trust in what Jesus did for them, just like God is instructing us in this chapter to do. And we're going to see that the reason he's going through this example of Abraham, we're gonna

get to the end of chapter 4 and he's gonna say, "It wasn't just written for Abraham, it's written for you also." Anyone sitting here present-day, this message is for you. The same way Abraham got righteousness equal to God's to get into heaven is the same way you and I get righteousness, and it's by putting our faith in God's provision, God's solution for sin's problem. And so Abraham's faith was described as not being weak.

Later in verse 19, as we move on in this verse, he says that *"he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb."* And I already know what some of you are thinking, because some of you aren't reading from the New King James and you say, "Wait a minute, my version says he *did* consider." Is anyone thinking that? But what you're gonna find is in the NIV and the NASB and the ESV, it appears to be a contradiction. Okay, did he consider his body, or did he not consider? And I think it's one of those questions that as we study the Bible, it's okay to stop and pause and say, "What does this mean, why does this seem to say two things, what's going on? What's happening behind this?"

Well, as we look at verse 19, he's harkening back to Genesis 17:17. And if you want to hold your finger there, we're gonna look at something in Genesis 17:17. Now, back in Genesis 15:6, God had made a promise. In Genesis 15:5 He had said, *"Look now toward heaven and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."* At that point in time, Abraham did not have any children, and in Genesis 15:6 it says, *"He believed the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."*

And so now we jump to Romans 4:19, which he's pulling out of Genesis 17, when Abraham's a hundred years old, and Sarah's 90 by this time. This is some 15 years after Genesis 15, and notice what Abraham says here. God makes a promise again to him in verse 15, *"Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."*

And then look at verse 17, *"Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is 90 years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" And then verse 19, "Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him."*

So, did he consider the deadness of his body and the deadness of Sarah's womb? Yes, he did, he recognized that. He recognized that was an obstacle. But when it came to trusting God and God's ability to perform what He had promised, he left that out of the equation. That's how I think we put those two things together. And so when we look at this word "consider", it's an interesting word because it's got an intensive in the Greek, it's got an intensive preposition slapped on in front of the word to give great intensity to this Greek word *"noeo"* meaning *to think*.

And so the idea is Abraham did not even contemplate, or even allow to enter into his thinking these things as it related to deciding whether or not he was gonna trust God or not. Was he gonna believe God? He recognized that he was a hundred, he recognized Sarah was ninety, but now he has a decision to make. Is he going to trust in what he can see, is he going to trust in what he knows, or is he gonna trust in what God Almighty says? And what we're gonna see is in Abraham's thinking, these things did not enter into the equation as to whether or not he was going to trust God.

So, he didn't even consider these things as he made that decision to trust God. And he had a lot of things working against him, like his own body. How many hundred-year-old men do you know running around, fathering children? I mean, it just doesn't happen too much, it's a very rare occurrence. And even more rare is ninety-year-old women having children. I wouldn't venture to say it can never

happen, because I'm sure there's some anecdotal story out there somewhere. But that's obviously not normal, that's obviously a situation that was miraculous in nature. And so he didn't even consider the deadness of Sarah's womb as he made this decision whether or not to trust God, and she was 90 years old at this point in time.

Abraham did not consider the physical and practical limitations of what God can do. God promised this, the physical limitation says no, God can't do this, but Abraham believed God, and as a result it was credited to him as righteousness. And so we see that response, that Abraham was not weak in faith because everything he could do and see contradicted everything that God was saying, and yet he still chose to trust God, and that's the mindset that we see through Abraham.

We get the third description in verse 20. Verse 20 says, *"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God."* And so we see that third description that he did not waver, he did not go back and forth. This idea of wavering has the idea of judging, or distinguishing, or separating by deciding, it meant to divide. We might say that he wasn't double minded, one day thinking *this* way, one day thinking *that* way, or just completely back and forth.

And so many of us can relate to that, being double-minded. Have you ever just changed a decision on something, just in a real quick span of time and you're just not sure which direction to go? Well according to this passage, when Abraham decided to trust God, he didn't waver. He wasn't double minded, he recognized that either he could believe and trust in himself, or he could believe and trust in the word of Almighty God, and he didn't go back and forth in that as we see the description here with Paul.

Another way we might put it is he didn't try to figure out or judge whether or not God's promise was valid, he simply took God at face value, and he believed Him. And in like manner, God wants you to do the same. There are so many people today that don't believe even though the Bible says that salvation is a free gift, you don't have to do anything to earn it. In fact, if you try to earn it, you can't receive the free gift. As much as the Bible communicates that, as much as we say that, there are still people that say, "Well no, you've got to do something. Come on, there's no such thing as a free lunch." Even when the plain word of Scripture is there.

And what are people trusting in? Well, they're trusting in their upbringing. One of the great things about America is that we work for what we get, right? There's a work ethic that hopefully keeps continuing in future generations, but there's a work ethic that's appreciated here in our country. You work for things, you gain things, and you benefit from them, and then if you do see people getting things for free, usually they squander those things. We say, "There's no such thing as a free lunch, you've got to work for what you earn." And in some ways, that's a blessing, and in some ways that's a curse as it comes to understanding the gospel.

Because it's one thing to say, "I've got to work for something, I've got to contribute." when you're physically able to do it. But when you understand the gospel and the good news of the gospel, you've got to understand the bad news that says you can't add anything, you can't contribute anything. In fact, when you try to contribute something, you get in your own way of receiving the free gift. Many people can't understand that, they can't take God at face value, they say, "Well yeah, but I've got to do something. I've at least got to go to church, right? I've at least gotta read my Bible, I've at least gotta stop doing this sin and doing this." And there's just a mindset, and the answer is no. You don't have to do that.

God is offering a free gift. If it's a free gift, it's free. That means you don't pay anything for it. That would be like paying for a Christmas gift, it's not a Christmas gift then. You cannot pay for a Christmas gift. It's either free or it's not, it can't be both. It can't be as some people teach, "Well it's free,

but it's gonna cost you everything.” What? Yeah, I'm tall, but I'm short. I'm rich, but I'm poor. Yeah, I'm white, but I'm black. What? It's raining, but it's not raining. I mean, how do you take two contradictory things, and then just put that down as if that's truth? No, either it's free, or you have to pay something for it. It's either/or, it's not both, and for some of us we've got to accept that. That's what Abraham did, he didn't waver back and forth saying, “I don't know if I should trust God's promises.”

I see all these things, and many people need to move into this direction where we just take God at His word, take His word at face value, and say when you believe in Jesus Christ you're saved. Your sins are forgiven, you won't face the death penalty, you have eternal life. That's what God's word says, and I think He would have us accept that at face value.

Every time we disbelieve God, we're wavering in this sense where we're evaluating God's promises, we're putting God on trial and determining whether or not He's trustworthy. Can we really trust Him? And we start to evaluate whether or not God can be trusted. Is this really true? I see this, I know this, I've experienced this, is God really legit, is what He's saying really true? And every time we waver, that's what we're doing, we're putting God on trial in some ways.

Typically, as I've stated, our evaluation of God's promises is based upon what we see, what we know, what we could potentially see happening through our natural abilities. Notice the focus is on *I*, as if I had all the knowledge in the world, as if I had all the insight into the world, as if I had a full picture. It's like the old illustration, you're on a parade route and all you can see is what's in front of you and you're saying, “Why is that float stopping? Keep moving! Why are you stopping?” You start yelling at the driver because you don't see a mile up the road that there's a massive three-car accident that they're trying to clear out so that that float can move, and all you're doing is getting mad at the float and it's not even its fault. The problem is you don't have a full picture, right? And so when we start to judge things in our life based on a partial picture, then we don't trust God, we evaluate God based on our own partial picture.

When God makes this promise to Abraham back in Genesis 15, Abraham's in his 80s already. No children, he's already in his 80s, God makes this promise, and like many of us when God makes a promise or we see a promise in God's word, we begin to pray for the answer to that promise. When do we typically expect the answer? Like... right then. You know, it's like come on genie in the bottle. God, come on, deliver, right now! And many times, what does God do? He waits. And He's not trying to be difficult or mean, but He's got a plan. He's got a timeframe.

And so what does He do with Abraham? Well, in his 80s, God makes that promise in Genesis 15. What does Abraham do in Genesis 16? He takes the advice of Sarah, he takes Hagar, they have their own kid, and now Abraham says, “Ah, here's my seed.” And then Genesis 17 says, “No, Ishmael is not your seed.” Abraham was 86 when that happened. And then you get to the end of Genesis 17, and you start getting into the promise of Isaac, and he's a hundred years old and Sarah's 90. So, we're talking about just from the time God made the initial promise, we're talking 15 to 20 years that this promise came to be true.

Now what was God doing in the process? Well, I think what He's doing in the process is what we've seen in verse 19. The longer it went, the deader their bodies became. The longer He waited, the more He was going to get credit when Isaac was born. The longer He waited, Abraham and Sarah knew that if God was going to fulfill His promise, it was going to have to be Him that did it. And so God systematically over time took all of their hope and any of their natural resources, and as one author put that I'm stealing his phrase, “He shut them up to faith.” And what that means is simply this: they had no other place to turn for the fulfillment of that promise. They'd already manipulated, they'd already

schemed, they'd already tried multiple things, and now they were at the end of their rope. Only God could do what God said He could do, and you know what, that's a great place to be.

And as I break off from the story, do you know that many times that's exactly what God's doing in our lives as we live this life? He's getting you and I to a point where we stop trusting in our own resources, we stop trusting in our own ingenuity, we stop trusting in ourselves, and He shuts us up to where there's only one option now, and that's Him.

I like the story that was shared years ago, there was a Bible School that had a van to pick up students. And the driver of their van was out one day and got into a car accident with another gentleman, and the other gentleman says, "No, no, we don't need to trade insurances, you didn't do that much damage. Let's just go on our way." And already you know that's not a good thing to do, right?"

And so the van driver comes home, there's a little bump on the bumper. No problem, they could get it fixed, it's gonna be very cheap. A couple weeks later they get a letter in the mail, a certified letter. It's from the driver of the other car, suing this Bible College for something extravagant, ten or eleven thousand dollars for the damage to their vehicle. So immediately the board comes together to discuss what they're going to do about it.

And as they're talking around what they're gonna do and the extravagant number, one of the board members says, "Well, I just want to say something before we pray. I just want to praise God that that guy is seeking \$11,000 and not \$1,000." And they were like, "What?!" I mean, you know that guy that shows up in the room that's like, "What?! What are you talking about? \$1000 would be much better!" But he said, "No, you know why it's better? Because if it was \$1000, we wouldn't be praying. We'd be navigating, manipulating, trying to figure out who we could call to get this amount of money, how we can do this fundraiser, how we can raise it. But because the amount is so extravagant, we have to trust God to work this situation out." And in that sense, God had shut them up to faith.

And so He is doing that to Abraham here. And we see that so far that Abraham is not being weak in faith, he hasn't allowed the deadness of his body and Sarah's body to influence his decision to trust the Lord. And then we see that he did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief.

We go on in verse 20 and we see this fourth description, which is kind of an interesting description. But he says this, "*He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,*" and so this fourth description, the second here in verse 20, is that he was strengthened in faith giving glory to God. And what we're gonna see is this word "strengthen" is a unique word, because it means *to be strengthened from within*. He was in-strengthened. So, as he was shut up to faith, as he began trusting in God, God began to do reciprocal work in his life and grow his faith so that he could continue to trust God going forward in situations like this.

And so what we see here in the fourth description is first of all, it's in contrast to being weak in faith, it's in contrast to wavering at God's promises. What we see is that once Abraham made the decision to believe God, he gained a reciprocal benefit from doing so, and that's what we see in this word "strengthened".

So, this word "strengthened", it's a compound word meaning *to make strong or vigorous*, but here's another thing, there's a lot of prepositions that Paul is throwing onto words here. And one of the things that you can see when he writes sometimes is he gets really excited, and he starts making everything emphatic. And so you see that here because he slaps on this preposition "in", and so what it has built into it is, *to be made strong from the inside out*, or to be in-strengthened.

So as Abraham believed God, there was a reciprocal benefit that in-strengthened him to continue to trust the Lord. We know that this in-strengthening came from God Himself because it's a passive voice. In other words, Abraham didn't make himself strong, what ends up happening is as he



trusts God, God is strengthening him from within. It's not about Abraham. He's a hero of faith no doubt, but Abraham was a hero of faith because he had a hero of a God. He had a great God, and that's what we see.

And as we simply step out by faith and begin to trust God in our lives, God is going to reciprocate that and strengthen us from within. But it all starts day by day, moment by moment, in the dredges of life when you're cleaning dishes, when you're cleaning up dog poop, when you're doing the garbage of life, whatever it is, the trials of life, it all starts then. Will you trust God? Will you trust yourself? You have a decision to make thousands of times a day. And as you begin to consistently make that decision to trust the Lord, God begins to reciprocate and build strength in you to continue to trust Him. And so we see that here in the life of Abraham.

And so as Abraham trusted God, God strengthened him from within. And we notice, what's the result of this in-strengthening? Look at the end of verse 20, "*but was strengthened in faith,*" - and then notice the result - "*giving glory to God.*" Abraham wasn't now beating himself on the chest and saying, "Look at me!" like the NBA basketball players do today, and it's kinda like, "Yeah, yeah, I'm the man!" He wasn't doing that. He wasn't saying, "Look at me, I'm a great man of faith!" He was saying, "Look at my great God! Look at what my great God just did. I'm a hundred years old. My wife's 90, we just had a baby! I mean, are you kidding me? That's just incredible news, this is the kind of God that I'm trusting in." And so you see that this resulted in him giving glory to God.

Going on to the fifth description in verse 21, "*and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.*" And so we see this description that Abraham trusted God, that when God made a promise, God kept His promise. I mean, doesn't that sound so simple? And I'm glad it sounds simple, because it is simple! That's as simple as it gets. God makes promises, God keeps promises.

John 3:16 He makes two promises, "If you believe in Jesus, you will not perish." That's a promise, God keeps His word, you'll never face the death penalty. Well, what if I sin 20 years from now? What if I murder somebody 30 years from now? God says that if you believe in Jesus Christ, He's paid the penalty for every sin you're ever going to commit, ever. And He says if you trust in Him, His death will count in your place, you don't have to face that death penalty. That's a promise. That's a promise maker, and that's a promise keeper.

Second promise, you have eternal life. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you possess life that lasts forever. And if God gives you something that lasts forever, can you ever lose it? No. Then by definition, He would have to call it something else. He couldn't promise you that you would have eternal life. If it depended upon you, He couldn't guarantee you eternal life. That's why Ephesians 2 says we're "saved by grace", God giving us something we don't deserve when we put our faith in Christ. Did you deserve it the moment you put your faith in Christ? No. Will you deserve it 20 years from now? No. Will you deserve it on your best day? No. That's why we have to be saved by grace. That's why there's only one way to heaven. That's why there's only one way for righteousness, and that's what Paul is communicating here in the book of Romans.

And so Abraham was fully convinced of this. And I told you that Paul is getting excited in this section, because now he uses another compound word for this word "being fully convinced", and it means to *full to the fill*. Overwhelmed. He's overwhelmingly assured that what God promises, God can keep. He's overwhelmed, full to the fill by this. And what was the overwhelmed or filled to the full? He was fully persuaded that what God would promise and could promise, He could keep it. That's what He was fully persuaded of. Fully convinced, overwhelmingly assured that what God promised He could actually carry out.

In essence, Abraham's faith was not only in what God promised, but also in who God was. And on the screen, I put "who He is", because this was also "able" as a present tense verb. See, that's for you and for me. Is God still able to keep His promises? Yeah. And when is He doing that? Well, right now. Today. He's able, He continues to remain able is the emphasis there. So just like He promised to Abraham, there's no difference, today He's making a promise to you. If you'll put your faith in Jesus Christ, you will have the righteousness of God, and you will have your sins forgiven, and you will have eternal life. That's God's promise, that's what He's guaranteeing.

Verse 22, as a conclusion to Paul's thought, "*And therefore,*" - we see this word "therefore" kind of indicates that he's making a conclusion to his thought - "*it was accounted to him for righteousness.*" And there's that word "accounted" again, it's our accounting term that Paul keeps using in this chapter, "*logizomai*", he's used it a number of times, he's gonna bring it up again in verse 23. But what he's saying is that when God saw Abraham's faith, He credited it, He accounted, He wrote it down on Abraham's account as righteousness. This is God's accounting system.

How do you get righteousness? Well, many people naturally think you get righteousness by being righteous. Doing good things, doing good works, not doing as many bad works, not doing as many evil things. That's not God's accounting system. That's not how God credits righteousness. And yet half of the world or more would tell you that's exactly how you get God's righteousness, is being more righteous. No. You're declared righteous, you're justified, I'm justified, Abraham was justified, declared righteous by God the moment he transferred his faith to Jesus Christ. The moment we transfer whatever we're trusting in to Jesus Christ alone, we gain God's righteousness.

Again, as Paul has been emphasizing, this is faith righteousness. Faith righteousness implies that you're trusting in the work of another, you're not trusting in your own works. You're not trusting in law-keeping, you're not trusting in good works, you're not trusting in rituals, you're not trusting in any of that, you're trusting in God's provision. This is the faith righteousness; this is how Abraham was accounted righteousness.

But as we go on into verse 23, we see an encouraging truth. It's not just superstar Abraham that gets saved this way; this is how everybody gets saved. It's not just for Abraham, it's for you, too. Verses 23 and 24, "*Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,*" - there's our accounting term as well - "*but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*" So, in other words, Abraham's not the only person that gains righteousness this way, we can too. This wasn't a one-time event where God declared someone righteous and a special occasion. This was designed to be a pattern that would be fulfilled all throughout history.

And so we see even as we look as far back as Genesis three and four, we see that by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice. Even Abel back in Genesis four was saved by grace through faith in this coming Deliverer, and we looked at that a few weeks ago as we went through a brief run-through on the Old Testament. What we see from this is salvation by faith *was, is*, and remains the *only* way God can declare somebody righteous. Because it's the only way man can be declared righteous legally in His sight.

And when you think about this - and this is not just church speak, this is just putting together the truth of God's nature - what He's promised, what He said He was going to do, and here it is: God's holy and just. God gave us a law, there's a penalty to that law, it's sin. But God is also loving. And so as He's forced by His character to execute justice, He's also forced by His character to be loving and try to prevent us from paying that penalty.

And so you've got this dilemma, and everybody on planet earth is trying to cover that dilemma, and they either overemphasize one characteristic of God, like the love of God. "Well, everyone's gonna

go to heaven because He just loves everybody!” Well then that immediately destroys His justice, and if you don't have a just God, we've got a much bigger problem on our hands than heaven. Because if He's not a just God, that means He doesn't judge fairly, that He won't accept a payment or sacrifice in your place, and that He can make a promise and change His mind down the road. See, that's a big problem. But then if you overemphasize the justice of God, then nobody can get saved.

And so the gospel, this method of righteousness, is the only way God has brought all of these things together, and if you try to add anything to it, subtract anything from it, you throw it all out of whack and you destroy the method. And that's why it's not faith in Christ plus something else. It's faith in Jesus Christ, period. That period is the difference between heaven and hell for many people, because many people don't have a problem with Jesus Christ. “Oh, I believe in Jesus. Great guy! Yeah, I believe in Jesus... *and* keeping the Ten Commandments, *and* getting baptized, *and* going to church.” And as you start looking at it, you just see comma, comma, comma. And they should have stopped five commas ago and just put a period right there, because when Jesus said, “It is finished”, there's a period after that. He paid it all.

Now the question is: do you believe that? Are you persuaded? God's persuaded. How do I know that? Because He raised Him from the dead. God says His death can count in your place. Now are you persuaded? Will you simply trust in what God has done for you? That's the message of Romans four, that's the message of the gospel. This is why this is the only way, this is why grace and faith have to go together, this is why you can't be saved by grace and faith plus works, it doesn't fit. It has to be this way, this is the only way, and I hope that you are persuaded about that this morning. And so we see it's also recorded for us. God doesn't want us confused or misled as to how He declares men righteous.

Verse 24, the other thing that we see is that there's no probation period. What do I mean by that? Well look at verse 24, he says, “*but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*” It's interesting because many times the verb tense in the Greek, you think that the word “imputed” is our verb and so “shall be” is just kind of communicating, maybe a future tense aspect to it. But interestingly enough, this word “shall be” is its own Greek word added to the word “imputed”. It's not part of that word, and it means to *be about or to do or to be impending*. The cool thing about this word is it's in the present tense. That means right now, at this moment, at this present time you can be declared righteous. You can have righteousness credited to your account.

You say, “Wait a minute, I didn't even wear my best shirt today. I'm not even wearing a tie! You know, some may not have even thrown on deodorant this morning! I've at least gotta be at my best for God to accept me.” No. Right now, this moment, right where you're seated, you can transfer your trust to Jesus Christ alone. You can believe, you can be persuaded that what Jesus did for you is enough in the sight of God. Enough to pay your penalty for all your sins, and enough to credit you with the righteousness that you need to get to heaven. Right there in your seat. I don't care if you've got a hole in your pocket, in terms of what you need to do, you can do it right where you are, nothing standing in the way, no probation period. He's not giving you a gift to see how you behave for 20 years and then say, “Okay, you get to keep it now.” No, right now at this moment you can be justified, you can be credited righteousness.

The emphasis is the moment one believes they can right now, this minute, be credited or counted as righteous in God's sight. Again, it's not after you clean yourself up, it's not after you get a haircut, it's not after you promise to do better, it's not after you say, “Well I need to be in church.” It's none of those things. Christ died for us while we were still sinners. He offers the free gift of salvation to *sinners*, not people that clean themselves up. Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, not good people. And so we've got to believe that, I hope we're persuaded by that.

It's interesting in this text that Paul goes back to the God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, we see that there in verse 24, he says, "*believes in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*" And why is that interesting? Because in verse 17, one of the things we learn about God is that He gives life to the dead, and He calls those things which do not exist as though they did. Now that's very important in this area of justification, and you know why? Two reasons: God raised Jesus giving Him life from the dead, and in the area of justification He can declare you righteous even though you're not righteous in practice all the time. See, God can positionally place you in Jesus Christ, and that's how He declares you righteous. He's not looking down and covering His eyes.

It's like when you've got a little kid and they draw you a picture. I mean, let's be honest... I love my kids, but their pictures are not always the best pictures, right? And at certain ages the artistic ability is just not there. I've got to get really creative to see that this line is a head, and this other little dot is an eye. I mean, let's be honest. So as a dad, what do I do? Do I tell them, "Wow, that's really not that good. I wouldn't do that anymore, that's really embarrassing." No, as a dad, I graciously lie to them. "That's great! That's awesome! I love it! That's the best picture I've ever seen!" Am I the only one that does that?

But see, God doesn't do that. He doesn't say, "Well yeah, he's really still a sinner, but I'm just gonna kind of tell him he's righteous." No, God is actually declaring you righteous because you *will be* someday. But see, He can call things that aren't as though they are, because God knows the end from the beginning. He knows how He's going to end you up, which is glorification when you're gonna be delivered from the very presence of sin, and you will be righteous, and He's already declared that to be true of you, even though we don't see it all the time in our lives. And so that is the beauty of what we're seeing here in verse 24.

And then as he closes out this section, we find out a little bit more about our Lord Jesus. In verse 25 he says, "*who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.*" Paul goes right back to the gospel, and he uses this word "delivered up", it means *to give over*. One of the things that's interesting is he uses it really in description of both being delivered up to His death, and also raised, it goes with both words.

And so what's interesting about it is it's a point in time, He was delivered up. That means that Jesus is not still dying a death every week when we come together for communion, for instance. We're recognizing the death that He already died one time, we're not celebrating His present ongoing death. That's not an ongoing thing, this passage says He died once, aorist tense, He was delivered up *once*. A point in time in history, it happened 2,000 years ago on a hill called Golgotha, and it's true. That happened on a day in history, that's a historically verifiable event, and that's what he's pointing to here. He was delivered up. But it's also in the passive voice.

Now we know from Scripture that Jesus willingly went to the cross, so we're not disputing that, but we also know that there were other actors in delivering Jesus up to die. The first actor, God. God gave Jesus over to be crucified from the divine perspective. We see that in Isaiah 53, "*it pleased God to crush him.*" *What?* I thought He loved His son. He does love His son, but He loves the world too. And this was the only solution for the world, and so it pleased God to crush Him, He gave Him up to this death.

Romans 8:32 tells us that, "*He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" And so we see that from a divine perspective God delivered Jesus up. From a human perspective, so did Judas. Judas betrayed Him. The Jewish and the Romans leaders also collaborated and put Him to death, and so He was delivered up by all these people.

And then we see this word “because of”, interesting because we have two uses here. “Because of”, you’ll see *“because of our offenses”*, and *“because of our justification”*. It’s actually the Greek preposition “*dia*” which means *through*. But what we’re gonna see from that use is one is retrospective, looking back, and one is prospective, looking forward.

The first one is retrospective, looking backwards, and what is He looking back at? Well, He *“was delivered up because of”* - or on account of - *“our offenses”*, he says there. And so it’s because of our offenses, it’s because of your sins and my sins that Jesus had to die a criminal’s death on the cross, that’s the reason. It was through our offenses that put Him there, that’s the reason He was delivered up.

And then we see the second, *“and was raised because of our justification.”* The second use is perspective, looking forward. How did God complete the justification process? How did He ensure that you and I could be declared righteous? Well, it was because of Jesus’s resurrection, it’s because He was raised back to life that our justification could be final. Notice again, He was raised because of, or through, for our justification, to assure and execute this plan of declaring you and I righteous when we put our faith in Him. The final nail in the coffin for God to execute that plan was His resurrection. That’s what He did, it was because of His resurrection that we can be convinced and persuaded that we can be justified.

And so Paul wraps up this section in Romans 4, basically telling us again that Jesus’ resurrection was God’s stamp of approval on the fact that His death did indeed pay your penalty for your offenses. And now the question remains as we started. Abraham was persuaded by God’s truth and by God’s revelation. God is persuaded and convinced by Jesus’s sacrifice for you. God accepts that He’s propitiated. He raised Him from the dead to show you, to give you proof that He has accepted what Jesus has done for you. Now the question remains: are you persuaded? Are you convinced that all you need to do to go to heaven is to put your faith in what Jesus did for you alone? Jesus died for your sins and rose again. I hope that you’re persuaded today.



# CHAPTER 21

## Benefits of Justification

### Romans 5:1-4

We've been studying through the book of Romans and remember in the book of Romans and in the Bible in general that salvation is a free gift. Salvation is not something you work for, salvation is not something you earn, it's a free gift. And simply put, if I presented you with a gift, you would simply have to receive the gift. And the Bible tells us, how do you receive the gift of salvation? It's when you put your faith in Jesus Christ and what He's done for you. He died for your sins and He rose again.

And I hate to compare salvation to an infomercial, but let's get cultural for a second. You know those infomercials, right? If you buy this omelet making machine, then it's only \$19.95. But if you call right now, just wait, there's more! You all know, "But wait, there's more!" And then they throw in a second omelet making machine, and then if you call right now, there's more. They're gonna throw in a t-shirt, or they're gonna throw in a wristband that says, "Eat more chicken" or something like that. I mean they're gonna really try to sweeten the deal for you.

Salvation is much like that, because inside the box of salvation we have three phases of our one salvation. We've got justification, that's what we've been looking at really over the course of the first four chapters of the book of Romans. And justification is simply a moment in time when you quit trusting in whatever you were trusting in to get yourself to heaven, and you transfer your faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone, because you recognize that He's the one who died for your sins and He's the one that rose again.

And God promises multiple places throughout the Bible, too many to count, but in John 3:16 that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not perish, you'll never face that death penalty that's hanging over your head because of sin, and you presently possess life that never ends, it's called eternal life. And that's what we find in justification, that's what Paul has been building up to this point in time, and he says the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, God, the judge of the universe, declares you righteous. That's justification.

But we also find that in our salvation package we have another gift box in there. This is awesome! Isn't this like when you have Christmas, and you open a gift and there's like three more gifts in there? This is how exciting salvation is. So not only are we saved from the penalty of sin in justification, but God also saves us from the very power of sin in sanctification. That's why we can talk about salvation in the past tense, we *have been* saved, we've been justified, God declares us righteous the moment we put our faith in Christ.

But we can also say that we are *being saved* on a daily, moment-by-moment basis, not from the penalty of sin, that's already been paid for and settled. But we're being saved from the very power of sin in our daily life. All of us who are believers understand that there are times in our life when we can be dominated by sin. And see, God has also made provision in our one salvation for victory over the power sin.

And then we finally look at the future tense of salvation, when we'll be saved from the very presence of sin. Sin will be completely removed from us, and that's called glorification, and that is yet future time when we either die or we're raptured, that's when glorification will come into play. But as we have been looking at justification here the last couple of months, it's also important to note that just as the infomercial says, you've got to open this box too. You've got to open justification, and we can

today in our text. Because what we're going to see is that there's benefits that you possess. You may not have even known what kind of benefits. I mean, it's great enough that our sins are forgiven, it's great enough that we don't have to face the death penalty, it's great enough that we have eternal life. Those are all great! That's exciting! If that's where it ended, sign me up! I want in. But it doesn't end there.

It's like when we used to take our kids to an urgent care place in San Antonio (it seemed like we went there a lot). And every time we took them, they had a treasure chest full of toys for the kids. And so the sick kids could come in and grab out a toy. But you know what? They could only grab one toy. They're only allowed one toy, or one popsicle. And you know, in justification, God took that whole treasure chest and He just dumped it on your head. You get it all.

And so we're gonna look at some of those benefits today. There's nine of them in Romans 5:1-11, so we're gonna start there. You know, the sad thing for many of us is that although we possess these benefits - these are ours, we own them, they've been given to us as part of our salvation - many times we don't benefit from them, we don't take advantage of what's ours in Christ, and so we want to look at that today.

Romans chapter 5, starting in verse 1 says this, *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* And again, anytime you've seen in the scripture this word “therefore”, understand that Paul is making a conclusion on what he's already said, he's bringing things to a wrap up.

And so in this case, he's wrapping up this whole concept of justification. Remember he introduced this concept back in chapter 3, that the way to get the righteousness that you need to get to heaven is not through keeping the law, it's not through good works, it's not through going to church, even *this* church, it's not through praying, it's not through doing any rituals like baptism or circumcision, none of that stuff can get you the righteousness that you need to go to heaven. In fact, the righteousness you and I need to get to go to heaven comes apart from works. Romans 4:5 says, *“stop working.”*

See, many people view the gift of salvation as something you have to earn, you've got to work for, you've got to be good. Good boys and girls go to heaven, and bad boys and girls go to hell, and that's the common theme throughout our world today, and that's been the common theme throughout history, and that's why you have religion at all. People are trying to work their way to heaven, and God turns that and flips it right on its head and says, “No. I did the work for you. I completed the work on your behalf, the work that you couldn't accomplish on your own, I took care of through My Son.”

And so he introduces this, and he's concluding this point, and in chapter four he gave us two old testament examples of men who were also justified or declared righteous by faith alone. You might say, “Well, that's not how it worked in the Old Testament. They had the law, they had to do all these sacrifices, they had to do things.” And what Paul has shown us in Chapter four through the life of Abraham and David is no, they got saved the same way you get saved today: simple faith in the work of the promised One who was to come. We know Him to be Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again.

And so we have this concluding comment, “therefore.” But I want you to notice something about this word, “having been justified.” It's a past tense word. In other words, this is not something you hope to get in the future, this is not something you hope to get even 20 years from now, he declares it as a past tense completed issue. It's done, there's nothing left to do.

And so when a person puts their faith in Christ, God at that moment, the Judge of the universe, the only One whose opinion matters, slams the gavel down and says, “Righteous.” Why are you righteous? Because you've lived righteously? No, that's the whole point of why you need a Savior! You can't live righteous enough to get to heaven. But the moment you trust in what God has done for you,



the moment you trust in God's provision, the moment you say "amen" to the work of Jesus Christ and say, "Yeah, that's my only ticket in." God slams His gavel down and says, "You're righteous, because I'm gonna judge you based on the merits of My Son." And is there anything wrong with Jesus Christ? No, nothing wrong. Perfect, sinless Savior, completely righteous, the One who's completely pleasing to the Father, and now you are found in Him and you have His righteousness. He has become your righteousness, and that's what we gain from this passage. In fact, when a person puts their faith in Christ, He justifies them at that very moment.

We see this other places in the scripture, Ephesians 2:8-9, notice this past tense aspect of the salvation that we're looking at, "*For by grace you have been saved.*" Now, "for by Grace" is important, because God gives you something you don't deserve. That's what grace means, *undeserved favor, undeserved merit.* Just like I never deserved to get one Christmas gift growing up, because I was a kid who made mistakes. I disobeyed my parents, I used to constantly trick my brother into doing all the chores, I was just a little rascal! I didn't deserve Christmas presents. But see, Christmas presents in my family weren't about what you deserved. I didn't have to pay for it, I didn't have to earn it, why? Because Christmas gifts are a *gift*. By definition, a gift is free. By definition, a gift is something you don't have to earn, something you don't have to merit.

And so it's, "*by grace you have been saved*" - Notice that past tense - "*through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" And what's really interesting too is you dive into the language there, this "*you have been saved*", it's a perfect tense verb, we don't have perfect tense verbs in the English language. Perfect tense says this: it's a completed action with continuing results. I love it. Because what that means is it's done, and you continue to benefit from what's been done. It goes on, it has continuing results. You have been saved, and you remain saved.

And that is one of the reasons that we teach eternal security here, that once you're saved, you're saved. Because you're saved by grace, you didn't earn it when you put your faith in Christ, you're not gonna earn it thirty years from now, you're not even gonna earn it on your best day. You know what, my best day would be to stay in bed all day long. Don't do anything, don't move, because then I wouldn't sin... I mean that would be my thinking. But even on that day I wouldn't earn it, I wouldn't deserve to be saved. And so we see that God can speak of salvation in a past tense.

And so he says, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith...*" we're gonna start to see that there are many benefits that you've received the moment you put your faith in Christ. The first benefit that we see in verse one is that you have peace with God. Now peace here means the opposite of war, the opposite of dissension, it means tranquility. And just the fact that Paul says this indicates that you didn't have this before. You and I weren't at peace with God before this moment, the moment that we were justified and declared righteous by God.

It'd be like a guilty murderer in a courtroom, and the judge slams down the gavel and he says, "Guilty." And instead of sending them to jail he says, "Hey, why don't you come over and let's have dinner tonight?" You would never see that! There's enmity there, there's distance there, there's separation. When the judge slams down "guilty", what typically happens? Does he stay in the courtroom? No, he's taken away. There's not peace, there's war, if you will, there's a lack of tranquility.

So, when he says that based upon the fact that we put our faith in Christ, we've been declared righteous by God, we now have peace with God for the first time. And see, that's what religion seeks to accomplish. Religion in general tries to get you peace with God, and it can never do that because religion is always going to tell you what you must do. Do, do, do, do, do, and it's a bunch of doo doo. It just doesn't make sense, and it's not a biblical message. The biblical message is you have to add two more letters to "do", "n-e". It's been *done*, Christ did it all, and that's the message of the gospel.

And so at that moment that we transfer our faith, it says that we have peace with God. This word “have” is a present tense verb, it stresses this present possession of peace. In other words, whether or not you feel like you have peace with God, whether or not you understand that, the moment you put your faith in Christ, you have it. That's a statement of fact in the Word of God, you presently possess it, and the idea is that you continue to possess this. It's a present tense verb, you have continual possession of this peace.

And so we're talking about a relationship. You were born into the family of God, you will never leave it, that can never be altered. You can never leave a family. You're always going to have that DNA running through your blood. And so this is a present possession, and as we look at it further, there's nothing that can disrupt this peace with God. Nothing. And nothing means nothing, even in the Greek. Or in any language, nothing means nothing. That means sin can't disrupt it, that means rejection of God's principles can't disrupt it, that means the moment the judge declares you righteous you're righteous, you have peace with God, that's your continual possession.

Now just like in any family, you can't change your relationship, but are their fellowship issues? If my son or my daughter does something specifically that I've told them not to do, there's going to be a fellowship issue. They're probably not going to jump on my lap when I get home, they're probably going to go to their room and try to avoid me. There's a distance in that relationship, that's a fellowship issue. I never kicked them out of the family, and even if I kicked them out of the house they wouldn't be out of my family. You're born into a family; you don't behave into a family. You don't go into a nursery at the hospital and say, “Yeah, I like this one right here. This one's good right, honey? This one's not crying. And they just told me this one hasn't even had a dirty diaper. I want that one, that one can stay!” No, that's not how it works. You're born into a family, just like you're born into the family of God.

And so this peace that we have on the basis of Christ's work cannot be disrupted, it can't be taken away from you. Some of us in this room need to quit hoping in yourself, and understand that every time you fail, you should never question your relationship with God. God has declared you righteous based on the merits of Jesus Christ. And to hope in yourself means that you believe in yourself, and I would encourage you, even on a daily basis, stop trusting in yourself. The more you look at yourself, the more disappointed you're gonna be, especially if you're honest with yourself.

Now the reason we possess this peace - and notice it in the text, I want you to see it in the Bible - this peace with God is through Jesus Christ. He is the means by which we have this peace. It's not because you behaved, it's not because you earned it, it's not because you built yourself up to a level that God is now forced to accept you, it's because of Jesus Christ. You weren't good enough when you got saved, you'll never be good enough. Praise God! He's not accepting you based on that standard; He's accepting you based on what Jesus did for you. So, it's through Jesus Christ that we have this peace.

Notice as we move to verse 2, we see a second benefit. But notice again that phrase in verse 2, “*through whom.*” Again, this next benefit is all based on our relationship to Jesus Christ. And we're gonna see as we get to the end of Romans five that God did something miraculous. Many of us don't even realize the significance of it until we're gonna get there, and hopefully through emphasis and reading it, we'll see, because this is so important as we live our Christian life.

Because once we transition out of Romans five and we get into Romans six, we're going to start looking at what God's provision is for you to not be dominated by sin's power. But we have to understand the phase-in, which is at the end of Romans five, and I digress. But the reason I digress is because what God did the moment you put your faith in Christ, is He took you and He identified you

with Jesus Christ, He placed you into Christ, your position has completely changed. Your acceptance is now based on Christ's acceptance.

And can you ever picture a day where God says, "You know Jesus, you really bother me. Go, just get away." Or "Jesus, I told you not to do that, this is the last time, or you're gone." No! In fact, every time God the Father turns to His right and looks at Jesus, He smiles. And every time He smiles at Jesus Christ, He's smiling at you, because that's where you are, you're *in* Christ. There's a benefit from being in Christ, so we're gonna see that as we go through.

But just notice the verbage here at the end of verse 1, "*we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" - verse 2 - "*through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*" And so we see this verse tells us, again, "*through whom we have access,*" and you know access is an interesting word, it means *to approach or to bring near*.

I remember to this day one of the best days of my life, and I'll probably get it wrong now, but you know when I used to think about Disneyworld, it was Disneyworld. Now it's like Epcot Center and Universal Studios, they've got a million things down there. So, I may be telling a story, but I was at one of those - I think I was at Universal Studios - and this is back in probably the late 90s, and I had a good friend that I was going to see, and he had a friend whose dad worked at Universal Studios. And so he got us hooked up for the day with VIP passes. Best day of my life!

Because with the VIP passes, we got free concessions. So, I'm a 19- or 20-year-old kid and I could eat. I could put it down. I still have that problem, I gotta kind of shut that down at times. But I could eat, so there was free food, and guess what? The hour to hour-and-a-half long waits? We got right up to the front, you just flash the VIP pass and get straight in. So that's when the Terminator 4D exhibit had just come out and we were just living like kings that day. But you know what, we had access because we had that pass. We had access because of the relationship that was going on.

And so that's what we gain in our relationship to Jesus Christ, we have access into the standing of grace, we have access to the most important person of the universe. In fact, it was used in this time of access to official people that you couldn't normally get access to, like a king or like a Caesar. You know, if you went to the White House today and you tried to get an appointment with Donald Trump, and you just went and knocked on the gate of the White House and said, "Hey, I'd like to meet with Donald Trump, does he have time? It's about 10:15, can he see me at 10:30?" What's your chances of getting in? Zero, because you've got no access.

But if I roll up to the gate with Donald Trump Jr. and he turns and says, "This guy's with me." I'm right through, I gain access. Why? Because his son has access, I have access. And see, that's the thing when you put your faith in Christ, because Jesus has access to the Father, you've got access to the Father. And it's access that's based on a standing of grace, which means you never lose the access, you can never do anything wrong to get banned.

And just like I wouldn't show up to the the gates of the White House with Donald Trump Jr., and while he's asking them to get me in, I'm not gonna devise my own way to hop the fence, I'm not gonna devise my own way to doctor up my ID, I'm trusting in his son. His son's gonna get me access. I'm not digging a hole and trying to dodge all the cameras on the lawn, I'm just walking in with his son, I haven't even thought about that stuff, I'm just trusting his son. Because if his son's not good enough, I don't have a chance anyway, we've already established that.

And you know if Jesus Christ isn't good enough, let's all just go home. We don't have a chance anyways. There's no hope for you if Jesus Christ isn't good enough. So, we're banking all our hope, all our trust in Jesus. And I like those odds, I like that proposition, because I know for sure I'm not good enough, that's not even a question. And so our access is based upon Jesus.

We see we have this word “have”, we *have* access. This again is that perfect tense, it stresses the completed nature of the action, we have it, we possess it with continuing results. It's not, “I have it today, but I can lose it tomorrow. It's done today, but if I don't behave it can get taken away from me.” No, the emphasis is, “I have it and I continue to possess it. It continues to be mine.” And so we even see that just drawn out. In other words, this access or this nearness has been granted, and it remains granted. Again, notice it's through Him. It's through Jesus, it's via Jesus Christ that we have all these blessings. But these are all part of the “And wait, there's more!” concept of justification. You have these things, dear believer. You possess them, they're yours because of Jesus Christ.

But notice he also goes on to say in this verse that we remain standing in grace. Verse 2, “*through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.*” Stand is also a perfect tense verb. That's why I keep bringing it up, because it is something that you stood in at a point in time when you put your faith in Christ, and you remain in that standing position. In other words, you remain in this position of grace. God has determined he's always gonna deal with you on the basis of grace. Why? Because Jesus paid it all. He's able to do that because Jesus did it all.

And so your relationship to God the Father is not one of performance, not one of, “Well, I hope I pleased Him enough to get to heaven.” No, you can confidently assert, because your confidence is in Jesus, that if God is dealing with you on the basis of grace, He's already giving you something you don't deserve, and so you just remain in that standing. That's what we're seeing here in this passage. And so through Jesus we have access by faith into this grace in which we now stand, and we remain standing. Again, this standing is through Jesus Christ.

So far, we've looked at two benefits that we currently possess. Now as we move on at the end of verse two, we see a third benefit. And that third benefit says this, “*and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*” The word “rejoice” has this idea of inwardly boasting. I love that! Inwardly boasting. Not of my own good works. When I get to heaven on my own good works, I boast about myself, that's what Ephesians 2:8-9 says.

“Yeah, I mean Jesus did most of it, but man, you should have seen how I closed the deal. You should have seen how I kind of made up the difference.” That's not salvation, that'll get you sent to hell quicker than anything else! Because what sends people to hell is not their sins necessarily. There's a penalty for sin, but what sends people to hell, because Jesus has died for the sins of the world, is whether or not you believe in Jesus Christ or you reject Him. That's the choice before you.

Going to heaven and hell is not about stopping sinning, or starting to do good, that's not it at all. The issue is what do you believe? Who are you trusting in? Are you trusting in yourself? You're with Donald Trump Jr. at the gates of the White House, and you're gonna go dig your hole and funnel a tunnel down underneath the White House, past security, into the Oval Office? I mean, this isn't a Bugs Bunny cartoon. That's not how it works. You wouldn't do that there, why would you do that to gain entrance to heaven? Why wouldn't you trust in His Son to save you from your sins and get you to heaven? And so we see this point here that there's an inward boast of the hope of the glory of God.

This word in my version is translated “rejoice.” Again, it's a present tense verb, really just expressing this continual and present mindset of inward boasting in the hope of the glory of God. I bring this out because this is important. Although it's translated “rejoice” here, this Greek word is largely translated elsewhere as “boast.” In fact, it's used thirty-eight times in the New Testament, I think 28 times it's used “boast.” And so the word itself means *to express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something as being exceptionally noteworthy.*

So, in this case we see that the believer is boasting in something. Let's go back to verse 2, they're rejoicing in hope or they're boasting inwardly, boasting in hope of the glory of God. And so we see in

this case they're boasting in the hope or this confident expectation - that's what hope is - of the glory of God.

What does that mean, what is the glory of God? Well, I think it means two things. I think it means number one, it's the confidence that the one justified will also be glorified. We talked about that third phase of salvation where we're going to be delivered from the presence of sin, that's a promise that God has made in our salvation package. And when we understand the impact of justification, of God declaring us righteous, we gain a confidence, a boasting that one day too we'll be glorified.

And we also see this born out in Romans 8:29-30, where Paul writes - and we'll obviously spend more time on this when we get there - *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* - And then notice this next verse here, verse 30 - *"Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."*

Do you know what your glorification is based on? The promise of God, not your performance in this life. In fact, God has already determined that if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you will be justified, and you will be glorified. That's a guarantee, that's a promise. And so as we start to understand what we have in justification, as we start to understand this declaration of righteousness by God, we actually gain in confidence. We actually gain in boasting of our future glorification. Not because we know we're gonna perform, not because we're making a promise to come to church, not because we're promising 10% of our income or 20% of our income or whatever we think is spiritual, but because God promised it. God said he's going to do it, and so we gain confidence in that.

In fact, if my confidence was in my ability to come to church, there'd be no confidence! How do you know what you're gonna do in 20 years? How do you know what you're gonna do tomorrow? Let's not give ourselves so much credit, as if we're gonna be consistent for 19 years and 11 months, and somehow in the 20th year something magically wrong is gonna happen, let's not give ourselves that much credit. You don't even know what you're gonna do next week, let alone 20 years. So why would our confidence ever be in ourselves?

We see as we get really grounded in this truth of justification, we begin to benefit from this. And this idea that God is a God of daisies from one day to the next, "He loves me, He loves me not. He loves me, He loves me not." A lot of Bugs Bunny references today, but that's not how God works. It's not a daisy type love, "He loves me, He loves me not." That's not how God works. The moment you were declared righteous, God also guarantees you'll be glorified, and as you sink into the truth of that, you can gain in confidence that God will indeed do what He said.

Now everything sounds great so far until we get to verse 3. This is kind of an interesting transition, because he says, *"And not only that,"* and you think, "Oh, there's more good. He's about to really drop some good stuff on us here!" No, he doesn't go that way. He says, *"but we also glory in tribulations."* What?! Like, rejoice in tribulation? *Really?* Like, now you can be excited when bad things happen to you in life? I thought you said there's more, Paul. I thought you were still pouring the goodies on. This doesn't sound like a goody.

What you would expect him to say is, "And there's more, you *won't* have tribulation anymore." In fact, that's how many people teach the Christian life, you come to God, and you won't have problems anymore. That's not biblical. I wish that were true in many ways. It's not like I have a trial in life and just sit on my couch and go, "Yes! Who! Bring it on!" I don't think any of us do that, but that would be nice. But there's something about understanding our justification, we now have a benefit because we can actually view trials and tribulations through God's eyes, not through our own. That is a true joy, that is a true blessing if we can ever get there.

You know, nobody likes trials. I remember the old TV show “Cheers”, anyone remember that show? Maybe no one would admit it here in this setting. But “Cheers” was a show about a bar. It was guys coming in a bar hanging out. And anyways, I’m not encouraging you to go watch it or anything, but Norm was one of the characters who would walk in, and every time he would walk in, the whole bar would be like, “Norm!” just welcoming Norm into the bar. And then Norm usually had always a pithy little comment right when he sat down, it was really part of the comedy.

Well one day, Norm was apparently going through tribulations, and he said (and I can totally relate to this comment), “It’s a dog-eat-dog world, and I’m wearing milk bone underwear.” Sometimes that’s how life feels. Like we’ve just got milk bone underwear on, and it’s a dog-eat-dog world, and people are just coming after us, and trials are aggressive coming after us. But what we’re gonna see based on what God has done in justifying you, is you have a brand-new way that you can view trials. You can actually bear up under them, you can actually have a perspective of what’s going on as you’re going through, and so let’s look at that in verse 3.

*“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”* And so this fourth benefit we see is that we have this inner joyful confidence. It’s actually this word “glory”, it’s the same word translated “rejoice” in the previous verse, so it’s this inward boasting, this inward joyfulness that we can have in tribulations because of what they produce. We’re gonna see that tribulations are used by God to actually produce something. There’s a production machine that God has in mind.

It’s like when you’re getting in shape for an athletic season. The worst day of practice is the first day, because you’re not in shape, and it hurts to run. And many times, you lose your lunch, or your breakfast, or whatever you ate before you ran out there, and it’s very painful there for a while, but there’s a future goal. The basketball coach wants you in the championship game at the end of the year to not run out of gas in the fourth quarter, and that’s why you’re running on day one. So, there’s a purpose, God’s got a production machine, a purpose in these tribulations.

Again, this word “glory”, it’s a present tense verb stressing this present and continual mindset of the believer towards trials in their daily life. He says, *“not only that, but we also glory.”* We can continually glory in tribulations. You might say, “Well yeah, but you don’t know about *this* that’s going on in my life, or you don’t know about *this*.”

Now let’s be honest, there are some pretty overwhelming tragedies that happen in people’s lives, aren’t there? It’s so much that it debilitates people. I joked about staying in bed for a day, but literally there are tragedies that happen that can just sideline people for months, for years sometimes. So I’m not trying to minimize that, what I’m saying is this: that God has put things in place, that God has a goal to use each one of those, whatever those may be, to produce something in your life, to grow you spiritually.

And so what we’re gonna see here is that this is a present tense verb, it’s the same word translated “rejoice” in verse 2, I mentioned that, and what’s interesting about this is it’s an inner joyful confidence that’s explained here. And it’s interesting because I think that if you and I had the pen and paper of our life and God says, “Okay, you design your life. You get to decide what you want to do.” I don’t know one person in this room or on planet earth that would say, “Yeah, I want my hot water heater to go out and not have the money in the bank account to fix it. I want the air conditioning in my house to go out and lose one of my dogs.” None of us would write that into our lives.

It would be more like, “I’m gonna marry the girl of my dreams, and she’s gonna stay the girl of my dreams, she’s not gonna change. I’m gonna have these kids and they’re all gonna be perfect, they’re never gonna have a dirty diaper, they’re gonna just obey everything I say, they’re gonna be there to help and serve me. I’m gonna have this great job and make lots of money, and I’m only gonna have to work

like 15 minutes a week, and everything's just gonna roll in.” This is what we would write our life to be. And you laugh because you know that's how you would write your life to be. I would, conceptually. But what we're gonna see here is that God's got something better in mind for you, because life doesn't work that way. If you got everything you wanted, you would not be who you want to be, guaranteed.

It reminds me of these stories, some of you may have heard of “the biosphere 2 experiment.” They were gonna try to figure out how to self-contain life, everything that you needed to survive. I think they had plans to take it into space one day and sustain life up there. Anyways, long story short, they got into the project, and you know what they began to find out? The trees that they had planted grew really quick, because that soil was just jacked up, probably with hormones out the wazoo. But the trees would grow up really quick, but as soon as they would grow, guess what they started noticing about the trees? They just collapsed. They said, “What's wrong with these trees?” I don't know what kind of trees they put in there, I don't know trees very well. But let's say they took a seed of an oak tree and they planted it, and it shot up, it looked really good, it had a good root system. You know what they found out about biosphere 2? You know why those trees would collapse? Because they had never been exposed to wind.

There's a type of tree called Bristlecone pine trees, and some of them are estimated to be 4,000 years old. And they say, “Well how can those trees live that long?” Well let me tell you how they live that long and what they've come to understand. They survive some of the harshest living conditions on earth: arctic temperatures, fierce winds, thin air, and little rainfall. And you know what it's done? It's made the trees stronger, not weaker.

And yet so many of us view life as, “If I had less trials, I could be so much closer to God.” And maybe you've said that before. I would almost venture to say you've thought about it in some form or fashion. I know I've thought if I would have less trials then I could actually be close to God. If this trial went away, then I could actually focus on Jesus. And see, the Bible is gonna tell you, Romans 5 is going to tell you, “No, it's in those trials that God gives you an opportunity to see Jesus.”

See, it's in those trials that drive you to the Savior. The Christian life is not about getting rid of trials. In fact, if you look at many of your own personal prayer requests - and I'm not saying this as a slam, I'm saying this about my own - what are our prayer requests all about? “God, take this trial away from me.” That's our prayer request. “God, give me an easy life. God, take this all away from me. I don't want any wind.”

And in a sense, you would never say, “Well God, I don't want to be strong. I don't want to be close to You, I don't want to walk with You.” We would never say that. But we would say, “Take the very things away that help contribute toward that process.” And many times, we don't even see the connection.

And so let's keep going in the verse here, but why can we be so confident? In fact, the word “tribulations” ought to give you really good comfort, it means *to crush*. Who's signing up for that one? This is Paul's equivalent of James 1:2-4, by the way, where he says, “*count it all joy when you fall into various trials.*” But it means *to crush, to depress, to squeeze*. And that's what these tribulations do in our life, and we feel those things.

So here becomes the million-dollar question: why can we have such a positive response to these? How could you positively respond to being squeezed or crushed in your life via circumstances? You know, the only reason you can is found right there in the verse, let's go back here. Verse 3, “*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations,*” - and notice that next keyword - “*knowing.*”

See, you've got to know something about what's happening. And so, many people, they don't take the time to know what we're about to read in the next couple verses. Because all we know or all we

want to look at is what we can see, touch, taste, feel, all of our senses that's what governs our life. That's our king. And when something disrupts something that's sensory for me, I get mad. I get upset. In fact, not only do I not know that God is using it for my good, I start to blame God for the very things that He's allowing, and God becomes the villain, and we become bitter toward God, and God wants us to view it completely differently.

If we viewed life that way, life would make 10 times more sense than it does today, if we just had this big picture view of what God's doing. What's God doing? He's producing something. The idea is expressed that over time, with experience, this is something we have actually seen in our own lives with good results. In other words, as you look back on your life, you can look to times where something bad happened, a trial happened, tribulation happened, bad circumstances, and you look back and say, "You know what, I would never choose that again, but I'm glad it happened to me because this is what came out of it." And I see heads shaking because we know that that's true.

But we just lose this perspective. We see it, hindsight's always 20/20, right? But it's when it happens today then it becomes the biggest problem in the world that needs to just get out of here. Because that's what I need to be happy, that's what I need to be spiritual is no trials, no bad circumstances, just get them out of here. And yet hindsight, we look back and say, "Oh you know what, I actually benefited from some of those trials."

You know, one of the greatest times in Carrie and I's marriage was when I had to switch careers, and I got cheated out of a lot of money in the career that I was in. It's a long story and I won't bore you with the details, but we went from having money in the bank and having money coming in to having nothing, overnight. And you know, we would never choose that again, that was not a fun time.

But I started to enjoy beans and rice for dinner, and it was great! And I started to enjoy the time Carrie and I would have, just crying out to the Lord in dependence saying, "Lord, how are we gonna pay for this? How are we gonna do this? How are we gonna accomplish this?" And then watching just systematically over the next few months, deal after deal that I should have been paid for in real estate was getting taken away from me, and I was getting cut out. But I look back to that time and it was a precious time for us. I would never choose it again. Personally, I would never write that into my story again. But looking back, I can see God used that, that was shaping our life.

In fact, we see that, "glorying in tribulations" because we know a couple of things. So, what do we know? What do you know about tribulations? Well, the first thing we know, according to verse 3, is we know that tribulation produces perseverance. This word "produces", again, it's a present tense verb, it means God, right now, through trials in your life is working to do this, to accomplish His end, to carry out His task. He's doing this constantly, and continually, and presently in each one of your lives, that's what He's doing. He wants to produce something, He wants to work it out, He wants to accomplish something.

And I think this word has a relentlessness built into it, and that means that God is not going to stop His plan because He knows what's best for you. Just like with your kids, you don't stop making them eat broccoli because the first time they eat it they turn their nose up. No, you know what's best for them. Now, we could get into a debate on whether broccoli is good or bad, but you get the picture. He knows what's best for you, and so He's gonna relentlessly pursue this for your own good, even though we would just cry, "Uncle! Enough, enough, just take them away." But He knows what's going on, He knows what He's trying to produce or accomplish in the lives of His justified ones.

Then we see this word "perseverance". It's sometimes translated "patience", it has this idea of bearing up under or having endurance as to things or circumstances. Notice that perseverance is not



getting out from under. That's where most of our prayer requests are, "Lord, get me *out* from under this trial, get me *out* from under this tribulation, get me *out* from under this circumstance."

As you take a divine perspective on trials and you boast in what God's doing through tribulations and trials in your life, he says that you can have a perspective where you say, "God, you've got me in this situation, I'm gonna trust you through it." "God, this is too heavy for me, I can't bear it. This is just too much for me, but You can bear it. You can take care of this." And instead of praying to get out of the circumstances, you begin to recognize that God may have a purpose in those circumstances.

And so just cast your hope and cast your dependence upon the Lord, and you just present yourself to the Lord and say, "I'm here, Lord. I can't do this anymore. This is heavy, this is crushing me." And then He sees you through, and you're walking by faith, and you see the big picture coming together. You know, this is the quiet, calmness of the believer to face the trials of life, and instead of always squirming to get out from under them, they recognize by faith that God's got a purpose for them. You recognize by faith that God's got a purpose for trials in your life.

The second thing we need to know, we know that tribulation produces perseverance, and then in verse 4 we see that perseverance produces character. So, as you remain under these trials, as you're walking by faith and depending upon the Lord, character begins to be developed. And this is a word that's defined as someone who's been tried or proved, or the proof of genuineness or trustworthiness is found in this person's life.

And so we see that the benefit of remaining under trials, of persevering, if you will, or being patient is that you trust the Lord through them. It builds stability, it builds trustworthiness if you will, in your life. And then we begin to see that the Lord begins to entrust them with more responsibility. You want to grow with the Lord, accept what's going on in your life, trust Him through it, and you're gonna see that God is gonna strengthen you. Unlike the trees in the biosphere that never get any wind, you're gonna be like a tree that's getting a ton of wind and no water, and your roots are gonna be going deeper, and your trunk is gonna be solidified, and then you're gonna gain more and more responsibility in the work and the ministry of the Lord.

And praise God, isn't that the way we want it? We want to be useful; we want to end up that day before the Lord and Him to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Isn't that what we want? It's like in third grade, I used to live for Mrs. Mitchell's stickers on my work. You know, she just put a little sticker, "Good job!" I barely even saw my grade when I saw a sticker on there, that was good enough for me. In the same way, God is going to put His stamp.

You know, if you want an example of that, look at the life of Joseph. Every trial and tribulation this man faced, he accepted it as from the hand of the Lord, walked by faith, put one foot in front of the other each day that he lived, and people all around him said, "Man, the hand of the Lord is on this guy. This guy is incredible!" And they began to promote him. And so you see this knowledge, knowing that there's a process that God is producing.

Then third, and we're short on time, but let me move through this. Perseverance produces character, and then character produces hope. And it's interesting because this word "hope" goes back to this confident expectation. So, as you're walking by faith, and as God begins to develop your character, you are going to be more easily able to look forward in confident expectation as to what God is going to do in the future. We looked earlier at that confidence; this hope is in our glorification. But it just means that you're gonna have a future outlook.

You know, you can almost get through anything in life if you know it's going to end at some point, can't you? I hate running, but if I signed up for a 5k race and I knew I got a free gift card to...

wherever, any food place would motivate me to run the 5k. "Hey, I'm gonna get a gift card at the end!" And so you see that that's the case even with trials.

And you know what's interesting, is many times we respond in the very opposite manner when it comes to trials. In fact, the worse it gets here, the more we question God, the more we criticize God, the more we're critical of God, the more we get bitter against God, and then we begin to question the future that He promised. Because the mindset, the thinking goes something like this: "Well if He can't take care of me here, how can He take care of me out here?" And see, trials and tribulations are not designed for you to end up there, it's for you to end up here, whereas you go through it, as you see God's faithfulness bearing you up under these trials and pulling you through, or driving you through, you gain more confidence in what's gonna happen in the future in terms of trusting Him.

Now this happens because some believers don't know that God is accomplishing things through trials. Many believers don't gain the benefit of this outlook in life, quite frankly, because they don't know that God's got a plan for trials. They've been told or they believe that once they get saved, life is going to clear up. You know, the Red Sea is gonna be parted, they'll never be in traffic again going through Atlanta... I don't know what they believe, but everything is going to be okay, they'll never have a trial again. That's not biblical.

It also happens sometimes when believers try everything they can to get out from under trials, not seeing their value or even despising their presence in their lives. You know the very thing that God wants to use, and because of our justification, we're actually given the ability, we're brought into the back room, we're given the thirty-thousand-foot view of what God's doing, and yet many believers still know that but don't take advantage of it in a practical way when Monday's trial hits. Or let's not even say Monday, how about Sunday afternoon, who knows?

And so in conclusion, maybe you're here today and quite frankly, this was an interesting message, but you really need the first message, you need to be justified. You need peace with God, you need to be declared righteous by God. You know that you're here today and if God were to judge you based on your life, there's no way that you're good enough to get in. And so the message for you this morning is really simple: Jesus did it all. Jesus died for your sins and rose again. Right where you're seated, put your faith in Jesus. Stop trusting in yourself, stop trusting in your religions, and just put your trust in what Jesus did for you, realizing that Jesus paid the death that you deserve, and that God accepted His work on your behalf. It's done. All you have to do is believe in Jesus.

But maybe today you're here and you just need to start enjoying the benefits that you have. I mean, you've got this box, you put your faith in Christ, now open it up and start enjoying the benefits that you have because you've been justified by God.

# CHAPTER 22

## Benefits of Justification Part 2

### Romans 5:5-8

One of the things that we had looked at last week was this whole concept of salvation being a free gift. And I used this gift box as an illustration, really to show that salvation is completely free like a gift. But just like you would open a gift and you'd expect only one gift, with salvation we've got three additional aspects that come with it. We've talked about this in detail in the past, but we've talked about the first tense of our salvation called "justification." That's really what we've been covering here in the first five chapters of the book of Romans.

To be justified means that the God of the universe declares you righteous the moment you put your faith in Jesus and what He did for you. Now what did He do for you? He died for your sins, and He rose again, and at that moment the Bible says you have been saved, can speak of it in a past tense way, that you have been saved, your sins have been forgiven, you presently possess eternal life.

But like all good gifts, it's always nice to have more inside, and there is more inside in the area of salvation. The second tense of our salvation is something called "sanctification." And so in justification where we were saved from the penalty of sin, in sanctification God makes provision so that you and I can be saved on a daily basis from the *power* of sin dominating our life, and that too is part of your one great salvation package.

And then we also look at a future tense aspect of our one salvation, and that's "glorification." That's the day where not only have you been saved from the penalty of sin, not only are you being saved from the power of sin, but one day in the future you will be saved or delivered from the very presence of sin, and I look forward to that day. I don't look forward to waking up in the morning and looking at myself in the mirror and realizing what a failure that I've been in my life. Because if we're all honest with ourselves that's the truth of the matter. We're not perfect, we mess up, we sin, but one day we are going to be delivered from that indwelling sin, and I look forward to that final salvation.

But as we were looking in Romans 5 last week, one of the things that we began to understand more fully is that there are benefits that you get in this box. Could you imagine if you gave a child a gift at Christmas and they refused to open it? I mean, we would immediately take them to the emergency room. "Something's wrong with you, kid! You're not going to open this box?" And yet for many Christians that's exactly what we do with justification. We say, "Well yeah, we're justified, we're declared righteous, we got our ticket into heaven. That's great!" And Paul is imploring us in Romans 5, "Open the box! See what else is in there." And we're going to see that in Romans 5 Paul begins to delineate what some of the benefits of our justification are.

And unfortunately, as I share a story this morning, many believers are failing in their daily life to appreciate what they have in Jesus Christ. And that to me is a travesty. That to me is like a kid at Christmas not opening their present, not opening the box and seeing what's inside.

It reminds me of a story of an aged silver miner, who had spent his whole life searching for silver in the mountains of the Old West. In fact, he had become so involved and so taken in with this search that his wife and children had left him many years before. When he died, the handful of people who came to bury him found in his possessions a note instructing them to bury him under his own cabin; he wanted to remain there. And as the shovels turned over the earth, a lustrous gray material

began to appear. It was the famous Comstock silver vein, the richest in California history. That miner had been a billionaire all his life, but he did not know the wealth that he owned, he never claimed it. And I'm afraid that many believers go through life in the very same way as it relates to our justification.

And so we're gonna look more closely at that in Romans chapter 5 if you want to turn there with me. But before we do, we want to do just a quick review of where we've been. We covered four verses last week, and they were jam-packed verses, there's a lot in there. But what we want to see in terms of the review is that we've got some benefits as it relates to our justification.

In fact, there is a church in Connecticut, and one of the things they've put together is a list of things that are true of you now that you're saved. And guess how many things are on the list? 215 things. 215 things that are true of you whether or not you realize it or not. Silver, truly in the ground under your cabin where you reside. You have blessings untold. And what I love about the list is they put "216..." in case we missed one, or two, or three.

You know, that's the great thing about God, is even when you understand what you've got, trust me, there's a whole lot more. In fact, we're gonna see this phrase as we go on in Romans five, and he's gonna say, "Much more." And see, that's the way our God works. It's not just, "Here you go, here's a little bit to tide you over." it's the whole box of blessings dumped and poured out on your head.

And so what did we look at last week? Well, the first benefit we saw was in verse 1, we have peace with God. It implies that before you put your faith in Christ, before you were justified, you did not have peace with God. You were at enmity with God. And so this area of justification, the work of Jesus Christ in your place, in your stead, provided you with peace with God. Second benefit we saw in verse two, we have access to this standing of peace because of grace. We have access, we presently stand in grace. Do you know that that means you can do nothing to mess up that standing? Otherwise, you'd have to redefine grace. It's either unconditional or it's conditional, it can't be both, it can't be "and", it can't be "or", it is what it is. Grace is unconditional, you stand in grace, you presently stand in grace, that means you won't even earn heaven on your best day.

And see, that's why you take the motivation for the Christian life out of the fear of losing salvation, and now you put it where it should be, out of a loving relationship with your Father who accepts you unconditionally, based on the merits of Jesus Christ. Now based on that, go serve. See, it's a different motivation. It's not, "Now I'm serving in case I get kicked out of heaven." Trust me, if your merits were anywhere factored in as to whether or not you'd spend eternity in heaven, you're kicked out. You're not gonna enter it, let alone get kicked out of it. You can't even come close enough, neither can I. That's the beauty of grace.

The third benefit of our justification is we inwardly boast of the glory of God. In other words, we can have confidence that God will one day deliver us from the very presence of sin. That God will start a project and He will finish a project. God will not run out of materials, He won't run out of nails, He's going to drive the final nail into that coffin of justification, which is glorification, being delivered from the very presence of sin. And when God offers salvation, God offers a full and complete salvation from start to finish, He takes care of it all. He doesn't mess up, He doesn't forget, it's not, "Oh yeah, about that. I better work on another plan." That's not what He does.

Fourth benefit from our justification, and this one really hits where we live in our daily life, and it should. Because many believers - including myself, I throw myself into this category - we're not living in light of this truth. We can inwardly boast, because you have been declared righteous, because God is going to save you in glorification from the very presence of sin, God is going to take care of everything as it relates to your eternal salvation. You can relax, you can enjoy life, you can inwardly boast about tribulations. You don't need everything in your life to go the way that you want it. And I said this last

week, I'll say it again: if God gave you a pen and a paper and said, "Write out your life." Nobody would write in trials. Nobody would write in difficulties.

There's an old Nissan commercial about a guy named Bob. And basically, the deal was if you buy their car, you're gonna get treated special, that was the pitch. Does anyone remember this? This is an old commercial. Anyways, I love it because he starts driving on the road - you never see who Bob is - he starts driving on the road, and it says, "No merging of lanes except for Bob." Bob can merge lanes. And then you go to a parking lot and it says, "No parking except for Bob." And Bob can park up front anywhere he wants. And then as the commercial goes on, you see Bob's car getting pulled over by a police officer (this is my favorite part). The police officer looks in the window and he says, "Oh, it's you Bob!" And he lets him go!

And you know, that's exactly the way we would write our life if given a pen and a paper and God said, "Write out how you want it to happen." We would be the Bob. That's how we would write out our life. And God says, "I've got a benefit for you in trials. I've got a benefit for you in tribulation." And that's what we saw last week, and if you have a divine perspective on tribulation, it's not going to be, "Lord, get me out of this at all costs and remove this from me." It's gonna be, "Lord, what do you have in this for me?" See, I want to align my thinking with your thinking, God, and that's the mindset. And we can do this because we know a couple of things, we pick this up from verses 3 and 4.

We know that tribulation produces perseverance. Remember, the word "perseverance" means *to bear up under it*. Tribulation gives you an opportunity to stay under the trials that God is allowing in your life. Why? So that you can be dependent upon Him to meet your needs. There's a direct connection, and if you do that consistently and God begins to develop this perseverance in your life, then He produces character in your life, He produces some stability in your life.

Have you ever been around somebody that the second something goes wrong, they react? They're like a pinball machine. They react over here, and then they react over here, and then they react over here. I used to work for people like that, and it was like riding a roller coaster every day. But it wasn't the fun kind of roller coaster, it's like, "I'm gonna lose my life, I'm gonna fly out of this thing because this guy is so reactionary." And so God doesn't want you reacting to circumstances, He wants you responding to him.

So, there's a difference between looking horizontally, reacting to everything you see, and smell, and taste, and feel, and touch, and we just react, react, react, react, instead of settling in, letting God and the trials remain over us, and then letting God produce this genuineness, this stability of character in our life. That's what God's after, He's not after giving us an easy life, He's not into producing Bobs, that's just not God's goal.

And then finally, we know that character produces hope, and that's where we pick up today. Remember, hope is not wishful thinking, that's the way we use it in our culture, but it's a confident expectation of something that's going to happen in the future. It's looking forward and it's confidence. And so we're gonna see something about this hope that God produces through trials. Verse 5, "*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*"

And so we see this phrase that "*hope does not disappoint.*" The word "disappoint" simply means *ashamed*. If you have this confident expectation that God's gonna do what He says He's gonna do, based on the present trials, you won't be ashamed - Because you're giving up your right, in a sense, to defend yourself presently because you're looking forward confidently to what God has promised.

And what that means is that you are not your own Savior, you're actually gonna trust the Savior. You're not just going to trust Him for eternal salvation, but you're gonna walk by faith in your daily life,

trusting Him, realizing that He knows best, He's got a plan, He's producing something in you, and you're taking your hands off the steering wheel and you say, "Yeah, that's right. I'm gonna trust the Lord. And I'm confidently expecting that He's gonna complete something, that He's doing something, not only in my life, but He's gonna do something in the future, and that's to deliver me from the very presence of sin."

I think this hope actually ties back to verse 2, and so that's where we're picking up that concept. In other words, our confidence is in God's Word and His promises can never fail us and leave us holding the bag. Has that ever happened to you before? You're going somewhere, maybe you're going down to a neighborhood pool. You're all ready to swim, you've got your swim trunks on, you've got your towel, you've got your sunscreen, and you walk up, you're ready to go, and the next thing on the sign to get into the pool says you need a key to get in. I didn't realize that I needed a key, and I was ready to swim.

In the same way, when you show up to heaven, you're not gonna be like, "Oh yeah, everything's taken care of, I'm gonna be glorified." And then God's got a sign on the gates of heaven, it says, "Oh no, you were supposed to do this, this, and this." That's not gonna happen, God's not gonna leave you holding the bag. There's a confident expectation you have because we're confident, number one, that Christ paid it all. Christ did everything to secure. If He did everything to secure your justification, we're also confident that He did everything to secure your glorification. And by the way, that's A to Z in that process, that's all of it, that's everything.

And if Christ did it all, we believe that He did, so we are seeing even in this area of tribulations that we have this hope and hope here is articulated. What does that mean? Well, it means it's got the word "the" in front of it in Greek. They don't put it in English because it wouldn't read right, "now *the* hope does not disappoint," but that's what's there in the language. And so it's referring to a specific kind of hope, and I believe that ties back to verse 2, which is speaking of our glorification.

Now it's interesting as we go on in verse 5, he gives us a reason, another reason, another benefit why this hope will not disappoint, why this hope will not make you ashamed on that day. He says it there in verse 5, "*because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*"

This word "poured out" means *dumped out*. This isn't God dropping a sprinkle of His love into your hearts via the Holy Spirit. This isn't God dropping a couple drops, this is Him dumping the bucket, that's what's illustrated by this word. And this is a reason that's given why hope will not cause us to be ashamed. This is our expectation that this hope will be fulfilled and think of it this way: because God loves us and enables us to withstand tribulation, He does this via the Holy Spirit.

See, He gives us this love, He pours it out into our heart so that we can actually withstand tribulation in our life. You have a tool, you have a benefit, you have riches that if you're not taking advantage of, if you don't know this, how can you take advantage of this? We need to know this and depend upon this in our life. God has poured out His love in our hearts via the Holy Spirit so that we can manage and have hope in the trials and tribulation of life.

And if you don't know that God loves you, if you're not confident that God loves you, this is how you typically respond to trials: "God, why are you doing this to me? Why are you letting this happen to me? I thought you loved me. I thought you cared. Why on earth would you let me go through this?" And it becomes this criticism of God. But the truth of the matter is God allows it because He loves you, and God can see you through it because He loves you. And God can see you through it because He's not just dropping love into our hearts, He's not just giving us a little bit of love, He's giving us Himself. That's a lot different.

I've had different managers growing up, and you know the kind of managers I always loved? I didn't like this kind of manager, "Go dig that ditch, I'll be back in two hours to see if you did it right."

And then when they came back, “No, that's not deep enough, that's not wide enough, keep going, I'll be back in two hours.” I like the manager that says, “We're gonna dig this ditch for two hours and I'm gonna get down there and do it with you.”

And that's what God does. He doesn't say, “Hey, here's some love, I'll come back and check on you in a little bit.” He's giving of himself, He's right there with you, He pours out His love. You need to know about that, that's a benefit that you possess, so when trials hit this afternoon, tomorrow, Wednesday, Thursday, whenever they hit, you can go back and rest in this truth. God loves you. He's poured out His love, He's not sprinkling it. And here's the beauty of it: He doesn't just pour out a character quality, He pours out Himself, He gives himself, the Holy Spirit indwelling you.

And we get this picture which even ties it with glorification too, when he says this in Ephesians 1:13, *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed,”* - notice this reference to the Holy Spirit - *“you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who”* - speaking of the Holy Spirit - *“is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”* And so we see the Holy Spirit is given to us, to again, guarantee that we'll be glorified. That's an earnest gift of the Holy Spirit to guarantee that we're going to be glorified.

It's also a benefit of our justification because God is said to have poured this out at a point in time, the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, this happened to you whether you knew it or not. The silver was in the dirt right there, right where your feet hit, it was there for you. And it's also referencing that it's continuing, it's a perfect tense verb. This love continues to flow, this living water is never going to go dry, never gonna run out, never gonna exceed the love of God. It's all right here, packaged in this verse.

As I mentioned, it's not as if God is dripping little drops, dumping it all out one drop at a time, He dumped the whole bucket out on you, and He does this by means of the Holy Spirit. But you know what, as we said, it's not an impersonal dump of just His love. It's not just, “Here it is, and I'll come back later.” but it's a giving of His very life.

And the reason that hope does not disappoint is because now we've got the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit within us is producing God's love, not only in our life, but also convincing us of God's love for us. And you know what the Holy Spirit's always trying to do? Attempting to guide your thinking to be in line with God's perspective. God's perspective on what? Well in this context, trials. We don't take God's perspective on trials. Maybe I shouldn't include you, but I had trials this week. Do you know how many times I rested in this truth? And here I am studying it! I'm studying it to teach it! And do you know many times practically I rested in this truth this week? Do you know how many times I felt overwhelmed and anxious about different things going on in our world, over at our address this week? And I didn't even rest in this truth, yet it was there for me. It was there for you this week.

Did you rest in this truth? It's right there for you, it's right on the pages of Scripture, you've got the Holy Spirit indwelling you - those of you who have put your faith in Christ alone - you've got this same benefit as well. Did you rest in it this past week? Will you rest in it this week? We can't go back and change last week, but we can this week. We can make volitional decisions on a moment-by-moment basis to trust in the Lord, and to rest in the benefits of our justification. That's where we need to be, that's what we need to encourage one another to do.

The only reason we can produce the love of God and grow in character is because the Holy Spirit is dwelling within us. The Holy Spirit wants to bear His fruit through you. It's never your fruit, you're simply bearing fruit. You don't produce fruit, the Spirit of God produces fruit, you bear it, and that's how it happens. And so not only is this love poured out convincing you that God loves you, but God now wants you to go out and live out this love to others, and you can do that in tribulation.

So, you know the other thing that tends to happen when we go through trials and tribulations is we lash out at other people, don't we? And we don't show a lot of love. And typically, the people that get the brunt of our lashing out are the people that are closest to us. Spouses don't raise your hand right now, but you know what I'm talking about. Kids don't raise your hand right now, but you know what I'm talking about. Employees, you could probably raise your hand unless you work for someone in here, but you know what I'm talking about. When you are struggling to see trials and tribulations from God's perspective, you tend to lash out at others, you tend to not exhibit the love of God which has been poured out in your hearts.

And now it's interesting because - I love Paul. Don't ever criticize rabbit trails, and now you can kind of put Paul's rabbit trails together, they're organized a little bit and you can kind of see what he's doing - Paul got excited about things, and he would break off his train of thought and then return to it, he does that in verse 6. He's just talked about the love of God poured out in our hearts, and now he's gonna say, "And let me tell you how God demonstrated it to you. Let me show you, let me verbalize how God shows you, proves to you that He loves you."

In fact, it reminds me of an illustration. There's a lady named Susan Wilson who won the 1995 Science Teacher of the Year in the state of Texas - a big honor, a lot of science teachers in Texas, they tell me. This was her motto: "If I can make a point with an explosion, I do." Now how many of y'all would have loved to have a science teacher that blew stuff up in class *on purpose*? I mean, I would have loved it!

In fact, she got the award, and the next year one of her colleagues at the same school got the award. His name was Al Bomber, he got it in 1996. And as they went to go interview him, they noticed that in his classroom, the ceiling bears the marks of numerous soda bottle missile launches, the walls are pockmarked from being struck by mousetrap propelled cars and the like. And what they said is, enthusiastically, they tried to use creative ways to demonstrate the principles that they were trying to teach. And they also said, "A true passion does not confine itself to words alone."

Do you think God is excited about what Jesus Christ did for you and for me? He's very excited. And so the pockmarks of this world, the missile holes in this roof, if you will, and the missile holes of our life are all designed to demonstrate, to show you, to prove to you that God does indeed love you. John 3:16 tells us that God not only loves you, but He loves the world. How do we know that? Prove it to me, God. Prove it. And you know what? God proved it 2,000 years ago, that's what we're gonna read about here in the next few verses.

Verse 6, "*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us*" - there's our word "demonstrates" - "*in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

You'll notice a couple of things that he says in verses 6, 8, and 10. Before he describes the riches of God's love, he's going to describe the depths of our sin. And you'll see he does that in verse 6, he says that we're without strength, he says that we're ungodly. Jump down to verse 8, he says that we're sinners, and then jump down to verse 10, he says that we're enemies. And this love is in contradistinction to who we are, it elevates this level of love more, it elevates this demonstration.

It says in verse 6, "*when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*" You'll notice I've got the Greek word "*huper*" there, I'll talk about that a little bit in a second. But Paul is describing the depths and the riches of God's love here, and first he does that by providing an accurate, although unflattering, description of ourselves.

Paul first describes us as still without strength, notice that. "*For when we were still without strength.*" This word "without strength" means *powerless, without the ability to accomplish a task*. Paul is referring to our



inability to pay our own sin debt, to provide, or obtain, or work for our own righteousness to get to heaven on our own. We don't have the strength to do that. While we had no strength, Christ died for us. While we had no strength, nothing to offer, Christ died for us.

And then we see this second description in verse 6. Paul describes us as ungodly, meaning *without fear and reverence for God*. It came to mean *one who actively practices the opposite of what God would want you to do*. This alone is incredible. It's one thing to be without strength, but it's another thing to have your fist up in His face saying, "I'm gonna just rebel and reject everything You say." It's one thing to be without strength, it's another thing to spit in somebody's face. That's the contrast here.

Not only did we have no strength, but in a sense, he's saying we weren't even trying. And you know, he spent the first three chapters describing this. Nobody is good enough to get to heaven, nobody is even trying hard enough to get to heaven, and everyone is going to be guilty on that day. He spent the first three chapters convincing us that all sinners deserve hell, don't deserve heaven, all sinners have a righteousness issue, the immoral, the moral, and the religious, even people that go to church have a righteousness issue. And so he spent the first three chapters convincing us of that fact.

Now Paul goes on in this verse to describe that even when these things were true of us, even when we were without strength, even when we were ungodly, Christ still did something for you and for me. He died for us. In fact, he goes on to say that He died in due time, meaning that He died at the perfect time. And if we were to trace the Old Testament, which we don't have time to do today, we see a prophecy in Daniel 9 that clearly gives the timeframe for when the Messiah would cut off, and Jesus died according to that timeframe. A prophecy written hundreds of years before He was even born.

We see also in history that Jesus died on the very same day as the Passover lamb. He died in the very same hour that the Passover lamb was sacrificed. Jesus died at the right time. He died at the perfect time in human history for us, and so we see that here. But we also see that He died once. Now some of you might say, "Okay, why is that a big deal?" I'll tell you why it's a big deal: because there are some out there teaching that every week when you take communion that Jesus is re-crucified. And I'm going to tell you that's a heresy from the pit of hell.

Because either Jesus died and paid it all 2,000 years ago or He didn't, and if He didn't, why are you taking communion anyways? Because He didn't do enough, He didn't finish it like He said He did? So, we're trusting in the fact that the Word of God is true here. Jesus died *once*, that means that your sins, past, present, and future, were paid for on a day in history 2,000 years ago. Now the question is: will He be your substitute or not? Do you want to pay for your sins, or do you want Jesus to pay for them? God has made it so that everybody's sins can be paid for if you'll simply trust in what Jesus did for you. And He did it one time, it's a final event.

Jesus is said to have died, again, a one-time event for the ungodly. And I told you we'd talk about this word a little bit, the word "for", it's a specifically inserted word, it's very important with incredible meaning. And the reason is it means *in behalf of, for the sake of, or literally in the place of*. This is substitution. God's justice is still executed, it just doesn't have to be executed on you, it can be executed on His provision for you. And this small word "for", although seemingly insignificant because it's just a three-letter word, says a whole lot. It's as they say, "pregnant with meaning."

This small word "for" tells us that Christ died a substitutionary death, and notice who He died *for*. He died for the ungodly, that means if you are a good boy or girl that you don't qualify for Him to pay your penalty, because you're trusting yourself to get there. See, either the Bible is true or it's false. Either Jesus is a Savior or He's not. Either you need saving or you don't, and if you don't need saving then you've got to work your way to heaven. And the Bible clearly says, "No, everybody needs a Savior. Everybody needs this substitute, or you and I would have to face this penalty on our own.

And so when it says that Jesus died for us, that is a very significant three-letter word. But I want you to notice where he goes here. Paul loves to prove his point. That's what I like about Paul. He doesn't just typically drop a hand grenade in the room and then walk out, sometimes he does, but sometimes he puts it down, he puts down a hard truth and then he seeks to explain it or to provide something to convince you of what he's saying is true. And so he does that in verse 7. He goes to this concept of this human mindset: would you even die for a good person? In fact, how many people in this world could you find that would actually die in the place of even a good person?

What's kind of comical about this is even this week, I got caught looking at something on YouTube, and you know how YouTube is, you watch a video and they've got a million other videos on the side, and you're like, "Oh, that looks interesting!" And so I was kind of going from video to video, and I watched this video and this guy was surveying people, and he was just going up to people on the beach that were playing with their dogs. And this was the question he asked them: "If you were getting ready to cross the street and your dog was with you, and your neighbor was with you, and you saw a bus coming down the street that was gonna hit both your neighbor and your dog, and you could only save one of them, who would you save?" You guys know the answer, don't you? "My dog! I'd save my dog." And this is almost a universal answer that people were not willing to die or get in harm's way for their neighbor, but they were willing to get in harm's way for their dog. Isn't that something?

And so it kind of illustrates Paul's point here, because in verse 7 he says, "*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.*" And so Paul is just stating the obvious here. It'd be a rarity to find someone who's willing to die in the place of somebody else, even if they were a good person. Even if they were a person of high value in the community, that'd be really hard to find. In fact, the word "scarcely" here comes from describing labor pains. The difficulty, the painful toil that it would take to find even one substitute for a righteous man, he likens it to labor pains. It's painful, you'd have to search across the world to find somebody like this, it's kind of the idea that's being communicated here.

Paul states that "*perhaps someone would dare to die.*" Again, this word "*hyper*" is used here for a good man, but even the way he states that puts it into question. "Dare" means *to have courage, the boldness or confidence to do something*. And so the implication is, "Even if I could find somebody that was willing, when it came time to execute it, to have the courage to do it, they probably wouldn't follow through."

You see, most of us from a human perspective can say, "Yeah, I can see that." Now throw out the dads saving the family. I understand there are lots of hero stories, I get that, but in terms of you being willing to die in the place for some good person that's been reported to you as good, that's gonna be hard to find. Just as hard as labor pains to find. And then if you got them to agree, sat them down, brought them up to execute them, they might have second thoughts, that's kind of the idea. It'd be a hard thing to find for a good person. Paul uses that to set up this incredible contrast that we're gonna see in verse 8, because by describing the way that humans think naturally, it's gonna put in such contradistinction the way that God thinks, the way that God loves you, the way that God loves me. It's totally contrasted from the way humans think.

And so in verse 8 we're gonna see this - but before I read it I want you to read this title from the slide ("Continual Conspicuous Proof"), because it's a continual tense demonstration - in other words, presently and continually, God is demonstrating this. It's continual, conspicuous proof. You want proof? He's gonna say, "There's the cross. You want proof? There's the cross. You want proof? There's the cross." And He's got it continually presented to you in full public display to convince you that what He says is true. He's demonstrated His love, He says He loves you and now He's demonstrated it on the cross, and it's a continual demonstration as we reflect on what Jesus has done.

Verse 8, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Verse 8 gives us a sixth benefit in this passage, and the benefit is: you have proof that God loves you. And I know that in a room this size there are people in this room that think every time they sin that God stops loving them, and I'm here to tell you that's not true. The Bible says it's not true. Quit beating yourself up and move on with the God that you love. Confess your sins, be restored back to fellowship, and then enjoy this God who loves you without requiring any merit on your behalf. Go forward and walk by faith and enjoy the Lord.

But there are people in this room that every time they sin, they beat themselves up, “How could God love me, how could God forgive me?” And you know what, you're right! How could He? That's true. It doesn't make any sense, because Paul just said even for a good man, we couldn't find someone to die. God doesn't think the way you and I do, so you need to adjust your thinking the way that God thinks about you, and the way that God approaches this situation.

And see, we've got this beautiful word in verse 8, it's the word “but”, and the phrase is *“but God.”* You ought to just take a chance when you get time and just look up, “but God” in the New Testament. Because just when it seems like it's going downhill, the wheels have come off, you're going downhill, you've got no brakes, there's nothing to do, God intervenes.

See, if we needed to find somebody, if we had to spend our whole life finding somebody to die in our place for our sins, and we had to convince them how good we are, we could never find it. But you know what? But God. God found that man, and He doesn't require you to be good. In fact, He knows that you're not good enough. Because as He was going through the process of living a perfect life, yielding Himself to the cross, you and I with our sins were basically spitting in His face. We were still sinners.

Christ knew what He was getting into. He died for people who were rejecting Him, He died for people who would just as soon spit in His face than to give Him a glass of water or a table to sit at. And see, God thinks much differently about this than you do, and praise God that He does. Because if He didn't, we'd all be toast, literally and figuratively we would be toast.

And so this word “demonstrate” means *to set forth before somebody, to declare, to show or to make known or conspicuous*. And as I mentioned before, it's in the present tense, it means that this is a continual and present demonstration of God's love in your daily life that you can see today, you can see tomorrow, you could see yesterday. This is a benefit of your justification. You have proof that God loves you, you have proof in this area of trials that He's poured out His love so that you can deal biblically with trials in your life.

Again, this cross work of Jesus is a constant, unstopping, repeating demonstration of God's great love for us. But why? For the skeptic, why is this a demonstration, how does this prove anything? And what way does this prove it, how does this demonstrate it? Well look at the end of verse 8. See, it said in this passage that Christ died for those that were without strength, that means you had nothing to give back in return. Christ died for those who were still ungodly and imperfect, that means you weren't perfect, you didn't promise to start perfecting yourself. But what does verse 8 tell us? That while He died for us, we were still what? Sinners. We were still sinners when He made the decision to die for us.

Now there's many messages out there today, many gospel messages that would say, “Well, you've gotta make a promise to get saved. You gotta be at least willing to turn from sin, you gotta promise something, you gotta promote something.” That's not what this verse says. Jesus didn't wait back on the cross and go, “Okay, I'm waiting for this person in 2,000 years from now to commit or surrender...okay, they did. I guess I'll get up there now.” That wasn't it at all. While we were still sinners,

while we were still spitting in His face, while we were still thumbing our noses at Him, Christ died for us. You talk about love, that's true love.

I mean, how many of you parents could give your teenage kids the key to the car while they're cussing you out to your face? While they spit in your face? While they've been robbing money out of your wallet? "Okay, here you go. Have a nice night, enjoy your friends." No, we pull that back, and rightfully so! Because they're still sinners, they're engaged in active rebellion right before us. We're not going to reward them, we're not going to do anything for them except maybe kick them in the rear end, that might be what we do for them. But we're not going to give them the keys to the car, we're not going to say, "Yeah sure, because you said all those curse words, I'm gonna give you a couple hundred bucks to go enjoy with your friends." That wouldn't happen. We know that.

If you're an employer, you wouldn't be giving an employee a raise while they're sitting there cussing you out, leaving early, coming in late, taking three-hour lunches, they're doing everything against what you've said, you wouldn't do something nice for them.

See, that's grace. That's getting something you don't deserve. While you were still a sinner Christ did everything on your behalf to pay for your sins, even though you weren't appreciative of it yet, He did it. That's the beauty of the gospel, and that's why Paul is saying this is a true demonstration of the love of God. If you need proof just look at the cross, understand what God did for you in Christ.

*"While we were"* is a present tense participle indicating that when Christ chose to die, He did it at the same time that mankind was still sinning, right at the very same time. "Still" also communicates this fact. And so Christ died for those who were in a present state of sin, that's you and me. Actively sinning, not for those who had stopped sinning, not for those who promised or made a commitment to stop sinning, not for those who had a willingness to stop sinning, not for those who promised to go to church, promised to clean themselves up, promised to quit doing this and start doing this, that's not who He died for. He died for us while we were still sinners.

And so one of the benefits of justification is the proof that God loves us. And looking back over this passage, we've got to be convinced. Because the love of God - as he tells us in verse 5 - has been poured out into our hearts via the Holy Spirit, that He's proved through His death for us on the cross, that can become an anchor to your soul. On a daily basis when trials hit tomorrow, when trials hit later in this week, the love of God can become an anchor to your soul.

# CHAPTER 23

## Benefits of Justification Part 3

### Romans 5:9-11

We are picking up where we left off last week, and remember as we've gone through this illustration, I think it's very important just to quickly review again. Salvation is a free gift. Salvation is not something you have to work for, not something you have to earn, not something you have to behave for, it's a free gift, just like the Bible says in multiple places. The reason it's free is because Jesus Christ has paid for it in full. When He said it is finished, He meant it's completely done. And the great thing about the salvation that God offers is it's like a gift that as you open up, you realize there's more gifts inside.

And so we've looked at that over the course of the last couple weeks, that as part of our salvation package, we get salvation from the penalty of sin. And that's called "justification", it's a big theological word, but basically what that means is that the righteousness issue that you had - the Bible says you've got no righteousness, you're not good enough to get into heaven on your own - God has provided a way for you to have the righteousness needed to get to heaven. And the way you get it - as we've seen detailed in the book of Romans - is when you quit trusting in yourself, you quit working, you quit trying, and you trust in the work of another, namely Jesus Christ who died for your sins and rose again. And the moment you transfer your faith to Jesus Christ, God declares you righteous. And if God declares you righteous, who else has a word in the matter? And the answer is nobody.

But we know that our salvation from the penalty of sin is not the only thing in the box. In fact, we've got an "S word" in there, another big word, "sanctification." We know that God is not only interested in saving you from the penalty of sin, but He's also interested in saving you presently from the power of sin in your daily life. Many Christians that don't understand what God has provided in the realm of sanctification are living defeated and dominated Christian lives, and God doesn't want you to live defeated or dominated by sin. And so He made provision in the gospel, the moment that you put your faith in Christ, this is also part of your salvation package, and now God wants to daily deliver you from sin's power. And so it's true to say that you *have been* saved, and that you are *being* saved daily from sin's power.

But not only that, the moment you trusted in Christ, God also saved you in a future tense from the very presence of sin, and one day in glorification - that's another big \$5 word - God will save you from the very presence of sin in your life. And so you see in this gift of salvation that God has provided an answer to the sin issue in your life. He's taken care of the penalty of sin, He's made provision so that you can have victory over the power of sin in your daily life, and He has also delivered you in a future tense from the very presence of sin when you die, or you're raptured.

And what we've been looking at the last couple of weeks, is we've actually been getting into this justification box a little bit more, because when you put your faith in Christ, it came with a lot of benefits. We've been looking at those in the fifth chapter of Romans - if you're not already there you can turn with me to Romans chapter 5 - but what we're going to see is that the benefits that we have in this box are given on a basis. In other words, there's a basis which God gives us these gifts, and we're going to see that today.

We're going to see this, "But wait, there's more!" You thought we had already delineated everything that you got, but now there's even more. And you're gonna see this phrase in verse 9, "*Much more then,*" you're gonna see in verse 10, "*much more.*" And so you're gonna see this phrase, "*much more*", we're diving into this box of justification further to understand the benefits that you and I have, because God wants us to rest, and know, and understand what we have in Christ. And I'm going to tell you something, the basis for these benefits is simply this: Jesus Christ, life.

In the next section we're gonna start a small break out series on what the gospel is not, and many people think that the way you get saved is you have to give your life to Christ. I want to ask you, what sounds more biblical: that you have to give your life to Christ, or that Christ gave His life for you? What is the biblical approach to being saved? But not only did Christ give His life for you, paying the penalty for your sins and rising again, but He also gives you His very life to live on a daily basis. That's why in Galatians 2:20 it says that the life I live in the flesh, it's no longer I, but Christ lives in me.

And Paul is transitioning out of talking about justification here in the middle part of chapter 5, and we're going to move into the second tense of salvation, sanctification. But you and I have to understand that in order to successfully live the Christian life, deliverance from the power of sin, we've got to understand the value that we have in the life of Christ. And so when he says, "*much more*", you're going to notice that it's, "*much more we're saved from wrath through Him.*" Verse 10, "*having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*" Verse 11, "*we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom.*" You're gonna see all of our benefits are tied up in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is Jesus Christ. For many people, the Christian life is to quit smoking, quit drinking, and quit cussing, quit doing this, start doing this. That's not the Christian life, folks. The Christian life is Jesus Christ manifested through you as you walk by faith in Him. That is sanctification in a nutshell. And God has made provision so that your sin nature no longer has to dominate you, and that's where we're going in the book of Romans.

But today we've got to finish out the benefits, and Paul is using this concept of having the very life of Christ at our disposal, the basis for all these benefits. And what it should also do is give you great assurance and encouragement that when God promises you eternal life when you put your faith in Christ, *you have* eternal life. Eternal life being defined as life that goes on forever that never ends.

This is why God can promise it, because He's not just dabbling you with eternal life. He's giving you eternal life with His Son; the very life of His Son is also given to you. That's why it's all guaranteed, that's why it's all sure, that's why it's all assured the moment you put your faith in Christ. It would be like buying some Sham Wows and getting the Sham Wow guy with it to actually wash and dry your car for you. Wouldn't that be awesome? I'd buy that! \$19.95, that's a good deal.

All right, so we are in the middle of Romans five and we're gonna do a quick review. Some of the benefits that we've looked at, the first benefit we saw in Chapter five is found in verse 1. The moment you put your faith in Christ, you're *justified* by God, you're declared righteous by God, you have peace with God, implying that before you put your faith in Christ you did not have peace with God. And so this is a new position, a new benefit that comes with justification.

We see the second benefit in verse 2, you have access into a standing of grace. And if you stand in grace, something that's unmerited or unearned, you can never leave that position. That position is yours, you remain in that position, because if you could fall in the sense of forever falling from that position of grace - now you can *not* take advantage of it and that's what many believers do, we don't take advantage of our position of grace - that's an oxymoron, because that would then imply you had to merit some reason to stay in that position. And so the emphasis is you remain standing, you have access into the standing of being unconditionally accepted by God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Our third benefit, we can inwardly boast or rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. In other words, we can be confident that one day we will be glorified. God has started the salvation process, and He will finish it. God doesn't start and complete projects halfway through, He does it all the way through. So, one day you will be delivered from sin's power, sin's presence in your life, and that is a glory hallelujah! I cannot tell you how many days I wake up, look in the mirror, so depressed and disgusted with myself and the failure that I see, and the exposure of sin in my life that God allows me to see on a daily basis. Whether it's dealing with my family, dealing with others, just even in my thinking, and to say one day I'm gonna be delivered from that... praise God! And we've got this hope, we've got this confident expectation that that will indeed happen based on the Word of God.

Our fourth benefit is very practical. This hits where the rubber meets the road, or whatever the sole of your shoe is, polyester, urethane, where it hits the road, this is where this comes into play. We can inwardly boast about tribulations in our lives because we know a couple things. Ultimately, what do we know? God has a purpose for trials in your life. God is producing something in your life. What's He producing? Well, you go to verses 3-4: *"tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."* If you have that divine perspective on trials, that God's using it as a production factory in your life to produce the character and life of Christ in and through you, you can boast about that.

I'm not gonna say you're enjoying it, it's not like you become sadomasochistic and start liking pain or something. It's just that you can have a heavenly perspective instead of always trying to get out from under trials. That's the Christian solution to trials, is to pray to get out of them instead of recognizing that God may have something for you in them, that He wants to bring you through to produce these things in your life. And so we get this as a benefit of our new position in Christ, we can actually view trials in the way that God wants us to view them.

Fifth benefit, God's love has been completely poured out. Remember, that's not a sprinkle, that's not a drop, it's dumped out. Verse 5, *"the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."* And then finally the sixth benefit that we looked at last week, you have proof of God's love because Christ died for you. We see that in verse 8, remember, this demonstration.

And now as we get into verses 9-11, what we're gonna see is God has done the harder thing already. What was the harder thing? Well, he detailed that in verses 6-8, he said that it's almost impossible to find any person on earth - remember, he uses the word that means labor pains, painful, hard - that's even willing to die for a good person, a righteous person, you can't even find somebody like that. That would just be agonizing to try to find one person in this world that's willing to die in the place of a good person.

And how did God demonstrate His love for us? Well let's read verse 8: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were a good person..." is that what your version says? No, it's the exact opposite. And notice the very first word in verse 8, *"but."* In contrast to human beings and the way that we couldn't find anybody even to die for a good person, God did something totally off the charts, totally flipped on its head, and He died for us while we were still sinners. Not after we promised to clean ourselves up, not after we promised to quit sinning, not after we promised to go to church, not after we promised to do this or promised to quit doing that. While we were still sinners, while we were literally spitting in His face, pulling His beard, putting a crown of thorns on His head, nailing Him to a cross, Christ died for us while that was going on. And if that doesn't demonstrate the love of God, I can't convince you otherwise. That's my argument. That's Paul's argument, that's what he puts forth, if that doesn't demonstrate the love of God, I don't know what else to communicate because that's an incredible truth.

And so what we're gonna see now in the next couple verses, if God has done that - that's hard, that's a difficult thing - can He do the easier things now? If He's done all this difficult work, then He's also going to do these easier things. And so some of these easier things we're gonna see starting in verse 9. And he's gonna say this in verse 9, let's read it. *“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”*

And so we look at this phrase *“much more then”*, let's look at it a little bit more closely. The word “then” actually could be translated “accordingly” or “certainly.” The idea is that - for those of you that have gambling in your past - it's a lock. *“Much more then”*, certainly, he's describing something that's super certain. Super certain, gonna happen, can bank on it, it's a lock. And I've often - probably not in a wise way - talked to unbelievers sometimes that do have gambling backgrounds in poker, and they understand this. This is the time where you realize you've got the hand that's gonna beat everybody else. And what do you typically do? All in, right? You don't even save your chips, you've got a royal flush, you're going all-in.

And in this case, we're going all-in on Jesus Christ, because He's a lock. If God doesn't accept Jesus and His sacrifice for me, and His resurrection, I don't have a chance, so I'm going all-in on Him. That's what faith is all about, I'm trusting that what God says about Jesus, the fact that He raised Him from the dead indicates that God accepted His death in my place, in my stead, for me as my substitute, and I'm trusting that to go to heaven. I'm trusting in the One who died for me and rose again to get me to heaven, and that's it. I'm going all-in on Jesus.

And so what he's saying here is this word “then”, it's certain. If we've been justified - and we have, it's a past tense, we've been declared righteous - much more then, much more certain is that we're going to be saved from wrath through Him. The word “much” means *many* or *much of number, more*. He kind of jams all these words together, and really in essence what he's saying is, “But wait, there's a lot more that we can be certain of. There's a lot more that's a lock, that's guaranteed to happen.” And one of those things that we're going to see is that the *“much more”* is referring to being saved from wrath through Jesus.

Now we've looked at justification, but remember, being declared righteous is not a day-to-day proposition where God looks down, takes your temperature, looks at the thermometer and says, “Nope, not righteous today, John. You're gonna have to pick that up tomorrow, you just didn't have a good day today. Sorry, I'm just being honest with you.” And then the next day I have a good day and He takes my temperature and He's like, “Ah, righteous today. Okay, you're righteous today.” No, it's not that at all. It's a moment in time, a point in time event, the moment you put your faith in Christ, God slams the gavel of heaven, case is over, you are righteous.

Now you're not righteous because you've behaved righteously, you're righteous because you've trusted in Jesus Christ, and He's credited His righteousness to your account. That's why God can declare your righteousness the moment you put your faith in Christ. And we see this backed up in the scriptures over and over again, it's not a daisy, “He loves me, he loves me not” relationship with God the Father. Just take all the petals off and say, “He loves me.” And it's over, that's it. A point in time event, and that's what we see every time when we talk about justification, it's described in the past tense.

This is why the Bible can say you have been saved, done, past tense. Why? Because Jesus paid it all. There's no more penalty for sin left to be paid, Jesus did it all. If He didn't, He's a liar. He said it's finished, and I believe Jesus. And I believe it for the simple fact that God the Father raised Him from the dead and said, “Amen. It is finished. It's done, I am satisfied, I'm propitiated. I accept Jesus's sacrifice in your place.” And this is why God can declare us righteous at a point in time.



We also see according to Hebrews 9:22, this verse and verse 9 talks about us being justified by His blood. Now why does he bring up blood? You hear a lot of people say, "Oh I'm covered in the blood." And they don't even know what that means, it's some religious phrase they picked up along the way. Why is blood even introduced here? Because the penalty for sin is death, and there has to be blood shed for forgiveness of sins. This is what Hebrews 9:22 says, and it's what the entire Old Testament testified to. So, it's consistent throughout the Bible, but it says this, "*And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.*" Without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness of sins. If you want your sins forgiven, blood must be shed. The good news for you and I is that Jesus shed His blood for *you*. So, it doesn't have to be your blood that has to be shed, it doesn't have to be your death that has to make that payment, Jesus's payment can count in your place.

We also saw in Romans 4:25 that His resurrection sealed the fact that God accepted Jesus's sacrifice. So now the question becomes, God accepts Jesus's sacrifice in your place, do you? That's the issue of salvation. God accepts Jesus as your only way to heaven, do you accept Jesus as your only way to heaven? Are you still trusting in a church, are you still trusting in your good works, are you still trusting in the fact that you get up and read your Bible or you pray to whoever, whether that's God or somebody else. You're trusting in those things, that's not the way to get you to heaven. The only way is the way that God has prescribed, and that's through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Will you trust in what God accepts? That's the million-dollar question. That's the question that your eternity and your eternal home will be based on. What did you do with Jesus Christ? Did you trust Him, or did you reject Him? Did you want to get there your own way? And you have that choice, God gives you that choice to make, but I would implore you and encourage you today that the scriptures are clear, there's no other way to heaven than by simple faith in Jesus Christ and what He did for you. That's where God wants our mindset to gravitate to.

And so as we think about our past tense justification, we get this seventh benefit, this "*much more*", and notice in verse 9 that the "*much more*" is that "*we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*" In addition to this "*much more then,*" that gives us this super certainty, "*we shall be saved*" is also a future tense, what we call indicative word in the Greek, meaning it's a guarantee. Indicative is a mood of fact. And so "*we shall be saved*" is a promise, that's a promise that "*we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*" It goes really well with John 3:16, because it says, "*whosoever believes in Him shall not perish.*" "*We shall be saved from wrath,*" that means we don't have to face the penalty for our sin, that's guaranteed because we've been declared righteous by God, because we've been justified.

So, we know that he's saying we'll be safe from wrath, the question becomes what wrath is Paul referring to? And there's lots of people that have opinions on this, what wrath is he talking about? But I think as we kind of follow the argument in the book of Romans, number one, the wrath here is articulated. Now what do I mean by that? It means it's got the word "the" in front of it. It's talking about a unique wrath, *the* wrath, a very specific wrath.

And so it's most likely (I believe) speaking of the righteous judgment of God that's gonna face unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment which is spoken of in Revelation chapter 20. The other thing is, again, building up the book of Romans in context, this is the kind of wrath that he's been talking about up to this point. Romans 1:18, 2:5, 2:8, 2:16, 3:5 and 3:19, and you'll see that up to this point in time this has been *the* wrath (articulated *the* wrath) that he's been talking about, this Great White Throne Judgment of wrath.

And so it's great to know that not only have we been declared righteous through God, but even more, we're guaranteed not to face the future wrath of God at the Great White Throne Judgment. Guaranteed! It's a promise. And so if God has declared you righteous, you don't have to appear before

the Great White Throne Judgment because your righteousness has already been settled. When was it settled? When you lived a string of good days two weeks in a row? No, when you put your faith in the Son of God who died for you and rose again. God, at that moment, slammed the gavel down, your case is closed. You don't appear before a punitive judgment seat again.

Now here's the other thing we want to see before we leave from verse 9, because this is really going to help us as we transition into sanctification. *“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath”* - how? *“through Him.”* See, not only do you get these benefits, but you also get the very life of Christ.

I hate to keep going back to this example, but it'd be like me trying to get into the White House to see Donald Trump. And it would be one thing to have a letter from Donald Trump Jr. saying, “Hey, let this guy in, he needs to see my father.” But it's something totally different to have Donald Trump Jr. standing beside me saying, “Let this guy in with me.” See, I can gain access through his son. I mean, I could just have a letter and that's probably good, they might have to do a lot more verification because of the forgeries that can happen in our day. But if Donald Trump Jr. is standing right beside me, unless he's got a Mission Impossible mask on and they need to do an eye scan or something, I should be able to get into the White House no problem, because I'm with the son.

That's what we're talking about here. It's not just that he's guaranteeing you that you'll be safe from wrath, but he's guaranteeing you're going to be saved through wrath, through Jesus. Jesus has been given to you. This is much more than just giving us a bunch of benefits, this is giving us the very life of His Son, and so it guarantees what Paul's promising here.

Let's go on to verse 10. We see this word “reconciliation” or “reconciled”, which just means that God has made us a friend. Verse 10, *“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”* Again, we see that reference to His life. And so we look at this eighth benefit, we're just building benefits. And like I mentioned in the last section, there's a list of 215 things that are now true of you that you're a believer in Jesus Christ, all backed up with Scripture. You and I have so many riches and benefits that many times we're not even aware of what we've got.

It'd be like going down to the bank and you've got a million dollars in your account, and you're worried about whether you can afford to eat out tonight or not. You know you've got a million dollars, it's like, “Hey, cakes on me!” or whatever, I mean you could treat everybody in the restaurant you've got so many riches, and you're worried. You're counting pennies, you're pulling change out of the car and saying, “Do we have enough?”, trying to put dollars together out of nickels. And here we are, we're rich in Christ.

And so we've just been looking at this in this chapter, but one of the benefits we have now is that God took us from the place of an enemy and made us a friend. How did He do that? Well verse 8 tells us He died for us while we were enemies. He died for us while we were still sinners. And so He brought us into a position of friends, God is the one doing the reconciling.

Again, this goes with verses 6-8 here, but “reconciled” by definition means *to take an enemy and make them a friend*. This relationship was actually prevented before because of God's holy and righteous demands. He can't just overlook sin, He's got to punish sin, but in His love that He demonstrated for us, Christ paid the penalty for our sin. Christ took the justice that you and I deserved.

And so that is what we're looking at here, this is why God can love us, because Christ took the justice that you and I deserve. This is why God can reconcile us and bring us into a place of friendship, not because we promise to quit offending Him, not because we promise to get our life right, it's because

Christ actually had the justice of God executed on Him so you and I don't have to have it executed on us, and now God is free to bring us into a position as a friend.

In fact, we notice that reconciliation by this verse is an action that God executes. It's a passive voice, we *were* reconciled. In other words, we don't reconcile ourselves, God reconciled us, God took this action. And it also tells us that it's not a continual process, it's an aorist tense in the Greek, it emphasizes a one-time event, you have been reconciled, case closed. You are now in a position of friendship with God if you've put your faith in Jesus Christ, and the reason that He can do this is because of Him, because of Jesus. He gives us His life, and that's what we're gonna see here as we go on.

Because he gives us, again, this “much more” concept, look at verse 10. “*For if when we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son,*” - here's our phrase again - “*much more, having been reconciled,*” - past tense - “*we shall be saved by His life.*” And so based upon this “much more” concept and based upon this completed action of reconciliation, God has guaranteed another promise to you, and that ninth benefit is simply this: we shall be saved by His life.

Here at Grace, we use a survey evangelism tool to share the gospel with strangers. And it's in these conversations many times that we get to a question on the survey where we say, “What are you trusting in? Why would God let you in?” And they'll go through a laundry list of things, “Well, I try to keep the Ten Commandments, I light candles, I go to confession, I go to church, I try to do well, I try to do good, I try to take care of this, I try to take care of that.” And we get to the end of the list, and we only leave so much space in there for people to fill out, and sometimes we fill out the whole sheet. And every once in a while, just with someone that maybe has sat in with a very religiously smug attitude, I'll get to the end of the list and I'll say, “Well what about Jesus?” And they'll say, “Oh yeah, Him too.” And I think I've shared that here before, but what about Jesus? Him too, really? That's the mindset?

And you're gonna notice that when Paul gets to this section, he goes to this “much more”, that it's through Him, it's by His life, it's through Him, under Him, through Him, through whom, everything is connected to Jesus Christ. There's a reason the Bible says that Jesus is the Savior. Because Saviors save. Ultimately you are saved because of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is your Savior. Jesus Christ is the savior of the world. He can save anybody, even sinners. In fact, if you're a sinner, you qualify for salvation. You don't have to be a good person to qualify for salvation, that is a misnomer, that is unbiblical, that's not found anywhere in the scriptures. God saves sinners, and Jesus Christ is the Savior.

And so we find our salvation, even here, wrapped up in a person, not in a thing, not in an activity, not in a behavior. In fact, if you want to be honest, it *is* based on a behavior, but it's based on *His* behavior. It *is* based on a work, but it's based on *His* work. See, everything gets twisted around, satanically deceived in our thinking, because Satan wants us to trust in anything other than Jesus Christ and Him alone.

And that's why when you put faith in Christ and you don't have a period after that statement, you've got problems. You start putting commas, and “ands”, and “buts”, and contingencies, and “your heart has to be like this”, and “your mind has to be like this”, and “you have to do this”, and “you have to go through this ritual”. You just messed it up. It got very un-simple quick, and it got off course, it's like a train that went off the rails at that point. The message is simple: Christ died for your sins and rose again. Do you believe that? Will you trust Jesus Christ to save you?

This is what Paul is trying to give us, this emphasis, this assurance that when we are declared righteous by God, we don't have to question whether or not God will ever accept us again. How do we know? Because we have His life. “*Much more then,*” if He did this hard thing, this is easy for God. You're going to be saved from the wrath to come, that's easy because Jesus died for you while you were still a sinner. That's a hard thing, God took care of that already.

And so this ninth benefit, we see here the “what” that saves us - Christ's life - but it's unclear what we're saved *from*. Again, this is one of those passages that there's gonna be some different lines of thought. But I think what we're seeing here from the introduction of this verse in verse 10, you'll notice that the very first word in verse 10 is “for”. And so I think just from an observation perspective that he's building on the same argument he just made in verse 9. He's expanding his argument for verse 9.

And so what were we saved from in verse 9? Well, we were saved from wrath at the Great White Throne Judgment, so I believe he's talking about this again. So it must be that His life saves us from the wrath of God in the future judgment at the Great White Throne as well. However, this is where some of the disagreement comes in, and so I just want you to be aware of it. And I actually could go either way in a sense, because even being saved from His wrath was taught in verse 9, it's probably re-emphasized again in verse 10, but the case could be made that it's referring to salvation all the way through. We shall be saved presently from the power of sin, and in the future from the very presence of sin. All of that's true, through His life we're gonna be saved.

And so you could say we're being saved daily from the power of sin by His life, or you could say we will be saved in the future from the very presence of sin by His life. I think both of those statements are true, I think both of those statements could be drawn from here. But the key - and this is the key that I don't want us to miss - the key is having the life of Christ. The greatest benefit of all from our justification is that we have His life, that we're accepted through Him, and so we see that in verse 10.

And then to close, verse 11, there's some benefit now, we've looked at this a little bit through the first few verses, but let's read verse 11. “*And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom*” - notice both of those “throughs” - “*we have now received the reconciliation.*” And so really in verses 9-10 there's only one time element that we haven't tackled in this section today, and it's present. We've looked at the past benefit, we've been reconciled, we've been justified, and we will be saved from the future wrath at the Great White Throne Judgment, so we've got the future, but now we've got this present benefit.

Now this present benefit has already been brought up back in verses 3 and 4. In fact, Paul uses the same exact word here that he has back in the first few verses in terms of rejoicing, which basically means this inward boasting in God. And so now we see our tenth benefit in this section, that we rejoice in God, our boast is in God, and why is it in God? Because of our Lord Jesus Christ, or through our Lord Jesus Christ. This word “rejoice” is a present tense participle, so it emphasizes what our present and continual mindset can be. As we understand the past and future benefits of justification, we can have a different perspective on today. We can have a different understanding of what God is doing in our life today.

And not only can we have a different understanding, but we can actually boast in trials. We can go to James 1:2-4 that says, “*count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*” and we can actually say “Amen!” to that instead of saying, “What in the world is he talking about? What an idiot, has he ever lived a day on this earth with trials?” That's the guy you don't want in the room, right? He's just like Mr. Goody Two-Shoes, are you kidding me? *Boast* in trials, be *excited* about trials?

But see, that's one of the many benefits of our justification. That we have all of these guaranteed benefits, we've got the very life of Christ, we're accepted through Jesus, and so when we go through things in this present day, and this present age, and in our daily lives, we can actually rest with Jesus who's walking through it with us. And see, there's that benefit from having His life there with us.

This word is better translated “boast”, we've talked about this before, but because it expresses an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy. And in this case, who's he boasting in, who's exceptionally noteworthy, who's worthy of being boasted about?

Well look at verse 11: God. Why God? Because of what He did through Jesus Christ. What did Jesus Christ do for you? Died for you and rose again, and God has given you His life as a believer, and we've got to understand the benefit of that, especially as we walk and live in our daily life.

So why can we rejoice and be confident in God? Because Jesus has secured - I want you to notice that in the text - *the* reconciliation, not just *a* reconciliation. See that in verse 11? "*through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*" You know what that means, folks? It backs up all of Scripture. There's only one way to heaven, there's only one way to be reconciled with God, and it's through His Son, Jesus, whom God accepted on your behalf when He died in your place. And so Jesus provides this reconciliation, this ability for God to take you from the place of an enemy and to make you a friend.

In closing, as we get ready for the next section, we're gonna see this concept "through Jesus", "with Jesus", "in Jesus", which is what we would call "identification". And this may not mean much to you right now, but I'm hoping that by the end of our sanctification section in Romans that this will mean everything to you. I believe it's that important. If you've never been exposed to this concept, or you've been exposed and it hasn't sunk in with you, that's okay too. I think we're gonna spend a lot of time, and I think you'll see it repeated, I think you'll see the emphasis in scripture.

But I want you to understand that in the first eleven verses that the Greek preposition "*dia*" meaning *through*, is used six times. That's a lot in eleven verses, you don't typically see a lot of repetition like that. This provides a great segue into the next section in Romans which describes who we are in Christ. And see, what we've got to understand is that there's something called identification, and who God identifies you with is more important than who you identify with yourself. And many of us need to understand this whole concept of identification because it's key to practical sanctification in the Christian life.

And so if you are not familiar with this concept, or haven't heard it before, or it's been a while since you've thought about it, keep coming to Romans. We're gonna keep diving through this and you're gonna see why this is important. What God is doing here in our identification with Christ is key, it's essential to you living the Christian life as Galatians 2:20 says, "*living by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*"



# CHAPTER 24

## What the Gospel Is NOT Part 1

### Romans

So, we've been studying the book of Romans and we have really been focused on what I would call the first section of the book of Romans, although we've covered four and a half chapters, we've really covered the section on justification. Justification is a big word, and so to kind of scale that down, we'll take a really quick 30,000-foot view so that I can tell you why we're going where we're going the next few weeks.

The issue is this: in order to get to heaven, God requires a righteousness equal to His own. Now for those of us who are honest with ourselves, that creates a big problem for us. And in fact, for those that don't think you need to read through the first three chapters of the book of Romans, you do, because he systematically proves that nobody's good enough, nobody's righteous enough in this way. And we get to the middle of Romans chapter 3 where he says all are guilty before God, nobody has the righteousness needed to get to heaven. We've got a problem; we've got a dilemma. In fact, our problem is twofold because the wages of sin is death, there's this death penalty hanging over us, and we've got a righteousness issue that we don't possess.

So, what do we have to do about it? Well religion will tell you you better get to work. Religion will tell you you better start going to church, religion will tell you you better start praying. Religion says you better commit and then pull yourself up by your chin strap. That's what religion says. See, God disagrees with religion. God provided the solution for you on your behalf, as a free gift in the gospel.

And the gospel clearly borne out in Romans 3 is Jesus Christ did something for you that you could not do for yourself. We know that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and then He rose again, He paid your death penalty and now God will credit righteousness to your account the moment you put your faith in Jesus, the moment you stop working, the moment you stop trying to be righteous. When you trust in God's provision, God will credit righteousness to your account, He will take Jesus's death and place it in your stead so that you don't have to pay that penalty. That's the beauty of the gospel.

So that's what we've been looking at, and in Chapter 4 we saw that this is not some contingency plan, this isn't Plan B, this wasn't God aborting His initial plan and coming up with a second plan. We see in Chapter 4 that He had this planned throughout eternity, this was always the way, and Paul gives two Old Testament examples to show that men are always justified by faith on the basis of God's grace, and we saw that in chapter 4.

What we've been looking at in Chapter 5 the last couple weeks, we stopped in verse 11, is simply this: there are benefits to your justification you need to know about. There are things inside that box that you need to open and not be like a two-year-old at Christmas. I told Carrie one year, "Why do we even waste our money on toys? Just wrap boxes. Just give them the box, they'll play with the bows! We could save hundreds of dollars, we can put it in their college fund, they'll never know. We can get a head start!" Don't be like a two-year-old at Christmas, open the box. Start benefiting from what you possess now in Christ, that you've been justified by faith, and that's what we've been looking at.

Now the reason I'm gonna take a detour this morning instead of continuing to go through the book of Romans, is because we're shifting in the book of Romans once we hit Romans 5:12, we're entering a new section. We're leaving justification to enter a section that we would call "identification", and then moving on into chapter 6 we're gonna start looking at "sanctification." Remember,

“sanctification” is just a big word meaning *being saved from the power of sin in your daily life*. See, God is not only giving you a ticket to heaven, but He also wants you to enjoy the process of getting there! He wants you to not be dominated by sin’s power in your daily life, and so He’s made provision for that as well. We’re gonna get to that, but before we do I think it’s very important to spend a few weeks on what the gospel is not.

Do you know that the third leading cause of death in our culture, in our society today is caused by preventable medical errors for people who are in hospitals? It’s third behind heart disease and cancer. The third leading cause of death in our country is preventable medical errors while people are under the care of trained doctors and nurses in a hospital. Did you realize that? I mean, there’s probably a bad apple or a bad egg somewhere in these hospitals that’s maybe doing some of this on purpose. In fact, I just read a story about a lady that they’re charging for like 50 counts of murder over the course of 25 years. But assuming that when people take the oath to help life and to care for life, that’s what they want to do.

So, there’s preventable medical errors, people who sincerely want to help the patient but misread the medicine chart. Instead of giving 3 cc’s they give 30, because the doctor was sloppy (like doctors are) and maybe scratched in something that looked like a 0. And instead of giving it three times a day, they give it once a day, they forget, they get busy. There are preventable medical errors from people who care, who want the best for their patients.

In our day, something very similar is happening with the gospel. People who have all sincerity, want to see people going to heaven, want to see people get saved, are repeating cliches that aren’t even biblical. They’re telling people that, “You can get saved by\_\_\_\_\_” and we’re going to insert in that blank over the next four weeks what people are telling people they need to do to be saved. And you know what? If people take these cliches at face value, guess what the end result will be according to the scriptures? They’ll go right to hell.

Now, this is not a small thing, this is not a semantical thing, this is an attempt to be biblical. An attempt to understand that there is an enemy out there that is attacking the clarity of the gospel, because Satan knows there’s only one way to heaven, and it’s based on what Jesus did on the cross. It’s based upon what He accomplished. And the second you add anything to what Jesus Christ did, you don’t have salvation, you don’t have good news, you’ve got bad news. And the end result of that bad news is an eternity in the lake of fire. That’s what the scriptures say.

So, forgive me if I get even more passionate these next couple weeks, because this is serious business. This would be like you going into a heart doctor’s office, and you’re getting a heart procedure done, and you wake up with a scar from the top of your head to the bottom of your toe. You would say, “Doc, can you be a little bit more precise? My heart’s here, my man, not all up and down here! Can you get to the heart?” This is so important because eternal destinies rest on this message. They rest on what Jesus Christ did, and so we’re gonna look at that for the next four weeks.

I’m gonna introduce a couple of words that nobody likes to hear, I don’t care if you’re a kid or an adult. I’m sorry, you didn’t know you’d be put through pain this morning, but here they are: pop quiz. Do you remember those words when your teacher came in? Pop quiz. So, I’ve got a pop quiz for you today. If you have a pen, I want you to take it out. If you don’t have a pen, you’re not off the hook, I want you to think mentally about this question I want to ask. And I’m gonna give you a minute, I want you to take this to heart, I want you to participate in this. Here’s the question: what must you do to be saved? You’ve got a minute. Nobody’s gonna look at your answer, we’re not gonna pass these around and point at each other, “Did you see what she said, did you see what he said?” I just want to challenge



you today. You're with a loved one, you're with a relative, they've got 30 seconds to live, and they ask you this question, what do you tell them? What's the biblical response to this question?

All right, pens down. And I just want you to keep that, because I want you to compare throughout the message. Because I'll tell you what's really unfortunate about this situation is I've met a lot of sincere people, a lot of people who have been taught well who have been exposed to false teaching on the radio, through books, through TV, as to what it takes to be saved. And I don't think many of us realize the exposure that we've had to it, and the things that we think are saying the same thing, but we're gonna point out they're *not* saying the same thing. In fact, they're gonna do the very opposite of telling you to trust exclusively in what Jesus Christ did for you, they're gonna give you something else to do, they're gonna add a work, and we're gonna look at that over the course of the next four weeks.

Now where do I get the basis for this? Well go with me to Ephesians 2:8-9. I just want to show you that I believe as Paul taught truth many times, he would tell you what things *were* and what they *were not*. Because when you start to put together what things are not, many times that's when the light bulb goes on. Many times, that's when clarity comes.

I don't know if you've ever put something together before, I am NOT the most handy person in the world. But what I have learned about myself is I don't know enough about putting things together, so I cannot just read one step at a time, I have to read a couple of steps down. I remember one time I was putting together a basketball hoop, and it said, "Put these two poles together." And I reached in the box, I just grabbed the first two poles I saw, "Okay, these look like they fit." Boom, bang it together. And you had to get up on a ladder and hammer it down so they wouldn't come out again. Well then like three steps down it says, "But don't put together pieces one and two." I looked, what poles did I put together? One and two. Walmart's cool about that by the way, you just take it back and they give you a new set, even if you mess it up, so that's what I ended up doing.

But when you talk about what the gospel is and what it's not, Paul had no problem clarifying that for us. Look at Ephesians 2:8-9, you'll see his thought process. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith,*" - that's what it is - "*and that not of yourselves;*" - that's what it's not - "*it is the gift of God,*" - that's what it is - "*not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" That's what it's not. And so you see this going back and forth, and that's what we're going to do over the course of the next 4 weeks.

And so a brief introduction, you know the word "gospel" is a generic word, it just means *good news of any kind*. We could use that in our own life anytime we got good news, we could say, "*euangelion*". If you want to talk in Greek, you can use that word. But it's just good news of any kind. When the gospel writers began to articulate it, they put a "the" to identify it as unique in this application of what Jesus did. A very specific good news is what we're talking about.

Now just based on that, news by definition is something that's already happened. You don't go to the newspaper to find out what's going to happen today. You don't go to the newspaper - kids, by the way, newspapers are printed news. I know you can get them on your phone now - or news app to read about what's going to happen tomorrow. What do you read about in the news? What's already happened yesterday or before yesterday, these are accomplished facts.

And so when we talk about "the good news", if you introduced anything on your paper or in your mind that you recorded that had something about you doing something *today*, besides believe in what's already been done, you've been impacted by false cliché responses to the gospel. Just understand it's out there, it's fighting for your mind, Satan is trying to deceive and he's trying to take the very message that can save souls and detour you and destroy it so nobody can get saved. That's his goal. He wants to kill, he wants to destroy, he wants to maim, he wants to harm, and the best thing he's got are people who are sitting in church who think they're saved, who listen to the same message every week that are

false clichés here and there, and one day will slip right off the church pew into an eternity in hell. That's his goal, that's the best type of accomplishment he can acquire in this life. Deceit, deception.

And so we see the gospel means good news, this is something that's already happened. In fact, the gospel is an objective. That means it's not how you feel, "Oh, I *feel* saved." It doesn't matter how you feel. What matters is that you trust in God's provision for your salvation. It's an objective message, it's verifiable, it's historical.

That means if we could hop in a time machine, we could go back 2,000 years and we could watch Jesus die on a cross on a hill called Golgotha. And if we could watch the tomb that He was buried in, we could see the light burst forth and see Him rise from the dead. It happened, it's historical, it's verifiable.

So, when we talk about the gospel, we're talking about events that happened in a day in history. Now what you have to do to be saved, that's something different, but that is not the gospel. The gospel is about Jesus Christ, who He is and what He has done. And so we see that the gospel involves the person and work of Jesus Christ. We find this clearly shown in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. But the person Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He's fully man, He had to be able to die for your sins, but He's fully God where His death can count for everybody.

That's why when the Bible says, "whosoever will", it means whosoever will. It means whosoever will believe, the offer is for everybody. Why? Because Jesus was God, His death could count in the place of everybody. His person's important, we're not just believing in some guy named Jesus or some neighbor named Jesus down the street, it's not just this name that somebody's been given. It's this person, it's specifically Jesus Christ who lived 2,000 years ago.

And what work are we talking about? We're talking about the fact that He died for your sins and He rose again. See, only Jesus can do that work. Only Jesus has done that work. And so when we talk about the gospel we're talking about a person, we're talking about a work.

Now why the need for the gospel? Well as we've tried to communicate clearly in the book of Romans, we've got problems. You've got problems, I've got problems. Two specifically: you've got a debt you cannot pay; it's called a death penalty. And you've got an unrighteousness, you've got a righteousness issue you cannot make right.

It's like dropping one drop of poison or 50 drops of poison in a cup of water. The second one drop is in there, it's polluted, I'm not touching it. It's been corrupted. One sin can corrupt you. One sin, as James 2:10 says, is like you broke the whole law, it's that corrupt. And so we've got an issue, we've got a debt problem, we've got a righteousness issue, and this is exactly what the gospel takes care of. And this is why there's only one response to the gospel. What must you do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's it.

Now why Jesus? Because He's the one who died for you and rose again. Very specific faith in a very specific object, for a very specific purpose, and that is His finished work on the cross and His subsequent resurrection. Please understand that although we want to get the response right, we are not preaching the response. I have a lot of friends that all they want to talk about is faith alone, faith alone, faith alone. And they'll tell people, "Faith alone, faith alone, faith alone." We're preaching Christ, we're preaching the gospel, we're not just preaching the response. We're encouraging the response to what we're preaching.

But make no mistake, preaching faith alone is not preaching the gospel. Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again, that's the gospel. The response to that is faith alone in Christ alone. But we're not just preaching response, we're preaching the person and the work of Jesus Christ. Paul says in Corinthians, "*I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*" We're preaching the

gospel. The gospel is what has the power to save, Jesus Christ is who has power to save, not a response. The response has got to be clear, and that's what we're going to be spending time on.

But if you'll allow me just to make that distinction, religion says this: religion doesn't have a problem with Jesus Christ. It's got a problem with the exclusivity of Jesus Christ, that's what religion has a problem with. Religion says Jesus did 90%, you must do 10%. Some religions say Jesus did 99.9%, you must do 0.01%. All I'm saying is if that is not a hundred percent, you have a gospel of works, you're earning your way to heaven however you want to slice it. Because either it's a gift or it's not.

And that seems so simple to understand, but it is difficult to understand as we're gonna see through these false cliches. Because people have no problem saying, "It's a gift, but you gotta work for it." What? Someone's gonna have to help me understand that one day. The sky is blue, but it's gray. You're fat, but you're skinny. You're tall, but you're short. Really, it's a gift but you've gotta earn it? How does that work out? I don't understand.

The gospel says Jesus did it all. Jesus did one hundred percent. See, this is salvation by God's grace. This is not something you merit, or earn, or deserve, and even faith is not meritorious, faith is admitting in some senses I can't save myself, I'm trusting in somebody else to save me. So, it's not a work, I'm trusting in the work of another. It's totally different from every other cliche that we see biblically or out in the culture, it's faith in Jesus Christ alone.

So, what's the problem? Why are we even making a big deal of this? Most people shake their head at this, "Yeah, yeah, I got it, let's move on." What's the problem? Here's the problem: the gospel is under satanic attack. And if you don't believe that, the reason it is under attack is because it's the power of God unto salvation, it's the only way by which people can get saved.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 says, "*But even if our gospel is veiled,*" - notice this - "*it's veiled to those who are perishing,* - now notice this next phrase - "*whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*" Do we understand that the gospel is under satanic attack, that this is not just a semantic issue? It involves semantics, don't get me wrong, but it's not just semantics. It's not, "Hey, we're saying the same thing."

How do you give your heart to Christ and ask Him into your heart and tell me that's the same thing? One is going out, one is coming in. Which one is it? How do you commit your life to Christ and surrender all and trust Him for salvation? How is that saying the same thing? It's clearly not saying the same thing. And that's all I'm saying, is we want to be biblical. Where the Bible says "believe" or "trust" or "put your faith in Christ" a hundred and sixty times in the New Testament as the only prerequisite to get saved, I kind of want to put a period after that then. I'm okay with that response, I just want to leave it right there. I don't need to add anything to it, I don't need to subtract anything from it, I just want it to stop right there, and I think that's the message that God wants us to communicate as clear as He communicates it over, and over, and over again.

This is how many of the confusing cliches work today. Just like the picture of this sign on the screen, "Do not enter, enter only." What would you do if you found that on the road? I would just probably turn left or something. If I was going to somebody's house, I'm sorry, I couldn't get there. I'm confused, I don't know what to do. And yet this is what many of the gospel cliches do. And so as we think about that, I want you to be prepared to notice the contradictions, notice that they're not saying the same thing as faith.

Jesus in John 19:30 said this, "*So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!'*" Do you know I have two bad habits of collecting? You can ask Carrie - and I've gotten better at this - but I used to collect Bibles. I don't even know how many Bibles I collected, and Carrie would be like, "Why do you have this many Bibles?" and it becomes really intense when you're moving, because Bibles are

heavy, you know, you're slapping them in the boxes, you're moving them around. Why do you have so many Bibles? So, I started giving some of those away, I've got a really good outlet now in Liberia to give Bibles away. I still collect them, but I clean them out quickly too.

But the other thing that I collect is gospel tracts. I collect gospel tracts from everywhere. If I go to a funeral home, if I go to a hospital, if I go to another church, if I'm in a Christian ministry and they have tracts out I take them and go home. You know the first thing I do when I get the gospel tract? I just read the end. Because I know right then, "Do I have something in my hand that's going to be useful to me?"

I've got stacks of gospel tracts down in my office, I would love for you to come down to my office and read through some of those with me. Because there's a tract that I'm thinking of right now that as you go through and you look at the "What must I do to be saved?", there's no less than eight different ways communicated in one tract to get saved. Do not enter, enter here. We don't see it because we're so - and I say "we", our culture - religiously minded, we've heard all this religious phraseology and stuff, and we just think it's all saying the same thing, and so it doesn't even register in our thinking anymore as being false.

We think it's saying the same thing. We think that asking for forgiveness and believing in Jesus Christ is saying the same thing. But you find me one thesaurus on earth that puts "believe" and "ask" next to each other. It's not saying the same thing, and yet we're okay with that. It's not in the Bible, it's in the churches and we're okay with that. My challenge to us these next couple weeks is let's be biblical. Let's actually take the message of salvation, this good news, let's communicate that clearly, and let's communicate the response clearly, and then let's just get our hands off of everything else. Let's just let it happen and trust the Lord, that's the way He put it together, that this is enough.

When Jesus said, "It is finished!", He meant that everything had been taken care of as it relates to your two-pronged problem. How do I know that? Well, the word "it is finished" is one word in the Greek, it's "*tetelestai*", it has three significant meanings. The first meaning was used in debt collection. So, this word "*tetelestai*" was found stamped on invoices to indicate that the debt had been paid in full. That's one significance to the word.

The second significance of the word is when they would actually send out Jewish young men to find sacrifices for the temple around Passover, they had to find a male lamb without blemish, lots of requirements, and when they found that lamb they would yell out, "Tetelestai! The sacrificial lamb has been found."

And then the third significance of the word was used in commercial centers when a boss gave an employee a task to do, and he would return to his boss and say, "Tetelestai. The task that you've given me is completed." And so when Jesus yelled out His last words on the cross, "Tetelestai!", what He was in essence saying is, "The debt has been paid in full, the sacrificial Lamb has been found, and the job that You gave Me is completed."

So, there's significance in words, and if Jesus says it's done, who are we to say that it's not? If Jesus says it's finished, who are we to say that something else remains, whatever that something else might be? The question becomes "If it's finished, what's the proper response to a finished work?" And the Bible tells us clearly, trust in it. Trust in that finished work on your behalf.

I want you to notice as we go through if the gospel responses or cliches that we look at today are synonymous with faith. Do they mean the same thing? "Trust", "belief", or "rely upon", are they synonymous or are they saying something different? And I also want you to notice if these cliches take care of the penalty of sin, which is death.

Now I brought up a couple of visual aids this morning, and I'm just going to tell you what I believe has happened. Back in Romans 3 we mentioned that God is pointing His finger, remember the word that we looked at in Romans 3, that God is pointing His finger at the cross as to where His justice was fully met, and He's pointing at Jesus. Today I have a flashlight and I have a cross on this wall, which represents Jesus Christ and His finished work, and over on that wall we have a mannequin body, representing ourselves and everything we do.

I believe as we share the gospel, God wants us to keep our flashlight on Jesus Christ. Even if we give the response "believe", the natural question should be, "Believe in what? Trust in what?" And it takes us back to the gospel, and when we keep the flashlight on Jesus Christ and what He's done we're gonna recognize that everything has been done, there's nothing remaining to do. What we're gonna see is that these false cliches do the opposite of that: they take the focus off what Jesus has done and put it back onto what we must do. And we're going to see that played out in these cliches the next few weeks.

And so without further ado - actually we've got a couple of "further ados" here and then we'll get to the confusion. This is the response: what must you do to be saved? Trust in Jesus. Why Jesus? Because He's the one who died for your sins and rose again. And you know what I love about this picture? I love that big fat period right there because that's where it belongs. The wording in the picture says, "Trust in Jesus." PERIOD! And you know for these gospel cliches, you know what they do with that period? They do this "..." and you know what they bring in? A comma. And you know what else they bring in? "And". "Trust in Jesus *and...*", "Trust in Jesus, *but* you also..." whatever. "Trust in Jesus *plus...*"

That's what we're going to see in these false gospel cliches. The second the period gets erased, just run. That's not a saving message. Trust in Jesus, Him alone. Why? He said, "It's finished", He died for your sins, God accepted His work on your behalf, raised Him from the dead, God said "Amen" to what Jesus did, and you can say "Amen" by putting your faith in what Jesus did for you. Period. Big fat period.

I like this illustration from Larry Moyer. If you're ever having an opportunity to share the gospel and you're struggling to get this across, draw three circles. Put a "W" in one, put a "W+C" in one, put a "C" in one. "W" represents works, you're getting to heaven based on your works. And when you believe that, when you understand that that's how you're saved is through works, you're basically saying that Christ's work is unnecessary, because you're going to get there yourself.

See, you're given the ability to choose your savior. You can choose Jesus and you can trust in what He did for you, or you can choose another savior. Yourself, a church, your ability to do good, your smarts, your ingenuity, whatever you want to trust in, you have the ability to trust your Savior. My encouragement to you is to trust the Savior that the Bible identifies, which is Jesus and Him alone. If you think you're going to heaven based on works, you think the work of Christ was unnecessary. "He didn't have to die; I can get there on my own."

If you believe that Christ plus works gets you in, which is what we're gonna look at in these cliches, you think that Christ's work was disappointing. "He did some, but I'm gonna have to help Him. I'm gonna have to pick up the slack there. He did 99.9, I'm gonna have to pick up that 0.01%." Or you can believe that Christ did what He said He did, and that means that if you're trusting in Christ alone, you are satisfied the same way the Bible says that God is satisfied with what Jesus did. And so this, again, just another illustration to help communicate this truth.

Okay, no further ado, here we go. Confusion number one that we're going to look at this week is "Give your heart to Jesus." And you've probably heard this, maybe behind closed doors or in private areas you might admit that you've actually used this cliche. I do want to say that early in my Christian

life, I used all of these cliches. My heart was sincere, I wanted to see people get saved, people used to say that I would witness to a tree if it wasn't swinging in the wind too hard, if it was still enough, and I just had a heart's passion for people and understanding the gospel. And I would share all of these cliches until someone pointed it out to me and said, "Where's that found in the Bible?"

In fact, when we talk about giving our heart or life to God, it sounds like a pretty good thing to tell somebody, right? I mean, you're not telling them to go down to the bar and get drunk and sleep in the gutter tomorrow. In essence it sounds like a good thing. The question becomes: is it a biblical thing? Is this what somebody really has to do to be saved?

Well, what we're gonna see is that the saving message of the gospel does not involve giving something to God in return for salvation. Have you ever thought about that? Who's the giver in salvation according to the Bible? God's the giver. God's giving the gift of eternal life. It's a gift from Him, not a gift from you, so this isn't about you giving something to God, it's about you recognizing what God has given to you. It's a total reversal here as it relates to salvation.

In fact, if this is how you get saved, through some exchange, then it's no longer a free gift. You're down at the market now, bargaining. "Hey, give me that, I'll give you this. "Hey, you give me that, I'll give you this and this." We're not bargaining for God. In fact, Romans 11:6 makes it clear, you're either saved by grace or you're saved by works, they don't come together. Grace and works don't come together, they can't. It's impossible.

So, if you're gonna get saved by giving your life to Christ, you're getting saved by your works, you're getting saved based on what you are doing for Christ. What's the gospel? Something that's already happened. What's this response to? Something you've gotta do right now. Done, do. It becomes very clear. Romans 11:6, *"And if by grace, then it's no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it's no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."* If you try to mix grace and works you have to redefine the words, they don't mean what they mean anymore. And so this cliché actually gets everything backwards, do you realize that? In fact, is the gospel about you giving your life, or your heart, or anything else to God, or is the gospel about Jesus Christ giving His life for you?

Let me put it a different way. If you were to appear before God at Heaven's gate, and God said, "Why should I let you in?" and you had one answer, multiple choice, "It's because I gave my life for that Man seated at your right hand." or "Because that Man seated at your right hand gave His life for me." Which one would you pick? I'd pick B, it's that Man seated at His right hand with the nail prints in His arms and in His feet, and the spear mark in His side. It's that Man who gave His life for me, not the other way around. You see how this totally flips the gospel, this totally flips faith on its head, and it totally now makes it about what you're doing versus what Jesus has already done, and I want to rest in what Jesus has already done. That's where my confidence is going to be.

Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me"* - and then notice this next phrase - *"and gave Himself for me."* Ephesians 5:2, *"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* But again, is it Christ giving Himself for us, or is it us giving ourselves to God or giving ourselves to Christ? Clearly, it's the other way around. Our emphasis is on what Christ has done. The gospel is good news, something that's already happened, not something we must continue to do.

Confusion number two: in addition to trusting in Jesus, we add confession of sins. This is a big one because many people include this extra phrase, "Confess your sin." See, confession of sins...has anyone ever read that in the Bible? Yeah, it's in the Bible. So, it's not that this isn't a biblical truth, it's just not a truth that needs to be jammed up as a prerequisite to be saved. In fact, what we're gonna see

is when we look at confession of sins, it's a truth for somebody who's already saved, not for an unbeliever to get saved. We're gonna kind of walk through that but understand that confession of sins is not a requirement for salvation.

Now do you have to understand you're a sinner, understand your need for a savior? Well yeah, I think that's logical, because why would you trust in a Savior if you thought you were good enough and you didn't realize you were a sinner? That's not what confession means. That's not what people mean when they say you must confess your sins to be saved.

In fact, if I'm swimming in a pool and a lifeguard comes and grabs me by my neck and drags me out of the water, I'm gonna be mad. Why? Because I wasn't drowning! Dude, let me swim, what are you jacking me out of the pool for? That doesn't even make any sense. But the moment I start to swallow water, the moment I realize that I'm going under, the moment I realize I can't catch my breath, and then the lifeguard puts his arm around my neck and drags me to shore, I'd give the guy a hug. "Man, thank you for saving my life!" See, I realize the need and I quit trying to save myself.

And so this is what we're talking about as it relates to confession of sins. We're not saying that you don't have to realize you're a sinner. If you don't realize it, you're not going to put your trust in a Savior, so at some level that has to enter into your thinking, otherwise you won't trust in the saving that God's provided. But you know that you don't have to confess your sins in order to be saved? In fact, do you know that it would be impossible, *physically impossible* for you to remember every sin that you've ever committed.

In fact, let me give you a quick test: what did you have for dinner last night? You can't even remember what you had for dinner last night, let alone every sin you've ever committed. That's what you want your eternal salvation to be based on? Do you think that's what God wants your eternal salvation to be based on, whether or not you've got a good memory? Man, we're toast! As I've shared, I can't even remember to take the trash out on the appointed night. The night doesn't even change, I just can't remember! We've got problems if our salvation is based on our memory.

You know secondly, it would invite disconcerting introspection, you would never be free and clear or secure in your salvation, because you'd fear that you'd forgotten something. Did you ever sin as a two-year-old? No? Yeah, right! I mean, come look at a two-year-old in our nursery, spend a little time there and see if the little two-year-old sins. How are they gonna remember the sins that they're committing in the nursery?

But let's do some confession math, I'm gonna take it really easy on all of us. Let's just assume you sin 3 times per day, that's it. I'm giving you credit here, some of y'all a lot of credit, and myself included. So, 3 sins per day, that would be 1,095 sins per year, and then based on an 80-year lifespan, that would be 87,600 sins committed in your lifetime. Do you see how ridiculous this cliché is in order to get somebody saved? Nobody would be saved, folks. If this is how you got saved, nobody could be saved. I'd rather try to keep the law than try to remember all the sins I've committed; I'd try to get there on my good works. We've got no chance if this is how we get saved.

So where does confession fit in? Well let me just say this, individuals will be condemned to the lake of fire, not because they failed to confess all their sins, but because they didn't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the issue now. Sin has been paid for. Anybody can benefit from the payment that Jesus made, all they have to do is believe in Him. People will go to hell with their sins paid for. The one sin that will send people to hell is rejection of Jesus Christ. If they won't trust exclusively in what Jesus did, they'll go to hell. That's what John 3:18 says, because they've never believed on Him. That's what sends people to hell, not lack of confession of your sins.

So where does confession fit in? Well confession of sins is for the believer and it's not to stay saved, it's to restore fellowship with God. It's not for the unbeliever to become saved, in fact we find this in 1 John 1:9. And you're gonna see this word "fellowship" in the previous eight verses a few times. We're talking about fellowship for people who are already children of God. You don't get into God's family through behavior, you get into God's family through birth, and that's why it's secure.

Because just like you could never get out of your family, if you're born in your family, you can't go back to the hospital and say, "Man, I want a refund. My family stinks! Get me out of here, redo this thing." You can't do that, your family's your family. And just the same way, when you enter God's family through birth, you can't get out of the family. Because you didn't get in through behavior, you can't get out through behavior - bad behavior, good behavior, whatever.

So, what happens when a believer engages in bad behavior? Well tell me what happens in your family when you used to engage in bad behavior. See, I'm giving you credit, "used to". Well, I know what I did, my dad used to be about 15 or 20 pounds more of solid muscle, and I remember the belt used to come off and I used to get a lickin' when I got in trouble. And I got disciplined, but he never kicked me out of the family. He never said, "You can't sleep in your room anymore, go outside." He never dropped me off at the Greyhound bus station and said, "You are officially disowned." He might have wanted to a couple of times, I don't know. But he couldn't do that because I was part of his family.

But you know, he disciplined me, and I distinctly remember the battle, the tension in my head as a kid when I got disciplined. I would go to my room, and I was upset with my dad. After a time in my room, I'd come out and sit on his lap. There's something about discipline, there's something about acknowledging your sin that restores fellowship. And see, with our Heavenly Father, it's the same way. 1 John 1:9 says this, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Do you know that the only thing standing between you and God - if you're a believer - the only thing standing in your way of just enjoying fellowship with Him is confession of sin? What does that mean, what does "confession" mean? Well, this word "confession" translates to a couple of Greek words, "*homologeō*" or "*exhomologeō*". It's derived from two root words, "*homo*" meaning *the same thing*, and "*logeō*" meaning *to speak*.

And so when we talk about confession, we're literally saying, "to say the same thing as God." Now you understand this more than you would probably give yourself credit for. This is not the same thing as saying, "I'm sorry." Let's just put that out there, this is not saying "I'm sorry." We do that a lot in our human relationships. In fact, parents, think of a time when you corrected your kids and they said, "I'm sorry", and what's the next question that good parents follow up with? "Sorry about what? What are you sorry about?" And then we find out if they really understand. Because now we find out are they saying "sorry" because they got in trouble, and they got caught? Or are they saying "sorry" because they truly understand that what they did was wrong?

In fact, I've noticed in my own life and probably the lives of my kids, sometimes saying, "I'm sorry" is the equivalent of saying, "Shut up and get off my back." Not, "What I did was wrong." but, "Shut up and leave me alone." And you've seen it, right siblings? "You did this to her, she did this to you, say "sorry" to one another." How does that go down sometimes? I mean, they're about to slug each other when they're saying I'm sorry. So, this is not saying, "I'm sorry" that's not what confession means. Rather, just like you would with your children, "I'm sorry, Dad, because when I spoke back to you, I was showing you disrespect." that's confession. Saying the same thing about that sin that I would say. "I'm sorry when I threw that ball across the room at 90 miles an hour and broke my sister's jawbone." Whatever it is, confession is naming the sin, you're identifying the sin. And so God wants you and I to do that as believers.



“Lord, when I looked at that person, I was angry.” “Lord, when I said that to my kid, I was out of control. I was angry.” “Lord, when I responded that way to my wife, I was angry.” “Lord, when I said that thing to somebody in the Bible study, I was trying to show them up because I’m jealous of that person.” Name it! Name what’s going on. “Lord, when I made that decision, I was in total rebellion.” Name it.

And guess what the promise is? God’s not gonna be like, “Oh really? Wow. Let me think about that for a second.” The text tells us God is waiting to receive you back. Fellowship, forgiveness, continual relational forgiveness. When you’re out of fellowship with the Lord it may break your heart, but you know whose heart it’s been breaking the whole time you’ve been out of fellowship? His, because He loves you that much. He loves you that much, and all He said is once you name it, come back in on His lap, come enjoy Him.

But again, the purpose of our study today, confession is not how you get saved. This is a truth for a believer, someone that’s already been saved.



# CHAPTER 25

## What The Gospel Is NOT Part 2

### Romans

We're gonna continue our quick break from the book of Romans, and very strategically, we're gonna talk about what the gospel is not. One of the things I want to really be careful to communicate each week is I am NOT up here to criticize, but I am up here to be very critical. And I hope you understand the significance or the difference between what I'm saying.

I'm not here to criticize people that use these false gospel response cliches, as if they're bad people. I think there's a lot of well-meaning people who have slid into these cliches. But I do want to be critical for the simple reason that the Bible seems to be critical. The Bible is very exclusive when it says that Jesus is the only way. The Bible is very exclusive when it says that the gospel is *"the power of God unto salvation unto all who will believe."* And then the Bible is very exclusive in that it uses faith and belief as the only prerequisite to be saved over 160 times in the New Testament. And so I'm not here to criticize people, but I am here to be very critical in the way that we share this message.

And so today I want to do a quick review of what the gospel is. You know, as they train people in the CIA to recognize false and counterfeit bills, for much of their training, the first thing they do is they look at real dollar bills. They look at the genuine truth of what a dollar bill is supposed to look like, because then when false bills pop up they're more easily able to identify it.

As I mentioned last week, Paul was not afraid to tell us what the gospel was, but also what the gospel was not, he did that in Ephesians 2:8-9, if you recall. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works."* And so you've got this contrast back and forth, here's what it is, here's what it's not, and many times true clarity comes when you realize what something's not. Many times, it's easy to think that somebody's saying the same thing that you are until somebody else points out that they're not saying the same thing, and then you realize, "Oh, that's not saying the same thing. That's totally different." So that's what we're going to be looking at here over the course of the next couple weeks.

You know, I think by definition, one of the things we've got to understand is that the word "gospel" is a Greek word, *"euangelion"* which just means *good news*. It's a generic word, it could be good news of any type, but when the Apostles used it in the New Testament they articulated, they put a "the" on the front of it. It was a unique message of good news, and that's what we're talking about this morning.

And just like I mentioned last week, you don't go to a newspaper stand or a news app to find out what's going to happen today, or what's going to happen tomorrow. News, by definition, is something that's already happened. And so when we preach the gospel, we're not preaching something *you* must do. The gospel is not walking an aisle, the gospel is not praying a prayer - we'll look at that today. The gospel is not you doing anything, the gospel is about an already accomplished finished work that happened 2,000 years ago on a hill called Golgotha. That is news, and it's newsworthy, because that's where the God of this universe dealt with the sins of mankind, and it's something to celebrate.

And so when we look at the gospel, we've got to understand that the gospel itself is an objective, verifiable, historical message based on facts that happened in human history, on a day in human history. That means if there was a time machine ever invented, we could go back to the day that Jesus died on

the cross, we could stick around for three days, and we could watch Him rise again from the dead. It's verifiable, historical, objective facts, that's the gospel.

*You* are not in the gospel; the gospel is about Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15 (which we read earlier today), it's all about what Christ did, who Christ is, and that's the gospel. That's the good news. You don't enter into that, that's a distinct event that happened in human history, an objective event. This gospel centers around the person and work of Jesus Christ. The gospel is about Jesus Christ, not what goes on in your little heart, not what goes on in your thinking.

The gospel is an event that happened 2,000 years ago on a day in history. The person, Jesus, was fully God and fully man. His work, He died for our sins and rose again. That's the gospel, that's the good news, that Jesus Christ the Son of God died for your sins, and He rose again on the third day. That's it. That's the good news of the gospel, that's what has power to save people from their sins. That's why we want to be clear on that, we don't want to introduce ourselves into that message, we don't want to introduce our feelings into that message, we want to keep it focused on Jesus. Because He truly accomplished that day what none of you could accomplish for yourself, and that's what we rejoice in when we talk about the gospel.

Why do you need the gospel? Why is it good news? I shared last week that if I'm swimming in a swimming pool and a lifeguard swims over and grabs me around the neck and drags me out of the pool, he and I are probably gonna be fighting. Like dude, I'm trying to swim, why are you dragging me out of the pool? And it's because he saw something as a lifeguard, I was drowning or maybe there was a shark coming, and until he gives me the concept that there's bad news I don't appreciate being saved. In fact, I view it as an inconvenience.

Why do I need Jesus? For those that don't understand that there's a two-fold problem that we have, "I don't need Jesus, I can get to heaven on my own. I'll just do a little bit more good works than my bad. Me and God, the guy upstairs, we'll work it out when I get there. It's gonna be okay, because I help people across the street, I try not to do bad things." And we start to view life this way.

The problem is the Bible says we've got a problem and we need a Savior. Our problem is two-fold, we've got a debt we cannot pay, it's a death penalty, the wages of sin is death. Now you can pay for it, but it's an eternal penalty, it's an eternal separation from God in a place called the lake of fire. So if you choose to pay that debt you can pay it off for eternity, but it's kind of like a mortgage, you never get it paid off, it seems. But in this case, it never gets paid off. And so you and I have a debt that we cannot pay.

And then our second issue, which really is brought out in the book of Romans, especially where we've been in the first five chapters, is you've got a righteousness issue, you're not good enough to go to heaven. Nobody's good enough to go to heaven, nobody has the righteousness needed because the righteousness needed to get to heaven has to be equal to God's righteousness.

So, we all have this problem, the gospel provides the solution to both of those problems, because Christ died the death that you deserve, He died in your place. And not only that, but God says if you put your faith in Christ, He will declare you righteous because Jesus becomes your righteousness. God takes care of all of your issues as it relates to sin and righteousness through the gospel. This is why we've got to get it clear; this is why we've got to understand what the gospel is.

And more importantly, or secondarily in importance, we've got to understand what the response is. If Jesus did it all there's only one acceptable response, and that's to believe on Him, that's to trust that what Jesus did is enough. That's not by adding something else, it's not Jesus *plus* something else, it's not Jesus *and* something else, it's Jesus PERIOD. That's it. Jesus said it's finished; I believe that He

finished it. I believe that He died for me and rose again. That's it, it's a simple message that gets very much confused.

In fact, this is many times where the wheels fall off the program. Because this is what we're looking at the next few weeks, is how people have tried to take this simple message of faith in Christ alone and tried to add something to it, tried to distract. And what it does is, like last week, I had a cross up here with "done" written on it, and I shone a flashlight on it and said God wants to keep the flashlight on the cross. I also had a mannequin up here that said "do", and how all of these responses try to take the focus off of what Christ has done and put it on what man must still do. And once you do that, you don't have a gospel.

Because religion will tell you all sorts of things to do. Just go talk to a religious person, and I just challenge you, take a notebook and write it down. A 70-page notebook won't even be enough to fill it up with everything you must do according to the world's religion. Religion doesn't necessarily have a problem with Jesus Christ, religion has a problem with Jesus Christ *exclusively*. That's where the problem comes in. They don't mind adding something else to Jesus, they don't mind taking Jesus along for the ride, they don't mind that at all. But the moment that you say Jesus did less than 100%, that you have to do anything - up on the screen we've got Jesus did 90% and you must do 10% - I don't care if it's Jesus did 99.9% and you have to do 0.01%, you have a gospel of works, you are earning your way to heaven, and that is anti-biblical.

And what we're gonna see is that all of these cliches that we think pass for the same as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ don't say that. They actually add something that you must do, and we'll look at some of that this morning. See, God says in His word that Jesus did 100%, now the question is are you persuaded of that yourself? Are you convinced that when Jesus said, "It is finished" that He took care of it all for you? If you are, you'll put your trust in Him and what He did for you. That's salvation by God's grace.

See, if God gave you what you deserved, you and I would deserve hell. But since God has chosen to save us based on His grace, He can give us something we don't deserve - unmerited favor. You will never earn it on your best day, and you will never not deserve it on your worst day, because you don't deserve it at all, that's the whole point. And that's why God can save us based on His grace, because of what Jesus did for us.

We started to look last week about some confusion. It's like this sign up here on the screen, "Do not follow, but keep left." How do you navigate that? Or this one, "Do not enter, entrance only." And we started to see that last week, especially with the first cliche. Did Christ give His life for me, or do I give my life for Christ? How many times have we heard that as the way to get saved? You've got to give your life to Christ, you've got to give your heart to Christ, and the question is, "Wait a minute, did you give your life to Christ, or did Christ give His life for you?" What does the gospel say? Christ gave His life for me.

It can't be "Don't enter and enter." It can't be "It's a free gift but you've got to do something to earn it." It can't be the conflict that we see. Or like this sign, "Do not read under penalty of law." Man, you just broke the law right here in church this morning by reading that sign. I have no idea where that sign is from, but that's interesting. Or what about this one? This sign on the screen says, "No left turn, no right turn, you can't go forward or backwards." That just makes me want to crawl up in my bed in a fetal position and not move. I mean, you can't go left, you can't go right, you can't go back, you can't go forward.

And what you're gonna find - all jokes aside because this is so serious - is you're gonna find biblical tracts that give you eight different ways to be saved, and it's "Don't make a left, don't make a

right, make a right, make a left.” And for any logical person that hadn't been exposed to any religiosity or Christian cliches, they're gonna say, “What in the world was this person smoking when they wrote this tract? What were they on, they were under the influence of something. Because it can't be, “Don't go left, don't go right, but then go right, and then go left” it can't be that!” And yet you look at our Christian gospel tracts and that's exactly what it says. It's insane!

And so we want to just emphasize, and point out the fact, and bring it to your attention. What you do with it is your decision, we just want to emphasize and bring to your attention that this is the most important message in the world. Because this is the only message that impacts people's eternal destinies. I'm not just talking about giving somebody a meal so that they're not hungry today. I'm not talking about giving somebody a place to live for two weeks so that they're not exposed to the rain. I'm talking about their eternal destiny. Why wouldn't we take the time to analyze if what we're sharing is biblical? Why would we blow this off? Why would we not consider these things? Because you're gonna see what people do, and what I have done in the past, is use all these cliches. I used them in my own personal evangelism, it's probably why I feel so passionate about being clear, because I felt like I've misled people over the years, and I want to be precise with this message.

Last week we looked at confusion number one, which I mentioned earlier, about giving your heart or your life to God. And again, if you were to appear before God at the pearly gates and He says, “Why should I let you in?” If you had two choices, would you say, “I gave my heart or my life to Christ.” or “He gave His life for me.”? Which one are you going with? I'm going with letter B. on that one for sure. I'm trusting in what Christ did for me, not what I did for Christ, because I know where I fail. I see it easily every day when I wake up and look in the mirror, it's pretty simple.

And then confusion number two we looked at last week, confessing your sins. We did the math, if you sin 3 times a day over the course of your life - only 3 times, I'm giving you a lot of credit - but 3 times a day over the course of your life, you've got over 80,000 sins to confess. Nobody could be saved, you can't even remember what you had for dinner last night, right? This is not how you get saved. We learned that confession of sins is actually for the believer to be restored to fellowship with the Lord, not to gain entrance into the family. So, when we look at confession of sins, it's not that that phrase is not biblical, it is, it's just a truth for the believer, one who's already a member of the family of God. We looked at that in 1 John 1:9.

And so confusion abounds in these cliches. So let's look at another few today. I mentioned last week, one must believe in Jesus, PERIOD! This is where it should stop, at this period, but unfortunately in the sharing of the gospel and the sharing of the responses to the gospel, the period gets crossed out and we start to add commas. And once you start to see a comma, it's Jesus plus something, and although Jesus is included, you just lost the message, the wheels just fell off the train.

And so we want to keep our period there, but one of the things that we're looking at this week is where people add commas. And confusion number three you'll hear a lot. In fact, this is one of the things that I run into a lot just as I talk individually to people and ask how they got saved. “Okay, you're saved, you're a Christian. How'd you get saved?” And they'll say, and I don't know if you guys have ever heard this, “I prayed the prayer.” Has anybody ever heard that? “I prayed the prayer. I prayed the sinner's prayer.” Or “When someone asks, “What must I do to be saved?”, what do you do?” “Well I lead them in the sinner's prayer.” And that's kind of a common response.

A couple of questions for you. Where is the sinner's prayer found in the Bible? Anybody have a chapter or verse? Does the Bible speak of a sinner's prayer in order to be saved? Just a couple of questions to consider. On top of that, is there any instance in the Bible, some example that we could point to in the book of Acts where somebody led another person in a prayer to get saved? The answer

to both questions is no, and that might surprise you. It's something that we've come to accept in our culture.

In fact, when I look at “the sinner's prayer” do you know that I have never found two sinner's prayers that are exactly alike? If your eternal salvation was based on you praying *the* - not *a* sinner's prayer, *the* - sinner's prayer and you can't even find two that agree, wouldn't that concern you? In fact, you know what I typically ask people who have prayed the sinner's prayer, which is telling as to this response to the gospel? “How many times have you prayed the sinner's prayer?” And it's never just once. You know why? Because praying a prayer doesn't give you any security. Trusting in a Savior who died for my sins and rose again, and God accepted His sacrifice on my behalf, that gives me security. I can trust in that, I can do that one time, because I believe what Jesus did was enough.

But praying this prayer does not give security. Let me just give you a couple of examples. I've got about eleven here on this sheet that I've collected, and I want you to listen to all the different things that are communicated here.

“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner and I ask for your forgiveness” - which we're about to talk about, confusion number four is asking for forgiveness - “I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead.” - Great! - “I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life, I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your name, amen.”

Another sinner's prayer: “Dear Father, I know that I'm a sinner and need forgiveness. I believe that Jesus died for my sin. I am willing to turn from sin. I now invite Jesus Christ to come into my heart and life as my personal Savior.” - That's going to be another confusion we look at, is asking Jesus into your heart and why you should never do it - “I'm willing, by God's grace, to follow and obey Christ as the Lord of my life.”

Sinner's prayer number three, “Dear God, I'm sorry for all the bad things that I've done. I do believe that Jesus died for me, so I can learn to please You with my life now and live with You in heaven forever someday. I want You to forgive my sins and help me to live in the way that You want me to. I want Jesus to be my best friend forever.”

The point is this: if there's a strategic sinner's prayer, where is it? Let's get it and let's start printing it out, because there's a lot of people putting out stuff that's not true. And the question becomes, do you get saved when you believe on the finished work of Christ, or do you get saved when you believe on the finished work of Christ *and* utter a prayer? See, that's what it comes down to, it's either done or there's still something to do. And in this case, prayer - even though it sounds spiritual - is not the answer. Belief is because you're resting in the finished work of Christ.

You know, American Tract Society is the largest tract publisher in the world. They were founded in 1825, they print more tracts than anybody in the world. Do you know that prior to the 20th century none of their tracts contain a sinner's prayer? This has kind of been a new development, largely based on the tent meetings that happened in the 18th and 19th centuries where they would bring people down to the front, and then they started tacking that in as a way to close the deal.

When you start talking about people in evangelism situations “closing the deal”, this kind of makes me cringe. And so they feel like closing the deal, getting somebody saved requires them to “repeat after me, bow your heads, close your eyes, repeat this exact wording,” as if God's a genie in the bottle and as long as they say the right things, they're gonna get eternal life. That's not it at all, and so it's interesting to see that this is kind of a new development.

Now there are a couple of things in the Bible that I think we should look at, because someone's saying, “What about this? What about that?” Let's look at a couple that I'm aware of, and that's this first one. What about the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18? Join me there and we'll look at that

parable really briefly. Because someone might say, “Well isn't this the sinner's prayer, what the tax collector does here?”

And so in Luke 18, starting in verse 9 - which by the way, verse 9 is key to understanding the entire parable. Because look at what verse 9's emphasis is on. He says, “*Also He spoke this parable to some who*” - did what? - “*trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.*” So, what's the point of this parable? Well Jesus is going to give us two examples, one person who trusts in himself for righteousness, and one person who trusts in God for righteousness. That's the point of the parable, not that he prayed to get saved.

But let's read the parable, verse 10, “*Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,*” - I love that, self-righteous people typically aren't even praying to God, they're praying for the benefit of others around them to hear how spiritual they are and how righteous they are - ‘*God, I thank You that I'm not like other men - extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.*’ *And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*”

And so this tax collector didn't get saved by praying the prayer, he exhibited the fact that he was trusting in God for righteousness through his prayer. He wasn't depending upon himself, he wasn't saying, “I thank you I'm better than these, I thank you I do this,” he realized that in order to have righteousness, he needed God's mercy. And so he was already saved, if you will, or already righteous through faith when he uttered that prayer. And so that's one example.

Another one that comes up a lot is in Romans 10:13 if you want to join me there. We'll spend a little bit more time in Romans 10 today. But Romans 10:13 does not teach that you must pray to be saved, although at first glance I can see why it's used. Romans 10:13 says, “*For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*” Seems pretty clear, that seems like a strong, airtight argument. The problem is that Romans 10:13 has a context. Romans 10:13 is not an isolated verse that we could just yank and take at an isolated face value, because it's within a context, it's within a passage.

And so as you read around Romans 10:13, what you're going to notice is that verse 14 continues to build off of this. So, let's read 13 and then let's continue on to verses 14 and 15. “*For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?*”

And so we notice the order here. Notice the order coming in from verse 14: one sent, one preaches, one hears, one believes, and then one calls upon the name of the Lord. And so calling upon the name of the Lord in verse 13 is done by a believer, somebody who's already saved, not as a prerequisite or a method to get saved. You see the order there in verse 14 and 15 as we just work our way back.

So, what is verse 13 talking about? Well remember this, that when we look in the Bible and we look at the term “saved” you always have to determine the context. This is so important with the word “salvation”, it's the Greek word “*σωζω*”. Anytime you see it, you've got to say, “Saved from what?” Because you go to the gospels and Peter is saved from drowning, not saved from eternity in hell as it's used. And so you've got to go to the context to see what you're saved from.

What we're trained to think is when we see “salvation” and “saved”, we automatically think we're being saved from hell. That's how we've been taught many times, or that's how we just naturally read the Bible, that's what we see. But in this case, I don't believe this is talking about salvation from



hell. Why? Because he's talking about a believer, somebody who's already trusted in Christ, somebody who's already saved. So, what does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord, or what does it mean to be saved?

Well, I think there's two possibilities here: deliverance from sin's power in the daily life of the believer, or physical deliverance of some kind. When believers get into trouble in life - has anybody ever gotten into trouble in life or had a trial that maybe you've called out to the Lord to deliver you from? - that's what I think it's talking about here. In fact, when you go back to where this verse is quoted from in Joel, that's exactly what it's talking about, help during the time of the tribulation. And so we're talking about either a physical deliverance here or maybe a second tense deliverance from sin's power, but it is definitely not Paul giving the method by which to be saved.

How do I know that? Well jump back up into Romans 10:4 he says, *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."* He continues his message that he's pounded into our thinking through the first five chapters of Romans, that you're saved when you put your faith in Jesus and His finished work for you.

Confusion number four, this is a big one in our day, and it's simply this: that in order to get saved, you have to ask for forgiveness, that's what you'll hear a lot. So, here's a question just to start this confusion, how does one receive forgiveness of sins? I'm gonna give you two options here, does somebody receive forgiveness by asking God for forgiveness, or is it simply a benefit that you receive when you put your faith in Jesus Christ? Which one's biblical?

In fact, do you know that you cannot even find the phrase "ask for forgiveness" in the Bible? Now there's some concepts in the Old Testament, I would grant you that, that seems to imply that especially as it relates to the Lord's Prayer, but in terms of teaching New Testament believers that this phrase "ask for forgiveness" is not in the Bible, it's not even for believers to restore fellowship with God. Because how do we restore fellowship with God as a believer? Is it by asking for forgiveness, or is it through confession of sin, naming sin the way God would name it? That's 1 John 1:9. It's not to ask for forgiveness, and let's break this down a little bit further just to kind of hone in on what this is saying.

Do you know that "asking" and "believing" are not synonyms? I mean, in any other setting this would be a totally foolish comment, because people would just roll their eyes and say, "Well of course it's not!" But you know in church you have to stop and think about that a little bit, don't you? Because this is some of the confusion that's infiltrated the gospel. You will never find "asking" and "believing" in a thesaurus next to each other, guaranteed. They don't mean the same thing.

And how do I know that or what am I talking about specifically? Well, you know that when you ask someone for something, do you know that there's implied doubt? In other words, that person could say "yes" or that person could say "no". There's implied doubt just by definition of asking.

I'll give you an example: teenagers, if you haven't already, one day you're gonna ask mom and dad for the car on Friday night to go out with your friends. Now you know when you ask that question, you better grease the skids a little bit, you better butter up Mom and Dad a little bit. "Mom, wow! Have you been working out? You look like you've lost weight." "Wow, Dad! I mean, I cannot believe you're in your 50's, you still look like you're 30! You're vigorous!" And Dad's like, "Yeah, I know what you mean!" and Mom's like, "What are you talking about?"

And so you've got to butter the skids a little bit, you've got to kind of pump them up before you ask for the car. And why do we do that? Why did we do it when we were teenagers, and why do teenagers still do it? Because the answer is not guaranteed. Yes or no, there's doubt there, you don't know how it's going to turn out, so you're asking. What about you employees that have asked your boss for a raise?

Not sure how that's gonna go, they're either gonna say yes or no, there's an implied doubt when you ask.

Now here's the contrast: biblical faith implies that the work has already been done. You're trusting in a finished work to save you to provide forgiveness. Go back to the example now. What if Mom and Dad came to you, teenager, and I know this sounds like a far-fetched story, but let's just say they said, "You know what, you have been *great* in school. I mean, you have done everything I've asked. What I want to do for you this weekend is give you the car on Friday night so you can go out with your friends. And on top of that," - let's just make the story really good - "I want to give you \$100 you can spend any way you want to. You're like, "Wow! What a parent!" Right?

But now put this in perspective, what must that teenager do in order to benefit from taking that car out? They take the key, they receive the hundred dollars, put it in their wallet, and then they leave the room before Mom and Dad change their mind, right? Because this is getting too good to be true! And so they take the key, they take the car out on Friday night and they go.

But what if this conversation went down on a Wednesday morning, and what if that teenager later that day said, "Hey mom, can I get the car Friday night to go out with my friends? Please, please, please?" Then Mom says, "Didn't we just have this conversation, didn't I just tell you that you could have it to go out with your friends?" "Oh yeah, you did tell me that. Okay, good!" And then Thursday morning the teenager wakes up, "Mom, please, can I have the car this weekend? I really need it Friday night." Eventually the parent is gonna say, "What is *wrong* with you child? Are you crazy? Are you psycho? Are you losing your mind?" Why? Because the parents have already told her or him, "You can have the car."

And see, in the case of biblical salvation and forgiveness of sins, the second you start to ask God for forgiveness, you're expressing doubt. You're expressing whatever the opposite of faith is, which is doubt, because now you're implying that the answer is in doubt, and God has told you by raising Christ from the dead the answer is no longer in doubt. You have forgiveness of sins offered to you as a free gift, the question now becomes will you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone? Not whether or not you'll ask for forgiveness.

By the way, the people that typically think that they get saved by asking for forgiveness, guess how many times they typically ask for forgiveness of their sins? Way more than once. And I've sat across from a number of people who have told me that the way they're going to get saved is they hope that the moment before they die, they're going to be able to ask for forgiveness. And see, they're trusting in their ability to ask for forgiveness, they're not trusting in the finished work of the Savior. That's the danger of this confusion. Because asking God for forgiveness implies, again, some level of doubt. It's really a subtle form of unbelief. It's not faith, it's the exact opposite of faith.

And just to be clear, you receive one-time, positional forgiveness of sins as an unbeliever when you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 10:43. You receive continual, what I'll call "fellowship forgiveness of sins" as a Christian when you confess your sins. Neither of these tell you to ask for forgiveness. There's a very specific response as an unbeliever, you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to receive forgiveness of sins, one time, your debt's totally cleared. But as a relational aspect, a fellowship aspect, we're told as believers to confess our sins.

Remember, confession is simply this: agreeing with God, naming our sins. And guess what? Your forgiveness as a believer is not in doubt. Because 1 John 1:9 goes on to say, "God is faithful and just." How is He just? Well, He executed the penalty of your sins on the Lord Jesus Christ. He remained just in doing so, that's why He's able to restore you back to fellowship and family. But it's not by asking for it, it's by confessing your sins, naming your sins. "God, when I did that, I was angry." "God, when

I looked at that person, I was jealous.” Whatever the sin is, you name it, and immediately God restores you back to fellowship. So again, it's not through asking. This forgiveness is a benefit of believing, not a result of asking.

And then finally we come to our final conclusion that we're going to cover today, and that's this concept that you hear a lot where you've got to make a public profession of faith. And what typically people mean by that is you've got to make a verbal public profession; you've got to say something in front of somebody for this salvation to kind of secure itself into your life.

Here's the problem, this error implies that in order for you to be saved, you've got to make this verbal public profession of faith, and if this was true, then Christ's work was not enough, there was something left for you to do to secure your salvation. You would have to add *your work*, if you will, a public confession to Christ's work of dying for your sins in order to complete your salvation.

You would see that when Jesus said, “It is finished” He must have run out of breath there, because what He really meant was, “It is finished except for your public profession.” But He doesn't say that, right? I mean He says, “It's finished.” That's what Jesus said. Jesus was comfortable with the satisfactory work that He had just performed, and you know God accepted it because He raised Him from the dead. And so we can be confident that when Jesus said, “It is finished” it's finished.

So, we're not adding a public confession to our salvation. Now public profession, it's interesting because many of these phrases that get jammed up as prerequisites to get saved, many of them are biblical phrases, they're just being jammed up into a place where they don't make sense. They're put in a position that they don't belong in. And so we talk about public profession, it is true, and we see this from 2 Timothy 2:11-12, that public profession of faith in Christ will be rewarded in eternity. But it's a reward, it's not how you earn your way to heaven. You're in heaven, you're saved, and then you'll have a reward based on whether or not you publicly confess Christ.

Where do we see that? Well 2 Timothy 2:11-13, it says, “*This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.*” - By the way, all these “ifs” here are first-class conditions, which just means in the Greek it's assuming that it's true for argument's sake. And so you could say, “If we died with Him, and we did, we shall also live with Him.” - “*If we endure,*” - and let's assume that we will - “*we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him,*” - and we will. If you think that on your daily basis you would never deny Christ, I've got three words for you: cocka-doodle-doo. Do you remember the story of Peter? That's exactly what Peter thought. “I'll never deny you. I don't care if someone's got a sword, I don't care, I'll never deny you!” And Jesus is like, “Whoa, pipe down, My man. You're getting ready to deny Me and you don't even realize it.” Every time you sin you deny Jesus Christ.

“*If we deny Him,*” - and we will - “*He also will deny us.*” - Deny us what? Entrance into heaven? Well, how does that fit with the next verse? “*If we are faithless,*” - and we will be, every time you sin, you're not walking by faith - “*He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*” Do you know that for you to lose your salvation, God would have to deny Himself? God would have to break His word.

John 3:16 says you'll never perish, God would have to lie about that. “Okay, you sin too much, Big John, I'm gonna let you perish.” And then He says you have eternal life. The moment you believe, the death sentence is passed from you, you've passed from death to life. And so the question of a verbal public profession, although biblical, it's not what's required to be saved, but it is required to obtain or gain reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. That's a whole other issue.

But we're talking about how does one get forgiveness of sins, how does one get justified? How does one get saved from an eternity in hell? It's not through verbal public profession. If denial or lack of public profession is required for salvation, then the Apostle Peter could not be saved based on that

definition, because he did deny Christ. He didn't make a public profession of faith in Christ. In fact, he did so at the threat of some little girl, that's how afraid he was that night.

Now go with me to Romans 10:9-10 and we'll kind of close out here today, let's spend a little time going through this passage. Because this is really, I believe, the proof text for this. Many people will go to Romans 10:9-10 for salvation. In fact, you'll find Romans 10:9-10 at the end of many gospel tracts as to what it takes to be saved. I love the truth of the word of God, I have no problems with Romans 10:9-10, but I would love to use a verse that's even more clear.

It takes some interpretation here because Paul is quoting an Old Testament passage, and so anyways that's neither here nor there, but let's just look at the context of Romans. Understand that the context of Romans is really simple. When we get to Romans 9:10-11, you've got Paul really describing what's going on with the nation of Israel. And I believe, and I'll try to make this point when we get there, that Romans 9 is God describing His dealings with Israel in the past. How did He choose them as a nation? There's a past component in His dealings with the nation of Israel.

Chapter 10 is God's present dealings with the nation of Israel, and chapter 11 is God's future dealings with the nation of Israel. That's kind of just a real brief summary of that. Now is Paul trying to tell us how to get saved in Romans chapter 10? Well, he's just described that in the first five chapters of the book of Romans. And so as we look at chapter 10, understand that it's got a very Jewish context to it, related to the nation of Israel in our present day. How do I know that? Well go to verse 1, let's just kind of read and ramp up on this context.

*“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*

Now Paul is just repeating what he's communicated in Romans 5, that to be justified by God is apart from the law, is apart from doing anything. It's all through faith in Jesus Christ, because Jesus is the one who died for your sins and rose again. And so he's making this argument, and then in verse 5 he says this, *“For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’”*

Now what we're going to see in these next couple of verses is that Paul is going to bring in a quote from Deuteronomy 30. If you want to make your way there, hold a finger in Romans 10, and put a finger in Deuteronomy 30, because we're gonna look at that closely here. Paul is going to quote Deuteronomy 30:12-14, but what we're gonna see is that he strategically changes some wording, I believe under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to make his point, to contrast works righteousness with faith righteousness. But when we get down into verses 9-10, he's gonna carry over some wording from Deuteronomy 30, so let's just kind of see how this plays out.

Deuteronomy 30, as we'll see, is talking about the commandment of the law. And as he mentioned in Romans 10:5, the commandment of law worked like this: if you're gonna get saved or righteous by the law, you better keep it perfectly. That was the message of the law. The message of the law was not designed to give somebody confidence in their ability to get to heaven, but rather to cast doubt on their ability to show them that they're a sinner. Romans 3, it was to expose us all as sinners, to show us that, to shut our mouths from justifying ourselves. That's the purpose of the law, is to show us we're sinners, not to give us a standard by which we need to get to heaven.

Let's read Deuteronomy 30:12-14 and then we'll come back to Romans 10. Verse 11 in Deuteronomy 30 let's start there. *“For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we*

*may bear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may bear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."*

Let's go to Roman's 10 now in verse 6. *"But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" - and then notice Paul's comment here as he's quoting Deuteronomy 30 - "(that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?" " - and then notice Paul's comment - "(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" - and I want you to notice how Paul changes this here as his comment - "(that is, the word of faith which we preach)."*

What was the message of Moses? "You must do it and do it perfectly. And it's right there for you that God's law has been revealed to you." You know, Deuteronomy is the second giving of the law. They're getting ready to go into the promised land, he's saying, "Hey, it's not too hard to understand what God's will is. Do it all perfectly." And the nation of Israel at the time said, "Yeah, we can do that." They didn't look at their own example of failing to do that.

And now Paul is saying to the Jewish nation, "This is what you thought, but this is what it is. It's not too hard for you to get to heaven, simply put your faith in Christ. In fact, the law was never able to get you to heaven, the righteousness that you're trying to establish on your own is through keeping the law," and what Paul is coming back and saying is, "No, it's right near. You can be saved today; you simply have to believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ."

And then he goes on in verse 9 and says, *"that if you confess with your mouth"* - notice the carry-over from Deuteronomy 30 "with your mouth" - *"the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart"* - notice that carry over, the word "heart" - *"that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* And so we see that Paul uses these words, he carries over "heart", he carries over "mouth", why? Because I believe he's quoting from Deuteronomy 30, he's building off of this argument that you don't get saved by law. And so he continues to build off of this as he ties it into Deuteronomy 30, building on this with some minor modifications.

And so as Deuteronomy 30 was focused on the law and what one must do, Paul is focused on the person and work of Christ, the gospel and what one must believe. He makes that shift clearly here. And so to go back and say Romans 10:9-10 is teaching that you've got to verbally confess something to get saved would put us right back under law, would put us right back under doing something. And that's the whole point of this passage is to remove the Jewish thinking from that concept.

In fact, it's helpful to note too that the Greek word *"kurios"* translated "Lord" can be translated "Lord", "master", "owner", or "sir". It's a title of respect, but what's even more significant is when this word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it's actually used of the covenant keeping God of Israel. It's a term in the Greek Old Testament that would trigger a Jewish mind to say, "That's God. Deity."

And so notice that Romans 10:9 doesn't tell us to confess our sins to be saved, but verse 9 says, *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus"* - that Jesus is God is what it's saying. That you agree that Jesus is God, that He is who He says He is. Remember, the gospel is not only the work of Christ, but also the person of Christ. Do you believe that Jesus is God? Do you agree with God the Father on the fact that Jesus is also divine, that He's a member of this triune God, He's God the Son, do you believe that? And that's what they were to confess as it relates to Jesus, that Jesus is God or deity.

By the way, if Jesus was God, then He could rise from the dead. And see, these were the two issues that were tripping up Jewish believers. One, they didn't believe Jesus was God. In fact, every time Jesus made a comment about being the son of God, or "before Abraham was I AM", He was using these "I AM" statements, they wanted to pick up stones and kill Him because they didn't believe He

was God. They didn't believe that, and they also didn't believe that He rose from the dead. They began to circulate stories that He did not indeed rise from the dead, that His disciples stole Him, etc. etc.

But you know, if one of those dominoes fell, then the other one would naturally fall. Because if they believed Jesus was God, He could have risen from the dead. And if He rose from the dead, He had to be God. And so you see those were the two issues for the Jewish mind, this was their, if you want to call it, their two main stumbling blocks, and I believe this is what Paul is describing here in this passage.

And then finally, if you look at the order, I believe Paul brings out the order here in verse 10. Verse 9 he says, *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”* So why does he go in the order of mouth and heart here? I think he's building off Deuteronomy 30. But notice how he flips it in verse 10. *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* So how is one made righteous? Belief. Belief in Jesus Christ, it's an internal response. And if you believe in Jesus Christ, then you should have no problem confessing Him as God, because you've already believed that in your heart. So, confession is just a response of somebody who has already believed.

# CHAPTER 26

## What The Gospel Is NOT Part 3

### Romans

We have covered a large section in the Book of Romans, and this section covers a big theological term called “justification”. The official theological definition of justification is “declaring someone righteous.” Simply put, it means something like what we sang about this morning, Jesus is a friend of sinners. Jesus does not allow good people to go to heaven, contrary to what the culture dictates, to what every world religion teaches you, that you've got to be a good little boy or a good little girl, the Bible is honest with you and says you're *not* good. The Bible says you've got a problem. And not only that, you've got a holy and just God that's determined the penalty: the penalty is death. And not only that, but you need a righteousness equal to God to get to heaven.

Here's the good news: Romans in the first five chapters through verse 11 tells us what the solution is. God doesn't expect you to come up with the solution, God has come up with a solution. He sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross in your place for your sins, and then God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf by raising Him from the dead.

What's left to do with the finished work? Well, God says if you put your faith in Jesus and what He did for you, you can go to heaven. Simple as that. Sins are forgiven, it's a free gift, salvation is indeed by grace. It's something you'll never earn, never merit, and in fact he encourages us in Romans 4 to stop working. Stop trying and start trusting in God's provision.

So that's what we've looked at in the book of Romans. And I thought it would be good to break out, because many people shake their heads in agreement when they hear that message, but when we start to challenge what the gospel is not, that's when the hairs on the back of our necks stand up, because now we're bucking up against cultural Christianity. And see, cultural Christianity many times changes this message of the gospel, this finality of what Jesus Christ has done. When He said, “It is finished”, He meant it's completely done.

And yet we have this issue in cultural Christianity where we want to try to add one more thing that we have to do to earn salvation. And it could be something simple as we've looked at, like praying a prayer, walking an aisle, and all the other church-ianity type things that we hear in our day. And know that the Bible is very clear: Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. The moment that one puts their faith in the finished work of Christ, they're saved. They passed from death to life, there's nothing left to be done. It truly is a religion of “done”, not “do.” Jesus did it all.

So that's what we've looked at, but why are we making such a big deal about what the gospel is not? If you'll just really quickly join me in Colossians 2:6, I want to show you one reason why I'm spending so much time on this - we're going to spend one more week on this and then we're going to get back to the expository teaching in the book of Romans, we'll start working verse by verse through the book again - but this is why I think it's so important, and let me just kind of preface it with this, Colossians 2:6 is the verse we're gonna read.

Here's the issue: just like building a house, just like building a building, if your foundation is shaky, if it's got cracks in it, if there's a misunderstanding of exactly how you do that, it's not a firm foundation. If we had a builder here and you showed up on site to watch him and he said, “Man, was that three bags of concrete or four? Was that 1/8-inch rebar or 3/4 inch rebar? Whatever. What do you have? Just throw it in there.” We'd be like, “Whoa! Wait, Nelly!” Because we're about to put something

on top of that foundation. We're not just laying concrete down just to lay concrete down; we actually want to do something with it.

And see, I believe that if you're unclear in this area of justification - meaning God declaring you righteous - this area of salvation from the penalty of sin, if there's lack of clarity there, it's going to impact your spiritual life, it's going to slow you down in your spiritual growth. What do I base that on? Look at Colossians 2:6: *"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."* See, if you don't understand how you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, or you're confused in that area, and you think you're giving your heart to Christ, or asking Christ into your heart, or you're praying a prayer, you're walking an aisle, raising your hand, doing 20 jumping jacks, whatever it is that people tell you you must do to be saved, that's going to creep into your Christian life. And then you're gonna think your Christian life is about doing this and stop doing that, and what we're going to find in Romans 6 is that's not the answer to the Christian life. That's not the answer to spirituality. That's not the answer to spiritual growth.

And so if we're not clear on the front end, how in the world can we build on top of it? That's why we're taking a little bit more time on this. Bear with me, we will move into sanctification in a couple weeks, and I know there's gonna be a "Glory, hallelujah!" on that, and I'm gonna say, "Glory, hallelujah!" too, because I'm looking forward to it. But we've got to get the foundation right.

And so we're gonna continue in that message today by looking at what the gospel is not. As a quick review - we've looked at this a lot - but just remember the gospel itself is an objective, historical, verifiable message that happened on a day in history 2,000 years ago. The gospel is not about you. We read in 1 Corinthians 15 the gospel is the good news about what the Son of God did 2,000 years ago, on a day in human history, on a hill called Golgotha, when He died for your sins and rose again. That's the gospel, that's the good news. You're not anywhere in that message.

The gospel is not about what goes on in your little heart, the gospel is not about what goes on at this altar (there's not even an altar up here), it's not about you walking the aisle, it's not about you giving your heart, the gospel is about a person and what He did and accomplished on a day in human history. The gospel is about Jesus Christ and His work, it's about His person. He's fully God, He's fully man, and it's about His work, He died for your sins, and He rose again. That's the gospel.

That's why if somebody has 30 seconds to live, and you come upon them on the road and they say, "What must I do to go to heaven?" You can share this message in under 30 seconds. One time I asked a lady, "What does it take to get to heaven?" She said, "You got to read the Bible." All 66 books? They're gasping for air, they've got 30 seconds to live! No, no. Jesus died for your sins and rose again. If you simply believe in Him, you're saved. That's what the Bible teaches. And so what we go back to is the Word of God. And this is what we preach, we're preaching the gospel.

Why the need for the gospel? Why is this the only message that can save? We kind of identified it earlier, we looked at it, there's a two-fold problem each person has: first, there's a death penalty, a debt that you cannot pay. As Romans 6:23 says, *"The wages of sin is death"*, and you can't pay that, or you can for eternity. The second problem is you have an unrighteousness that you can't make perfect. You can't go back in time and become perfect, you are corrupt, I'm corrupt, that's what the Bible teaches.

And see, in the gospel, God takes care of both of these issues. Death was the penalty, Christ died for you. You have a righteousness that you can't obtain on your own, God is gonna credit Christ's righteousness to you. He takes care of both problems in one fell swoop, Jesus did it all. So, if He accomplished it all, what's the only response left? How do you respond to a finished work? How do you receive a gift? Well, you don't pull out your wallet and say, "Let me pay you for that." You receive it. So, the Bible says, "How do you receive a gift?" You put your faith in Jesus, you believe on the One



who died for you and rose again, and that's the only response the Bible gives as to what it takes to be saved.

Now why do we have all of these other cliches in there? We've kind of looked at that in the past few weeks. I believe it's an underlying satanic attack on the only message that can save you. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who *believe*. That's it, it's simple! In fact, it's so simple, it's hard for people. We want to add something to it. You know, "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch." I mean, that's how we naturally think, we want to add something to it. God is satisfied, will you be satisfied with what Jesus did for you? That's the million-dollar question.

Religion says that Jesus did 90%, or Jesus did 99%. It doesn't matter if you have any percentage left that you need to do, it is a salvation by works. You have no different message than any other religion in the world whether that's Mormonism, Buddhism, Hinduism, anything. You've got the same message because you've got to do something to get there. If Jesus did 99.9%, and you have to do 0.01%, you are indeed calling God a liar. If you were there when Jesus said, "It is finished" you would say, "No it's not! There's 0.01% left for me to do." And see, we're just taking the Bible at face value. God says Jesus did it 100% and all you have to do is trust in the work that He accomplished for you. This is God's grace; this is salvation by grace. Faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

We've got Awana starting next month, and one of the co-founders of Awana, Lance Latham (Doc Latham) wrote this: "Ask any religious person, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" He'll say, "Of course!" Is this man therefore saved?" In other words, religious people don't have a problem with Jesus Christ. They don't mind mixing Him into their solution as a part of the solution. What they have a problem with is the exclusivity of Jesus Christ to meet the solution, that's the problem that many religious people have.

The real question is where's your hope? Are you depending upon Christ alone and what He's done at Calvary, or is your hope in penances performed, masses, baptisms, and so forth? This is not faith in Christ and His work, it is faith in you and your own works. None of these can save. A lifetime of tears, vows, faithfulness to a church, and daily self-denial could not bring peace to a hungry heart. But we're here today to tell you if you need peace, you can find it in Jesus Christ, you can find it in Him alone. He's done it all, He's paid it all, God requires nothing more from you than to simply trust in what God is satisfied with, which is Jesus paying the penalty for your sins.

But as we've been looking at, confusion abounds. Just like this sign, "Do not follow and keep left." Or this sign, "Garbage only, no trash." Or this sign that we looked at last week that makes you want to curl up in a fetal position and not get out of bed, "Stop, no left turn, no right turn, don't go forward, don't go backwards." Which direction do you go here? And many of the gospel cliches do exactly this. "Give your heart to Christ", "Ask Him into your heart." Okay, am I going or coming? Is He going or coming? What's going on? Am I praying a prayer? Am I doing jumping jacks in the back? Am I raising a hand so you can come around and lock Him into my heart? I mean what is going on with these cliches?

And so as we've looked at the last couple weeks, confusion number one that we looked at a couple of weeks ago is this idea of giving your heart or life to God. And we asked the question that day, is it *you* giving your heart or life to God, or did Christ give His life for you? Which one do you want to base your eternity on? I'm going with the letter B on that one. I'm going on the fact that Christ gave His life for me.

Confusion number two: confessing your sins. We saw - hopefully in detail - that this is a truth for the believer, one who's already saved to be restored back to fellowship, but not the means by which an unsaved person gets saved. We saw that if you had to confess all your known sins to get saved, you'd

be in trouble because you can't even remember what you had for dinner last night, let alone the sins you committed two weeks ago. If that's how you got to heaven, it wouldn't be that way.

Confusion three: we looked at the sinner's prayer and that it's not found in the Bible, that no sinner's prayer is the same, and that there's not one example in the scriptures of somebody leading somebody else in a prayer to get saved. Where did this come from? I mean these are the kinds of things that we've been looking at, but these are part of our Christian and church culture.

Confusion four: ask for forgiveness. You get forgiveness of sins the moment you put your faith in Christ, and you get relational or fellowship forgiveness when you confess your sins as a believer. You never ask God for forgiveness of sins. Why? Because when you ask God, doubt is implied. He can say "yes" or "no" implied in that question, and the point is God has provided forgiveness of sins, will you simply trust the method that He's provided for it?

Confusion number five, we looked at last week, was to make a public verbal confession. So we would have to add our public verbal confession to Christ's work, and again, you see we add a work.

And I'm gonna tackle one today, it's probably pretty good timing as we're getting ready to embark on our VBS and Awana coming up, and it's really the King daddy of them all in our culture today, and that's this phrase "asking Jesus into your heart." In fact, this is probably the most common and most popular of all gospel response cliches in our modern day. I would imagine that everybody in this room at some level, at some time has heard this phrase, maybe been instructed to do this phrase. And so we're going to look at this today and see why it's not biblical.

This phrase took Christianity by storm back in the 70's when the children's ministries started to become more formalized and kind of brought to the forefront, and rightfully so. We've got these opportunities with all these little kids running around our church to share the gospel with them, to share the truth of how and what it takes to get to heaven, so why wouldn't we focus on that or make that an emphasis? But this is probably where this cliche got introduced. And here's the issue, it was done out of a sincere heart. Because they wanted to clarify the response to the gospel, especially for children. They wanted children to really understand what it took to get saved, so they developed this phrase "asking Jesus into your heart."

But today we're gonna look at 6 reasons not to ask Jesus into your heart, and we'll kind of just cover these one by one. You know, one pastor that I was aware of estimated that he had asked Jesus into his heart over 600 times from the age of 6 to 18. The way he figured that was he walked the aisle 50 weeks out of a 52-week year, every year from the time he was 6 to 18, because he wasn't quite sure he did it right. He wasn't quite sure that God accepted him, he wasn't quite sure he said the right words.

And so imagine that, and I believe that if I gave everybody an opportunity today to testify that many of you would say, "Yeah, I can relate to that. Maybe not 600 times, but I know I've done it many times." And so we're going to look at this confusion. Again, trying to stay clear on the gospel, trying to understand that what Jesus did was all that needed to be done, and that we simply have to rest or trust in Him and His finished work to get saved.

Reason number one you should never ask Jesus in your heart: it's never found in the Bible. That's a short sermon. I mean, that's a fifteen-minute sermon, we can just go home, right? We don't need any other reason hopefully, but we'll provide some additional reasons. But you know, it's never found in the Bible.

In fact, if you ever get into a discussion with somebody that says you've got to ask Jesus in your heart and that's biblical, just ask them where the verse is for that, ask them to show it to you. It's not there! Nobody's ever been able to show or share that verse because it's not in the Bible. Nowhere in the

Bible is anyone instructed to ask Jesus into their heart to be saved. Nowhere in the Bible is there one example of this happening.

So, beyond this, is there any other reason we really need? But this is a pretty big reason. In fact, I would say it's safe to assume that if you never listened to Christian radio, you never watched Christian TV, you never listened to a podcast or an mp3, or you never attended an evangelistic crusade or church, you would never conclude on your own that you must do this simply by reading the Bible, because it's not there.

And yet, it is embedded into our culture. It is embedded into our churches. And in fact, many people might even be saying right now, "What is the big deal? It's basically saying the same thing!" And interestingly enough, it's *not* saying the same thing. They're not synonymous phrases. If we took out the Oxford thesaurus and we simply looked at the word "ask" and the word "faith", they don't say the same thing. You wouldn't even use it interchangeably in a normal conversation, and if you did people would think you were crazy! "Faith, can I have some potato chips?" You wouldn't insert "faith" for "ask", they don't go together, they're not even saying the same thing. And yet so many times in these cliches, that's what we do, and the person that's never heard it before is like, "Wait a minute... right turn, left turn, don't go back, don't go forward, stop. What?"

They're confused and we're confusing them, because as I've said before, some of the tracts that we pass out in our churches have eight different ways to get saved listed in the tract! And the person that wrote it in all sincerity thought they were saying the same thing every single time, but it's not. It's don't go left, don't go right, don't go forward, don't go back, and stop. And the person that reads it for the first time and has never been exposed to church is like, "What? What does it take to get saved? Now I'm more confused than ever."

Now don't misunderstand, Christ does come in and live in the believer's heart when they put their trust in Him alone. Not because they asked Him to, it's a result of salvation, not the means to being saved, that's the distinction that we're making. Is Christ in our hearts after we put our faith in Him? Yes. The Bible clearly teaches that. In fact, we see that in Colossians 1:27: *"To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

And so we see Christ in us, but it's as a result of putting our faith in Christ, being saved. Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."* So, it's not that we're saying Christ is not in the believer, we're saying He doesn't get in there by *asking* Him to come in, He gets in there the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ. That's the distinction that we're making.

Reason number two that we should not ask Jesus in our hearts: because it's not how you get saved. Just look at a couple of verses, notice how Paul and Silas respond in Acts 16:30-31, it's not by asking Jesus in your heart. *"And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'"* Not asking Jesus in your heart. Ephesians 2:8-9, notice we're saved by grace through faith, it's not by asking Jesus in your heart. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*

In fact, do you know that in the New Testament alone there's 160 verses that give faith as the only prerequisite to be saved? This is the response. We preach the gospel, and we exhort a faith response to the gospel, we don't want to confuse it by giving people more things to do, we want them to trust in the finished work of Christ. And so again, this is the emphasis that we find in the Bible.

There was a story that a friend relayed to me of a twelve-year-old boy, who would go forward every week during the youth Bible study and ask Jesus into his heart. And one day my friend was able

to talk to Ricky and he kept asking him, "Why do you keep going forward?" And he said, "Well, I just don't know if I did it right. And I just don't know if He heard me, and I just don't know if He came to stay in, and I just figured it was safer to keep asking Him in my heart."

And my friend said, "Ricky, I want to take you to a Bible verse that's very common, John 3:16. And all I want you to do is to put your name in this verse, and I want to know what you have to do to be saved. Is it asking Jesus in your heart or is it something else? And so John 3:16, and Ricky inserted his name and he read it this way: for God so loved Ricky that He gave His only begotten Son, that if Ricky believes in Him he should not perish but have everlasting life. And you know at that moment, Ricky realized he didn't have to ask Jesus into his heart to be saved, he simply had to believe on the One who died for him and rose again.

That's the shift that we want to move toward in the sharing of our gospel. This is what we want to share with the kids who are attending our VBS this week, this should be the message that we share if anyone walks in this church. If you're 80, or you're in your 90's, or you're in your teens, or in your 30's or your 40's, if they ask you what it takes to get to heaven, we should be able to communicate this message with clarity. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Why Him? Because He's the one who died for you and rose again. That's the message, that's the gospel, that has the power to save, nothing else does it, so we want to be clear with that, not get distracted.

Reason number three why you should not ask Jesus in your heart: it requires no understanding of the gospel to do it. You don't even have to *know* the gospel to ask Jesus into your heart, you don't even have to *know* that Jesus died for your sins or rose again to ask Jesus in your heart, you don't have to know any of that. You just repeat a prayer, you just ask Him to come into your heart, you don't have to know anything. Remember, the Gospel as we understand it defined in the scriptures is that Jesus Christ the God-man died for our sins and rose again on the third day. You can ask Jesus into your heart without believing or knowing this, you don't even have to know this to ask Jesus in your heart, that's what's so crazy!

Over the years and in hundreds of conversations about people regarding salvation, you know what I have found interesting, is that more than half the time when people say, "I got saved when I asked Jesus into my heart." that they never bring up His work on the cross, that never even comes into the equation. In fact, the only time they mentioned Jesus is in the phrase "asked Jesus into my heart" and when I've dug a little bit deeper, you know where they go to immediately after that?

You know they used to teach - I'm kind of getting distracted, but I'll come back here - the drive-thru people at McDonald's and these fast-food places, you never try to cut off the customer. If they order a hamburger, the next question is, "Is there anything else?" It's kind of suggestive marketing. "Well yeah, now that you mention it, how about some fries?" "Anything else?" "Yeah, now that you mention it, a milkshake." And your goal is to keep them going and going and going.

Well, I'm not saying I do that in my conversations, but sometimes when people say, "I asked Jesus into my heart." I'll say, "Okay, is there anything else?" And you know where they inevitably go? Good works. "Well yeah, I try to keep the ten commandments. I try to go to church." "Anything else?" "Yeah, I light some candles." "Okay, anything else?" And they're just like throwing the kitchen sink at it!

And honestly, I don't want them to have that conversation with God on the day of judgment. "Anything else?" "Yeah, this and this." and defending themselves. I want them to come up with one answer, "God, that Man seated at your right hand, with the holes in His wrists and the holes in His feet, He died for me. That's my only chance, is that Man seated right there. And if He's not good enough for you, God, I don't have a chance. But I'm trusting in that One, the One who died for me and rose again."

And so when we get to this idea of asking Jesus in your heart, many people don't even understand that you can walk up to anybody on the street and say, "Do you want to go to heaven when you die?" And what are they gonna say? "Yeah! How do I get there?" "Well, you just gotta ask Jesus in your heart. Just repeat after me." And most people will just throw that in the mix! "Okay, I'm covered there now. Got that one covered!" And they don't even know what Jesus did for them, many times they haven't made that connection.

There's quite a difference between asking Jesus into your heart or knowing that you're saved because Jesus died for your sins and rose again, and you're trusting in His work for you. There's a difference, there's understanding when you tell somebody to believe. Why Jesus? Why do I have to believe in Him?

In fact, when we give that proper response, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", the natural follow-up question is, "Why Jesus? Why Him? Why do I have to trust in Jesus?" Implied is there's something that He is, something that He did (i.e. the gospel), that you must rely upon and it's unique to Him, uniquely something that He performed on your behalf that you're trusting in. And so even the response of faith is not nebulous, we're not talking about, "Oh, you just have to have faith." We're not doing a local news report and just talking to some random person on the street. "Oh, I just had faith." No, we're talking about a specific object of faith. We're talking about putting your faith in a specific Person, who did a specific thing 2,000 years ago on a day in history. It's specifically trusting in Jesus Christ and what He did for you, it's very specific. And so that would be the question that's begged with the proper response of belief.

Reason number four: asking Jesus in your heart either results in no assurance of salvation, or it brings a false assurance to some. Both are very scary, they confuse the means of salvation with the results of salvation, they put the cart before the horse. And so many people walking around don't even know if they're saved or not, because they're very confused, and that's why many people who have asked Jesus in their heart have done it more than once. That proves the point.

In fact, before we moved here, we were going to an Awana program at the church we were going to at the time, and one of the teachers came up to my son Cody and said, "Cody, have you ever asked Jesus into your heart?" And Cody was shocked. We'd talked about this in our home. And he just said, "Uh... no." And I told him, "Tell him next time no because your Dad told you not to ever do that. Because I want to get into a conversation with your teacher." So, I say that just to say that even if you're raised in a home that's teaching the Word of God, you've probably still been exposed to this.

I don't typically do this in our church, but is there anybody here, at any time in their life, that has ever asked Jesus in their heart? Would you just raise your hand and just keep it up? I just want you to look around the room really quick. Now keep your hand up because here's question number two: those of you that did, keep your hand up if you did it more than once.

I don't think any hands went down; everyone kept theirs up. This happens everywhere I've ever talked about this issue. Why? Because it doesn't provide any assurance. You're always asking the question, "Did I do it right? Did I say the right words?"

And so apart from that, what if I tell you that Jesus did it all? That Jesus died for every one of your sins, and God accepted His death in your place by raising Him from the grave, and all you have to do is trust that He died for you in your place, and that God will accept you to heaven. See, now I know it's done. Now I can rest in what He did, and now my confidence is in Jesus Christ and what He accomplished, not in myself and my ability to ask the right question or say the right words. I'm trusting in the finished work of another, and I'm confident that God accepts His work on my behalf, because that's what the Bible says, and so I'm resting in the finished work of Christ.

In fact, suppose a wealthy millionaire wants to offer you five million dollars. By the way, if you find someone like that, just send them to me first, I'd like to visit with them first. No, I'm just kidding. So, he offers you five million, he says, "Here's five million, I want you to personally have it. While I know you don't deserve it, nor have you earned it, you can have it right now as a gift from me to you." What would you do with that scenario? I'd be like, "Okay, let me have it right now before you change your mind." You would not say, "Oh please give me your five million dollars! While I don't deserve it and cannot earn it, please give it to me. Please, please, please!" You wouldn't say that.

And yet, here's God, He wants to offer you salvation, a free gift, He wants to offer you forgiveness of sins, and this response encourages you to do that very thing - asking God for something that He's already promised to give us. And you see that asking Jesus into your heart when you look at it from that perspective is really a subtle form of unbelief. Because now you're not trusting God to do what He said He's already going to do when you put your faith in Christ. So, we're talking about a much bigger issue here than just semantics or just word choice.

No one has ever been saved by asking Jesus into their heart. That is not the way people get saved. Now I will say this, they may have put their trust in Christ, they may be saved and confused, that definitely can happen. But no one got saved because they asked Jesus in their heart, they got saved when they put their trust in Christ. And here's the sad thing about it, they're shifting the issue of salvation to what *you* must do instead of what Christ has already done. See, that's the gospel, that's why we preach the gospel, it's a finished work, it's been accomplished on your behalf. And what's really sad about this whole situation is this shift of focus, and then it causes a lack of assurance as we kind of detailed.

Reason number five you should not ask Jesus in your heart. Let's get into the Bible a little bit, those were kind of points, let's look at Revelation 3:20. Revelation 3:20 is typically a verse that's used, "Oh, do you have a verse where you can ask Jesus in your heart?" "Oh yeah, Revelation 3:20, that teaches it." That's typically the proof text for Revelation 3:20. It says this, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*"

Now here's the great thing about Revelation 3:20, in fact, it's the great thing about every verse that ever existed in the Bible: it's not on an island by itself. It's in a context, which means it's in a paragraph, it's in a chapter, it's in a book, it's in a Testament, so we've got some context here to dive through. And so the first thing I just wanted you to notice in Revelation 3:20 is that the words "ask", "Jesus", and "heart" are not even found in this verse. The very verse that's supposed to prove that you have to ask Jesus in your heart doesn't even contain the main terms.

Now, I will grant them that Jesus is speaking, so let's give them that one. Jesus is in the verse, He's implied, He's speaking, I got it. But the concept of asking Jesus in your heart is not even found in this verse. What's the context here, what's the audience? Well, those of you that have a study Bible or your Bible breaks out into sections, you can see what the context is. This is one of the seven letters to the churches in Asia Minor. Revelation 3:14 says, "*And to the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write,*" So who's He talking about here? Is He giving a method by which to get saved, or is this a message to people who are believers already, the church? It's the church. This is the context of who He's writing to here. He's not giving a how-to on how to get saved, that's in Romans chapters 1-5 which we've been looking at, that's the how-to.

So here He's talking to the church, and what does He say to the church? Let's read it. Verse 14, "*And to the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.'*" - What's He vomiting out? Them, because of their works, He's not accepting their works. Why is He not accepting

them? Verse 17, *“Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked -”* Wow, what a list of distinctions there. *“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”*

Notice that He rebukes and chastens. “Chasten” means *discipline*, that's child training. You know there are times that I wish I could discipline kids in my neighborhood, help them out along the way a little bit. But I can't touch kids in the neighborhood, I can't discipline them. Why? They're not my kids.

You're gonna notice that when God uses some “C” words in the Bible - one is “chastening” - that's always an indicator that He's talking about His children. And then He uses “condemnation”, and that indicates He's talking about those that aren't His children. So, we see this idea of chastening that should cue us off as well, and then there's a good use of the word “repent” in here. Verse 19 He says, *“be zealous and repent.”* Now what does repent mean? We're gonna cover this in one sermon next week. “Repent of sins” or “repent from your sins”, that phrase is never found in the Bible, and we'll look at how that's used in gospel presentations. But the word “repent” from the Greek just means *a change of mind*.

And so let me ask you - we haven't even gotten into this study, there's so much more that could be drawn out from what Jesus just said to this church - if you had to guess or understand what they were to change their mind about, what would it be? Well, they think they're rich. They think they've got it all together. They think they are God's gift to the church, and they need to change their mind about that. They've got some issues, and they don't even realize that.

In fact, their issues are so great that when we get into Revelation 3:20, the image that Jesus provides is they are doing church, and Jesus is out knocking on the door to try to get in and be a part of the service. It's been said (and I think it's right) that when the rapture of the church happens one day that there will be some churches where *nobody* will be missing that next Sunday.

And that's what is illustrated here, that Jesus wants to be a part of this fellowship, that Jesus wants to be the head, not only of this local body, but of every true body in the world. And here in the church of Laodicea, Jesus is relegated to being outside the door knocking, trying to get in. How do I see this? Well let's keep going. 3:20, what door is Jesus knocking on? Verse 20, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”* He's knocking at the door of the church, not someone's heart. That's the interpretation, that's where they changed the interpretation. Now it's all about Jesus knocking on the door of your heart, and if you let Him in, He'll come in.

Now there's a couple of reasons why that can't be the case, and it's just simple observations. One of the simple observations, look at verse 20, He says, *“If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him”* - two words, *in, to*, not one word, *into*. Now why is that important? Because “in to” means He comes in to the church, over to the individual that opens the door, not into them. See the distinction there? He's coming in to the church, over to that individual, not into the individual's heart. This is what He's communicating.

And what does He want to do when He gets there? He wants to come into the church, over to them, *“and dine with him, and be with Me.”* And what does that illustrate? It illustrates fellowship. He wants to sit down and have a meal and be in intimate fellowship with His children. And right now, He can't have that. Why? Because they're not in fellowship with Him, they've got Him outside the door. He's out there banging on the door trying to get into His church and they won't even let Him in. They need to change their mind about that, they need to open the door and be brought back into fellowship with the One who died for them and rose again. This is not a verse that teaches you how to get saved.

And finally, reason number six: it confuses rather than clarifies the condition of salvation. It especially does this for children, and I'll tell you why. This is why most children have asked Jesus in their heart more than once also, there's a confusion there, they're not comfortable with this. And part of the reason this is used is because they feel like it clarifies, they think this cliché helps children understand or communicate, but frankly, the opposite appears to be true. Here's what's crazy about kids, is they actually believe thinking very concretely, not abstractly. That's just learning theory, that's just research on the way kids are, and you know exactly what this looks like.

In fact, there's an example of a four-year-old girl who was watching a medical program on TV with her parents - and I don't know why they were letting her watch this, but this is a story that was relayed to me - during which there was a heart operation, and they actually showed the doctors lifting the heart out of the body. And she looked over to her dad and she said, "Daddy, is he giving his heart to Jesus?" And you know, you've got an example if you have kids, that's how they think, they're very concrete.

It reminds me of another story that was relayed to me, of a kid who leaned in during a church service on her mom's chest, and she heard the mom's heart beating. And the little kid looked up at her mom and said, "Oh, that's really cool! I can hear Jesus in your heart." And the mom said, "What's He doing?" And she said, "I think He's percolating some coffee." But I'm just saying, kids think concretely, they don't think abstractly. And you know what's crazy about this is when they're confronted with the appeal to ask Jesus in their heart, they think that He's coming into the organ that pumps blood, that's how concrete they are. So, it actually distracts.

You know, taking this so concrete, if you did have to have a heart transplant, does that mean you're no longer saved? Because He was in *this* heart, now that one's going out and I don't know if I want that heart because I don't know if he's asked Jesus in his heart. It gets to the point of ridiculous.

And here's the thing I want to encourage you with, do you know that kids can understand the concept of trust? Tell me the little girl in this picture on the screen doesn't understand the concept of trust as she's up on the diving board that's twice her height. And I'm sure that looked really high for her, and you know how kids are like, "Oh yeah, I'll jump off, put me up there!" And then they get on and they're like, "I don't want to jump." And what do we say as dads? "Come on, trust me. I'll catch you, just trust me. Just jump, I'll catch you." And what does the child do? They trust their dad. They might size him up, "Okay yeah, he's got some thirty-four-inch pythons like Hulk Hogan, I can trust him." But they know Dad. If Dad says, "Trust me, I'll catch you.", he'll catch you. They understand it at a playground, up on a slide. "Come on down, I'll catch you. Trust me."

If they were by chance in a burning house and they were on a second story with their life at stake, do you think they'd be able to understand trust? "Trust me. Jump, I'll catch you. Trust me." Kids can understand trust. Kids can understand relying upon. Kids can understand resting in. These are all synonyms for faith that actually helped illustrate the concept a little bit better. Kids can understand that, so why give them something that's gonna confuse the daylights out of them? Why do it? It doesn't even clarify, it doesn't even do what it was designed to do, it muddies the water worse.

Let me share a couple of disturbing statistics with you. Awana put out a statistic many years ago, and I don't even think they do this anymore, but they used to give a gospel accuracy survey to some 18,000 pastors and Christian workers involved with the Awana program. 13,500 of the 18,000 agreed with the gospel invitation, "Right now, ask Jesus to come into your heart." That's seventy five percent of workers in Awana that agreed to that invitation. That ought to break our hearts. That's not even biblical.



And if Doc Latham and Art Rorheim - the founders of Awana - knew what was going on with their program, they would roll over in their graves. Because those guys were passionate about clarity, passionate about making much of Jesus Christ, passionate about what Jesus did and what He accomplished. They didn't want to distract from His work, and yet now many of the workers are distracting from that very work.

Another sad story, one night at Awana club, the club was dismissed, and one of the leaders found a little girl back in the corner all by herself. She was just standing up, standing on her feet, looking up with her mouth open, just standing there. The church leader watched her for a couple minutes, she hadn't moved, and he thought, "I wonder if she's okay, that looks a little weird." So he goes up to her and he says, "What are you doing back here?" And she said, "I'm waiting for Jesus to come into my heart." See, it's distracting, it's harmful in a sense. It doesn't give anybody confidence, and we want them resting in what Jesus did, we want their confidence to be in Him.

Now I know that there's gonna be some objections to this, and that's okay. The first time I was even introduced to this concept, I was mad. I'll be honest, I was really mad. Because I used it all the time with people. I told people, "Hey, you gotta ask Jesus in your heart." That was my evangelism go-to phrase. And so I was listening to a tape that a friend had given me, and I almost threw the tape out the window, I was *that* mad. It was my friend's tape, that's the only reason it stayed in the car, because I had to give it back to him.

But you know, I began to think through it and I said, "You know, he's right. This is unbiblical. And if I claim that I want to be biblical, I want to be clear." This is an important message; we're not just making spaghetti here. If you get a pinch of oregano in there versus two pinches, who cares? It's still gonna be okay. We're talking about eternal life, we're talking about where people spend eternity, so why would we want to mess around with that? Or even just be nonchalant about it?

So, objection number one that I hear often is: isn't this just simply a matter of semantics? It's saying the same thing, it's just semantics, right? My answer to this is yes and no. It is a matter of semantics if you mean that word meanings and definitions are very important. Then yeah, it's a matter of semantics, words are important. My answer is yes if you mean that God intended to use words in their normal way to communicate how one is saved. Like when He said "believe", He meant "believe". When He said "Jesus did it all", He meant "Jesus did it all".

But my answer is "no" if you mean that trusting Christ and Him alone and asking Jesus in your heart are the same thing. They're not the same thing. It is not an issue of just semantics in that case, they're not the same thing. They can't be the same thing by definition. If words have any meaning whatsoever, they *can't* be the same thing.

Objection two: does it really matter as long as you're sincere? Doesn't God know your heart? Does God know our hearts? Yes. I mean, yeah, you got me there. God knows our hearts, I'm with you on that completely. But has anyone ever gotten saved by asking Jesus in their heart? No. Nobody's ever gotten saved by asking Jesus in their heart.

Now are some people confused who have put their trust in Christ? Yeah, I think that probably a lot of people who communicate this message are people who are saved but confused. The sad thing about it is that their gospel will save no one. If that's the message they give to people, that you have to ask Jesus in your heart, no one can get saved by that message. They have to put their faith in Christ, and many people have been confused by this cliché.

Now, accuracy matters in this area if you believe the following things: that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Now if you're one of those people who think, "Well there's many ways to get to heaven, God's gonna sort it out when we all get there." This message

was probably a colossal waste of your time, because you're like, "Why is he making such a big deal about this?" But if you actually believe Romans 1:16, that it's the power of God unto salvation for everyone who *believes*, then accuracy is going to matter. We want to tell people to believe the gospel because that's how people get saved.

Accuracy matters if you believe that a correct understanding of God's plan of salvation truly determines where one will spend eternity. If you have a concept of God that He's just gonna grade on the curve, you just do your best and you might get there kind of thing, again, this message was a colossal waste of time for you. But if you actually believe that God's plan is truly exclusive, and truly unique, and truly centered on the person and finished work of Christ, then this is going to be important to you, because this is determining people's eternities.

And then finally, accuracy matters if you believe that you have a responsibility to teach the Word of God, or to communicate the Word of God just like God gave it. If you're like, "Well yeah, God said this, but I really think it could have been put better this way." I mean, just tell me, I'm not gonna stand next to you if you actually think that way. No, I'm kidding. But if you believe you have a responsibility to communicate this just like God gave it, then this type of accuracy is going to matter to you.

In the next section we're going to cover the topic of repentance and where that fits in relation to salvation, and in the following section we'll get back into Romans verse by verse expository teaching, moving on to sanctification. And remember, when we talk about sanctification, we're talking about God's present salvation from the power of sin, and that's where all of us are living day to day.

# CHAPTER 27

## What The Gospel Is NOT Part 4

### Romans

We're gonna continue in our study of the book of Romans next week, picking up in Romans 5:12. If you wanted to read ahead you could read the rest of chapter 5 and kind of have an idea of where we're going. And the reason you should come back for Romans 5:12-21 is because we are going to talk about, and emphasize, and glory in our identification with Jesus Christ. Because when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, God does something very special, very unique, and He's got a purpose for why He does it. That's what we're gonna see fleshed out in Romans 6, 7 and 8.

When you are identified with Jesus Christ, there are things that are true of you now, there are things that have happened to you that you need to know about so that you can benefit from them in your daily life. And so it's gonna be theological, but it is where the rubber meets the road. You need this, this is where we all live, is in growth in our Christian life and understanding who we are in Jesus Christ. So, we're gonna start that next week.

But today we're gonna continue a four-part break off from the book of Romans, because Romans 5:11 provides a good break off point to really come back and solidify our understanding of the gospel. And you might say to me, "Well man, we just spent six months and four and a half chapters talking about the gospel, don't you think we're solid enough already?" Well, I wish we were, I never feel comfortable with that because there's so many voices out in Christianity, so many messages that come forth over the radio waves or through book form that contradict what Paul teaches in the first four and a half chapters of the book of Romans. And the sad thing about it is they actually think they're saying the same thing as what Paul said.

In fact, I've shared before, but we have tracts down in my office that give no less than eight or nine ways to get saved in one single tract. Confusion abounds, so we've been looking at what the gospel is not. And again, just as a reminder, this is not a series to criticize everybody else in the world and think that we've got it all right, and that we're the only ones that have a corner on truth. That is not the purpose of this brief series, but the purpose is to be critical - critical of the message, critical of what's being shared. Because if we truly believe that the gospel is what saves people, and that we get saved by putting our faith in Jesus Christ and what He did for us alone on the cross, if we truly believe that and we believe that's the only way to heaven like the Bible teaches, then we want to be clear with it. We want to be precise with it because we actually believe that's the *only* way somebody can get saved. That's the emphasis, so just remember that.

I'm going to just read a verse this morning by way of introduction, Jeremiah 9:23-24, "*Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glorifies glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment,"* - those two things go together in the gospel - "*and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord.*"

And so as we look at what the gospel is not, our purpose is to make much of Jesus Christ. We want to exalt Him to a preeminent place in our thinking, to see that any response that detracts from the finished work of Jesus Christ is a response that we want to reject, because we think that highly of what He's done for us.

That's really the emphasis today, and to do that, let's do a quick review of the gospel, this is very similar to what you've seen the last three weeks. When we talk about the gospel, we're talking about an objective, historical, verifiable message that happened on a day in history 2,000 years ago. These are facts. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross for your sins and He rose again three days later. We're talking about that event. We're talking about if we had a time machine we could go back and witness that event. That's the gospel, you are *not* in the gospel. Jesus is what the gospel is all about. What Jesus did for you and who Jesus is is what the gospel is about.

And so when we start talking about the gospel, what's the gospel? Well people say, "You've got to recognize you're a sinner, you've got to come down to the front aisle, you've got to raise your hand, you've got to do this," No, we're missing the whole point! Jesus is the one who accomplished the gospel, and He did it 2,000 years ago. And so when we talk about the gospel, we're not talking about feeding the poor. That's not something that happened 2,000 years ago. We're not talking about doing good works or going to church. That's not the gospel. The gospel is Jesus Christ and what He did, it's all about Him.

And so many times, just like in life, we make it all about *us*, don't we? We make it all about us, and God wants us to look at the cross, because that's where He's pointing Himself. That's where God the Father was satisfied with what Jesus did. And the question is: are you satisfied? Are you okay with that? Can you depend on what He did for you? That's the message of the gospel. And so the gospel involves the person and work of Jesus Christ. The person, He was fully God, He was fully man. His work, very simply put, He died for our sins and rose again on the third day.

Why do we need this? Why do we even need a Savior? Are we just swimming out in the pool getting along well, or are we drowning and need a lifeguard? Well, the Bible says you're drowning, the Bible says I'm drowning, we need a lifeguard. Why do we need it? We've got a two-fold problem, we've got an issue. We've got a debt we cannot pay, the wages of sin is death, and we have an unrighteousness that we could never make perfect, we could never get a righteousness equal to God's righteousness to get to heaven. In the gospel God provides for both. Jesus died for you so that you wouldn't have to die, and God through Jesus provides righteousness for you to enter into heaven.

And so the gospel takes care of all that. Jesus said, "It's finished, it's done, I paid it in full." So, what's the response? The only response the Bible gives over and over again as to what it takes to be saved, the only response that coincides with the finished work is to trust in it. To believe in it, to rest upon what Jesus did for you. That's it. And so you'll see the word "believe", you'll see the word "faith", you'll see the word "trust" in the Bible over a hundred and sixty times in the New Testament as the only prerequisite to get saved.

And what we've looked at in these false cliches over the past few weeks is really simply this: the false cliches end up doing, unfortunately, is taking the spotlight off of what Jesus has done and they put the spotlight on what you must do, and they bring it back to being about you, in essence saying that what Jesus did was not enough. You still have to... whatever, fill in the blank. And that's what many people believe.

And so religion says that Jesus did 90% but you've still got 10%, or maybe religion says Jesus did 99.9 % and you've got 0.01% left. But a salvation that's based on even 0.01% of your efforts is a salvation by works any way you cut it, that's not unmerited, thus God would be requiring something additional from you than simply trusting in the work of Jesus Christ. Grace says Jesus did 100% and I'm just gonna trust that He did it right, that He did it well.

We've been looking at these confusions the last few weeks, and some of the confusions that we've looked at look a lot like this sign on the screen: don't go forward, don't go backward, don't go

left, don't go right, don't go anywhere, don't move. They look a lot like this sign, they're confusing, they can't all be the same, they're not saying the same thing. Some of the ones that we've looked at, we won't give a whole lot of time to each one of these since its review, but this concept of giving your heart or giving your life to God, we hear that a lot. When you get to heaven and God says, "Why should I let you in?" Are you gonna say you gave your life to Him, or are you gonna say that Jesus gave His life for me? Which option are you gonna go with? Which one is more biblical? It's not about what you give to Him, it's what He gave to you. God's the giver, we're the receiver in this relationship.

Confusion two that you hear a lot: confessing your sins. Confession is a biblical word. Don't misunderstand, I'm not saying that confession is not in the Bible or it's not a biblical word, it's just not the way you get saved. Confession is for the believer in Jesus Christ who's out of fellowship due to sin in their life, and this is an opportunity to tell God what you did was wrong, and God says by His grace He's gonna receive you and restore you back to fellowship. So, it's a message for someone who's already part of the family, a child of God, someone who's already been born into the family of God, not somebody who's trying to get into the family of God.

And we also made a comment that if confession of sins was necessary to be saved, we'd all be in trouble because even just based on three sins per day over the course of an 80-year lifespan, you'd have over eighty thousand sins to confess. Good luck with that. Good luck remembering everything. If that was dependent upon you, nobody could be saved, and so we looked at that.

We also looked at a very common phrase, "Pray the sinner's prayer". Obviously, there's no verse in the Bible where a sinner's prayer is found, although you can find them in almost every tract in America. And not only that, but none of them are the same. And there's no instance or example of one person leading somebody else in a prayer to get saved. The emphasis when somebody wants to get saved is to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe, trust in what Jesus has done for you. And so we talked a little bit about the sinner's prayer.

We talked about another one that's big: ask for forgiveness. Ironically, if you look in the Bible, that's not even taught for the believer. The unbeliever is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they receive forgiveness of sins. The believer is to confess their sins when they sin, and they're restored to fellowship. Nowhere does the Bible teach to ask for forgiveness for your sins as it relates to salvation. And so we looked at that, and that's very commonly used. In fact, we also made the statement that when you ask God for something that He's already promised to give to you, it's a subtle form of unbelief, the very opposite of faith, which is what we need to do to be saved.

Confusion number five, this idea that you have to make a verbal, public profession of faith, that you've got to say it out loud to seal the deal. If that's the case, then Christ did 99.9% and you still have to do 0.01 percent of verbal confession. And those who have lost their voice or are mute, maybe God would allow them to write it on a sheet of paper, I don't know. But the mindset here is this verbal, public profession that they have to do, and we looked at that.

And then this was the big one in the last section, which we've heard and is very common with most of us: asking Jesus into your heart, which is never found in the Bible. We saw that Revelation 3:20 does not teach this as a response to the gospel. This is nowhere to be found in the pages of Scripture. And we also looked at how it causes a lack of assurance, and how many people who have asked Jesus into their heart have done it more than once, more than two times, because it's not how you get saved, there's not an assurance there.

Today we're going to look at the seventh and final confusion that *we're* going to look at - there's more, but for sake of time we'll not cover all of them - and that is this response of repent of or repent

from your sins. Now this is really gaining traction in a lot of circles, and I'll tell you why: because people don't like this message that salvation is a free gift, and that you don't have to do anything to earn it.

In fact, what they've seen, or their claim, is that when you teach people just to believe, then they think they can get their ticket to heaven and then go live any way they want to. And so this, in their mindset, puts a little teeth in the gospel. Like if someone really veers off, there's something there that's gonna bite them in the rear-end and really get them, and lock them into a life of sanctification, and that's kind of the mindset behind this message.

Now this is another one like confession of sins, repentance is a biblical word. It's used in the Bible in a lot of places, so it's not even to say that it's not in the Bible or it's not a biblical word. What I'm going to propose to you this morning - and hopefully you can be patient with me to develop this idea - is that the meaning of the word "repentance", I believe in our culture, has been hijacked. I don't believe that the initial and original meaning that the author's intended for their original audience is what we understand the word "repentance" to mean today in our church circles.

And so if you'll allow me some time to develop this, it's definitely something that may challenge your thinking if you've never heard it before, which means that it may be hard to accept, but just take in the thinking here. And if you want to discuss it further, I'm always available just give me a call, I'm happy to sit down and discuss this in more detail.

But first of all, it may surprise you to learn that the phrase "repent of your sins" or "repent from your sins" is not found in the Bible. That's a pretty big statement, because if you ask certain Bible teachers, you'd think it was on every other page of the Bible. You'd think it was in every book of the Bible because of how much this is emphasized, and really just put forth as a prerequisite to be saved.

The other thing is that the Word of God does not demand repentance from sins in order to be saved. But I will say this, every person who's ever believed upon Jesus Christ has repented of something. Now I have to define that for you, because I don't want you to be confused. I'm actually saying something different, but it's based on the meaning of the word.

When you see the word "salvation" in the Bible, we've covered this before, but you know enough about that word "salvation" now to know that it doesn't always mean salvation from hell, right? We know that. In fact, the Bible speaks of us being saved in three tenses: saved from the penalty of sin, saved from hell; saved from the power of sin, being presently saved, right now, from the power of sin; and being saved in the future from the very presence of sin. And so we know that when we see the word "salvation" in the Bible, it doesn't always mean hell. It could mean present deliverance from the power of sin, or future deliverance from the very presence of sin, you've got to look at the context to determine which aspect it's talking about.

The same is true of baptism. When we see baptism in the Bible, what do we always think of? We think of water. We've got to erase that from our thinking, because there are baptisms in the Bible that don't contain any water, they're dry baptisms. So, we have to go to the context to see what the author is talking about. Is it a dry baptism, or is it a water baptism? And so baptism doesn't always equal water.

An example, 1 Corinthians 12:13 says we've all been baptized by the spirit into one body. That's not a water baptism, that's the Spirit of God baptizing us into the body of Christ. And you see this again in 1 Corinthians 10 where it says that the Israelites were baptized into Moses. *Baptized into Moses?* So, you see, there's something bigger there than water. In fact, he says they were baptized into Moses through the Red Sea, and who got wet that day? Not the Israelites, the people that God judged.

So "repentance" is another word in the Bible that when you see it, don't automatically think "Sin. It's repentance from sin, repentance of sin." The question is going to become, "Here's repent, let

me look at the context. What is this verse telling me to do? Or what is this verse saying that they did?” But it's not always a repentance from sin. So that's the introduction.

What does it mean? Well, the word “repent” is simply found in a verb form and a noun form in the New Testament. “*Metanoō*” is the verb, “*metanoia*” is the noun. It's made up of two words, you can kind of see it broken down, “*meta*” meaning *change of place or condition*, we see that in our word “metamorphosis”. And then you've got “*noō*” meaning *to exercise the mind, to think, to comprehend*. And so when we look at this word “repent”, it means *change the mind, an afterthought, having a thought that was different from your former thought*. Overall, it means a *change of mind*.

And so when you look at the word “repentance” in the scriptures, you should ask two questions: who needs to change their mind, and what do they need to change their mind about based on the context? That's what we're looking for in this word. And what you're gonna find is that many uses of the word “repentance” have nothing to do with sin. They have something totally different that they're telling their readers to change their mind about. And yet every time in a church culture that I've ever been in, the mindset is when you see “repent” it automatically goes with “sin”, and it doesn't. There's things that you can change your mind about generically, yet unfortunately in our day, this word has become impregnated, like with triplets or quadruplets, with meaning. It's just added all sorts of meaning to it.

And so one of the meanings we see that's associated with repentance is you've got to be sorry for your sin. Like if you don't show emotion, then you're really not sorry. And I've actually seen people who have been taught this, and they're like almost in the back room slapping themselves so tears will come out. Like we're on some thespian stage trying to figure out how to cry so that we're accepted by God, as if God's fooled by that. But they say if you're truly repentant, you'll feel sorry for your sins. So they impregnate meaning into the word that has to do with being sorry for sin.

Another one that you'll see is this idea of turning 180 degrees. If your life doesn't turn 180 degrees, then you're not really serious about salvation, and you can't be saved because you didn't truly repent from sin. The question is, who gets to determine 180 degrees? I mean, what if it's 179, are you saved or are you lost? And who sets that standard since the Bible doesn't actually use that terminology? Who sets that standard? Does that mean perfect perfection, from that point forward you never sinned? That would be 180 degrees. Growing in holiness might be 178 degrees, I'm giving people a lot of credit there, maybe more like 89. And so that's where it becomes confusing, “What do you mean by I've got to turn 180 degrees to be saved?” Does that sound like the work has been done, or does that sound like there's something left to do? Sounds like there's a *lot* left to do.

And then this is another one, that you must turn from sin and turn to God, that's a very big meaning. Again, I'm just putting forth to you, I think that's an impregnated meaning to this word, that wasn't inherent in this word. Let me give you an example: we talk about words and what they mean. Our goal is to find out what a word meant to the original author, in the original context, to the original audience. And I'm going to tell you, we do this naturally and normally with every other book, it seems, than the Bible.

Let me give you an example: if there was a biography written about George Washington, let's just say it was written in the early 1800s. And you'd never read it before, and so you're reading through the book and it said, “George Washington was a gay man.” Would you put the book down and call your friend and say, “Did you know George Washington was a homosexual?” Of course you wouldn't! Why? Because how was the word “gay” used in the 1800s? He's happy. Hey, maybe he's a lighthearted guy. I mean, shoot, he's chopping down cherry trees, right? He's a lighthearted guy. But you wouldn't go back

and say, "Oh, I didn't know George Washington was a homosexual." You would clearly say, "What did the word "gay" mean back then?" and interpret it as such.

Now if that was to be said about a politician in our day, what would you naturally think? That's a gay person, you'd think "homosexual". And so you see, even words kind of develop in meanings over time, but if you want to know accurately what the author was communicating about George Washington, rather than cause a scandal and say, "The first president of our United States was a homosexual.", maybe we should take it in context as to what the author was meaning in that day. And thus, I would encourage the same approach with the word "repentance".

And so what I'm gonna do is give a brief history lesson. If you don't like history, I am really sorry, you picked the wrong day to come to church, and it'll be better next week. But if you like history you'll appreciate this, because what we're going to do is talk about the use of this word "*metanoeo*" and "*metanoia*" in the Greek, during the the time of Jesus, during the time of the Apostles, even predating them in the Classical period. And so this classical Greek usage from the time of 900 to 300 B.C. - remember B.C. kind of goes backwards, the bigger the number is, the farther away, the smaller the number, the closer to A.D. And so we're kind of working towards modern day going 900 to 300 B.C. - but the prominent meaning of this word was *a change of mind* or *an afterthought* in extra-biblical Greek writings.

Plato used it this way in his writings, these very words, as he wrote in Greek. Xenophon, who is another philosopher, used these words the same way, "changing one's mind". Thucydides was a historian, and Thucydides wrote about a revolt in the city of Mytilene. And this revolt went something like this: there was a group of people within a city that was controlled by an athenian council or leadership, and this group of people decided to stir up rebellion in the city, and so they tried to take it over. Well, they pushed the revolt down, they captured some of the people involved with the revolt, and the Athenian council then determined, "You know what, we can't really sort out who all is involved, so we're just gonna kill everybody in the city." That was their judgment. And then they slept on it.

Have you ever woken up and done something different after you slept? Well, the Athenian council slept on it, and the next morning, Thucydides, the historian, says that they repented. They changed their mind. What did they change their mind about? They decided they weren't going to kill everybody in the city, they were only gonna kill the people that they knew were involved in the revolt. So you see the use of that word in the classical time. And that's just one example, there's many, and we could have pulled a bunch of Plato quotes, but for sake of time we didn't do that.

Moving on into the Koine Greek usage. The Koine period, 300 B.C. to about 100 A.D., the time of which the New Testament was written, how was the word used here? Well, it was also used to communicate a change of mind. Not being sorry for your sin, these are concepts foreign to the language, they didn't impregnate the word with this meaning. And so what we saw in this time was a guy by the name of Polibius writing about the Dardani people's plan to attack Macedonia while Philip was away - Philip apparently was leaving the city. And so they were planning this attack when he left. And as they're getting ready to attack, they see him riding back into town, and it says they repented. They changed their minds, they decided not to attack because he was coming back into the city. And so again, we see a very normal, natural use of the word.

This is actually my favorite story, because it's just really cool. Plutarch, who was a biographer and a philosopher himself, tells a story about a young baby named Cypselus. And Cypselus went on to become a horrible tyrant, unfortunately. But when Cypselus was a baby, there were a group of hired men who were sent to kill this little baby. And I don't know if you've ever heard this story, it's just really incredible, great timing on the reflexes. You know, babies smile, and they have a lot of gas. Maybe he



just had a lot of gas, I don't know, but the very time they sent somebody to kill the baby, the baby would smile and coo at them, and these men couldn't do it. They couldn't carry out the murder that they had been hired to commit.

And so the story tells us that they repented, they changed their mind about killing the baby. Well, some of them would go down the road and I think they realized, "Wow, if we come back to the guy that hired us, and they find out we didn't kill this baby, we're going to be killed." And so the story then says that they repented of not killing the baby to go back to kill him, and they never could find the baby when they went back. But this is again, just a story of the natural, normal use of this word, and that was in the Koine Greek period.

Another period where Greek was used, it's during the translation of the Septuagint, which again, is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures. And so when did they use this word to translate Hebrew words? Ironically enough, our Greek word for repentance is only used 20 times in the Old Testament. 13 of those use this word to pertain to God repenting, or not repenting. And so right there we should feel really uncomfortable if we said, "Repentance always means from sin." Because now we've got an even bigger issue that God is somehow repenting from sin. So we want to look at this word from a generic definition as we go forward.

And so, here are some points to consider. Let's just kind of throw this out here, that's more of a history, but some points to ponder as it relates to the word "repent". What people change their mind about is not in or implied by the word repent itself, we have to have a context. We have to look around, what are they telling them to repent or change their mind about? Because "repent" can be used of sin, it can be used of something good. We saw that in the story of Cypselus the baby, they repented or changed their mind of killing him, and then they repented and changed their mind of not killing him. So it's generic, the context tells us what they're changing their mind about.

In fact, if we use the word biblically in our day, you could repent about common daily occurrences. Breakfast, for instance. I decided this morning I was going to wake up and eat a bowl of cereal. Well by the time I got ready and was ready to go out the door, cereal was not on the equation anymore, I didn't have time, so I grabbed a granola bar. I had repented about my breakfast this morning. It wasn't like I did anything wrong - unless you ask my wife, I probably shouldn't be eating sugary cereal - but it wasn't like I did anything wrong by changing my mind, I just changed my mind. That's a daily occurrence, that's a normal use of this word "repentance", and the context will dictate that.

Some of you repent some days on your way to work, because you take a different route. You hear the traffic, and you say, "Oh, I was gonna go that way, now that I've got this information, I changed my mind, I'm gonna go this way." That would be a use of the biblical word "repentance" in everyday life. And so what I'm trying to get at is the word "repent", there's not something inherent in that word itself, the context is going to dictate what you change your mind about.

This is what I mentioned earlier, but every verse in the Bible that uses the word "repent" is gonna tell you who specifically needed to change their mind or their thinking, it's very clear. Who is the author talking to, who is the speaker talking to? And then you know who needs to change their mind. Each context is gonna describe what the individual or the group of people needed to change their minds or their thinking about.

Acts 19:4 gives us a great example, because many people say, "Well what about John the Baptist? Didn't he preach a message of repentance?" And so notice Paul's understanding of John's ministry in Acts 19:4, and notice what they were to change their mind about when John was preaching repentance, notice what Paul understood them needing to change their mind about. This verse is to some God-fearers, probably not believers yet because they hadn't heard about the one who was coming after John,

but definitely folks that were interested in the Word of God and in truth. Paul says to them in Ephesus, *“John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance,”* - and notice what he was saying to the people - *“that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”*

Why was that an important message to the Jewish people? Because we see all throughout the Gospels what Judaism had devolved into, was that if you had a piece of skin, a foreskin cut off and you were circumcised, and you were a son of the Covenant, you got into the kingdom, period. You're a natural child of Abraham, you're in. No problem, you're in. You've made it to eternity just through physical birth. And John was saying you need to change your mind about the way you get into the kingdom of God, because if God wanted to raise up children from these stones to Abraham, He could do it. That's not what it's about.

Are you trusting God's coming deliverer? Are you going to put your faith in the one who's coming after John, who is heralding Jesus? That's what they needed to change their mind about. You don't get into heaven being Abraham's children, you get into heaven by putting your faith in Jesus Christ, the One who's coming, that was the message that John preached according to Paul.

Do you know that the moment you believed in Christ you changed your mind? You repented in that way. Not necessarily of sin, but you repented. What did you change your mind about? Well, you changed your mind about what you believe in. You changed your mind about what you decided to exclusively believe in. You changed your mind about what you were trusting to get you to heaven, and that comes in all shapes and forms.

Many people trust their good works to get to heaven, many people trust their church involvement to get them to heaven, many people trust their giving to get them to heaven, many people trust the fact that God is going to be just a loving God, not a just God, and so as long as I kind of keep up my good works a little bit past my bad works then I'll get into heaven.

And you know what? People need to change their mind about that thinking. That thinking needs to change because that's not biblical. God clearly says that all of our good works are like filthy rags. They're unacceptable to Him, anything that we try to do, because when we say we have something left to do, we are saying that Jesus has not done it all. And are you really willing to stand at the judgment of God at the Great White Throne and call God a liar? “No, what your Son did was not enough.” I'm not. The Bible says He accepted Jesus's sacrifice, I'm okay with that, I'm gonna take God at face value on that.

Nobody comes into this world saved. If you're born into a church, it doesn't make you a Christian, just like if you were born in a garage it wouldn't make you a car. And just because you were born in a hospital, it doesn't make you a doctor. I mean, it doesn't even make you a nurse if you're born in the hospital, let alone a doctor. The point is you have to put your faith in Jesus Christ, nobody comes into the world a Christian, at a moment in time you have to realize that what you were trusting in to get you to heaven is not good enough, won't get you there, Jesus and Him alone can do it.

And so in that sense, everybody changes their mind about something they were trusting in when they put their faith exclusively in Jesus. Repentance implies that no person is a blank slate before salvation. Every person in the world has some kind of false hope that they rely upon for salvation, or a false hope that gives them reason to believe that they can just ignore the issue of salvation. This is what I would call the head-in-the-sand approach. “I just don't want to think about it today. I'll put that off, we'll just keep kicking the can down the road and worry about that later.” And many people have this that they need to change their mind about. A change of mind will therefore occur prior to somebody trusting exclusively in Jesus Christ for salvation. Because nobody comes into the world trusting in Christ exclusively, that has to be a change of thinking, nobody naturally thinks that way.

And so when we look at the word “repentance”, we want to be careful to understand that we're talking about a change of mind, not a change of conduct. That is probably the impetus of this confusion, is that when people talk about repentance they mean a change of conduct, they mean that you're going to stop sinning, and if we have to stop sinning to get saved, nobody can be saved.

Let me say that again: if you have to stop sinning or you have to sin less in order to be saved, you don't need a savior, you just need to get to work and start cleaning stuff up. You need to get the spiritual power washing gear on and instead of turning it on your driveway, you need to turn it on yourself. Have fun with that, you'll blow yourself into Kingdom Come! Vibrating hands won't be the worst injury you got there. This is the whole point, it's a change of mind.

Now, should a change of mind hopefully lead to a change of context? Yes, it should. But is it guaranteed? Is that really what we have to do to be saved, it's guaranteed? Well then, you've got a work that's been done, and you've got a work that's remaining to be done, you've got a gospel of works.

And so the question that comes to my mind at this point is: what went wrong? How did this word get away from how it was naturally or normally supposed to be used, to what we have today? How did this develop? And again, another kind of history lesson, and I apologize again for those that don't like history. Ultimately though, I believe that it occurred through false teaching, and then a reaction to that false teaching, and then a reaction to that false teaching, and have you ever heard of a pendulum swinging? Is that not exactly how many people still respond to false teaching today? They recognize it as false teaching, and instead of just adjusting and coming back dead central, they swing over here, and they create a new error. And then these people see the error here, and then they swing it back even further this way, and this is what we're gonna see in the history of this word.

And so one of the original teachings that came through Augustine - or he really kind of solidified it, it was losing ground - is this concept of original sin. That we are born in Adam, as sinners, that we all have a sin issue the moment we're born. It's not something that we get or contract later on, we come into this world with original sin. But here's what happened from this: people started to take it too far. And so they started to say that original sin and all sins committed prior to water baptism were removed by baptism. And so if you got baptized at age 30, every sin you committed up till age 30 and your original sin was washed away by water baptism.

Now why is this a problem? Well first of all, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. So, we're talking about the wrong liquid here, we need to be talking about blood, not water. So, there was this concept that baptism washed away original sin, and baptism washed away every sin you committed. So how do people respond to that? “Well, I better wait til I get baptized, because I'm sure I've still got some sinning left in my body. So instead of getting baptized at 30, I'm gonna roll the dice a little bit, I'm gonna try to wait until I'm like 80 or 85, and then from that point forward I'm just gonna try to really button it up, and tighten it down, and just lock it in.”

And so what happens is they begin to delay getting baptized. And they begin to have a mindset, “Well, I can just live it up, because the second I get dunked in water, all this is gonna be taken care of.” And so you see this reaction to the false teaching.

The church saw this, and what it ended up doing was producing a bunch of people that were not interested in going to church, because they're like, “Well we're gonna go live it up until we get baptized.” So, the reaction to this was, “Okay, yes. Baptism is the cure for original sin, and all the sins you commit up to that point, but there's also another solution to take care of sins you commit after baptism.” And they introduced the concept of repentance, which in their definition meant being sorry for sins, meant confessing post-baptismal sins, as well as doing acts of penance.

So, they began to introduce the concept of penance, you hear that in “repentance”, that concept of doing things to make it right, to appease God, and so you begin to see this concept. And this is why confessionals, human confessionals, developed in the history of the church. Largely for this, because it's this idea of doing penance, it's this idea of praying prayers, or a repetition of prayers, it's this idea of lighting a certain number of candles, it's this idea - even in other countries - where they will have to crawl through a city on their knees to appease God, to appease Him for all the sins committed post baptism.

Now why is this a problem biblically? Because the Bible tells us that Jesus died for all your sins, past, present, and future, and that God is satisfied with His payment for those, so why on earth would we introduce another payment system for sins that have already been paid for? And yet this was a reaction to this false teaching. To reflect this theology, the Greek words that we looked at earlier, “*metanoō*” and “*metanoia*”, translated “repent” and “repentance” were translated into Latin, which became the language of the church. And the most common Bible translation of that day, the Latin Vulgate, these words were translated into Latin by words meaning “new acts of penance” and “acts of penance” in a verb form and a noun form.

And so this idea of action, something you must do, began to be introduced into this concept of the word. The reason it carried on is because Jerome, who produced the Latin Vulgate of the Bible, retained this practice of translating “repent” as “do acts of penance” in Latin. And so you've got generation after generation, after generation of church leaders teaching this concept, using a word in Latin that reflects this idea of doing acts of penance. So how did this get into our day? Well, this translation was a standard for centuries, this was what everybody used for centuries, and I believe this caused a shift in the meaning of the word.

And then finally, John Wycliffe, a great Bible translator, while translating the first English Bible, heavily relied on the Latin Vulgate more so than he did the original Greek and Hebrew text. And so this idea carried over into his Bible, also the Douay version, 1609-1610, the version right before the King James Version also did the same, and again, the reason for the carryover. And so you're looking at Jerome writing the Vulgate around 400 A.D., all the way to about 60, we're looking at about 1200 years of history where this word was understood to mean doing acts of penance, doing something.

And so that's a big problem. Why is this such a big problem when we talk about this creeping into our definition, especially as it relates to being a prerequisite to be saved? Well first of all, if repentance does mean feeling sorry for your sin, then part of your Christian life, part of the way you get saved is dependent upon your emotions. That's scary for some of you guys that don't cry, I feel sorry for you. I mean, you might not ever be able to get to heaven. I'm kind of being facetious, but I'm just saying that if our emotions have to be depended upon for us to go to heaven, we have to do it the right way and feel the right way, we've got problems.

Have you ever laughed at an inappropriate time, something just strikes you as funny? You're done, you've got no chance, and we all understand this. And I've admitted that I'm a big crybaby during movies, but my wife doesn't cry during movies. We're just wired differently there, I don't know, I just cry during movies. But if it was feeling sorry for your sin or showing emotion, how could you depend upon that to get you to heaven? That would be a frightening thing to depend upon.

Another reason why this is interesting, is there's a separate word in the Greek to communicate sorrow. It's not “*metanoia*”, it's not “*metanoō*”, it's a word “*metamelomai*”, and it is never associated with salvation. You can't find “*metamelomai*” in any passage that has to do with what it takes to be saved. In fact, let me give you an example of the use of the word “*metamelomai*” and you tell me if this guy was saved. Matthew 27:3, “*Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful*” -

*“metamelomai”* - *“and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.”* Do you think Judas was saved? I mean he felt sorry for his sin, so sorry that he didn't even spend the money he had earned. I mean at least go get a popsicle and then throw the rest out and throw the change at him. But he was so overcome with grief and sorrow that he threw the money back, and that's that word there, but Judas wasn't saved.

If repentance is your effort to turn from sin, or turning from sin, or a promise one is making to God that they're going to turn from sin, that person's depending upon themselves. That person's salvation is dependent upon themselves. Again, 90% Christ, 10% me. 99% Christ, 0.01% me. It doesn't matter what the breakdown is, there's still a dependence upon that person to be saved.

In fact, if somebody truly repented of their sin according to this definition, that somebody had to completely turn from sin to get saved, by definition, wouldn't it be true that they would never be able to commit that sin ever again or it would prove that their salvation was false? If at the time somebody got saved, they were struggling with anger, let's say that they were a murderer in jail and they flew off the handle anytime someone criticized them, and they killed somebody. And then somebody came in with that bad news message that “You've got to turn from all your sins, and oh yeah, trust in what Jesus did for you. But you've really got to turn from all your sins.” That would mean that if that guy *ever* got angry again, then he never truly repented, and thus he never really got saved.

But see, they won't go that far, those who teach this method. Because somehow at that point, God starts grading on a curve, or God starts grading in the gray. “Well yeah, they're not gonna be perfect, but it's okay as long as they're willing.” That's not how God judges, that's not how any judge judges. “Yeah Judge, I killed that person, but I didn't mean to.” “Yeah, I got angry and I kind of slid a knife into their stomach, and I know they died, I just didn't mean to. You know, my hand just slipped, and I held on to the handle and it went in.” That's not how that works, right? You're judged on what you do and what you don't do.

And so in order to say you have to repent from your sins, completely turn 180 degrees, the standard that God would set if that was how you got saved was you could never do it again. Otherwise, you didn't repent by definition, you didn't turn. And so there's problems with that type of definition for this word. If we make it what I believe is the biblical meaning, which is “a change of mind”, it just makes better sense, and it coincides with the finished work of Christ, trusting in what He has done for us.

If repentance is turning 180 degrees (I mentioned this earlier), how would you know if you made the full turn? You'd be setting up your own standard. You know sometimes as I watch different branches of the service learning how to march, many times - especially in the young ROTC - the guys are trying to turn, and then you can see from the stands that a couple guys did it, they made it, and a couple guys are still a little off, but they think they made it. They have to be pointed out that they didn't quite make it. And so the same would be true here, you'd be depending on yourself to know what 180 degrees looks like from God's perspective if that's how you got saved. How would you ever know?

And then finally, if repentance as defined above is required for salvation, how can we deny that this would be teaching a faith plus works salvation? Faith in what Christ has done, but you still have to turn from sin, you still have to have actions that indicate, and then that proves that you're indeed saved. And so there's a lot of problems with this definition, and again, our emphasis today is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that what Jesus did accomplished all that we need, we need nothing else to get to heaven other than what He's done for us. And so the Bible is very clear that the only way we can get to heaven is when we put our faith in Jesus and what He did for us alone.

I would just encourage you or challenge you to look in your Bibles this week, look at where “repentance” and “repent” are used and see if you can determine who is supposed to change their mind and what they are supposed to change their mind about. I think it will just jump off the page.

Don't forget, in the next section, Romans 5, we need this as believers. If you know this already, you need to be reminded of it, and we need to just start settling in to the great riches we have in Jesus Christ.

# CHAPTER 28

## We Have an Identity Crisis!

### Romans 5:12-14

One of the things we're going to talk about today is why we're free from condemnation, and that's our position in Christ. And as we move on in the book of Romans, we're going to pick back up in verse 12 this morning. We'll cover three verses, and the reason we're going to cover three verses is because I'm gonna provide a little bit of an introduction to this whole concept of identification, which is so key in walking and living the Christian life. Because there are things that we need to understand about our past, our past family history if you will, and our current family history. So, we're going to look at that in the area of identification.

One of the things that we've got to understand is in the area of justification, which is what we've been covering in the first four and a half or five chapters of the book of Romans, we understand that justification is an act of God. A one-time act, a judicial, legal declaration of righteousness. Now in this act, God does not make somebody righteous, that's something different, that's called "sanctification". But in justification, God legally bangs the gavel down and declares the person righteous who puts their faith in Jesus and what He did for them by dying for their sins and rising again. And that is a one-time act that's done, complete the moment someone transferred their faith from whatever they were trusting in and put it in Jesus and Him alone. They are justified, done deal, past tense, a one-time event, God has declared them righteous.

When we move into sanctification, which we're going to be doing here as we move into the end of Romans chapter 5, chapters 6, 7, and the beginning part of 8, what we're going to see is different from justification because this is an ongoing act of God, an ongoing work of the Spirit of God in our lives. And in this stage, God is trying to make us practically holy. He's made provision so that you can grow in holiness and grow in righteousness, to stay in fellowship with Him, that's really the goal. Just remember, Christianity is all about relationship. It's not about just getting together and doing the right things, checking off the boxes, stop doing these things and stop checking off these boxes. The God of the universe, the One who spoke everything into existence wants a relationship with you. John tells us that He desires those who worship Him in spirit and in truth.

And so God is not as caught up on the externals that we get caught up on. He's more concerned about what's going on internally. What's going on in your mind? How are you thinking? How are you relating to Him? How are you viewing life and life circumstances? Are you viewing it just the way the world does? You know, somebody cuts you off in traffic - and hopefully your finger is not coming out - is your fist coming out, just like everybody else in the world? Is that how you view life, that life is centered around you, or are you viewing it from a divine perspective? That's what sanctification is all about.

As we talk about Christianity, we have an identity crisis going on. And I'm not talking about stolen identity, I'm talking about believers who don't understand who we are and what we possess because we're now in Christ. And that's a great phrase: *in* Christ. There's meaning to that, it's not just a preposition and a name. There's a depth of meaning that you can never explore fully in this lifetime, but we want to try to, because we want to benefit from what that means to be in Christ.

You know, that reminds me of a story - there are many airline people here in our body, so you'll appreciate this. Have you ever dealt with a difficult person in the airline industry, any difficult customers?

Of course you have, probably on a daily basis. But a United Airlines gate agent in Denver, Colorado was confronted with a passenger who probably deserved to fly as cargo instead of flying in coach. During the final days at Denver's old Stapleton Airport, a crowded United flight was canceled, and unfortunately, they weren't staffed up to handle all of the rebooking.

So, they had a single agent at the desk doing the best job that she could, rebooking a long line of inconvenienced travelers. Suddenly an angry passenger pushed his way to the desk - and you just know what's coming, don't you? He slapped his ticket down on the counter and he said, "I have to be on this flight, and it has to be first-class. Make it happen." The agent replied like all airline agents do - they're polite and professional - and she says, "I'm sorry, sir. I'll be happy to try to help you, but I've got to help these folks first, so if you'll get to the end of the line, I'm sure we'll be able to work something out when it's your turn." And then he responded, unimpressed, loudly so the passengers behind him could hear, "Do you have any idea who I am?"

Now just a sidebar on that story, if you have to ask somebody if they know who you are, they don't. So don't even go there. So, he said, "Do you know who I am?" This is great, without hesitating, that gate agent smiled, grabbed her public address microphone and said, "May I have your attention, please." She began, her voice bellowing through the terminal. "We have a passenger here at the gate who does not know who he is. If anyone can help him find his identity, please come to gate 17." The folks behind him in line began laughing hysterically and although people were late due to the canceled flight, they were no longer angry at United.

But you know, for many believers, the same thing is happening. There is an identity crisis, we do not know who we are in Christ, and as a result of that, we continue to run the treadmill of a failed Christian life experience. We read about power in the New Testament, we read about victory over sin, and we say, "That could never be me. I could never experience that." And we have to understand who we are in Christ. You've got to understand the resources that you possess now that you put your faith in Christ to save you from the penalty of sin. There are resources that God has equipped you with, provided you with, so that you can live in victory over the power of sin, and we're going to look at that today.

One of the ways that Paul begins to introduce this whole topic of sanctification, is through the idea of federal headship. And what does federal headship mean? Well, very simply put, it means that your leader, your authority, whoever that is, makes a decision that impacts you. He or she does something that impacts you. And so let's just look through it from an American perspective. I would assume that most people in this room are American citizens, there might be a straggler here and there, and that's okay, you're welcome in our church. But let's just assume that we've got American citizens here and we can relate to this federal headship.

If President Trump makes an alliance with a certain country, we are in alliance with that country. Now before anybody tries to give me a civics lesson, I understand Congress and the Senate, I know they've got to work with them on some of these things, I get it, I'm just using this as an example. But if we have an ally in Germany, you have an ally in Germany, and it's based on the decision of our federal head. In contrast, if he declares war on a certain country, if we go home today and read the news and we're at war with North Korea, you are now at war with North Korea as an American citizen. Because your federal head has decided to engage us in war, we're now at war.

If he changes health care - and some people say "Amen" - if he's able to work through that, then our health care will change. We will be impacted on the ground with how we do health care. If he changes the tax code, then our tax reporting structure will change. I think we get the point. In fact, everyone in here was impacted by an ancestral federal head. In other words, you are an American here



today because at some point, someone in your history and your ancestry moved to America, they made that decision to move here, and you've benefited from that decision. You are now an American because of that decision. You didn't make that decision, they made the decision, and you have been impacted by it. And so you see this concept hopefully that makes sense as it regards the federal head.

The same is true of an employer. When your employer decides to remove the coffee pot from the break room, you suffer, don't you? And then when he decides to put in a Coke machine with flavors, you benefit from that as an employee. So, you see this concept of federal head really working out in lots of different areas in our life. I can think of one even in our personal family: when Carrie and I decided to move to Georgia to take this role as pastor, guess what our kids weren't able to decide? "Yeah, you guys go ahead, we'll stay in Texas." Their federal head, me, made the decision to move to Georgia, and they needed to hop on that moving truck when we were rolling out of town, they were coming with me. And so there's people impacted by what federal heads do.

Here's the thing we've got to understand, is that God sees all of humanity in one of two categories, under one of two federal heads. As you sit here today, you're not Black, you're not White, you're not Hispanic, you don't have a southern drawl, you don't have a northern accent, you don't say "eh", you don't say "y'all", that's not how God sees people. I know that's how we see people, but God sees people as it relates to who they are in their federal head. You either sit here today and you are in Adam, or you are in Christ. That's God's estimation of everybody in the world today. There are only two heads, if you will, of the human race, you are either in Adam or you're in Christ.

And so as we jump into Romans 5, and before we get there, we want to understand a couple of things. The decisions that your federal head makes, you are impacted by, and that's what the whole chapter of Romans is about. Now the bad news is we had a federal head that we were born into in our natural family that made a very poor decision, and you were impacted negatively by that. And we say, "Oh man, that's not fair. I mean, I'm held accountable for something this guy did thousands of years ago?"

But here's where it's great that it remains unfair because God now can accept you into his family based on what this other federal head did for you, and that's not fair either. And that's why we rejoice in the grace of God because God can give you something you don't deserve. But just like He did with Adam, it's the same way He's gonna do with Christ, but it's two different distinctions. And so that's what we're gonna look at really in Romans chapter 5.

And so when we talk about identification, many times people will say, "Well it's the First Adam and the Second Adam." You'll hear that concept, and it's talking about two different heads. That's incorrect, and I'll tell you why, because if there's a first Adam and a second Adam, what does it potentially imply? There could be a third Adam, there could be a fourth Adam, this list could go on and on. But I like more of the phraseology "the First Adam and the Last Adam", pronouncing some finality, that there's not going to be another federal head that God is going to identify you with. You're either identified with Adam, or you're identified with Christ.

And so one of the things we need to know as a believer is whom God identifies us with. In other words, we need to know who our federal head is, and that should impact the way that we live our life. And based on God's identification with us in Christ, we're gonna see some remarkable truths in Romans 6. Number one: because you're in Christ, you died to sin, that's Romans chapter 6. Because you're in Christ, you died to the law, that's Romans chapter 7. and because you're in Christ, Romans 8:1 is going to tell us there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There's no condemnation that remains for you, and it's not based on your behavior, it's based on the fact that God placed you in Christ, and you actually benefit from what He's done for you on this federal head level.

So as a believer we need to know the following three things: number one, who our federal head is. Number two, what our federal head has done. And number three, how we have been impacted by it. And it's in this area of "how" that we're gonna find the key to sanctification. We're gonna find the key to growing in our Christlikeness, to growing in spirituality. It's in this "how" that we're gonna begin to see that God not only made a provision for the penalty of sin, but God has made a provision for the power of sin in the believer's life.

And if you don't know what that is, and if I were to ask you to take a sheet of paper and write down what provision did God make for the power of sin in your life, and you would be scratching your head and not really sure what to write, or you'd just be guessing, this study's gonna be meaningful to you. Because you're gonna see from the word of God what God has done to give you victory over sin in your life, and that's really where the rubber meets the road. Now it's theological, but it's theological in the sense that you can take it down and put it right into your shoe leather. This is exactly where you and I live on a daily basis, and so let's continue to dive in here.

On the same side, it's not just recognizing that God identifies this with Christ, but we need to change our thinking. We need to begin to identify ourselves with the federal head that God identifies us with, this is recognizing that you're part of the family. Many of you have stayed the night somewhere, maybe with some friends, and you know how it is. Maybe you roll into town about eight o'clock, and you catch up a little bit, and then they head off to bed. And you're brushing your teeth, getting ready to go to bed, it's about 10:30, and you say, "Man I'm thirsty." And what do you do? Well, you're like, "Oh, I don't know where any of their cups are. I don't know if I'm allowed to take these. I mean, are these cups they use or are they just cups that they keep in their cabinet?"

And so what do you end up doing? While you're using the bathroom sink, maybe just get a drink of water from the faucet, because you don't want to mess up the system. You know, you don't feel like part of the family. But then the next morning your friend says, "We forgot to show you, here's the bowls, here's the cups, here's the spoons, here's the forks, and this whole pantry is for you."

I just had this experience in Texas, they went out and bought a ton of food for me and I thought, "Man, they must think I'm fat." Because they filled the pantry up for me they said, "You can have all of this." But they showed me where the bowls were, and you know even the first day I kind of hesitated, like "Can I get that myself or should I ask them?" But by day two, I was walking around like I owned the place! I was taking bowls out here, and I was making this, and I was mixing this up, and that's kind of the imagery that we've got.

When you're in Christ, God wants you to rest in your position and enjoy the benefits that He's got for you. He doesn't want you inching around or acting like you don't belong. You belong! Not because you're good, or special, or you've got your stuff together today. You belong because Jesus Christ has got His stuff together. Jesus Christ did for you what you could not do, and God accepts you on the basis of that. In fact, before we go on in Romans, we find in 1 Corinthians 1 a very subtle statement. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 it says this: "*But of Him,*" - God - "*you are in Christ Jesus.*" Who placed you into Christ? God the Father did. And God wants you to remain there permanently, and that's the whole point of this positional truth is that you are in Christ permanently and you can never leave that box.

And so let's continue to look at some of the truth. I know that makes no sense right now but let me explain. One of the things that we talked about, when God identifies you with Jesus Christ, we need to begin to identify ourselves as being in Christ. And I put this picture of Spider-Man up here as a great example, because I've had two sons now, the youngest one especially loves Spider-Man. And so you know what happens when he loves Spider-Man? He runs around the house and he's throwing up little pretend webs, and he's flipping around the couch, and he's making the sounds, and he puts on his

Spider-Man mask and a Spider-Man shirt, and he identifies with Spider-Man. And in that moment, when he's running around like this, this picture of Spider-Man is what he thinks he looks like. He's identified with him.

And we see this with little girls identifying themselves as they grow up with princesses, or kids identifying themselves with different athletes, wearing their jersey and saying, "I'm gonna do just like LeBron James!" And they're trying to dribble between their legs, and they think they look like him. They're identifying themselves with him. We see this in schools, the Gothic kids sit over here, the athletes sit over here, the academic decathlon kids, the student council kids, and you identify with the group. And many times, you don't identify with a Gothic group unless you're willing to paint your nails black, and wear black lipstick, and dye your hair black, and wear black clothes, and you start to look like the group that you identify with.

And see, there's benefit just even in this mindset of identification, starting to see yourself the way God sees you. If you've ever made the comment, "Oh man, I'm just a failure. I'll never amount to anything in the Christian life." You need to stop identifying yourself with the old Adam, you need to stop seeing yourself as associated with him. That's not true of you anymore. Now, you may fail, you may make mistakes, but God sees you in Christ. He sees you with potential. Because the moment that you begin to depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ in your life, you're spiritual, and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. And so we begin to just change our thinking and acknowledge that we are no longer in Adam, we are in Christ, and this is very important as we go forward.

I know I said we're gonna do a little bit of a longer introduction today, but before we do this, let's review our history. There may be some people in this room who did not grow up with their biological parents. And I think of the stories you read where kids are adopted off early in life as a baby, and they grow up in a loving family of adoptive parents, and yet what usually happens about the time they start hitting their teenage years? There's a curiosity. They love their family, and they love what's been going on, they love the fact that they adopted them, but there's this itching curiosity to know their real biological parents, to see if they have any brothers and sisters, if their parents are still alive, the story behind why they were given up, there's just this itching curiosity to know their history.

And in the same way, we want to review our history in Adam. Because once we understand this history, I think we're going to be so much more ready to put it in our rearview mirror and to stop identifying ourselves in this way and begin to identify ourselves the way that God now sees us. And so some of the quick summaries: in Adam you entered your federal head's family through birth. When you're born physically, you're born in Adam. That's your federal head, that's who God identifies you with, that's whose family you're in, and you enter that by physical force, so that's true of everybody who's ever been born physically. They're in Adam, they're under that federal head. Nobody born physically is automatically born in Christ or in that family. And so we see that this is true of everybody that's ever been a human in mankind's history, they're born in Adam.

But in Christ, you don't enter by a physical birth, you don't climb back into your mother's womb and get born again like Nicodemus thought. You must be born again, you must be born from above, and you enter Christ's family through spiritual birth. And so the moment you hear the gospel, that Christ died for your sins and rose again, and you put your faith in Him and Him alone, you are now taken out of the family of Adam and you are born again in Christ. And so, no longer to go back to this family as we'll see as we continue to the distinctions and the contrast. This is what we're gonna see in Romans 5.

Adam had committed one trespass. As our federal head, he made a big mistake, and we all suffered the consequences for that. In Christ, He performed a righteous act that benefited all who will trust in His righteous act. One act by the federal head condemns everybody in Adam. But also in

contrast, Christ, this federal head, by one act can free everybody from condemnation. In Adam, everyone in Adam will face condemnation, the lake of fire. We learn from Romans 8:1 that everyone in Christ will never face condemnation, they've been justified, they've been declared righteous, they have a ticket to heaven, if you will.

Everyone in Adam has guilt. Everyone in Christ, guilt has been removed through the sacrifice of Christ, and we actually have life. And not only eternal life in a quantitative sense, in talking about timeframe, but a quality of life. Understanding that when we sin, that sin has been paid for. Understanding that when we sin, there's also fellowship forgiveness available when we confess our sin, that God wants us right back into fellowship with Him. And so we understand these things as it relates positionally.

The other thing we see in Adam is that sin reigns like a king through death. This is why sin dominates, and dominates, and dominates the unbeliever. Now you may say, "Well there are unbelievers that do a lot of good things." I understand that from a human perspective that's true. I would love to have a neighbor that helps and mows my lawn once in a while, rather than a neighbor that wants to kill me. I mean, I get that. There's differences and levels of goodness, and I understand that.

But from God's perspective, what He says is that every good work, all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. In other words, even the good things that unbelievers do are not acceptable to God, they don't meet that standard. There's some motive that's off there, there's some desire to maybe be seen for their good works and be recognized, we don't know, the point is that none of those good works are acceptable to God. And so sin, even in these "good works" reigns, and all sin produces like clockwork, death. That's all sin does.

Now in Christ, grace reigns through righteousness, and that's not only a positional righteousness which we have in Christ, where we were declared righteous the moment we put our faith in Christ, but also God making us practically righteous as we begin to rest in these truths. In Adam, the ground and source for sin in death is found in him and that relationship to him. But in Christ, the ground and source of righteousness and life is found.

In Adam, you've got one source to live from: sin. And that's the thing, that's why when you understand this concept of federal headship, and somebody thinks and looks at getting to heaven, and they think, "Well, all you gotta do is do good works to help you get out of this box and into this box." you see that you're buried, that what he did condemns you, there's no way to get out of this on your own. And that's why good works never contribute to anything, because every good work is clouded by the fact that you are in Adam, that you've got no chance of getting out of him on your own. We looked at 1 Corinthians 1:30, it's *of God* that you're in Christ, it's *of God* that you were removed from Adam. God has got to do that miraculous work of changing your federal head, you cannot do it yourself, but you can trust in the One who can do it for you, and that's the message of the gospel.

But you know, in Christ, you have the potential to live from one of two sources. Now, that doesn't mean that you bounce back and forth between boxes, what that means is what we're gonna see in Romans 6, even though you're now in Christ, you've got an indwelling source of sin that you can continue to present yourself to and be its slave. Or, you have for the first time the ability to present yourself to God and be a slave of righteousness. But you have that choice, you've got that ability to count on God's provision for you and either present yourself to sin, or to present yourself to God. And so you've got the potential to live - even as a Christian - from one of two sources. The person in Adam doesn't have that choice, they've got one source to live from and that's sin.

This is great news! You can leave this family, you can get out of this family, and it's via death we're gonna see that not only did Christ die for your sins, but you died with Christ. Did you know that

you have already died if you're a believer? You didn't attend that funeral. But you know that that's true of you the moment you put your faith in Christ. God identified you so closely with Jesus Christ that He took you into His death, burial, and resurrection, He did it for a purpose, and that's to free you from sin, we're gonna see that in Romans 6. But that's how you get out of the family, that's how you get out of Adam's family.

And how did you get into God's family? You were born again. You're born into this family. Here's the good news about being in this family: you can never leave this family. You know why? Because you can no longer die. Because Christ lives, because your federal head lives, you live. Because Christ was raised up, you will be raised up. That's the truth of the Bible. You can no longer have any chance of leaving this family, and that is eternal security on a grand level. Because now you are found in Christ, and so when God looks at you, He no longer sees the sin that weighs you down in Adam, He sees you in Christ, His beloved Son. And every time He looks to His right hand and sees His Son sitting next to Him and smiles at Jesus, in many ways He's smiling at you. And He accepts you the way that He accepts His Son, He loves you the way that He loves His Son. Why is this the case? Because He's put you in Christ, you're in the right box, you're identified with the right federal head.

And so as we go on now, let's jump into Romans chapter 5 after we have introduced this concept. We're gonna start in verse 12: *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned - (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.)"*

And so in Romans 5:12, what we see is this word "therefore." Why is that there? Do you remember where we came from in chapter 5? We came out of the first 11 verses really detailing the benefits of our justification, and we looked at, I think it was 8 or 9 benefits that we have now that we're justified, one of those being in verse 1, we have peace with God. Another one is we've got the ability to look at trials from God's perspective and understand why trials come to us in life. These are all benefits from justification.

And so now what he's saying is this, "Therefore, based on all of that, you're safe and secure because of your new position, and because of who you are now identified with." And to do that, he's going to review your history. Before, we were identified with Adam and now he's gonna say, "Just as you were identified with Adam, now that you're saved, now that you've been justified, you're identified with Christ." In fact, we see this phrase in verse 12, *"just as through one man"*, he's comparing these two federal heads, and the reason he's comparing is he wants to give us confidence in our new federal head, in Christ, what we have now in Christ. And this really solidifies everything he's been teaching.

It's like plucking the daisy petals and saying, "She loves me. She loves me not. She loves me..." and then you just hope you get down to the bottom and she still loves me. But you never know unless you count the petals. But God is not in heaven going, "Um, I love him. I love him not, I love him. I love him not." No, the moment you put your faith in Christ you're there. You're there to stay permanently, it's not a daisy kind of love. It's an agape love, it's an unconditional love, and He can accept you based on the basis of His grace because of what Jesus has done for you, and because of the fact that He's placed you in Christ.

And so what we see from this verse is that it's, *"just as through one man sin entered in the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."* And what we see here is the act of this one man, Adam, causing sin to enter the world. Why does the world have sin in it? Why is there suffering? Why is there death?

We can all point the finger back at Adam. What an uncomfortable place to be. You know, something goes wrong and everyone's pointing their finger at you. But it's true, this is where it all came into existence. Right there in the Garden of Eden, back in Genesis 3 when Adam took the fruit of the tree that he was commanded not to eat from. That's when sin entered the world, and guess what? Death tracked right along behind him, and this happened at the fall.

We also see in James 1:15 this progression as well, it's this internal lust, these internal desires that lead to sin, and then sin when it's completed leads to death or brings death. And so we see that same pattern even in our own lives. But where did it enter the world, where did it come in? It came in right at the fall. Now why is this important to you? You might say, "This is an old Sunday School lesson. I already know that Adam fell, I already know that Adam sinned, I mean I got that back in Genesis 3. We're in Romans, why are we still talking about that?" It's because of this concept of federal headship, that's why. When he did that, you were impacted. In fact, the entire human race was impacted, and that's what Paul is going to talk about. This one act, because we were united with Adam, had serious ramifications. Not only for him, but for all of us.

And so the first ramification we see is simply this: death came into the world through Adam's sin. This is where death came from. We see in Genesis 2:16 that God clearly told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die. And so when we get into Romans 5:12, our acts of sin are not even in view here. Paul covered that in Romans 1:18-3:20, where he talks about yours and my acts of sin, the fact that all have sinned and committed acts of sin. That's not even in view here. What God is saying is because Adam sinned, you actually sinned in Adam. You were held responsible for what your federal head did. And I know you're thinking, "Well that's not fair!" That's okay, hang with me, because unfairness is actually going to be a good thing when we start talking about our second federal head.

But you know that this death in Adam's life occurred in multiple aspects, and we've looked at this a couple of times in the book of Romans. But first, he died physically. That's the way we typically think of death, we think of physical death. We've been to funerals, we've been to open caskets where we come up and pay our respects to our friend, and our friend's body or loved one's body is there, but they're not there. You know there's this separation that occurs, a physical death between the spirit and the soul and the body. But that physical death happened to Adam nine hundred years after he ate from the fruit.

Another aspect of death is number two, relational. He immediately had a separation in his relationship with God. We see that in the way that he responded to God's presence in the garden, he hid from Him, he tried to cover himself with fig leaves. There was a relational death there, and that one happened immediately.

And then the third one is spiritual death, and that would mean this: that if Adam's sin problem was not taken care of, he would spend eternity separated from God, in a place that God had initially created for Satan and his angels called the lake of fire. But that also happened immediately, Adam's position of friendship and fellowship had completely changed as a result of death, and that's when death entered the world. When sin entered the world, death followed.

Now we see this death and all of these aspects also spread to all men, look at 5:12 again. He says, "*just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin,*" - notice this next phrase - "*and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*" And again, we're not talking about *your* acts of sin, what we're saying is because Adam sinned, you sinned. Because Adam died, you died. Because Adam was condemned, you're condemned. See, it all has to do with this federal headship. What did Adam do that impacted you? At a federal level, this is why everyone still dies. You've never met anybody that's beat

that ultimate statistic: ten out of ten people die. Have you ever met anybody that's never died? All of us die, and the reason for that is because of what Adam did. We were taken into his death; we were associated with him as our federal head.

Now the second thing we see from Adam is because all men sinned in Adam because he was their federal head, so when he sinned, you also sinned. We talked about it not referring to our acts of sin here, but our position of sin. Not only have we done wrong, but we were also born wrong. That's one of the things that many times we don't think of, and that's why, again, this whole concept of good works, "Well if I just do more good things than I do bad things, then maybe I can go to heaven." No, the issue is not only the things you do or don't do, but your birth. Your birth was wrong, your federal head was wrong, you were associated with him and what he did, and you reaped the consequences from that.

And so what Paul is referring to specifically is that each one of us would experience death, condemnation, etc. because of what Adam did. Again, death spread to all men because all sinned in Adam. So, this section is specifically discussing this, and hopefully this point has been made that man's single action got all of us into trouble. And also what we're going to see at the end of Romans five is how another Man's single action could get us out of a bad spot, could get us out of trouble.

Now Paul just makes this statement, and what we're gonna see in verses 13-14 is he's going to prove his statement. How do we know that death and sin spread to all men? How do we know that from the pages of history? Well, we get into verses 13 and 14 and we read this: *"(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.)"*

And I want you to notice something at the beginning of verse 13 if you hadn't noticed it before. Do you have a parenthesis there? Most of you will have a parenthesis in your Bible there, and if you trace down where that parenthesis ends, it should end at the end of verse 17. And so Paul really quickly takes a sidebar to explain this in more detail or to prove his point.

If we were just reading through with the information full flow, we would jump from verse 12 to verse 18, and notice that conclusion in verse 18: *"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life."* That's really the conclusion of the thought in verse 12, that's how you put it all together.

But we have this little parenthesis in here, and I think it's important because I think what Paul is doing is proving that what he's saying is true, that sin is not imputed without law, and we see this in verse 13. And he makes an interesting point because what he's going to say is that sin has been in the world since Adam, and death has also been in the world since Adam, but the law came years later with Moses.

So how does that reconcile? Because we always thought, "Well if you break the law, then you die, and that's why death is there." And Paul is saying, "No, no. The reason people die is because they were associated with their federal head, they were impacted by what Adam did. He was the race of that family." In fact, as you know your history in Genesis, this is probably why God did not kill Cain on the spot. There was not a law that said, "don't kill" yet. That came in the law, and so he wasn't killed on the spot, but did Cain die eventually? Yeah, he died. Unless you know where he lives today, I mean, he's dead.

Why did he die? Did he die because he killed his brother, or did he die because his father had sinned, and death entered the world through sin? He was in his father when Adam sinned, and he reaped the benefits of his federal head. That's why Cain died, and that's Paul's point here. Because of this sin, sin was not imputed per se or charged to their account, because no one had violated a clearly defined

and revealed standard, no one had broken a law yet. There were only two people on earth that could have broken the law that was given, and that was “Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” and they broke it. Past that, there were no other clearly defined standards.

And yet you read Genesis 5 and it's just a funeral procession: and this guy lived, he begot so-and-so, and then he died. And then this guy lived, and he begot so-and-so and then he died. And then this guy lived, and he begot so-and-so, and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died. And it's just a funeral procession, proving exactly what Paul says here, that because you were identified with your federal head, death came into the world, death came to you, sin came to you, that's why we stand condemned before a holy God. There's a source issue, a position, a family issue here. And remember, because of our federal headship relationship with Adam, we also experience the consequences from his one action. Again, this is how Paul has proven that all men sinned in Adam and then suffered the consequences of Adam's sin.

Verse 14, we have this concept that death reigned. Death reigned like a king, you might say. Verse 14, *“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”* And so he says, “Well in spite of this or nevertheless, in spite of the fact that there was not a clear standard to violate, everyone from Adam to Moses still died and this happened to them because of what had happened to their federal head.” Now not to confuse things, but Enoch did walk with God, so Enoch did not die, we saw that in Genesis 5. I think there's a reason for that, but it's a side trail, we won't get into that today.

But in terms of what had happened to everybody, it proves the fact that Paul says God views humanity in relationship to their federal head. And as a result, even though they had not committed or violated a law, they too died from Adam to Moses. Death is said to have reigned, literally meaning “to rule over.” Nobody escaped the death penalty. Every time you see a little white casket of a little baby that's passed away, that's a reminder of this truth. That's why even babies can die, because they too - and that's the hardest thing to say, right? From a pastor's perspective, from a father's perspective, to say that these little babies sinned in Adam and that's why they died. I mean, it's not the reason they died, but that is a reason death enacts on them. That's a hard thing to say, because you see these little babies, they're so innocent, what happened? But it just proves a point of federal headship, the fact that what Adam did impacted us all.

As we said, no one from Adam to Moses had a clear-cut command, “Don't eat from this, don't do this or you'll surely die.” And so when Adam sinned, he transgressed, he willingly violated the direct command of God. It wasn't something that he was confused about, he knew exactly what he was not supposed to do, he knew exactly what tree he was supposed to stay away from. And so no one after him up until Moses sinned in the same manner that Adam did, a clearly defined standard which he willingly violated. Nobody did that, and yet everyone still died, and that's the point that Paul is driving home here.

And then he makes this last comment in the very last part of verse 14, he says, *“of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”* And that's what we're gonna get into in the rest of this chapter. This word “type” is an interesting word, but what it is telling us is just as Adam was a federal head whose action affected many, there would be another One who would have more positive effects on many.

And so when we look at this word “type”, it's an interesting word, it means *something that's caused by strikes, blows, a mark, or a print, an impression.* And so the idea is just as Adam made a decision that impacted many, there's going to be another One who made a decision, who committed a righteous act instead of a failure, who's going to have the ability to impact many, and of course we know that to be



none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the rest of the chapter describes how Adam was a type of the One who was to come.

Now again, why are we going through that? Why does Paul even go here? I used to know of a pastor that would teach Romans 1-8 and he would skip this section, because he didn't even know why it fit. He was like, "This is kind of missing the point, we've got justification, we just go right into sanctification, so why is this so important?" This is so important because the method, the means by which you are sanctified, goes through this process of identification. Because the way that God made provision for you to have deliverance from sin's power is a direct result of your identification with Jesus Christ, and that's what we're gonna look at in Romans 6, so this is very important.

It also should hopefully give you great confidence in your life that you now have everything that the Bible says you have now that you're saved. You can't lose it, it's yours forever. When God promises you eternal life, you have eternal life. That means everlasting life that doesn't end. When God promises you that you're accepted in the beloved, that means even on your worst day you're accepted. Why? Because you behaved, and you performed? No, because quite frankly, even on our best day we don't deserve to be accepted. But we are accepted, Ephesians tells us, *'in the beloved.'*

I love that word. As God describes Jesus Christ, He describes Him as the agape Son. Would you ever think that God the Father could be upset with Jesus, or unsatisfied with Jesus, or just say, "Jesus, get away from me, you're bothering me today.?" Could that ever happen? No! He's completely satisfied with Jesus, He completely loves Jesus, and because you are in Christ, you are completely accepted in Christ. That's the message of identification.

And so how can knowing this impact you? A couple of things: I believe it's foundational for knowing and relying upon God's provision for victory over sin in your life. That's a very practical reason, but I think even more practically, it can completely change the way that you view yourself in your life in general. I borrowed this list from a book that I thought was just very insightful, and it's just the contrast of many times what we think or feel about ourselves versus what God says about me.

Many times, we think of ourselves, "Well, I'm always the last one chosen. No one would pick me." Ephesians 1:4 says that you're chosen by the One who makes the rules, the One whose opinion really matters. You're chosen in Christ. "I feel guilty all the time. I just don't measure up; there's no way God could accept me." Do you know that God says that He's the One who makes the rules, and He says if you put your faith in Christ, you're forgiven. You don't have to have guilt anymore; He's taken that away. "God seems so far away." The Word of God says you've been brought near to God in Christ. "Oh, my problems are too trivial for God." No, you have boldness and confidence to enter His presence. "I'm too weak to resist sin. I'm never gonna change, I'm always going to struggle with this sin." No, the truth of the word of God is that Christ has freed you from sins, you do not have to be dominated by sin.

In fact, the normal Christian life should be a life of victory, not a life of failure. And if you're experiencing failure today and you've convinced yourself, "Well that's just the way it is." I've got good news for you. I've got a lot of good news for you over the course of the next few months. That's not true of you. Now that you're in Christ, you've got the ability to live in victory, and that is a "Glory, hallelujah!" That is a gospel truth for the believer in Jesus Christ, we've got to know that we've got that.

"I feel like God has given up on me." God doesn't condemn you because you're in Christ! He will never condemn you, you will never be condemned, even on your worst day, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ. "I feel like no one loves me. I'm not a saint." You are fully accepted in Jesus Christ by God the Father. These are all true of you because of your position in Christ. If you don't already, you need to start viewing yourself as (whatever your name is) "John in Christ." I am accepted in the beloved, I

am loved unconditionally by the Father, He will never cast me out, no not ever, and I'll be with Him for eternity. We need to understand these truths, these are so important it can change your life on a daily basis, just learning how to identify yourself with the federal head that God identifies you with.

“I'm inadequate, I'm lacking, I'm not good enough.” No, the Word of God says you are complete in Christ. You have the fullness that you need to live the Christian life, you've got it all, you're not lacking anything. As we leave today, let's believe these truths. Let's start to incorporate these truths into our thinking, let's start to recognize that God had a plan for Romans 5:12-21, and it's not just to go past it as quickly as we can. It's to prepare us to soak in, and rest in, and start to walk in the truth of our sanctification.

# CHAPTER 29

## Much More Than Not Alike

### Romans 5:15-19

We're going to continue our study here in the book of Romans, we're going to look at this topic of identification, because it's one of those topics that I think is really under emphasized in Christian teaching. In fact, I shared last week that at times, many Bible teachers will just skip through this section or fly through this section, kind of not really knowing how it fits with the previous context to where we're going in Chapter 6.

But I think it's a key linchpin, and part of the reason I think that is because here in the Church of Jesus Christ, I believe we're having an identity crisis. And it's not a gender identity crisis, it's not identity theft, it's an identity crisis in which we don't understand who we are or what we have in Christ Jesus. And it's one of those topics that, interestingly enough, is so littered through the pages of Scripture that if you're not looking for this phrase "in Christ" you'll just fly right past it, you'll miss it.

But it's very key, in fact, it's so key that the security that we have in all three phases of our salvation is based on identification. When we talk about three phases of salvation we're talking about "justification", past tense that says, "I have been saved from the penalty of sin." We're talking about "sanctification", present tense that says, "I am being saved from the power of sin." And we're also talking about a future tense called "glorification", which means that we'll be saved from the very presence of sin at death.

Let me show you a couple of things. If you want to just put your finger in Romans, you can leave it there, and if you've got more than one finger then you can go with me to 2 Corinthians 5:21, if you want to, I'll just read it for you. But I want you to notice this phrase "in Christ" as it relates to our righteousness, as it relates to us being declared righteous. 2 Corinthians 5:21, *"For He made Him"* - Jesus - *"who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God"* - and notice that next phrase - *"in Him."*

See, God can declare you righteous, not because you have promised to behave the rest of your life, or that you have sworn and taken an oath that you'll quit sinning, and you're going to sin less and less. No, that's not why God saves you. God saved you because you trusted in the finished work of another, and when you did that, God took you out of your old family, your old federal head, and He placed you in Christ. And now you know what? You have righteousness. You have been credited righteousness; Jesus Christ is your righteousness that can never change. And see, our position, our identity secures that righteous standing before God. Go with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. The beautiful thing about our identification with Christ is you didn't place yourself in Christ, God put you there. God had a purpose for putting you there.

And so in 1 Corinthians 1:30 he says this: *"But of Him"* - speaking of God - *"you are"* - again, notice the phrase - *"in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God"* - notice the next couple of phrases - *"-and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-."* See, you have been set apart to God, you've been sanctified in Christ, and now God wants to make that positional sanctification a reality in your daily life. He wants you to grow in who you are in Christ; you have been sanctified.

And then finally, going back to Romans chapter 8, we understand that even if you fail in life, and even if you make mistakes, nothing can separate you from the love of God. Why? Because you've been placed in Christ, look at Romans 8:39. *"Nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to*

*separate us from the love of God*" - which is where? - *"in Christ Jesus our Lord."* See, this identification, this isn't just positive thinking. We're not telling you to think positively and when things are going bad, just remember who you are in Christ. That's not the whole message. The message is yes, we need to remember that, but the reason we need to remember it is because it's true. This is true of you. This is God letting us in behind the kitchen doors showing us how He views you on a daily basis.

And so where this becomes practical is when you begin to say, "Well, I'm a failure. I'm never going to amount to anything." "Oh, no one will listen to me. No one likes me. I've got no value in this life." All this kind of thinking, that's all wrong, because the truth of the matter is God views you much differently. And you know what? In the grand scheme of things, who cares what you think of yourself? I'm more concerned about what God thinks of you. And see, identification gives us that truth that God views you differently than you view yourself, and you as a believer need to start aligning your thinking with the way God thinks about you and stop believing all of the garbage in this world.

Every time I see a magazine cover, every time I see an advertisement, I just think lie, lie, lie, those are all lies. That's what our world promotes; I want to promote truth. Romans 5, this section of Romans, promotes the truth that you are no longer seen in Adam by the only One whose opinion matters. You are seen in Christ, you are loved, you are accepted in the beloved. See, that's the beautiful message of identification.

I love this quote by a commentator, William Newell, he says: *"You and I would fail as did Adam! And God desired that believers should be secure forever, by Christ's work. It was in"* - notice this next word because it doesn't sound like it - *"love that He held that judgment day in Eden. In love He judged us, condemned us, in our federal head, Adam,"* - Wow, that doesn't sound loving, Judge. But notice why He does it: *"that He might justify us in the work and Person of the other federal Head, Christ."*

See, God views humanity (as we mentioned last week) in two categories. Not black, not Hispanic, not Spanish-speaking, not southern Georgia accents, or northern accents, God doesn't see us that way. That's how we see humanity, that's how we see mankind. God sees you one of two ways as you sit here today: God either sees you in Adam, or He sees you in Christ.

And the dividing line is, what are you trusting to get yourself to heaven? Are you trusting in your good works? Are you trusting in your church attendance? Are you trusting in the fact that you were born into a Christian family? What are you trusting in? Are you trusting in the one who died for you and rose again?

See, the moment you put your faith in Christ alone, God takes you out of Adam's family and He puts you in Christ's family. And the good news that we started looking at last week is that the decisions that Adam made impacted you negatively, but the good news is now the decision that Christ made, the one righteous act that Christ did impacted you in a positive way. So positive that many times we don't even understand exactly what we have in Christ, we have to learn about it over time because the Bible is just filled with the benefits that we have now that we're in Christ.

We looked at this concept last week, and I have a picture on the screen of North Korea going back and forth with our President in this ping-pong match, no pun intended. But you know, if he declares war on North Korea, everyone in this room who's an American citizen is at war with North Korea. His decisions impact all of us, and we looked at that concept last week.

The other thing we looked at a little bit last week, just in terms of review, is this idea of the first and last Adam. We're not talking about a first and second Adam, implying that there's going to be a third and a fourth, but that God is done with these federal heads for humanity. You're either in Adam or you're in Christ. As a believer in Jesus Christ, we need to know whom God identifies us with, in other words we need to know who our federal head is.

As a believer, we need to know the following three things: who our federal head is, we need to quit identifying ourselves with Adam. Adam's a failure, Adam's under condemnation, Adam will amount to nothing, that's not you anymore, that's not your identity before God. We need to know what our federal head has done, and we will look at that as we continue to study Romans 5, and we need to understand how we've been impacted by it. Additionally, we need to begin to identify ourselves with the federal head that God identifies us with. We need to understand how God views us and begin to think of ourselves that way.

Yesterday I had an interesting experience. Did you know weeds grow in Georgia? They are a nightmare! My nine-year-old and I spent about two hours picking weeds in our backyard yesterday, and we got a lot of it done, but not all of it. And those of you that know Sadie, she's a talker, so she kept me quite interested in the conversation and time flew by. We talked a lot about hermit crabs and things that were important to her, but out of the blue she says, "Dad, what are you preaching on tomorrow?" Whoa, that's interesting. So how do I explain identification to a nine-year-old? Because this is important for any believer of any age to understand. And so I came up with an illustration and I'm going to share that with you today.

Everyone talks about and wishes that you had that rich uncle, right? That rich uncle that exists somewhere in la-la-land, fairytale land. And one of the things about that is as a kid you find out about this rich uncle, he dies, and he leaves everything to you. And the only thing you know at that point in time is that he had a million-dollar life-insurance policy, and you say, "That's great! A million dollars in the bank for me, I'll take it!"

But as you get into the room and the lawyers begin to explain who your rich uncle was, what he did, what he owned, you start to realize that your rich uncle owned a boat. Well, you know what that means: you've got a boat. And then you find out that your rich uncle has a beach-side cabin on the island of Oahu. You've now got a beachside cabin on the island of Oahu. And then you find out he's got a cabin up in Aspen, Colorado with ski slopes going right in front of it (I don't know if that exists, but it's an illustration we're building here). You've got a ski cabin in Aspen, Colorado.

You see, what your rich uncle has, *you* now possess. And as you sit in that room and as you listen to everything that he possessed - a private jet with a full-time staff that's paid for the next 60 years, you can go anywhere you want, that's *your* private jet. That's your staff. A mansion here, a car here, a car there - and you begin to realize it's much more than just a million dollars in the bank, and you thought *that* was good enough.

For many Christians they think, "Well, I put my faith in Christ, I'm not going to hell, my sins are paid for. That's good." I'm here to tell you, just sit at the table. Begin to understand from the Word of God who you are in Christ and what you have. It's so much more than just getting out of hell! It's so much more than having your sins forgiven. It's so much more that it's going to take a lifetime and an eternity, if you will, to learn all that we possess in Christ.

This is why God identified you with Christ. Because He didn't just give you one blessing, but what you find is like swimming in a swimming pool, you are going to be buried in blessings. As you figure out more and more about who you are in Christ and what you have, and what He provided for you, you're going to be swimming in the blessings of God. This is what we have to understand, this is why this whole concept of identification is perfect. And then I asked Sadie if that made sense and she said, "Yeah, so about the hermit crab..." Let's keep going, maybe it did make sense, maybe it will as we go forward.

Join me in Romans chapter 5, let's pick up where we left off last week in verse 15. What we saw in verses 12-14 was this: your federal head - which you were born into, this family physically - he sinned.

And because he sinned, you sinned. Because what was true of Adam became true of you. And because he sinned, death came by sin, and so everybody in the history of mankind has died, except we did mention one exception back in Genesis 5, and that was Enoch. That's one exception and we won't talk about the exception, but everybody else died, and that's Paul's proof that God identified you with Adam.

Because even from Adam to Moses there was no law, there was no specific command that people broke to incur the death penalty. Adam had a specific command: don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he broke it, and so he incurred the death penalty. But the whole point of federal headship and identification is because Adam did that, you suffer the consequences of his one action.

And I can already hear it, and we mentioned last week, "That's not fair." You are correct, and you ought to thank God that it's not fair! Because in the same way He's going to allow one action by one man, in time and space history to condemn you to an eternity in hell, He's also going to allow one action by one Man, in time and space history to give you the opportunity to go to heaven and to enjoy the blessings, and that's called grace. You don't deserve either one, it's not fair. We don't want fair when it comes to the justice of God, we want grace so that He can execute justice on somebody else on our behalf, and that's what He did in Christ.

And so what we're going to see is starting in verses 15 and 16, Paul is going to use a couple of repeated phrases. Verse 15, he's going to say that *"the free gift is not like the offense."* And then in verse 16 he's going to say, *"and the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned."* And so we're going to see that the free gift is not like what Adam did.

How are they not alike? Well, we're going to see it play out, but they're not alike because what he did provided negative consequences, but what Christ did provided positive consequences. So they're not alike in that way. They are alike in that they're both federal heads and that their actions impacted others, but they're not alike because of the consequences, one negative, one positive. So that's one of the repeated phrases that we're going to see.

The other repeated phrase that we're going to see is this phrase, 'much more.' That's what I love about God. He is an expressive God, if you want to say it that way. He doesn't do things half-heartedly; He does things much more. And you're going to see words in here like "abundance", God just does things in an incredible way. He doesn't just restore what you had; He takes you to somewhere so much better. This is the kind of God that we serve. And so we just want to point that out as we begin to study through here in verse 15, and we'll look at this concept of not alike.

Verse 15 reads this: *"But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many."* And so the free gift is not like the offense. The "free gift" spoken of here, when you look at it in the original language means *a gift of grace*. A gift that you don't deserve, a gift that's undeserved benefit. The offense spoken of here in contrast means *a fault, a lapse, an error*, and it came to represent errors or faults of weakness. So right there by definition, the word choice is totally different. One was due to a lapse of error and weakness, and so there were deserved consequences. One is undeserved consequences, it's a free gift, it's something that you're given. And so when we look at this concept of Adam in Christ and one of the ways that it's not like the other, it's the fact that the consequences here in Adam were deserved, and the positive consequences in Christ were undeserved.

It wasn't like you said, "Okay God, if you'll just get me out of Adam I promise I won't sin anymore. I promise I'll quit looking at that stuff, I promise I'll quit getting angry, I promise I'll start loving my wife and not kicking my dog, and I promise, and I promise, and I promise, if you'll just put

me in Christ.” That's not how it worked, you didn't merit your departure from Adam, it was an undeserved free gift when you put your faith in Christ.

Then he goes on to say, “*For if by one man's offense many died,*”- and that “if” there is what we would call a first-class condition in the Greek. And so what that's saying is, “For if by one man's offense many died, and they did,” not a conditional like “if”, “maybe”, “I don't know.” No, it's a first-class condition assuming the fact for argument's sake.

So “if by one man's offense many died”, and they did, assuming that the reality is true, and didn't we just see that back in verses 12,13 and 14? They did, that's the whole point of Paul's argument. If one man sinned, everyone was impacted by it, and everyone died even though they had not sinned according to the likeness of Adam, breaking a specific command. Because the law hadn't even been introduced until Moses, and yet everybody from Adam to Moses did what? They lived and then they died, and we see that funeral procession in Genesis chapter 5.

And so notice that Paul uses the word “many” of both groups under their federal heads. Let's read that again, because I want you to pick that up, I believe there's a strategic reason that he uses the word “many.” Verse 15, “*For if by the one man's offense*” - notice that word “many” - “*died, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.*” And so the “many” of Adams' group that we see in verse 15 is really “all.” How do we know that? Go to verse 12 and verse 18.

Now the distinction that's going to be made is this: the Bible doesn't teach universal salvation. And so when he's talking about the many of Christ here, he's talking about the work of Christ applying to everybody. That's why the Bible doesn't say in John 3:16 “For God so loved the elect that if the elect believes, then they won't perish and have eternal life.” No, He loves the world - that's everybody - that whosoever - that's anybody - believes. So, the point is this: to get from Adam as federal head to Christ as federal head is easy, in the sense that God has made it available to all. He's not limiting it to a certain few, He's not limiting it to certain initiated, special people, He's offering it to all.

So, the many of Adam here is “all”. The many of Christ that ‘abounds to many’ here as we look in verse 15 is “all.” In other words, it's available to all. Now do all take advantage of it? That's really the million-dollar question, and we're going to see that distinction as we keep working through Romans 5. No, all do not take advantage of it, because all don't believe on Jesus. Some people reject Jesus Christ and what He did for them, and some do it for religious reasons. “It can't be that easy, I gotta do something! I mean I like Jesus, don't get me wrong, Jesus is in the equation, but I've got to add something to that.” And people that think that way don't realize that when they do that they are basically stating, “Jesus you are not enough.” Is Christ enough for you? Are you convinced that He paid for all of your penalty on the cross when He died for you and rose again? So that's the question.

And so we get to this word “much more.” You know, we've got so much more in Christ, and when we talk about what we have in Christ, you can't even get the words out, because you can't in one setting tell everything that you have in Christ, it's so overwhelming. I mean, this is the God of the universe who is using His creativity to love you and shower blessings on you. How do you sit and describe that in an hour-long talk over coffee? You can't do that. You wonder what we're going to be doing for eternity, aren't we going to get bored up there after the first thousand years? No, we won't! We're not going to get bored; this is what we're going to be excited about, this is what we're going to understand more and more.

And so we see this phrase that Paul uses, it's two words put together in verse 15, it's “much more”, and I'll just show you the Greek, it's “*pallo*” and “*mallon*”. “*Pallo*” means *many* or *much of number*, and “*mallon*” means “more”, so it seems kind of redundant, but that's the point. This is “more more”, this is a lot of more, a *whole lot* of more. We could say it a lot of different ways, but the point is he's

emphasizing how much more you have now in Christ. What you've got in Adam is true, but you've got so much more in Jesus Christ, and that's the emphasis here, and this is the good news aspect of identification. When we present the gospel and justification, we talk about bad news, that you're a sinner and there's a penalty for sin, and God's going to exact that penalty on you.

And then we have the good news, Christ paid that penalty, and you can benefit from it when you put your faith in Him and Him alone. And there's good news of identification. There was bad news: you're in trouble, one decision got you into a world of hurt, but guess what? Somebody else's decision can get you out of that world of hurt and put you into a world of pleasure at God's right hand with the Savior.

So, God's undeserved favor and the gift by grace from Jesus Christ - again, something given freely, not deserved or earned in any way - abounded to many, and it abounded to the many of Adam's race, which means that all have the ability to be put into Christ. All have the ability to be saved and delivered from Adam's family. So, in the same way Adam's one offense had consequences for all, Jesus's gift had consequences for all, the same all for many. And again, it abounded, it means in excess, it exceeded in number or measure in a way that it had more than enough.

Have you ever been to those stores where they say, "Free sandwiches all day?" and if you don't get over there right in the morning, they actually lied to you, because eventually they run out of bread. There are too many people that take advantage of it, and by the time you get there, they're like, "I'm sorry, we're out of bread. I mean, we can slap a piece of ham and cheese on a napkin if you want to take that, but we're out of bread." And it's like, "Wait a minute, you said free sandwiches all day to anybody that comes!"

And all I'm saying is this word "abounded" means that God's not going to run out of bread. God's not going to run out of the ingredients that He's promised to give you. They're bound, they're in excess, they're never going to be used up. So that's the beautiful nature of an infinite God who makes promises and then doesn't break His word, He keeps His promises. And so God's grace, again, unmerited favor, Jesus's gift of grace is more than enough to take care of every person, the many of Adam's race, the "all" under his federal headship.

And that's what we see in verse 15, it's *not* like the offense in this way, it's *not* like the offense in the terms of consequences, but God has done something much more, and it's abounded, it's accessible to everybody. As we move into verse 16, we're going to see another not alike. Verse 16 says, "*And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.*"

And so what he's saying here is the gift is not like - again, it's in distinction to - what came through the one who sinned. And what does he mean by that? Well eternal life, salvation, is not like death and condemnation in the sense that in Adam the consequences are deserved, and in Christ the consequences are undeserved. Good consequences, but still undeserved consequences based on the work of Jesus Christ.

I remember growing up in school, and sometimes it's fun to tell stories because you can always make yourself look better in stories. Now I do tell stories where I look bad, but in this case, you just have to trust me, I wasn't the bad guy, okay? I really wasn't. And you guys have had experiences like this or can relate to this, but we were sitting in economics class in high school, and to this day I still feel sorry for this teacher. He was a nice guy, but the kids took advantage of him. He was kind of on his way out, he was nearing retirement, he was probably old like 40 or something (which I thought was old then, I'm starting to think it's young), but he was definitely near retirement age.



And I remember these kids in my class, every time he turned to write on the board, they were crumpling up sheets of paper and just throwing them at him as hard as they could and trying to hit him while he was writing on the board, and these papers were just hitting around his head. And he really had a good sense of humor, because one time somebody threw a penny at him, and he turned around and picked it up and he was like, “You cheapskates. At least y’all could throw \$20 bills up here.” And so he had a good sense of humor.

But I remember one time (there *is* a point to the story), someone threw a paper at him and he said, “Okay, who threw that paper?” And you know high school class, right? Everybody points and tattles - no, nobody tattles. You know the whole phrase, “Snitches get stitches”, you don't want to mess around. And the kid that threw the ball, he was the guy that could give you stitches too, so nobody wanted to say anything.

And so we all just sat there and he said, “Okay, well since nobody will tell me who did it, you're going to have an extra assignment tonight.” And he gave us a ton of homework based on the action of this one guy. And I remember thinking, “Man, that is not fair! I wish I would have told on the guy.” But I got stuck with extra homework because of what one guy did, and again, I think that illustrates this point that we're looking at here with this action of Adam and how we're all impacted. What is true of our federal head is also true of us. It was Adam's one offense that resulted in a condemnatory judgment for all of us.

Now we're going to look at something here - and I say this facetiously, I'm not trying to say that God doesn't have good math skills because obviously He created math and He created truth - but we're going to see some reverse math here. In fact, if you could do math this way, many more of you would love math. Because what we're going to see is God's math is a little bit different here. And so follow with me in verse 16, because He's going to say this: *“but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.”*

So, let's put these in contradistinction to one another. What did He just say? Notice the contrast, why the gift is not like the offense. Here's why it's not alike: one offense by Adam equaled death and condemnation. Now let's look at God's math. Many offenses equal justification or declaration of righteousness. And if you're anything like me, shouldn't this be the opposite? How could this be?

And by the way, this is going to preempt the question that comes up in Romans 6:1, which basically says this: shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? If lots of sin brings out the grace and glory of God more, shouldn't we just keep on sinning so that God's glorified and His grace is exalted? It's based on some of this math that's going on here. And he says one offense condemned everybody, many offenses you can be declared righteous. How does that work? Well, it only works in the gospel, it only works in a message that's gracious, it only works in a message that saves you not based on what you do but based on what Jesus Christ has already done.

And so this doesn't seem to make sense, but in the grand scheme of God and the way that He values things, here's the answer: it lies in the value and the worth of the work of our second Federal Head. See, God values and puts great worth on what Jesus Christ did for you on your behalf, and that's why He can take many people who have not only been condemned in Adam but have worked out that condemnation through specific acts of sin over their lifetime, He can take those people who put their faith in His Son, and He can declare them righteous. He can give them a free gift called “salvation” when they simply put their faith in what Jesus did. It all has to do with the value and the work of Jesus Christ.

We always talk about value adding, let's provide a value-added solution. I would sit in many business meetings over the years (and some I wish I had not had to sit through because they were just

too much) and I remember one boss who said, "Don't bring me problems, bring me solutions." And that was his mantra. Anyone can see problems, anyone can complain, anyone can point out where the fault is, but how many people can point it out and then devise a solution for that problem? That's the way our God works. That was an overwhelming problem, a race of mankind who had no righteousness, who had a death penalty hanging over their head. How would God solve that problem? He solved it through the provision He made in Jesus Christ. And so God is the ultimate solution maker, and He considered what Christ did to be of very high value.

Verse 17, "much more", this is one of those much more comments, and notice that it has to do with a difference, a change of reign. There's a change of reign when you leave Adam's family and become a part of Christ's family. Verse 17, *"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."*

The "if" here, again, is another first-class condition, basically saying if by one man's offense death reigned through the one - and it did - again, see verses 12-14. Death reigned, death reigns over this world, over lost humanity, those in Adam. And so what has changed here in verse 17 and how did it reign? Well again, we saw it in verses 12-14, by Adam's one offense. It's been borne out time and time again, everybody is part of the ultimate statistic that 10 out of 10 people die, right? That's true in life, we see that play out, the older we get the more funerals we attend.

I had a guy tell me one time, "Hey, right when you get out of high school, invest in a nice suit." And I said, "Why? Like, to go to church?" And he said, "No, to go to all the weddings you're going to be going to in the next ten years. You can just have one suit and just go to all the weddings and reuse it." And he's right, because at that stage in life, how many weddings do you go to? Seems like for a couple of years I was at a wedding every other weekend. And then as you get older, you need a suit for a different reason, because you're attending more and more funerals.

And that's just the reality of the world we live in, death reigns over Adam's family and over mankind in general. But you know what, there's a "much more", there's a "*pallo mallon*" as we looked at earlier. There's so much more that those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

We haven't talked much about the rapture of the church since I've been here, but you know what? There is a generation of believers who will not die. Isn't that a wonderful truth? Based on this fact that nobody in Christ has to physically die. Why? Doesn't it say that it's appointed unto men once to die and then after this, judgment, so doesn't everybody have to die? The reason you don't have to die is because your federal head died for you. He died for you, so you don't have to die.

And you may be part of that generation - and maranatha, Lord come - let it be our generation that goes up and joins Him in the clouds, that would be outstanding and exciting! But that's why life reigns. You don't have to die. Now you may still physically die if He tarries, but the point is you will never die again, you will live eternally. Something has changed here, when you changed families there was also a change of reign, death no longer has power over you.

Now just as Adam's one offense caused death to reign, much more on this positive side due to Jesus's gift of righteousness there will be some who reign in life and here's where the distinction comes in, remember I said "the many" can refer to all, and it can also refer to those who respond. How do we pick that up? Well go to verse 17 again, he says, *"For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who"* - notice that next word - *"receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."*

And so although it's available to all, only those who receive this gift benefit from it. It's conditional on reception. And so how do you receive this gift? Again, there's this condition, one must

receive it, and you know I think John does the best job of explaining this in John 1:12 because he describes succinctly how you receive Christ when he says that to receive Jesus Christ and His free gift, one must believe in His name. You must believe, that's how you receive Christ.

And that's why even in gospel presentations I shy away from the word "receive", because I believe John goes on to explain what that means, so why not just give the explanation rather than the word "receive"? But "receive" is a biblical word, we're to receive this abundance of grace, we're to receive Christ, but *how* do you receive, that's the question. Well, you believe in His name, you believe not only in who Jesus Christ is, His name, but what He did, that's all that's implied (I believe) in His name. And so we see that that's the condition for benefiting and reigning in life.

And this life is guaranteed. It's not a limited time only gift, like you've got to act now, it's not a high-pressure sale - it's high pressure in the sense that you don't really know if you'll live the rest of today, I mean that's just the nature of life and the nature of tragedy, and in the world that we live in it has death. But the point is this: it's provided in abundance, it's an unlimited supply, it's an overflowing amount is what the Scriptures teach us, this abundance that he talks about.

The reigning spoken of here also is future tense, notice it's talking about something in the future, verse 17: "*will reign in life,*" will reign, future tense, it's speaking of our future glorification in which physical death, or any type of death will no longer touch us. Because Christ died, you will not have to die. Because Christ lives, you live. See, that's the greatness of being identified with this federal head. So, life will indeed reign and rule as we are guaranteed that this will be true of us. Notice again this connection to Jesus, verse 17, "*will reign in life,*" - notice that next word - "*through the One, Jesus Christ.*" You are inseparably connected to Jesus Christ, where He goes, you go. What He has, you have. And that's the beauty of this message of identification. And what's even more beautiful about it is we're going to see that God has done something as a result of that to help you in your daily life, to actually grow you spiritually, to benefit you in sanctification, this deliverance from the power of sin in your daily life.

And so moving on to verse 18 and 19, and before we look at verse 18, understand that verse 18 is really a continuation from verse 12. If you look in your Bible - I pointed this out last time but you can see it again - notice that there's a parenthesis at the beginning of verse 13 and notice where that parenthesis ends, it's at the end of verse 17. And so that was a parenthetical group of thoughts, Paul is explaining everything that is going on.

But if you were just to read it through you would read from verse 12 to verse 18 and so it looks something like this: verse 12, "*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-*" and then jumping down to verse 18, "*Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.*" And then it continues to go on here.

And so verse 18, we're going to look at this idea, this "therefore", and again you'll see what's kind of building off here in verse 12. Because of Adam's one offense sin entered the world - the world meaning all men - death through sin to all men, judgment upon sin, all men's sins, and not only that but Adam's sin which they're associated with, and then condemnation of the entire race came to all men. So, if there's any question as to whether or not this includes all men, this should really eliminate that question, and here's why: everybody dies. This is why death is in the world.

But even so he goes on, similarly this concept of being identified with your federal head, similarly but in contrast, right? The consequences are different. Through Jesus Christ, one righteous act, the free gift came to all men. All men had an opportunity to be saved and have an opportunity to be declared righteous and reign in life, that came to all men via their Federal Head, we see that in verse 18.

And so really, we've got two paths that are put forward, which federal head do you identify with? What family are you in? There are only two. If you don't know if you're saved, you wouldn't say you're a hundred percent sure you're going to heaven, you're really not sure what it takes to get to heaven, today I'm here to tell you that you're in Adam. That's what the Bible teaches. And with Adam, his one offense brought sin, death, judgment, and condemnation to your life. And that is where you stand today.

But here's the great thing: you don't have to attend this church for six months before you can be in Christ, you don't even have to come to this stage, you don't even have to talk to me! You don't have to talk to any of the leaders here, you don't have to put money in the offering plate, you don't have to promise to read your Bible every day for the rest of your life. All you have to do is know the simple message of the gospel: Jesus Christ died for your sins so that you wouldn't have to pay for them yourself, and then He rose again. God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf, will you put your faith in Him?

If you put your faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone, you're safe. You leave Adam's family and you're born again into Christ's family, and now what you have as a result is because of what He did for you, what He accomplished for you, how He performed for you. You get righteousness offered as a free gift with resulting justification in life. It sounds like a no-brainer to me! It sounds like a free gift, and I know many times in our culture we get very skeptical of a free gift. Certainly, you've got to pay for it, certainly you've gotta do something for it. But no, the Bible says it's free because Jesus paid it all. Someone actually paid for it, it just doesn't have to be you. Jesus paid it all.

And then to close this section in verse 19, sinner or saint? Look at verse 19: *"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."* In verse 19 we see this concept of sinner or saint. And this word "made" you'll see it's used twice in this verse, *"For as by one man's disobedience many were **made** sinners,"* (emphasis mine). The word "made" means *to set or to be placed in a situation or position*. It's talking about your position; it's talking about your identification. So, in this case, through Adam's disobedience the entire human race was placed in Adam and were sinners by position.

Now let me just say something about this for a quick second, this is only true of you if you're in Adam. You know I've been in many situations before and teaching Bible studies, and I would just be in a room full of Christians and say, "Hey, if you're a saint this morning, would you raise your hand?" And you know what most people would do? They would look around like, "Yeah, I've kind of had a bad week, or a bad month, or a bad life. I'm just going to keep my hand down. I'm not a saint."

You know, the Bible teaches that if you put your faith in Christ, you *are* a saint. Period. That's the truth. You are no longer a sinner by position. Do you know that? Somebody could never say that you are a sinner by position. Now, do you sin? Yes, and in that way, in a practical way, somebody could say you're a sinner, because by definition when someone sins, what do you call that? Well, you call them a sinner. But I'm talking about position. You're not a sinner, that's not your position anymore. Because you've been identified with Christ, you are now a saint! That's who you are, that's your whole new identity, that's how God sees you.

Now again, it doesn't excuse sin in the believer's life, we're not promoting sin, we're not saying, "Hey, go live any way you want to!" that's not the whole point. We're just talking about what God did in a positional aspect, and as a result you are no longer considered positionally a sinner, you are no longer considered unrighteous. Why? Because you've been made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, 2 Corinthians 5:21. You are righteous even when you don't behave righteously, your position can't change. And so we see these are little distinctions that we pull out here in the text, but they're so important in the way that you understand and view yourself in life.

He goes on to say that “*so also many will be made righteous.*” Again, same word used. In contrast, each and every one of us can be impacted by Jesus's decision to go to the cross and rise again. “Made” is the same word used above of Adam, and in this case, through Jesus Christ's work on the cross we have this opportunity to be placed in Christ, and we can be righteous by position, a never changing position. And many people view this whole concept of identification like the daisies, “He loves me, he loves me not.”

So, you have a bad day and think, “I guess I was in Adam today.” And then you have a good day and think, “Okay, I guess I was in Christ today.” And there’s this back and forth, and the point of the matter is when it comes to identification, once you put your faith in Christ you no longer go back to being in Adam. You’re done there, that position is gone, that whole identity is gone. You have one identity moving forward, and because you can never die because Christ died for you, you remain in that position. You *are* righteous, you *are* a saint. These are positional truths that are true of us. Our present state is a result of our position, and our position is impacted by our Federal Head. And going forward, this is going to be so crucial to understand. We're really laying the framework, the foundation for understanding what he's going to teach in Romans 6 and 7. This is so important to understand how this is going to practically impact you in your daily life.



# CHAPTER 30

## Grace Superabounds

### Romans 5:20-6:2

Today we're going to talk about grace, but we're going to hear about it from a different perspective. And grace is one of those things that in many languages, there's not even a word for it. When Bible teachers go over and begin to communicate the Bible to certain people in different tongues, they have to figure out how to explain grace because it doesn't exist. And unfortunately, even though we have the word in English, for many people in their thinking it doesn't exist, because they have a misunderstanding of what it means, or they have a limited view of what it means. And I would just venture to say that it's probably the greatest word in the English language, and I know some would disagree with me - that's okay, they can be wrong if they want to - but it is probably the most creative, God-thought-up-word in the history of the English language.

And so today we're going to look at this concept at the end of Romans 5, and we're going to start getting into 6. Some of you are saying, "Hey, I know the gospel, I know how to get saved, tell me how this is going to impact my Christian life." We have arrived today! We're going to start really getting into the nuts and bolts of the Christian life. But nuts and bolts from a theological level to understand what God was doing behind the scenes to get you prepared, so that when your foot hits the road you actually can have victory in the Christian life, and that can be a normal Christian experience for you. And so that's what we want to begin to look at today.

We've been looking at this concept of having an identity crisis and hence the two boxes up here really just representing our identity - who we are either in Christ or in Adam, realizing that God sees the entire world this way, in one of two identities or one of two boxes. In Adam, and you don't have to do anything to get into that family, you just have to be born physically. So, if you're sitting here today, you were at one time in Adam, you may still be in Adam.

The key to getting out of Adam and getting in Christ is to recognize that a Savior, the God-man Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came and lived the perfect life, died on the cross for your sins and rose again on the third day, and the Bible says if you simply believe in Him and what He's done for you, you can be saved. You can be saved from the penalty of sin, you can be saved from the power of sin, and you can be saved from the very presence of sin when you die.

But something even more beautiful happens, you are actually placed into Christ, and that's our identity. Many Christians are having an identity crisis, even many of us that know Who our identity is. Many times, practically, the way it works out in our life, we're having an identity crisis and we need to begin to see ourselves the way that God sees us. And so we've looked at that in the fifth chapter of Romans.

We've looked at this concept of federal headship. Really simply put, Adam made a decision that impacted his entire race, and that had negative consequences. On the flip side though, Jesus Christ made a decision, He went to the cross and it impacted all those who would believe in Him. So, we screamed, "That's not fair! I don't want to be held accountable for Adam's decision. How come I got condemned when he sinned? How come everything bad happened to me when he sinned?" Hold up, because grace now says that God can give you credit for what Christ did as your Federal Head, and Jesus Christ did it all right. Jesus Christ actually accomplished something where you get positive benefits. And so we've been looking at this federal headship concept that one man making one decision impacted an entire

group of people, but another Man who made a better decision also impacts a group of people who will put their faith in Him.

Today we're going to finish out the end of chapter 5 and begin chapter 6, and so if you'll join me in verse 20 of chapter 5, we're going to see that something happened. Earlier in the chapter we saw that when Adam sinned, death came into the world through sin, and then death passed to all men because all sinned in Adam. And then we saw that this was true, and Paul proved it, because in verse 14 he said, "*death reigned from Adam to Moses,*" even though nobody sinned like Adam, nobody had a law to break like Adam did, and yet you can see the proof that we suffered from the decision of our federal head because everyone still died. From Adam to Moses, everyone still died except for Enoch, and we won't discuss that exception today. But everyone else died from Adam to Moses, but there was no law.

So why did the law come? Paul's writing to not only Gentile believers but also Jewish believers, and so the question becomes well then why did the law come? If everyone was condemned in Adam, why did the law come? Many people, even in our day, when you ask them what the purpose of the law is, you know what they tell you? "So, you can get to heaven. You've got to keep the law to get to heaven."

And so the Jew might naturally be thinking at this point, "Well that's why the law came in, and that's why we have to keep the law, because we've got to start making up for lost time since Adam really screwed us up. We've gotta get out of Adam and we've gotta start keeping the law." And so Paul's going to say, "Here's why the law came in." He's going to show us here in verse 20.

So, verse 20 says, "*Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.*" So, we've been talking about how Adam and his sin affected the entire human race, but now the law came along later for another purpose. There's another purpose in there, and it wasn't to give you eternal life. The law entered - or came alongside of (that's what the Greek word means) - at a point in time in history, to a specific group of people, on a specific mountain back in Exodus 20, when Moses led his people out of Egypt and God gave them the law of Mount Sinai. That happened at a point in time, to a specific group of people, at a specific time in history.

But we're going to notice that the purpose of the law, you'll see it right there in verse 20, it's not to make you holy. It's not to make you righteous. It simply comes alongside to prove that what Paul said was true of you in Adam is true. It's like a court case where Paul is now presenting exhibit A, exhibit B, exhibit C, and for some of you that might go all the way around the alphabet a few times, myself included, all the exhibits of acts of sin emanate from your position of sin. And it's proving the fact that you too are deserving of condemnation, that you were condemned in Adam, but you through the law now see that you too are deserving of that condemnation as well.

And so still in verse 20, notice that the law was given for the express purpose of offenses abounding. In other words, it's not that the law *created* sin, the law just *exposed* what was there. I was joking with a couple of my kids this morning - I'm not going to name any names because I'm going broke on that. I made a deal with my kids long ago that if I mentioned their name in a sermon, I'd give them a dollar when they get home. So, they're always listening, so no names mentioned today - and we were talking about the eclipse happening tomorrow. You know what's crazy about the eclipse? Tomorrow they're going to tell you not to look at the sun, and guess what you're going to want to do? For the first time in I don't know how many years, you're going to be tempted tomorrow to take a peek at the sun. How many days have you lived in the last two years where you've said, "I want to look at the sun today." Probably never! You probably don't look at the sun on a daily basis. I mean, you feel the effects, you see it.



But when a law enters, something happens inside. We're going to see that explained even more in Romans 7, because the law has a way of stirring up this indwelling sin in us to want to break it. And so as the law enters, it's not like it created sin, it just exposed and gave people an opportunity to now violate a clear command or instruction, and now they're exposed. Exhibit A, exhibit B, it's all on the table now, it's very clearly spelt out. We've had those situations with our kids where they said, "Well you didn't say I couldn't go outside to the pool, you just said that you wanted me to stay in the home." And it's like, "Wait a minute, do I have to give you a specific law? You can't read between the lines or understand?" In the law, God gave specificity. Now it's clear, you can't get away due to ignorance.

But you know what we're also going to see in Romans 6 and 7? And this may be a new concept for some, but do you know that the law was not given to make Christians holy either? Many people believe that now that we're saved, God's given us the Holy Spirit, and the reason He's given us the Holy Spirit is so now we can keep His law to be holy.

Now, let me ask you a question, and I'm kind of getting ahead of myself, but we'll get there eventually when we get into this section, but let me ask you this: would you rather live your Christian life by a list of rules that you're monitoring and checking off and determining whether or not you're keeping up with it, or would you rather live the Christian life holding the hand of the Holy Spirit of God who is leading you daily? The very One, the very Person who wrote the law, the very One who will not lead you into sin.

And that's why I believe Paul says in Galatians 5:16, "*Walk in the spirit,*" - and what's the next phrase? - "*and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.*" Double negation in Greek. You will never, no not ever fulfill the lusts of the flesh. That means if you're walking by means of the Spirit of God, you won't sin, He's not going to lead you into sin.

I used to play a game with my brother, and man, it was a dangerous game if you're working with the wrong person. And some of you've done it where you partner up and someone's got a blindfold on you, and it's like a race around a yard with trees. That's how I remember it, a lot of trees and a lot of things to run into. And you have to trust your partner's not going to goof off and run you into an oak tree. Because you're blindfolded and you're just trusting them, and they're running you around the yard and you're trying to win this race. And I used to have friends that would run their partners into the trees on purpose, and I always just hoped I never got that guy.

But you know, the same imagery is true. Will the Spirit of God run you into a tree? Run you into a ditch? Run you into sin? Or do you think He knows how to lead somebody into righteous living? I think He knows how to lead somebody into righteous living. And I don't even think He's tempted to run you into a tree like some of those friends that I had. And so the law is not given to make Christians holy either, it's specifically given to show that offenses abound, that's what verse 20 tells us.

So, for sin to be clearly seen, and clearly seen that mankind deserves the punishment laid out by God - death and hell - He Institute's His law to show mankind their overwhelming sinfulness. Now man can't say, "That's not fair!" Now man has to shut up and say, "Yeah, that is fair. Wow. I didn't know it was that bad." And you saw the purpose for the law addressed back in Romans 3:19-20 as well, where it said that the law shuts our mouths, it condemns us, we've got no way to defend ourselves. And so Paul is just bringing that up, this overwhelming sinfulness, this more than enough condemnation, this lack of righteousness that we have and that we've talked about so many times in the first five chapters of the book of Romans.

But you know there's another purpose for the law, and it's a little bit more subtle, and if we go back to verse 20, we see this: "*the law entered that the offense might abound.*" - and notice this next phrase - "*But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.*" So now that sin is defined by the law, what we end up

seeing is that now men understand their predicament more clearly, they understand the type of trouble that they're in. And you know what happens when you understand the trouble that you're in? You begin to appreciate and value the solution more.

We've used this illustration before, if you're out swimming in a lake and a lifeguard jumps in and drags you to shore, if you don't realize that you were drowning, or you don't realize that a shark was encircling you, you have no appreciation for the lifeguard. In fact, you might even be angry at that lifeguard until you find out the whole story, until you find out the bad news, as it were, until you find out the danger that you were involved in.

It reminds me of a little kid, he comes in from playing and he tells his mommy, "If I were to fall out of a tree and you had two options, that I fell out of the tree and I'd either break my leg or I would just rip my jeans, which would you pick? Would you rather me break my leg or rip my jeans?" And the mom said, "That's a simple one, of course I'd rather you rip your jeans!" And he said, "Well mom, I've got good news for you. That's all I did; I just ripped my jeans."

And so it's a really creative way to present bad news. But you know if you don't understand the bad news, you can't appreciate the good news. You can't understand exactly the value of what God accomplished in Christ. In fact, if there's no need for a solution from outside of oneself, then the person thinks they got it all under control and they'll figure it out themselves.

Once people realize they don't have it under control, they are clearly condemned, there's exhibit A all the way through double Z against them in terms of the offenses abounding, then they begin to be open to look outside of themselves for a solution. It's no longer about me getting my life better, me behaving more, me doing something or stop doing something to get saved, instead it's I'm going to rest in the Savior. I'm going to believe what God says, that this Man who died for my sins and rose again can save me, that's what I'm going to rest in.

And so you see that the value of it as the law begins to expose sin, it provides this stark contrast to grace. Now all of a sudden you realize you deserve something; God is going to enter the scene, God is going to come up with a solution, and God is going to give you something you don't deserve. And see, now it stands out, now it's a contrast, now it's distinctive, and Paul's going to do that here in this passage. We're going to see that the solution presented is the grace of God. As verse 20 says, "*But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.*"

And so how does Paul distinguish grace? He's going to do it here in this verse through vocabulary. It doesn't come out really clearly in the English, but I hope to bring it out a little bit further in the Greek. So, when he gives the solution of God's grace abounding much more, what we're going to see is he's going to use a different word for the word "abounded." So, in the first phrase there "where sin abounded", it really is just a word that means *more than* or *exceeding* or *more than enough* if you want to say it that way. But when he comes back and uses the word "grace is abounding" he switches vocabulary. He throws in another word, and he adds an emphatic Greek preposition on the front of it called "*hyper*". So now he's got "*hyper*" meaning *over or super* and he's got "*perisseuo*" meaning *to be over and above* or *to exceed*.

Now why is this important? Because if you put these two together you have an extremely emphatic word in the Greek. This would have been a way to get your attention. This would have been a way to really distinguish how sin and offenses abound, but now grace is going to super-abound, over and above abound. And so it's talking about a great or exceeding abundance.

And so the word itself has a built-in exclamation point. There are no exclamation points, or periods, or commas in the Greek, but this would have had a built-in exclamation point. This would have been like typing an email using all caps. This would have been like bolding the word, underlining the

word, italicizing the word all together. This is what Paul is doing here, he wants you to know that sin abounded, but grace always over abounds, super abounds.

And so I might be able to throw a ball twenty feet, and that might be my sin abounding, but somebody else can come in - God, preferably - and can way out-launch my ball. He's always going to cover it, it's always going to be out in front of Him, and by definition, that's why grace is the solution. Because if grace isn't the solution, then you have to stop sinning so much. If grace isn't the solution, you're already in trouble because you've sinned too much. And that's what all the evidence presented against you shows us, and so it has to be grace.

If it wasn't grace, then God could not offer salvation to anyone. Nobody could be offered salvation because nobody could merit it. So, it has to be grace, it has to be God giving it as a free gift. And because it's grace, a solution abounding offenses, then anyone can be saved, and that's consistent with the New Testament. Whosoever will can be saved. "Whosoever", that means anyone, and this is why it's consistent with the teaching in the Bible.

We've said this a million times, you don't even have to come to this church to get saved. You can be saved because the Savior died for you and rose again, you can put your faith in Christ anywhere because He's the one that accomplished it, we don't do anything here. We're not trying to get you to come to church because we're going to threaten that you're going to go to hell if you don't come to our church, that's ridiculous! No church has ever been called the savior, no church has taken care of your sin penalty, no church has risen from the dead. But the Church of Jesus Christ will rise from the dead someday. Why? Because *He* rose from the dead. See, that's the great truth we were just looking at this morning in 1 Corinthians 15.

And you know, if someone could out-sin the grace of God then salvation could not be by grace, because by definition, grace is unmerited favor, something you cannot earn. There are people in this room today that have incredibly awful, embarrassing pasts. In fact, if we put up on the screen some video clips from your past, you would run out of the room, tail tucked between your legs, crying, embarrassed, never wanting to ever come back to this building - your pastor included in that group. But you know what this is saying is that you can't out-sin the grace of God. Whatever you've done, there's an answer, there's a solution because Christ has paid it all and He's paid it in full.

And by dichotomy, by reverse, if it's something you cannot earn, then it's also something that once possessed by faith, you cannot lose. If you never deserved it in the first place, what makes you think that God is going to make you deserve it thirty years from now? It's just crazy! I think I've used this example before, but it's like getting a birthday gift when you're five years old, and then getting an invoice in the mail from your mom and dad thirty years later asking you to pay them back for the bike. The second that invoice hits the mail, that's no longer a free gift, you just had it on loan for thirty years, the longest layaway plan in history. *30 years* you've gotten to use this bike!

So, God is not coming back requiring payment at some point in the future, He's not now requiring certain behavior so that you stay in His family. Can you imagine communicating that to your kids, that you have to behave a certain way to stay in my family? And if you don't, you're no longer my family. Now I get it, there's house rules, so if you don't behave in my house, you might have to be out of my house. But you can't get kicked out of my family, you're in my family, you were born into my family. I can't unborn you. You can't unborn yourself. And so when we talk about grace, that's one of the beauties of it. You did nothing to get in, thus you can do nothing to get out once in. You are born as a child of God. And so we love to celebrate the grace of God as it relates to eternal security.

Now why did God do it this way? Look at verse 21. Because if we just left at verse 20, then the question in 6:1 would make a whole lot more sense. Because 6:1 says, "*What shall we say? Shall we continue*

*in sin that grace may abound?*” That’s a question coming right out of verse 20, because someone says, “Wait a minute. Are you saying that we can continue in sin and then God’s grace will always super abound? And so thus, the more we sin, the more God’s grace will come in, the more we glorify God.” And you see how people twist the message of grace or abuse the message of grace.

The reason that question is anticipated is because Paul anticipates someone’s going to get stuck in verse 20. But if they would just read on in verse 21 there’s no reason to get stuck. Verse 21 says, “*so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” See, God wants grace now to reign. God wants grace to reign in your life, because if grace begins to reign in your life in a practical way as a believer, guess what your life is going to look like, practically? Well, it’s going to look like who you are by identity. It’s going to look like who you are by position. You are righteous, you have the righteousness of God in Christ, and that’s going to begin to manifest itself in your life in a very practical way as you begin to allow grace to reign.

And so what Paul is saying here is that in the same exact way that sin reigned or ruled as our federal head, or in our life as mankind, God now wants grace to reign through righteousness to eternal life. And I think that’s not only talking about a quantity of life forever and ever, but a quality of life here, an abundant life, if you will, through our new federal head. And you still see this connection of federal head, sin reigned in Adam, grace is to reign in Christ.

But we’re going to see that Paul shifts his conversation a little bit, or shifts his focus if we can bring that out, because he says, “even so”, he’s comparing to sin reigning which was a fact, he’s going to say “even so grace might reign.” Notice that phrase “*might reign.*” Why doesn’t he say it *will* reign? Why doesn’t he say, “As a matter of fact, it *does* reign”? I mean, I believe it *does* reign. But why does he say, “might reign”? Why is it not a guaranteed thing for believers?

Well, I think it’s interesting because he switches the mood of this verb, he switches it to a subjunctive and it indicates probability, it indicates a hope or a wish. In other words, it gives us God’s desire for the believer, that they would allow grace to reign through righteousness, that’s the goal for the believer, but it’s not necessarily guaranteed. It’s not what we would call an indicative mood in the Greek that would guarantee it as a mood of fact. With this mood everything is present and in place for a high likelihood of accomplishing the action.

It’s not like God left you in a lurch, it’s not like you’re MacGyver and you’re only working with two things to get out of this crazy situation called life. God doesn’t just give you a couple things and say, “Hey, good luck! I’ll meet you on the other side.” God provides everything for a righteous life for you. Everything, all the resources you need. In fact, not only does He provide it, but you have it, you possess it in your identity in Christ, and we see that in 2 Corinthians 5:21.

But why is it not guaranteed? That’s the question. Well, I think we know that in the case of sanctification, you have a participatory role in that. Your participatory role is that you are the unknown variable. Everything’s in place for you to live righteously, but you’re the variable, because you have a volition. You have the ability to make decisions. You can choose - as we’ll see in Romans 6 - to present yourself to God, or you can choose to present yourself to sin. You have that choice, that’s why it’s not guaranteed, but everything is in place for your success in the Christian life.

And so we see even Paul begins to notice this or make this comment here, and he’s going to build on this further in Chapter 6, but I will say this, that our only hope for a righteous life on this earth is to learn what it means to allow grace to reign, that’s the only hope. Grace teaches us how to live righteous lives. The law will not teach you how to live a righteous life. It will teach you about the character of God, but when we get to Romans 7, you’re going to see that all it does is stir up indwelling sin to want to break it. It actually kicks a sleeping dog.

Paul's experience in Romans 7 starting in verse 13 is that he wants to do things he can't, and he doesn't want to do things that he does. That's why all of us can relate to that at some level because we have tried to conquer and live the Christian life in our own strength, obeying commands or not obeying commands, and that's not how you live the Christian life. The Christian life simply put: Galatians 2:20, it's Christ living through you. It's that simple, right? Now we just all leave and go do that. But it's learning what it means to stop depending upon your ability to keep a law, to keep certain disciplines, to keep whatever, and start to depend - just like you did for salvation from the penalty of sin - you start to depend on God for salvation from the power sin in your life. That's the key to the Christian life, and so it's by faith.

And we see that this grace is what teaches us how to live, Titus 2:11-12: *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,”* - it's available to all - *“teaching us”* - and notice that it's grace teaching us here. What does grace teach us after we're saved? - *“that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.”*

Many people will say, “Are you just saying we're saved by grace and then we can go live any way we want to and then we're still saved?” No, I'm saying that the only chance you have to live a righteous life is if you learn to let grace reign. Otherwise, if you pick any other method, you will live dominated by sin in a very practical way for the rest of your life. This is what has to be learned, this is our only opportunity, and that is what Paul is going to begin to detail here as we get further and further into Romans 6.

In fact, notice the key to understanding how grace reigns, it's ‘through righteousness’, and it's ‘through Jesus Christ.’ Again, going back to what? Identification. You are so united with Christ; we've got to begin to see that and understand that. This is how God makes all of this happen, He makes it happen by means of Jesus Christ our Lord and His life in us and through us.

Again, God has identified us with Jesus, we have all the privileges that He provides, we have all the resources that were at His disposal. Do you know that Jesus, when He lived on earth, He lived a dependent life on the Father, He said, “I don't do things unless the Father tells me to do them. I don't speak things unless the Father tells me to speak.” Guess how you should live? The same exact way. The same exact way that Jesus lived.

You could say, “Well He was the son of God!” But He voluntarily limited the use of His divine attributes while on earth, and He only did it when the Father cut Him loose, so to speak. And someone might say, “Well that's Jesus, I could never live that way.” What's crazy is that the very life that He lived is the life that lives inside of you. If you have ever prayed, “Lord, I wish Jesus were here so He could love my wife the way that she deserves to be loved.” You've got that life inside of you, Jesus is living in you. The life that you now live in the flesh, you can live by faith in the Son of God, and Christ can live His life through you. If you've ever prayed as a wife, “How would Jesus support or love my husband?” You've got that life inside of you. “How would Jesus raise my kids?” You've got that life inside of you.

This is the secret to the Christian life, and it's no secret Jesus Christ is the Christian life. Not a bunch of rules, not a bunch of disciplines. Are you kidding me? I mean, think about that. Why would we trade in something of less value when we have something of utmost value available to us? Why would we do that? We wouldn't do that in any other place. I wouldn't buy a brand-new car and roll down to the gas station and see an old jalopy roll in and say, “Dude, I love your car! Can we switch?” Are you kidding me? Why would we do that in our Christian life?

And yet practically speaking, that's what many of us do, we just trade in this brand-new Mercedes for an old jalopy, and we do it on a daily moment-by-moment basis, trying to struggle and strive and

figure out the Christian life when God wants you to do the same thing you did when you got saved: quit trying and start trusting. The same message applies for the believer.

The question becomes here as we close out chapter 5, do you identify yourself with Jesus or are you still identifying yourself with the first Adam? How do you see yourself? And as we said in Romans 6, as we kind of trickle into 6:1, we're going to see that Paul anticipates the question. The reason he does is because of what was said in 5:20. He's assuming that someone's going to get stuck in 5:20, basically saying, "Oh man, if we sin and God's grace superabounds, then if we sin more, more grace comes and that's a good thing, and God will be glorified as we sin more." And Paul is going to give the answer why that's not true.

And I think his answer is going to surprise you if you've never seen it before, because he doesn't answer that question the way many of us would naturally answer that question. And so I want to just challenge you, Paul was not wrong in his answer, we're wrong in our answer. We need to begin to identify ourselves and believe what the Word of God says as the correct answer to this question. And so he anticipates this question.

But let me just say this, and I've tried to say it a couple of times, so forgive me if you've already heard it and you got it, that's great! Hallelujah! There may be some that haven't gotten it, and so I'm going to try to rephrase it here in a different way. Do you know that God made a provision for the penalty of sin by sending Christ to die for you? We all agree that's the gospel message, Christ died for you. Do you know what the message of sanctification is? God also made provision for you to be delivered from the power of sin when He crucified you *with* Christ. See the difference? One is Christ died for you in your place as a substitute, and now you died with Christ as your representative. That's the key, that's the provision that God has made for delivering you from sin's power in your daily life. And so we're going to see that really spelled out here in Romans chapter 6, starting in verse 1: "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*"

Now you'll notice - and I've had this up here since verse 20 and I'll address this here in a second - your Bible reads, "*shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*" And what's left out of our English translations is the word "the", and I think it's there for a distinct purpose and we'll kind of get to that here in a second. Paul said the purpose for grace in verse 21 - again, I think people got stuck in 20 and didn't get to 21 - was that grace might reign through righteousness. Not to continue in sin, but that grace might reign through righteousness, a godly life, a righteous life pleasing to God, but he anticipated that some of his readers might have gotten stuck in 5:20.

The sticking point was, as I've said, if someone sins and then God's grace abounds, that must mean it's a good thing. Because if our sin brings God glory, we should sin more. That was the misunderstanding, and still is a common misunderstanding of the gospel of grace. Romans 3:8 says, "*And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'?*" - that's the outcome of people thinking we're teaching this - "*as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.*" And I believe what Paul is saying there is if that *is* true, if that's what we were teaching, then their condemnation of us would be just. But we're not teaching that. We're not teaching let's do evil so that good may come, that's not what Paul's message was at all. In fact, if verse 21 was read clearly, his message is that grace would reign through righteousness, that's God's desire for us.

But we see this word "sin", and you're going to notice that the emphasis at the beginning part of Romans - the first four and a half chapters - was sins plural, or the fruit of sin, acts of sin you might say. Whereas we start getting into the end of Romans 5:20 and on, and you're going to see that sin now shifts to the singular. Sin is a noun, it's articulated with the word "the", "the sin", and so we want to notice this change especially as it starts in verse 20, and then ask the question: Why? Why this change?

What's he emphasizing here? What's he going after here by adjusting his language? These are the things we want to observe as we study the text.

So, is Paul talking about a certain act of sin, *the sin*, like anger? Is he talking about a certain type of sin? Well, you know, a little anger at home is okay, but then killing somebody's really bad. And are we talking about that sin, is it specific, or is he talking about a certain consistency of sin? What's he talking about here?

I believe that Paul is saying *the sin* which causes us to ask the question: the sin what? I think that's what's there. He's identifying a source of sin in the believer's life, which is what I believe that he's calling out here. Paul is referring to the source of sin, the root of sin in our life, i.e., the sin nature. Now, there are some people that aren't comfortable with this term "sin nature", and so I just want you to know what I mean by it, because I'm going to use it interchangeably with the word "flesh" or "indwelling sin" or "the source of sin." What I don't mean by that is that you're still in Adam. I don't mean that at all. Your identity has changed, you're in Christ. What I'm talking about is there is an indwelling source of sin that tries to draw you away from God, and when I use that phrase, that's what I'm talking about. And we've got to be careful on context, especially when we use the word "flesh", because the flesh in the Bible, the Greek word "*sarx*" could mean your human body, or it can refer to this indwelling sin. And so we'll make careful contrasts when we get into different contexts where we may need to articulate that.

And so he's saying here that there's a source of sin, this root of sin in our life, and then he says, "*Shall we continue in the sin that grace may abound?*" And the word "continue" is an emphatic form of the word translated "abide." We all know the word "abide" in John 15, he says, "*He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*" It's the same word used here where Paul is saying shall we continue, or shall we remain, or shall we continue to abide in sin?

And so what does that mean? It's probably a good question. Well, I think he's anticipating the question, the objection: should we continue abiding in the sin nature - and I think this is the key - and live under its control? That's the key. You're saying that you can sin, grace will abound, so should you just go on as a believer and live under sin's power? Live under sin's control so that God's grace can abound even more? Of course, we know Paul's answer.

But we've got to understand when we get to this section of scriptures, we've been looking at all of this fruit: lying, anger, lust, cheating, adultery, whatever. This is all the fruit, this is all what we see out here, this external visual. This is what you notice when you flip off - hopefully you don't - somebody that cuts you off in traffic, there's a very external thing that you can see and notice. And so many times, we approach sin in our life as, "Well I get angry, and so what I'm going to start doing to get rid of anger is I'm going to start counting to 10 before I say anything." And we start approaching acts of sin in our life in a very worldly, secular, psychology type way.

The world's solution becomes our solution. So, when I get angry, I'm going to take ten deep breaths and I'm going to count to ten. Find a Bible verse that tells me that. Find a Bible verse that says when I struggle with cheating on my exam, what I should do is put my hands in my pockets, and then put blinders on my eyes. There are all of these worldly ways that we try to address all of these sins. And yet, God is telling us in Chapter 6, "I've dealt with the root. Why are you chasing around the tree cutting off bad fruit?" That's what the Christian life felt like to me for many years, was exactly that. I was running, I wasn't on a treadmill, but it felt like one. And as I ran around to the back side of the tree and tried to cut anger off, something else was growing on the other side. And I was just circling the tree, cutting off bad fruit, trying to rid my life of all these sins (plural) and I didn't even realize that God had done something with the root of sin.

And see, your success, my success in the Christian life is going to be based on how well you trust in God's provision for the root of sin, this indwelling source of sin, this power of sin. How well do you trust in God's provision for that? It's God's battle, He's accomplished it. How well will you trust or rest in His provision? Just like you have rested or trusted in His provision for the penalty of sin in your life, God wants you now to trust and rest in His provision for the power of sin in your life, and that's the root. It's not chasing around the tree trying to cut off bad fruits.

And so we know Paul's answer in verse 2: Certainly not! "*Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!*" May it never be, and may it never come into existence would be the emphatic way that he would say that. And now Paul's reason for being so emphatic in his answer has nothing to do with the reason that most people would give for not continuing in sin in the Christian life.

In fact, if a believer were to come to you and they asked you this question, "Why shouldn't I continue in sin? Why shouldn't I continue to live or be controlled by sin?" What one reason would you give to the Christian as to why they should not continue in sin in the Christian life? Take a second to think about that. You're the Bible answer man or woman to this person, and you've got to give them the answer to this question: Why should they not continue in sin in the Christian life? And I already know, it's like how do you choose one? There's lots of things that you might say. But if you could only say one, what would it be?

Would you tell them that sin is bad for you? Would you say, "Well, sin is against God's will, and it offends Him.?" Would you say that sin has consequences? Would you say that sin is not good for your health? That can be true, too. Would you say that sin will cause you to lose rewards? Would you say that when you sin, you're actually submitting to the devil? Would you say that when you sin you break fellowship with God? Or would you say when you sin God will discipline you? Are any of those your answers? Do you have another one?

Do you know that all of these answers are true to some level? But do you know that Paul doesn't give any of these answers as his one reason as to why Christians should not continue in sin? That's not his answer, look at his answer in verse 2. He answers it by asking a question, and he says this: "*Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*" You know where Paul goes with his answer? He goes right back to identification. This is why Romans 5:12-21 is in our Bible, it's transitioning us into this practical area of sanctification.

Do you know that Christ died for you, and He rose again? That's the good news of the gospel. But do you also know as a believer that you died with Christ? If that's a new concept for you today, I would just encourage you to soak in the light of the truth that's found in Romans 6. Because this is where deliverance from sin's power in your Christian life, this understanding can begin. This is one of the keys, if not *the* key.

And so we see in verse 2 that Paul's reason is what I would call a positional truth based on our identification with Jesus Christ. You know, Paul hung his whole life on this truth. Paul saw our union with Christ as so real and so practical that he hung his life on this truth. Why should you not continue in sin? Because did you know that you've already died? Did you know that you died to sin with Christ? Do you know that? Did you know that there was a funeral celebrated on your behalf the day that Jesus died? Because He's your federal head, guess what happened? You died with Him. Jesus was buried, and you were buried with Him. Jesus rose from the dead, and guess what? You too will rise from the dead. And not only that, but you have been raised from the dead, in a sense, to walk in newness of life right now.

See, all of these things are true of you because they're true of Jesus, and that's what we're going to read about as we go on further next week. In fact, we didn't even time it, but we're going to have a



baptism service next week, and we're going to be looking at Romans 6:3-5 which talks about our spiritual baptism with Christ, our identification with Christ, and how meaningful that water baptism is as it pictures that spiritual baptism.

But do you know that as believers, you and I have died to *the* sin, the sin nature, indwelling sin, past tense, point in time. Do you know what that means? It's not a command for you to crucify yourself, that's not what this verse says. This says it's already happened to you. It's done, you have died with Christ. How shall you who have died to sin live or continue to be under the control of sin? It's not a command to crucify yourself.

In fact, do you know that crucifixion is one of the only ways you can't kill yourself? Think about it. You can nail in your feet, you can nail in one hand, but who's going to nail in the other hand? You can't even kill yourself through crucifixion. It's not something you do, it has to be done to you, and this verse says it's already happened. It's a past tense event, you have died. Whether you believe it, whether you know it, whether you understand it, it's true of you. If you're in Christ, this happened to you.

When did it happen? 2,000 years ago, when you put your faith in Christ, God retroactively took you into Jesus's death. He did it for a reason, He identified you with Christ for a reason so that He could free you from the power of sin in your life and guarantee that you will be delivered from the penalty of sin, and you will be delivered from the very presence of sin in glorification. It all centers in who you are and what you have in Jesus Christ.

So, the question Paul asked to answer his own rhetorical question is this: Since we have already died to the sin nature, why would we live any longer in it or under its control? Notice he doesn't say it's impossible to do so, but rather it's unnecessary, it's undesirable, why would you do it? Why would you trade your Mercedes for an old, rusty bucket of junk? Why would you go back to presenting yourself to sin and all of the consequences that come with it?

So now the million-dollar question for us is when did we die? This is the beauty of our identification with Christ, because when He died, we died with Him. So, you see why it's all connected here. Not only did Jesus die for us as a substitute, but He also died with us as our representative. We're going to develop this further as we continue to study through Romans 6.



# CHAPTER 31

## Identification With Purpose

### Romans 6:3-4

Today we're gonna continue our study in the book of Romans and remember last week we left off in Romans chapter 6. You can join me there; we're going to be in Romans 6:3-4. But one of the things that we're picking up right in the middle of is this anticipated question that Paul asked, believing that his audience is thinking this very thing. And to find the reason they're thinking this very thing, we've got to go back to Romans 5:20 which says, *"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."*

And so he anticipates this question for those who are listening to him, and basically the question goes like this: Romans 6:1, *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* To put it in modern parlance, "If I'm saved by grace and all my sins are forgiven, why can't I just go live any way I want to now? Even though I'm saved, can I go live like a hellion or a child of the devil? Can I go on living that way?" And so Paul is in the middle of answering that question.

Last week I gave you a pop quiz. Some of you remember the blood pressure rising when I said, "pop quiz", it brings back all the memories from school when that was such a four-letter word, or I guess the 7-letter two words. But last week's pop quiz went something like this: if a believer came to you and said, "What's the one reason you can give me why I should not continue to sin in my Christian life? Why should I not live like the devil? Why should I not live any old way that I want to? I mean, I'm saved, right? Sin goes this far, how far does grace go? It covers it. What about if sin goes way out here? Grace covers it. So why should I live a Christian life? Why should I desire to live a life that's holy? Why is that even part of the equation?" What would you tell that person?

We looked at a list, but Paul doesn't say any of these things on the list. Now these are all true - I'm about to rattle those off - but Paul doesn't answer that question with any of these responses: he doesn't say sin is bad for you, though it is. He doesn't say sin is against God's will and it offends Him - it is, that's true. He doesn't say that sin has consequences, but that is also true. He doesn't say that sin is not good for your physical health - that's true sometimes. Sin will cause you to lose rewards, he doesn't say that, although that's true. He doesn't say that when you sin, you're submitting to the devil - that's true. He doesn't say that when you sin you break fellowship with God, although that's true. And he doesn't say that when you sin God will discipline you.

See, all of these things are true, but Paul doesn't give any of these as a reason for why you should not continue in sin. But he's got a very strategic reason, a reason that really builds off of the argument that he started to put together in Romans 5 as it relates to our identification with Jesus Christ, who we are now in Christ. We are no longer in Adam, a position of condemnation and judgment, but we are now in a position of righteousness, a position of holiness, a position of acceptance by God the Father.

There's something unique in this identification that Paul's going to bring out, and his answer in verse 2, he answers this question in the form of a question, and he simply says this: *"How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* Do you know why the believer should not continue in sin? Because they died to sin. Wow! Did you know that not only Jesus Christ died for you, but if you sit here today and you put your faith in Jesus and what He's done for you, do you know there's another truth that's also true of you? You died with Christ. *You* died.

We know Jesus died, that's the gospel, we preach that wholeheartedly here. Jesus died for your sins and rose again, that's the only means by which we can have our sins forgiven if we're trusting in Him as our Savior. But do you know the Bible also teaches that in your union with Christ, you died as well? It reminds me of this cartoon of this lady sitting with a couple and she says, "Well I haven't actually died to sin, but I did feel kind of faint once." And you know, many believers take this tack, and they want to make this a feeling. They want to feel like they've died to sin, and they want to just experience that they died to sin.

Whether or not you feel it, whether or not you experience it, whether or not you know it, whether or not you believe it, whether or not you rest upon it in your daily life or rely upon it, it is true of you, because the Word of God says it's true of you. It's true of you because God the Father is the One who identified you with Jesus Christ and took you into His death with Him, buried you with Him and raised you again to newness of life with Jesus Christ. All of these things are true because of your union with Christ.

You know, it reminds me of something that we understand, and we practice, especially in this church. I appreciate the fact that you guys as a group want to be clear on the gospel. You have a passion for that, you have a heritage of that here at this church, being taught the clear message of the gospel.

And so if someone were to come to you and ask, "What must I do to be saved? What must I do to be righteous in God's sight?" You would certainly want to give God's answer from the Bible! You wouldn't just make something up. You wouldn't say, "Well, come to church, and if you crawl on your knees from the parking lot into the front row pew, where you can feel the pastor's spit on your face, then you can be saved." That would be pretty gross, wouldn't it? But you wouldn't say, "You've got to come to church every Sunday for a year consistently to be saved." You wouldn't say that because that's not the biblical answer, is it?

Paul summarizes the biblical answer in many places, but in Acts 16:30-31, he's asked specifically, "What must I do to be saved?" And he says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved." Why Jesus? Why do I have to believe upon Him? Why do I have to rely upon Him? Because He's the one that died for you, He's the one that rose again. See, it's Jesus or nothing in the estimation of God, and that's what we've been studying in the book of Romans up to this point in time.

But you know what I find interesting, and ironic, and sad? (Can I use that as an adjective?) Is that when people now approach you as a believer and say, "What must I do to live the Christian life?" You know what we do with our Bibles? We just shut them. We put them down, and we start talking about all these self-help books, and all these top-ten lists, and all these spiritual disciplines, and you gotta start doing this, and you gotta start doing that. What does God say? What is God's answer to that question: how do you live the Christian life?

And many of us come up with fleshly schemes on how to live the Christian life, and if you want to look at how those turn out, go to Colossian 2:22-23, and look at how that works out. Touch not, taste not, don't do this, stop doing this, start doing this, and at the end of that passage it says, "Man, those things look good." Those things to the carnal mind make sense. Yeah, that's how I get holy, that's how I get spiritual, I gotta do these things and I gotta stop doing these things, and yet at the end of that verse in verse 23 it says, "*but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*" In other words, they cannot deliver you from sin's power.

You know what, the same Man who delivered you from sin's penalty is the same Man that wants to deliver you from sin's power. Not carnal schemes, not the top ten list, not the latest Christian bestseller and self-help book, that's not where your help comes from. Where does our help come from? The Lord. Who made provision to overcome sin's power? Is it in your self-adjusted schemes? Is it in

you getting up at 5:00 a.m. every day and reading your Bible for two hours, is that how you gain victory in the Christian life? Or do you gain victory in the Christian life the same way that you gained justification: by trusting in Somebody else? Somebody who's much stronger than you, Somebody who's put something in place.

And so the answer to how to live the Christian life is simply this: God has made a solution for you, God has made a provision for you to be delivered from sin's power, do you know what that is? Biblically, do we know what that is? Well guess what? We're gonna find out what that is in Romans 6, so you're showing up to the right place if that's something that interests you.

There are two lessons that every person in this world must learn: number one, and this is the only lesson you need if you're not sure you're saved, you're not sure you're going to heaven, you're not sure that you're a Christian, you're still kind of checking it out. Just ignore lesson number two for a minute, you need lesson number one. Lesson number one is this: you cannot save yourself. Yes, you can come to church. Yes, you can do good works. Yes, you can even give to the church. Yes, you can do lots of good things, but that can't save you. God's got a provision and a solution in place, His name is Jesus Christ and He died for your sins and rose again.

Now why did He die for your sins? Because that was the death penalty hanging over your head. You have a righteousness that you could not earn, so no matter how many good works you do to try to be righteous, you can't do it. You can't merit enough righteousness, and that's why God wants you to stop trusting in yourself and trust in the One who died for you. Faith is simply looking away from yourself. No longer am I going to depend on myself, and man that brings me comfort. As I've shared before, I can't even remember a grocery list at Kroger let alone the list that might be required to get me to heaven. I don't want to trust in myself, that's becoming more and more prevalent the older I get that I am not worthy of heaven. And you know what? The Bible says none of us are. We've got to look outside of ourselves, we need a deliverer.

But you know as a Christian, you need to learn this lesson, I need to learn this lesson, and that's lesson number two: I cannot live the Christian life. Now some of you in here are gonna say, "Amen, hallelujah, that just brings freedom!" and some of you are getting mad right now. You say, "I don't know about that, I'm kind of getting it down, I'm figuring it out." The Bible says you can't live the Christian life. You need a Deliverer; you need Someone who can save you from the power of indwelling sin.

We recognize that in justification, why can't we recognize that in sanctification? Why do we struggle there? Why do we think that God is saying, "Here's the keys, I'll meet you on the other side. Good luck in this life, I know you're gonna get hurt, but I'll see you on the other side. Figure it out, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and start banging out, and cranking out this Christian life." The truth of the matter is you cannot live the Christian life, but you've got a Deliverer who wants to live it in and through you. That's the message, that's the lesson that we need to learn.

Now before we dive into the passage this morning, I want to show you a couple of things, just kind of in a big picture format if I can. What I want you to see is in Romans 6:1-9, I want you to see the unity words that Paul uses. Because this is why our identification with Christ is so important, it's because whether you realize it or not, God has joined you to Jesus Christ the moment you put your faith in Him. You are in Him, He's in you, there's a reciprocal union, you are in Christ. And I want you to notice all of these combo words.

And so verse 1, *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized **into** Christ Jesus were baptized **into** His death? Therefore we were buried **with** Him through baptism into death, that **just as** Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so** we also should walk in newness of life. For if we*

*have been **united together** in the **likeness** of His death, certainly we also shall be in the **likeness** of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified **with** Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died **with** Christ, we believe that we shall also live **with** Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion **over** Him.” (Emphasis mine)*

And you see that connection with Christ, God wants you to see that in this passage. This is why God identified you with Jesus Christ. He's doing something with it, He's accomplishing something with it. And as it relates to your life, it relates to your ability to get free from the power of sin to actually live a victorious Christian life. God did this for you.

Now I want you to notice another repeated word starting in verse 3: “Do you know this?” Verse 6, “Do you know this?” Verse 9, “Do you know this?” There are some things we have to know. If you don't know them, it's like having a gun with bullets and then showing up to a gunfight without using it because you didn't know someone slipped it in your bag. It's like showing up to buy dinner and not realizing that your wife, or your husband, or your child - although that's a little bit more far-fetched that your child would actually put money in your wallet. The children usually take money, right? - had slipped money in your wallet, and you're thinking, “I'm broke!” and not having the resource there to use. We've got to know what we have in Christ, and so we're gonna begin looking at that today.

You need to know something. What do you need to know? Let's go to verses 3 and 4. He says, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” So, verse 3 tells us that we need to know something. First of all, do you know that you were baptized into Christ Jesus? Notice it doesn't say baptized into water there. In fact, we're gonna look at baptism, but every time people see the word “baptism”, typically they think water. We're gonna look at why this is not talking about baptism into water.

But he wants you to know that we were baptized into Christ Jesus, and because we were baptized into Christ, there were other things that happened as well, namely the first one, we were baptized into His death. Now notice I've got the word “the” there, that's in the Greek, and it's establishing a unique death. This is not you dying, right? We looked at that last week. Verse 2 is not a command for you to die, verse 2 describes something that's already happened to you, not something for you to do. You have died to sin, that's true. That's a done, accomplished, completed fact, and now Paul is gonna tell us when and how this all happened.

Paul assumes that the believers he's writing to understand that they've been baptized into Christ. That's a very, hopefully, basic truth. At the moment you put your faith in Christ, you are now part of His body, you are *in* Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13, which we'll look at later, says that that baptism is true of every believer that puts their faith in Christ. And so Paul is gonna use this known or understood fact really to build his case and show when the believer died to sin.

And so he's gonna function like any good teacher or math teacher. When I used to teach high school math (I taught algebra), I didn't show up the first day and start in chapter 14, right? I mean, after summer, the kids can barely handle chapter 1, and that was like a review from last year! And so we build from what you know, and we keep building in the next section based on what you know and introduce something new. And then we build on what you know and introduce something new. And so Paul's gonna do this. They know that they were baptized into Christ Jesus, but now he's introducing another truth that they need to know, and that's that they were baptized into His unique death.

Basically, we all died to sin the moment we were baptized into Christ. When did this happen? When did you die? When was your funeral? When did you die with Christ? When did you die to sin?

The moment you were baptized into Christ, that's when it happened. That's the “when” of it, and now Paul is gonna describe this further.

But before we go, we want to define baptism a little bit, because baptism is a misunderstood word, clearly, not only in our culture, but really all over the world. But the word “baptism”, part of the confusion is the Greek word is “*baptizo*”, so they just transliterated that into English, and so it doesn't give us a really good understanding of what was being communicated by that word. But it means *to immerse, to submerge, to overwhelm*. It can mean *to saturate* depending on the context, but it also means *to put into, to identify with, or to place in union with*.

Just using that definition, I could even say the pencils in the cup on the screen were baptized into that cup. By definition, it was placed into that cup. And so I wanna just expand your thinking on this word baptism so it's not always water you think of, that there's a definition behind it. And then we go to the context and look at what it's talking about, what kind of baptism.

So, to kind of give us some other ideas on how this word was used, I did a little research on how this word was used just in everyday Greek culture to give you a perspective of some of the ways that people would have understood this word or used it. This word “*baptizo*” was used of cups and utensils. It was also used - in this case in Mark 7:4 - of ceremonial cleansing. Obviously, that's not the picture of being baptized in a river, it's something else, it's being identified with or submerging themselves.

This word was also used of Spartan soldiers in the fourth century B.C. This is kind of an interesting story, but you know apparently, they had the same spears for hunting and the same spears for fighting a battle. And so in their mind, what they would do to transform their spears is they would take the tips of their spears when they were going into the battle and soak them in pig's blood. They would cover the tips of their spears in pig's blood, let it solidify, and then in their thinking it was now a warrior spear. “I'm no longer hunting; I'm going to kill people in this battle that's coming to me.” And so that's how this word “*baptizo*” was used.

Another use common in the culture was when they would dye white cloth. They would take pieces of white cloth and then dip them, or soak them, or submerge them into a colored dye, and then it would take the color of that dye. And so it wasn't like today where I look around and I just see colors galore, that wasn't the case in that culture. They had to actually develop this white cloth, and then they had to have the ability to take it to a dye place, leave it under long enough that this white cloth became red, or blue, or turquoise blue, or whatever other colors I'm seeing out there. Salmon, back there in the back. Looks good! But it would be a dip into the dye, and it would take on the characteristics of the dye.

“*Baptizo*” was used to describe a sinking ship in the 5th century (again, in extra-biblical writings), or something - or someone - sinking in mud. So, if somebody was watching the Titanic go down, they could say, “That ship is being baptized into the ocean.” And this just means it was being submerged, you can even say it's being identified with the ocean because it's still there to this day. Another use was to describe when someone was buried or submerged in debt. You could say they were “*baptizo*” in debt.

And then one of my favorites is this one: “*baptizo*” was used to describe how a cucumber was made into a pickle, baptized into the liquid to “pickle up.” True story, they found a recipe on how to make a pickle during this time frame, and they would use the word “*baptizo*” to describe what the cucumber was doing, soaking in the vinegar to pickle up. Interestingly enough, they would also use in the recipe another Greek word called “*bapto*” which meant *to dip*. And so you would soak it to let it pickle up, and then you would maybe dip it in some seasoning to give it some flavor on the outside. So, two different words, kind of the same root, but one emphasizing submersion or immersion here.

We've already said this, that it doesn't have to do with water. In fact, if you look at all the baptisms in the Bible, best I can count (I may be missing one), but I count seven. Seven different

baptisms are mentioned in the Bible, and you know four of those are dry, and only three of those are wet - in other words with water. And if you've never heard that before, that might be shocking. I'd be happy to share that with you. But that's the truth.

So, when we talk about being baptized into Christ, we're not talking about water baptism, we're talking about spiritual baptism. We're talking about something that God did the moment you put your faith in Christ, and so this is what Paul is referring to. So, when Paul says that the believer was baptized into Christ Jesus, he's saying they were placed into, they were identified with. He placed you in Christ, He identified you with Christ, that's the meaning of the word "baptism" that we have before us today.

So, when did it happen? When did this happen? I think that's a great question. It happens the moment you believe the gospel. The moment you put your faith in Christ, God takes you out of Adam - now I'm using that as a generic term, we're going to talk about how he takes you out because we're about to read it here in verses 3-5. You died with Christ, you were buried with Christ, you were raised to newness of life, you were born again into the family of God, that's when all of that happened.

And so we read in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that we were all baptized into one body and it was done so by the Spirit of God, not a human being. We're gonna have a baptism service immediately following today's message, but we are not baptizing people into the body of Christ. That job description has already been fulfilled, and Someone holds that role, and that's the Spirit of God. God's Spirit is the one who baptizes people into the body of Christ. We as a church don't put anybody into the body of Christ, we don't get anybody into heaven by our actions. We share the gospel, we share the message, we share the Person who can save them, but it's the Spirit of God who baptizes everybody into one body, not a human being.

1 Corinthians 12:13, *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."* And so it happened at the moment you put your faith in Christ. Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us that we were sealed with the Holy Spirit the moment we believed. Ephesians 1:13-14, *"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."* And so I have this "In Christ" box up here, but where this illustration breaks down is if we were doing it biblically according to Ephesians 1:13, I'd have a lid on this box, a lid that you couldn't break open that the Spirit of God has sealed you into union with Christ. You have been sealed, that position can never change.

And then finally Ephesians 4:5 tells us that there's only one baptism common to all believers, and this is Spirit baptism into the body of Christ. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, that section in Ephesians 4 talks about the unity that we have as believers. Everything that we have in common as a believer, this is true of you. You've got one Lord, you've got one faith, you've got one baptism. What's the one baptism common to every believer? Well, it's this Spirit baptism that we read about in 1 Corinthians 12:13, that's why he uses the word "all", he means "all." It's an all-inclusive word that all of us have in common.

And so now Paul is going to use this known fact about the believer's baptism or identification into Christ, and then he's going to go on to tell us that three other things are true of us now whether you know it or not. When you were baptized in the body, you were crucified with Christ. You were buried with Christ. You were raised with Christ to newness of life. And so when we baptize in water today, we are illustrating what God has already done to you in Christ. This is the human element reflecting what's already true, and this is the element that's already happened, that God accomplished when you put your faith in Christ.



And so now using this known fact about the believer's baptism or identification into Christ, he's going to go on to say that the believer was baptized or identified into something else, and that first thing is Christ's death. And so we see in verse 3 that he says this: *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"* And so the very same group that were baptized into Christ also experienced crucifixion with Christ. The very same people who were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death.

This is why Paul mentioned in verse 2, "The reason you shouldn't go on sinning? You died with Christ. You died to sin." And now Paul tells us when and how this took place. And you know, as we said when we were looking at these federal heads, what happens to Jesus happens to you. Jesus died, you died. Jesus was buried, you were buried. Jesus rose again, you have been raised to newness of life, and you will rise again in the future, bodily at some point. Because as we looked at this morning in Sunday school, Jesus is the firstfruits, that means there's more to come. That's you, that's me, that's those who have put our faith in Christ, we too will be bodily resurrected as it relates to the scripture.

A great story I think that illustrates this truth, based on a true story although I don't know if I have all the true facts, there's some details that vary. But it is a true story, it's about a gentleman named George Wyatt who lived during the civil war. And George was drawn by lot to go to the front, he was gonna be put into the army. Unfortunately, George had a wife and six children, and so you could imagine the terror in their family thinking that their dad was gonna go to the frontlines, and they'd probably lose him forever. Especially in an agricultural society where he provided the means to eat for that family.

And so there was a young man that George knew named Richard Pratt, and Richard offered to go in his stead for George Wyatt. And so at the courthouse Pratt signed the usual papers, but he did so under the name of George Wyatt. He took Wyatt's gun, he took Wyatt's clothes, he took Wyatt's horse, and after a briefing and a bit of training, he went into battle and was killed at the siege of Vicksburg. He was buried on the battlefield, and after the battles of Shiloh and Gettysburg, the conflict had grown more hopeless.

The frantic draftsmen were going to every house and demanding that every man prepare to go to war, for it looked like Richmond might fall soon. They came to the farmhouse of George Wyatt - remember, Pratt had taken his place. Wyatt met them at the door and asked, "What do you want? What can I help you with?" They said they were drafting every man that was alive. Wyatt smiled and told them, "I have died." They asked what he meant. Wyatt paused for a moment and told him the story of what happened on the day of his draft. He told them that his friend Pratt had gone to the courthouse and signed in as George Wyatt. Wyatt told them, "Go to the courthouse, check your own records. You'll find that the judge recorded my death and add it to the record that I was buried on the field of battle near Vicksburg." Wyatt took a big breath and said in a strong voice, "You cannot draft me, because your judicial records say that I am dead." George Wyatt was never drafted, and he could never be sent to war.

See, he died in the person of his representative. And see, that is the position by faith that God wants you and I to take on a daily basis. We've got to understand that when Christ died, you died. You have already died to sin. Now take that position as it relates to your practical living in the Christian life, and we'll look even further at what our part is as we continue the study in Romans 6.

But in verse 4, he goes on to say not only did you die with Christ, not only were you baptized into His death, but verse 4 tells us that we were buried with Him through baptism, into death, and so we look at this concept of burial. And he says the word "therefore." Since it's true that you've been baptized or identified with Christ in His death, it's true that you're also buried with Him, you're so united with Christ. It's not like you died with Him and then you watched Him get buried. Because in order to

be raised to newness of life, what has to be true of you? You have to die. There's no resurrection without death, and burial is the proof that death indeed occurred.

And so you're united with Him not only in His death, but also His burial, and also His resurrection. Burial always signifies death, and it did indeed take place, it's a proof of death. In fact, when we're looking at the proof of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, what is one of the proofs that Jesus died and that He was buried? It was also predicted according to the scriptures, so there's two proofs. But one of the proofs is that He was buried. Because you don't bury living people, you bury dead people. It proved that He did indeed die.

What was the penalty of sin? Death. What did Jesus do? He died. He didn't just get hurt on the cross and recover and use essential oils and get better three days later. No, He was buried, He was dead, He died and then He rose again. And so that's the message of the gospel, and because *Jesus* died and because *Jesus* was buried, you died, and you were buried with Him. That's what Romans 6 is teaching us here.

Now he does it for a purpose. Go back to your Bibles in verse 4, and I want you to notice that small word, "that." *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that..."* The word "that" is a keyword in this passage because it's in the Greek what we call a Hina clause, and all it does is it indicates purpose. So, if you want to get behind the kitchen door, if you want to get into the mind of God, "Why did He do this? Why did He go to all the trouble to identify us with Christ, to baptize us into His death, to baptize us into His burial, why did He do all that?" We're about to find out. He's going to give us the reason or purpose behind this identification.

And this is why (as I've joked before), Romans 5:12-21 should not be skipped in the study of the book of Romans. We've got to understand that passage because God has a very specific reason for identifying you with Christ. Not just talking about it, this isn't just some mental Jedi mind trick that we have to believe. This is true of you! This is true, this happened to you the day you put your faith in Christ. And so what's the "that" for? What did He do? And what we're gonna see is that the reason He did it is so that you can live a practically righteous and holy life.

How do we see it? Well let's just finish verse 4: *"that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* He wants to not only give you eternal life that starts after you die and lasts forever, He wants to give you a quality of life right now, an abundant life. And I'm here to say that if you're living in sin, if you just have a very casual acquaintance with sin in your life and you can justify what you're doing, and you can say, "Oh yeah, but I'm saved." I'm saying that you're not living according to the purpose that God has for you. You are living outside of the purpose that God has for you.

God wants you to live, and experience, and enjoy abundant life, a newness of life. Because He knows - the One who created you, the One who wires you - knows that you cannot be any happier than the day and the moment that you are in His will, in fellowship with Him, enjoying Him. Your wiring changed; you are no longer wired to enjoy the things of this world. You are no longer wired to live out of fellowship with the Lord. That is going to turn into a miserable, wretched, and difficult life if that's how you're living. God wants something much better for you because He loves you. Not because He's trying to shut down the fun you have, He's trying to give you true joy, true fun.

Psalms tells us in His presence is fullness of joy. That's what Jesus is about. If you look at John's repeated message of what Jesus said in John 15 when he writes in 1 John, He wants your joy to be full and He knows it can't be unless you are walking in fellowship with Him.

And so God did all this behind the kitchen doors, behind the screen so to speak, and He's telling you why: He wants you to walk in newness of life. Do you think it encourages God to see His children

dominated by sin over, and over again in their Christian life? Do you think God likes to watch that? Do you think that warms the heart of God? Do you think He's up there getting ready to zap you with a lightning bolt, or do you think every time that happens it's breaking His heart?

The God of this universe wants you to enjoy the life that He's created you for. He's made every provision for you to do so. Why do we continue in sin? Why do we continue trying to fight a battle that God says He's already fought, He's already won, and now will you simply trust and rely upon His provision for you so that you can experience that victory too?

Isn't it interesting in Ephesians 6 when we talk about the full armor of God, what is the command there? Stand. Not, "Go take that hill. Go take that hill back! Buck up, I know it looks scary, but you need to go defeat those enemies!" No, stand! You're victorious, you've got it. Just stand, enjoy your victory in Christ, enjoy the victory that God has won on your behalf.

And so he gives us this purpose clause in verse 4, "*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death,*" - why? - "*that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" This is the end goal. In the same manner that God raised Christ from the dead through His glory, God's purpose for the believer is to walk in newness of life, that's what He wants to accomplish.

That's why you don't continue in sin, He's got something much better. He went through a lot behind the scenes to crucify you with Christ, to bury you with Christ, to raise you to newness of life in Christ, why would you continue in your old manner of life? That's Paul's argument here. Everything about you has changed. Because the believer has been baptized or identified with Jesus in His death, He's also been baptized or identified with Jesus in His resurrection. See, you're completely united to Him. What happened to Jesus and what's true of Him is true of you. Resurrection life, newness of life, spiritual life, can only happen when you recognize that you're alive from the dead.

God has done something to you in relationship to sin - indwelling sin, the sin nature, sin's power - that you could not do for yourself, He's made a way to deliver you from it, and now the question is will you rely upon that method of deliverance? Are you gonna go to the Christian bookstore and pick up the new bestseller on the top 10, the Dirty Dozen or the Clean Dozen, whatever it is. And are you gonna depend on somebody else's ideas on how to be spiritual, or do you want to go to the Bible and find out what God's solution is? What's God's provision for walking in victory?

See, this is the life that the believer is now designed to walk in, hence the reason for Paul's comment in verse 2. "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*" See, this is what we have to know. Things have changed, you're different. You've got resources you've never had before, you've got the ability to stop presenting yourself to sin and to start presenting yourself to God. You have the ability to be a tool of righteousness instead of a tool of the enemy to sin, a destructive tool.

The type of outcome and acts that Satan wants to encourage you to do to destroy your marriages, to destroy your families, to destroy this church body, to destroy every relationship that you've ever had in your life, Satan is about doing that. And if you continue to present yourself to sin, that's exactly what will happen, because sin brings death. Sin brings death to relationships, sin brings death, that's what comes with sin. So, if you want to go on and just keep presenting yourself to sin, death, carnage, wreckage, train wreck of a life, that's what we can guarantee biblically. Or we can trust God, just like we did in salvation, trust in His provision, and we can begin to experience this newness of life that He talks about.

Now I have to bring this up and I've only got a few minutes, but that's good, that'll make me speak quickly and succinctly. Notice this phrase "should walk." We're still in verse 4, and he says, "*that*

*just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” And this word “should walk” is an interesting word because of the mood that this word is in the Greek, it's called the subjunctive mood, it's translated “should walk.” Let me give you two examples where this is also recorded as a subjunctive mood and some other passages in Scripture that talk about living out the Christian life.

The one that you might be familiar with is Ephesians 2:10, which follows Ephesians 2:8-9, which we know as it relates to salvation. But Ephesians 2:10 follows right after that, and it says: “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand,*” - notice this - “*that we should walk in them.*” Same mood, subjunctive mood, so he uses it here. And we also see it in Titus 3:8: “*This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.*” And that word “should be careful” it's the same Greek mood, this subjunctive mood.

Now why is that important? Why am I even bringing that out? Is it because we're trying to look impressive with Greek? No, there's really some significance here. The reason I bring that out is the subjunctive mood in the Greek does not communicate a mood of fact or definite occurrence or action, that would be the indicative mood. So, what do I mean by that? It's not guaranteed. Everything's in place, but it's not guaranteed. This subjunctive mood presents the verbal action as being probable or intentional. It can also express verbal action in terms of mere possibility.

And so God has done all these things, He's done it in order that you should walk in newness of life, but walking in newness of life is not a guaranteed thing for every believer. And it's not because God failed, or letdown, or messed up the plan. What it's basically telling us is this: every believer is fully equipped, fully resourced to walk in newness of life, however, it's not a guaranteed outcome. Why? Because there's God's part, and as we get further into Romans 6, we're gonna see that the believer has a part, and that's generally where the breakdown occurs. It's in our part where the breakdown occurs.

How do we respond to God's provision? How do we benefit from God's resources? Are we relying upon God's resources or relying upon our resources? That becomes the question, and this is why unfortunately, the whole topic of sanctification (salvation from the power of sin) is not a guaranteed thing, and it fluctuates on a daily moment-by-moment basis as the believer learns what it means to walk by faith or reliance upon God's resources for the Christian life. And so the breakdown is between God's purpose or plan, and then the execution or manifestation of that plan in and through your life.

And I'll tell you this, I'll spill the beans, so if you want to skip next week you can, you'll have the answer. The answer is faith. Because not only do you get saved by faith from the penalty of sin, but what does Romans 1 tell us all the way back? It says the *just shall live* by faith. And just like you trusted God to save you from the penalty of sin, God wants you to trust Him on a moment-by-moment, daily basis to deliver you from sin's power. That is the message of sanctification, that is the message of Romans 6. And so we see that we're united in Christ.

# CHAPTER 32

## You've Been Put Out of Business

### Romans 6:5-7

Let's get started with the book of Romans. You know, being put out of business is not typically a positive term, that's usually a scary thing. When we talk about putting sin's power in your life out of business, that's a good thing, that's a very positive thing. And so we're gonna look at that today as we study in the book of Romans.

And we saw the last couple of weeks that the key to this is something that you need to know: you have died to sin. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you died. Whether or not you realized you died, whether or not you realized that God took you into the death of Jesus Christ with Him, that's true of you. Don't be like this lady who was sharing with a couple one night that said, "I haven't actually died to sin, but I did feel kind of faint once." Don't be like her, stand on the Word of God, and what the Word of God says is that you died to sin. That's true of you whether you realize it or not.

And there's a couple things that we need to learn, there's lessons that everybody in the world needs to learn. The first one is this: you can't save yourself. That is a lesson that everybody in this world needs to know, that's why we preach the gospel, that's why we communicate what Jesus has done. Because the contrast of that is you can't do it on your own, you can't be good enough to go to heaven, you can't do enough good things or stop doing enough bad things to earn your way to heaven. You cannot save yourself; you need a Savior, you need a deliverer. Not just you, I need one too, we all need to recognize this lesson.

And so if you're here today and you haven't realized that lesson, just ignore number two. It's not Mr. Miyagi, you just repeat rule number one here, but honestly, we need to get rule number one first. Because if you're not even wired for sound, number two means nothing to you, because you're not even living the Christian life. We need to be born into the family of God, and that happens when we look away from ourselves to a Savior who died for us and rose again, and we trust what He did for us in our place, as our substitute. That's lesson number one that we need to learn.

But the second lesson we need to learn as Christians is this: you can't live the Christian life. Now, you don't typically expect to hear that from church, right? Because church typically gives you a list of things to do during the week to go live the Christian life, and that's typically the mindset. But I'm here to tell you God doesn't want you living the Christian life in your own strength. He doesn't want you cranking it out in your own efforts. He wants you walking moment by moment, in faith, that the same Person who delivered you from the penalty of sin is the same Person who wants to deliver you from the power of sin.

And see, when we get through Romans 6 and 7, you're gonna notice that Paul recognizes this very thing. Romans 7 he says, "*Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" *Who* shall deliver me. Not *what*, not the latest book at the Christian bookstore, not the latest list of do's and don'ts, *who*, it's a Person. See, we have to realize we can't live the Christian life, but we've got a deliverer that can live the Christian life through us.

See, that's the message, that's the good news that keeps on giving. Becoming Christian is not just getting a ticket out of hell into heaven. The Christian life is an abundant life that God wants to live and flow through you as you walk and live on this earth, so that it impacts your relationships. So that

when you're in a marriage, as a husband, you can love your wife as Christ loves the church. And you say, "That's impossible!" and I say, "That's my point! You can't do it on your own."

And I don't care, you may have the best wife in the world - and I would venture to say you don't, because *I've* got the best wife in the world! So, we can get into that argument another time - but even when you have the best wife in the world, you cannot love her the way that Christ loves the church, you need Christ to love her through you.

And this is what we're talking about here, trusting, and resting, and depending upon the one who can deliver you from the very powers in your life. We've got to learn that lesson. See, we're in the midst of this section in Romans that is teaching us that lesson. And we've seen that the answer to not continuing in sin in the Christian life is in verse two, "You have died to sin, that's why you shouldn't live in sin anymore."

And then we saw last week that we have been baptized into Christ Jesus, this is something that we know. We have to know this, God wants us to *know* this truth, because if we don't know it, we can't depend upon it, so we've got to know it first. And so he wants us to know something in verse 3, that we were baptized into Christ Jesus, and when that happened, when you were placed into the body of Christ, when you were placed into Christ Jesus, there was something else that God did. He baptized you into His death, He baptized you into His burial, and He baptized you into His resurrection, for the purpose - at the end of verse 4, notice that last phrase - "*even so we also should walk in newness of life.*"

In other words, it should impact your daily life. You want to know where righteous living comes from? It doesn't come by trying to keep the law. It doesn't come by keeping a list of do's and don'ts. It comes as you learn, and know, and begin to depend upon this truth in your life that you're gonna see it manifested on a more consistent, daily, and practical basis. Wouldn't that be an awesome thing to happen, if you personally began to walk by faith in the Deliverer who can deliver you from the power of sin? And watch how it transforms every relationship that you have, from your marriage to your kids, to your friends, to your co-workers, to your fellow believers in Jesus Christ.

You know, I was told years ago that the local church is like a commune of porcupines. And you've seen porcupines, right? You know, they've got the sharp quills that poke out. And when it gets cold, porcupines naturally want to get together to provide warmth, but guess what happens as they get closer to each other? They start poking each other. And you know many times, the local church can feel just that way: a bunch of porcupines poking each other all the time.

And each one of us should not be worrying about what they're doing, not worrying about what she's doing, not worrying about what he's doing, but worrying about what I'm doing. Am I rightly relating to the Lord by faith on a moment-by-moment basis? That's where my front porch needs to be swept. You've got your own front porch, and sometimes I can see dirt on your front porch a little bit clearer than I can on my front porch.

Each of us should take the mindset and say, "I am gonna walk by faith in this Deliverer. I want Him to deliver me from the power of sin. I'm gonna stop trusting my two-hour quiet time every morning to give me a good day in the Lord, and I'm gonna start walking by faith, moment by moment." Have your two-hour quiet time, I'm not discounting that, that's great! I hope it's rich for you. I'm just saying don't trust in that to deliver you from sin's power on a daily basis. Trust in the one who wants to deliver you, trust in a person, that person is Jesus Christ. So, we're gonna look a little bit more closely at that today.

Verse 5, we're gonna see that Paul is going on and building on his argument that ended verse 4, this concept that God did all of this baptism and identification for a reason so that we would walk in newness of life. And then he says in verse 5, "for" and he's building on that argument, he just keeps

building on this argument. In fact, if you start looking through Romans, you're gonna see a lot of "fors." Paul is just building his argument one thing with another.

And so in verse 5 we see that we have been united with Christ. Verse 5 reads this, "*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.*" And again, "for" gives us this indication that Paul's building on his argument here that he started at the end of verse 4, and we also see that this "if" here is a first-class condition.

And all that means simply is this: he's assuming the reality of it for argument's sake. So, it would really say something like this, "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, and we have." You see a lot of first-class conditions translated "since" as a statement of fact. So, he's not saying it's in doubt. He's saying, "This is true, this has happened, you have been united with Christ in the likeness of His death."

And then he goes on to say that "we have been", and this is a perfect tense, which means it's a completed action with continuing results. Now why is that significant? Because it says, "We have been united together in likeness of His death, and we remain united with Him." That's the emphasis there. That means that if you have a bad week, God doesn't send you to the doghouse in Adam, right? Bad week, good week, God has united you with Jesus Christ. He's fused you together in Jesus Christ. Your identity is always in Jesus Christ.

I love traveling overseas with a United States American passport. Because you just stand out overseas, you get preferential treatment - maybe not in some areas, but the places I go. I don't know why that's the case, but they see that U.S. passport and it's almost like, "Come to the front of the line!" kind of treatment. And you know why? Because I'm identified with this great country.

And what God is saying here is you have been united, and you remain united with Christ, even when you have a bad week, even when you have a good week. None of that impacts your identification with Christ, your union with Christ. In fact, Paul goes on to use a couple of words that describe how united we are with Christ, and one of those words is this idea of being united together. It's a compound word, it means *to be planted together* or *grow together*.

If you've ever seen two strands of Ivy just wrapped together, growing up a wall - I mean it grows on everything, doesn't it? - a wall, a ladder, you see them growing together and it's got this idea of being fused together. And so when we talk about being united with Christ, this is a very organic union that we're talking about. This is something that you're placed together, there's not really a stronger way to communicate how tied in you are to Christ.

And that's why when so many people walk around life and bemoan themselves, or get depressed, or beat themselves up for failure, you've got to understand that your value is not in how other people view you. Your value is not in how society looks at you. Young girls, your value is not in the magazine pictures, please don't ever get caught up into that thinking. Your value is in the One who died for you and rose again. You have no greater value on earth than Jesus who went to the cross for you, and you are highly valuable to God.

And see, this unification that God talks about with Christ, this is why it's so important, we've got to understand who we are and what we have in the Lord Jesus. I love talking about Jesus because He's awesome! And what He did was awesome, and what God continues to do in the lives of believers is awesome! That's what we're looking at today.

So, you've been united together, Paul uses that terminology here. And then he also says that we've been united together in the likeness of His death, and it just means *resemblance*, it means *similar to*. And so the idea communicated here is it's not exactly the same, Jesus physically died on the cross. His

was a unique and distinct death, but God also took you into that death for the very purpose of setting you free from sin's power. And so it's similar in that way.

And then that next phrase in verse 5 it says "certainly", so he's making an argument in the beginning of verse 5: "If this is true - and it is - then certainly something else will happen." And he wants us to be assured. And what can we be certain of? Well, he says, "*Certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.*" And this is a particle which gives a super addition concept, I think that it was back in chapter 5 Paul says, "much more" it's the same kind of concept. If this is true, then certainly much more this is going to be true. If this has really happened, this is definitely going to happen. It's a really strong way to give a super addition to what preceded it. But since we know that this united togetherness in the likeness of His death happened, we know that we're going to be resurrected. That's the confidence that we have that we're going to be resurrected.

Now you could make the argument contextually that he's talking about resurrection, newness of life, this practical Christian living that we're talking about, and you could make that argument. But I think because he's dealing in the future tense here, he's arguing for our future bodily resurrection. That because we've been united together with Christ, and because Christ rose from the dead, we too are gonna rise from the dead bodily.

That was an issue that the Greeks in that day struggled with. We see that play out in the book of 1 Corinthians 15, because what was their issue? They didn't deny that Christ raised from the dead, they denied that we were gonna raise from the dead future bodily. And Paul gives the same argument there, he says, "Look, if Christ raised from the dead, you're gonna raise from the dead." Because Paul understood how united we were with Christ. We're fused together with Christ, what happens to Christ happens to us, because of our identification with Christ.

This is why this whole concept, although it may seem really sky-high theological, is so practical. God is letting you in behind the kitchen door so to speak, and He's showing you what ingredients He's putting in the stew for you. He's showing you how you have been designed to be delivered from sin's power.

And you know what, this is one reason why I'm really slowing down in this section. Those of you who've thought I've gone slow, I am really sorry up to this point, because I'm slowing down even further because this is so important. I don't want us to miss this, I don't want to miss it in my own personal life, and I don't want you to miss it. I want this truth to soak in, I want us to begin to apply this truth in our life, and just take God at His word and begin walking by faith.

If you have lived the Christian life up to this point in time in your own strength, according to your own wisdom, according to your own ideas, and your own, "Well I've always done this, and I've always done that." I want to deliver you from that bondage through the Word of God. I want you to begin to walk by faith in the Deliverer who is there to fully deliver you from the power of sin, so that you're not addicted. So that you're not saying, "Gosh, I wish I could stop doing that. You know, every time this happens, I respond this way. And every time this happens, I respond that way." And you know, there's deliverance for you, it's just not in the 10-step program. It's not in the latest list on the internet, it's not because of some video that was shared with you on Facebook, it's in the Word of God, it's all over the place, and this is a highly concentrated area where we find it in Romans 6.

Romans 6:6 is also going to tell us something that we need to know. Remember last week I circled some words on the PowerPoint: verse 3, **know**, do you not know? Verse 6, **knowing**, verse 9, **knowing**. And so we see the first key word in Romans 6 is *knowing*, there are some things that you need to know. Because if you don't know them, then you can't count upon them. And that's what he's gonna tell us to do in verse 11, start counting upon by faith the things that you know.



And so what do we need to know in Romans 6? And this is so crucial to our understanding because what we're going to see here is that he says this: *"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."* And I'm going to just kind of give you a quick heads up on where we're going here. See, you've got to know this truth - and we'll talk about that truth, our old man crucified with him and what that means - because notice the two words "that." See the two words "that" in verse 6? Actually, there's three "thats", but we're just gonna look at the last two.

So, you see the two "thats" that give us the reason. God is not like the type of parents we are sometimes, "Hey kids, get your shoes on." "Why?" "Because I said so." Right? That's not what God's doing here. God is more of the parent that says, "Hey, why should I get my shoes on?" "Well, we're gonna go to the grocery store." He's explaining the reason behind what He's saying here.

You need to know this, why? There are two purposes, He did this so that the body of sin might be done away with, and that we should no longer be slaves of sin. There's a very practical reason why God did this, and why you need to know it. This is how God did away with the body of sin, and we'll talk about that in more detail, and this is how God intends for you to no longer be a slave to sin, which implies what? That if you're not resting in this truth, you're a slave to sin.

Now that's not true of you in Christ, but it's true practically as you're presenting yourself to sin on a daily basis, because who you present yourself to as we'll see later in Romans 6, you are a slave to that person to obey it. You're a slave. And so although you've been freed from sin - and we'll use some examples later to kind of clarify what that means - you're walking as if you weren't free from sin in the Christian life.

And so we've gotta understand why Paul is saying, "You gotta know this." There's a purpose for it, you've gotta know this. And so, "knowing this", knowing what? Well, we're gonna know that another reason for God's identifying us with Christ was so that our old man would be crucified, because that has practical ramifications in our lives. This word, "knowing" here is a knowing that you learn, you've got to be taught it. It's not an intuitive knowledge, this isn't a downloaded microchip the moment you get saved, it's something that you have to learn, something that you have to grow in understanding.

And so he's saying, "Grow in your understanding of this truth. Learn this truth, spend time studying this truth, knowing, and learning this truth." It's something that we have to be taught, and this knowledge is simply this: that the believer should be presently gaining in this knowledge that our old man was crucified with Christ. See, that is going to be a key for us as we continue to walk and benefit from this truth in our Christian life, it's just understanding this.

So, who is your old man? You know, Wally Cleaver? No, it's not your dad. Your old man, what's it referring to? Well, it's referring to the believer's old self or old identity in Adam. When I was in Adam, I was John Clark in Adam. That was my identity, that's my old man. In fact, when I was born, that's when John Clark of Adam entered this world, and that's when I took my residence in Adam. Now, what we're saying here in Romans 6:6 is that that identity, that old self - John Clark in Adam - was crucified with Christ. The great thing is the Bible says I was born again into Christ, and now I'm John Clark in Jesus Christ. That's my identity. John Clark in Adam no longer exists, I've been crucified. We need to know that truth because it's got practical ramifications as we live the Christian life.

Now that's a good thing, because we learn other things about this old man in Scripture, and one of the things that we learn about this old man from Ephesians 4:22 is that you who are in Adam, your old man only gets worse and worse as time goes on. It probably explains why I was in a nursing home one time with my family and little kids, and we got cussed out by an older lady there because we were

being too loud while the Andy Griffith Show was on. This old man, this old nature just gets more and more corrupt, Ephesians 4:22 says.

And so if somebody doesn't get saved, they may get more adept at hiding their selfishness, they may get more skilled at hiding their sin, but the Bible says that this old man just gets worse and worse and worse as time goes on. Aren't you grateful that when you put your faith in Christ, your old man was crucified with Christ? That you no longer have to live according to its dictates anymore? That you're no longer tied like a chain, forced to do what he would say to do?

The person that the believer was in Adam was crucified with Christ, and that person no longer exists. Galatians 2:20 illustrates this, "*I have been crucified with Christ;*" - that's our old identity - "*it is no longer I who live,*" - John Clark in Adam no longer lives - "*but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh,*" - John Clark in Christ, now living in this fleshly body - "*I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" See, this is not a truth just confined to Roman's 6, this is all over the Bible, and that's why we're to know this or to gain in our understanding. This is so important and so key as we grow in this understanding. And so because of this, no believer is currently related to or identified with Adam. That's just the truth of identification. John Clark in Adam no longer exists.

Those of you who are saved here today, you in Adam no longer exist, it's you in Christ, that's your identity, that's what He's talking about here I believe, when he talks about our old man being crucified with Him. And so we see this old man, this identity in Adam. You're in Adam, and when you place your faith in Christ, you become in Christ and that's who you are now. Bad day, good day. Bad week, good week. Bad month, good month. Bad year, good year. You're united with Christ the moment you put your faith in Christ.

God is not afraid of His grace. He's not afraid of people abusing grace. Otherwise, grace can't be grace. If you can't abuse grace, then it would not be unmerited, it would have to be merited at some level or some extreme, you'd have to say, "Alright man, I'm shutting the waters off there." But grace is unmerited by definition. This is why God can confidently unite you with Jesus Christ the moment you put your faith in Him. He can confidently do that and guarantee all the promises that He does.

Now one of the clarifications we need to make here, in my understanding of this whole topic, is that the old man is to be distinguished from our old nature or our sin nature. Now, I've told you before, I use that synonymously with indwelling sin, the power of sin, and even the flesh. I use those terms synonymously, but we've got to understand that our old man in Adam is not the same thing as our sin nature.

Unfortunately, even though we got saved, when we got saved in Christ, we didn't get our new bodies yet, we still live in the same human bodies. Now the human body itself is neutral, there's nothing evil about your human body. How do we know that? Well, one: the Bible says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. And so we know that it can't be unholy. The other thing we know is in Romans 12 and Romans 6 God tells us to present our bodies, He wants to use our bodies. So, they're not inherently evil, they're neutral.

Well, what's interesting is that we had a nature when we were in Adam, and guess what? That nature or that indwelling sin is tied or connected, indwelling these human bodies, and we don't lose that when we get saved, it's still there. We're gonna see that prevalent, and if you live the Christian life for a couple minutes, you have experienced that pull towards sin. Doing the things that you *don't* want to do, not doing the things that you *do* want to do, making excuses for this, excusing that, etc.

And so when we talk about the difference between old man and old nature, I'm not saying that if you have a sin nature that you're still in Adam, that's gone. You are no longer in Adam if you're saved, but you do have indwelling sin that has not been erased, but guess what? When you get your redeemed

body, it's gone. Praise the Lord! That's called glorification, and that's when God delivers you from the very presence of sin. It's out of your body at that point, and we will say "Glory, hallelujah!" on that day, because we look forward to not being a failure and acting like idiots all the time. And well, maybe I'm speaking for myself.

So, our old man refers to our identity, who we were in Adam. Again, this person no longer exists after justification, and our old nature in contrast, our sin nature, refers to the source of sin which indwells our human bodies. Unfortunately, this still exists after justification, hence the need for the Deliverer. Hence the need for somebody bigger, stronger, greater than I to deliver me from the power of sin.

If you want to see what a Christian life experience is of a Christian who's trying to deliver themselves from sin, not looking to a deliverer, read Romans chapter 7 starting in about verse 13 through the end of the chapter. And let me tell you how it looks: it's gross, it's ugly, and it's full of failure. That's what it looks like. So, if that's the Christian life that you're living, you don't have to stand up and admit that to anybody here. But if you're living *that* Christian life, I can guarantee that's how you're living the Christian life: in your own strength, in your own efforts, according to your own carnal thinking on how you overcome sin, or how somebody else has told you to overcome sin, and you're not resting in God's method or God's provision to deliver you from sin's power.

Now notice that according to this verse in Romans chapter 6, our old man "*was crucified.*" That's a past tense event, that means it's already completed, it's not a command that needs to be fulfilled. And we've got to understand how God feels about our old identity. He didn't change our old man, He didn't clean up our old man, He didn't try to transform our old man, He crucified it. He's not working with our old man.

Many of us get in this mindset like we're part of this old Adam improvement society, like we're just gonna improve the old man, we're just gonna reform it and put it in its place and start developing principles to overcome it. God's method of dealing with the old man was to crucify him, to crucify you with Jesus Christ that He might put you in a position where you can actually succeed, where you can actually live an abundant Christian life.

And so when we look at this, we're not told to crucify ourselves. We looked at that a couple weeks ago, and that's one of the only methods of execution that you cannot do to yourself. You know, you get one hand in, you get your legs in, who's gonna get the other arm in? You're stuck, unless you're a contortionist, and you could put the hammer in your mouth I guess and bang it in. But you cannot crucify yourself, that's one way that you can't execute yourself.

So, in other words, this is an event that already happened to the believer, the believer does not need to crucify themselves daily. This is something that if you try to do, you will fail. You will never win at doing this, you're not designed to overcome sin in your own strength, you're designed just like you were in justification, to give up trying and trust in the One who accomplished for you what you could not accomplish for yourself, and it's the same way in the Christian life. We need to come to that realization that this is something that's already happened, accept it with the eye of faith and begin to depend upon it on a moment-by-moment basis, and we'll learn practically how that looks as we get down into verse 11.

And this is really where it's going to come into play, verse 11. The believer doesn't need to crucify themselves, but they do daily, moment-by-moment need to count upon this crucifixion with Christ. This is how you walk by faith. You say, "Well how do I walk by faith? I still gotta take steps." This is it. You're filled with the knowledge of God, you're filled with the provision that He's made, and

you begin to depend upon it in your daily life. Moment by moment as you're walking through life, you're coming back to this truth and trusting God for it.

Now we looked at why God did this, we mentioned that as just kind of a summary, but go to verse 6, those two “thats” at the end of the verse, and we're gonna see that first purpose. Why would God do this? Well, the first thing he's gonna say is that the body of sin might be done away with. This is one of the reasons that God crucified you or crucified your old man with Christ, that the body of sin might be done away with. Now the word translated “done away”, we've got to define it, because it can be misunderstood if you just take it at face value. But it means *to render powerless, to make inoperative, to put out of business or to strip of power*. What it doesn't mean is *annihilation*, it doesn't mean *lack of existence*. We're not saying that you *don't* have indwelling sin, we're saying you *do*. But God has made a way to put it out of business, to render it inoperative in your life. God has provided a way to do that as we look at this concept of indwelling sin.

And so this word communicates an existence or a presence, but what it's communicating is a limitation of its impact, even though it's still present. The best way to describe this, those of you that like to work on cars or know anything about cars, if you put water in the gas tank, what's gonna happen? You're gonna destroy the engine. Now it doesn't mean you annihilated it, it didn't vaporize and disappear, it just means you put it out of business, you made it inoperative, you really messed it up and it's not going to work, it's not gonna get you anywhere. This is the same concept as it relates to sin's power in our life. God has made a way to put that thing out of business, to make it inoperative in your life.

So, what is the body of sin referring to? Well again, to take all the suspense out of it, I believe it's referring to the sin nature, this indwelling source of sin. And so when Paul says that Jesus crucified our old man with Him for the reason that the body of sin might be rendered inoperative or put out of business, I believe that God did that crucifixion work, identified us in the death of Christ for the very sole reason to deliver us or to put out of business the power of sin in our lives. To actually give us hope that we don't have to be slaves of sin, we don't have to go on presenting ourselves to sin.

In fact, that's going to be Paul's exhortation after he teaches all of this as we get into Romans 6, he says, “Stop presenting yourself to sin! You don't have to present yourself to sin, you've been freed from sin!” What does verse 7 say? “*For he who has died has been freed from sin.*” See, that's why you need to know that you've died, because you have been freed from sin based on your death with Christ. That's why you shouldn't continue in sin, that's what we see back in verse 2 as the answer.

And so remember, our human bodies are neutral, they can be instruments for God's glory, they can also be instruments used to fulfill and carry out the lusts of the sin nature and of the flesh. The human body doesn't need to be rendered inoperative, when it says, “body of sin”, we're not talking about the human body, that doesn't need to be rendered inoperative, that doesn't need to be put out of business. God wants to use our human bodies, we see that in Romans 12:2, we see that in Romans 6, we see that in 1 Corinthians 6 when we talk about being a temple, our body's a temple of the Holy Spirit. God wants to use you to be His hands and feet to the world.

So, we're not talking about making the human body inoperative, that's not what we're talking about here. Rather, it's the sin nature that's rendered inoperative, it's the sin nature that needs to be put out of business, it's the sin nature that needs to be left off to the side as rendered powerless in your life.

And a great example of this is anybody that's married or been married, you can relate to this. Because the moment you got married, you stopped making phone calls to your old boyfriends and girlfriends - at least you should have if you haven't. You stop taking their phone calls, you stop going on lunch dates with them, you stop taking them to the movies, you stop emailing them, you stop texting

them, and for all intents and purposes, your relationship to them has changed forever. It should change forever.

You're not trying to check on them and see how their day went, you're not following up with them. Those relationships get cut off; you've died to those relationships. Your relationships with those old girlfriends, those old boyfriends, that's forever changed. And see in the same way here, it's not that your girlfriends have died, or your boyfriends have died, but you've died to them.

Same thing here. It's not that sin in you has died or been put dormant. I mean, anybody who's lived a Christian life for a couple of minutes knows that's not true! This pull towards sin, this pull to think wrongly, to speak wrongly, to do wrongly, this pull to be lazy when there's something that I know God wants me to do, and then say, "You know, I think I'll just stay in bed. I think I'll just stay in the chair. I think I'll just sip another cup of sweet tea before I get to that." This pull just to be everything that God doesn't want you to be, this pull away from God.

You know what though? Your relationship to sin has changed. You're dead to sin, you have died with Christ to sin. And so when you go back and begin to present yourself to sin, it's just like you're married and you're going and hanging out with an old girlfriend, or you're going and hanging out with an old boyfriend, and you just keep bringing that person into the relationship. Imagine having a date night with your spouse and saying, "Hey, do you mind if old so-and-so comes with us on our date tonight?" You would never do that! Talk about true murder, you'd probably get killed for that one! You don't do that, you don't even think about that, you don't bring them into your new relationship.

And yet many times for believers, that's exactly what we do even though the sin nature has been rendered inoperative, even though our relationship to sin has been forever altered, we go back, and we keep presenting ourselves to this indwelling power of sin, even though we've been cut free from it, even though our relationship has changed. So, through our death with Christ, the sin nature has been rendered powerless over us so that we would not have to serve it as slaves any longer.

There are many ways to put somebody out of business, and we see that many times when violent riots strike for different reasons, and people physically break down storefronts, destroy, and steal all the merchandise, and that can put people out of business. Or you know what, there's another way to practically put somebody out of business, and that's to stop going in their place. Stop buying their goods, stop buying into what they're selling you.

And in the same way, God wants us to stop buying into sin. Stop buying into what this pull of sin, this indwelling sin is encouraging us to do, and stop presenting ourselves to it. That's how you practically put it out of business in your life, and that's a faith principle. But at the end of verse 6 when he says, "*the body of sin might be*" it's a subjunctive mood again, and the idea is that it's probable, but it's not guaranteed. Why is it not guaranteed? Because the believer has a choice whether or not they're gonna trust in God's provision, whether or not they're gonna continue to present themselves to sin, whether or not they're gonna rest in God's provision and present themselves to Him. The believer has a choice, so that's why it's not guaranteed. Everything's in place for your success, but it's not guaranteed.

And so let's look at the second purpose in verse 6, "*that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*" And this is designed to have a present and practical outcome in our daily life. Our old man was crucified with Christ so that we would not be in a position of servant or slave to our sin nature. That's why God did it. You wonder, "Why did God do it? Well, let's just skip over this, let's go to something more practical." This is as practical as it gets. It's a practical truth based on a theological truth, and in order to benefit from it practically, you've got to know this theologically. You want to trust and depend upon God's provision. How did He maneuver all of this to set you free from sin's power? This is how He did it, and so we've got to know this.

This is designed to have a practical effect so that you're not gonna walk around being a slave to sin. You know what it no longer implies? It means that before justification, *everyone* was a slave to sin. And you might say, "Oh no, I wasn't. I was a pretty good guy." No, that's not what the Bible says. It means every action, every thought, everything you did had some kind of selfish motive, implication, or sinful quality to it. You were dominated by sin; you were a slave to sin. It's like sin had you by the nose, wringing your neck, chained, and just drug you along through life. That's what it implies. And you know, it's never fun being a slave. It's never fun being dragged around by your nose to do wrong things that you know would disappoint the Father.

God Himself, via His identification of you with Jesus Christ has delivered you from slavery to your sin nature. One of the truths that unbelievers need to realize is that they are slaves to sin, but one of the truths that we as believers need to realize is we're not slaves to sin. And I think so many times we can live our Christian life and just settle and say, "Well, this is just always gonna be me. I'm always gonna struggle with this sin. This is always dominating me. Every time this happens, this is how I respond, and that's just the way I am." Garbage. That's not biblical truth. That's carnality, that's your sin nature, speaking and convincing you of otherwise. You have been set free from sin.

It reminds me of an example, and I'm sure it happened - I'm not aware of a true story, so it's just more anecdotal - but imagine a slave during the time of the civil war who was born into slavery, and he woke up every day and his life was the same. He would go to bed, wake up in the morning to the arousal of his master riding his horse yelling at him, "Erasmus, get up, let's get out to the cotton fields." And Erasmus would get dressed and he would race right out and say, "Yes sir. Yes sir, Master." He would run out to the fields, and this is how his life went on over and over, every day. He couldn't decide, "I'm gonna take a day off. The cotton fields look good, they'll be there tomorrow, I'll get to it then." He couldn't say, "I'm gonna go to sleep a little bit earlier tonight because I'm feeling tired." He couldn't say any of that. He had to do what his master told him to do.

Until one day, somebody showed up on the farm and said, "I've got this paper, Erasmus. This is the emancipation proclamation signed by the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. And you know what this paper says? It says you're free. You're free, you're not a slave anymore. You don't have to obey this master." Well Erasmus says, "Wow! That's great news! I'm free! I don't have to do this anymore? Okay!" So, he goes back that night and he says, "Wow, what am I gonna do with my freedom? This is great, I don't even know what I'm gonna do. I'll go to bed and start thinking about that tomorrow."

Well guess what? In the morning, Erasmus was aroused by his master. "Erasmus, get up! Get out to those cotton fields! Go pick cotton! I want you to take this guy, and this guy. I want you to focus on the back forty. Get up now, right now!" You know what Erasmus did? He started putting on his clothes and ran right out there, "Yes sir, Master!" He gets about halfway out to the cotton fields, and he says, "Wait a minute! What in the world am I doing? I'm a free man."

And so Erasmus turns around, he's walking back to his house, and he's gonna start packing his stuff. And then his master comes by and goes, "Erasmus, what are you doing? Get back over there!" And he starts whipping him. And so Erasmus starts heading back out to the cotton fields, and then about three quarters of the way out there he says, "What am I doing? I'm a free man!" And it's that wrestle back and forth that illustrates the Christian life, because the sin nature doesn't stop screaming, doesn't stop hollering, doesn't stop trying all means necessary to get you to obey and to be its slave. It will continue to do that throughout the rest of your life on this earth. Sorry, I wish there was better news than that. But I do have good news: God has freed you, and God has given you a Deliverer to make that practical in your life. That's truly good news.

And so when he says in verse 7 - if you need more convincing, notice that word "for" - *"For he who has died has been freed from sin."*, this word "for" just explains further why a believer does not have to live or be a slave to sin any longer. It explains why we're not slaves to sin. We've been freed! How were we freed? We died to it. In our death is the key to our victory. The result of this death is described here also as the completed and accomplished fact. You're not killing yourself, you died, and you have been freed. You're free. Start believing it, start trusting in it, start resting in that truth. It's another benefit that we get from being in Christ. Death ends all claims. A man who's in debt up to his eyeballs, the moment he dies, they don't take his dead body and bring him into a debt court to try to collect. He's free. Death frees all obligations, and so when you died with Christ, you were free from sin. You were free from being a slave.

And so today I just ask you, if you're a believer here, did you die with Christ? Do you believe that? Whether or not you believe it, it's true of you. You died with Christ. Now will you start walking in light of that truth, depending upon that truth, soaking in that truth, asking God to give you wisdom how that becomes practically applicable in your life? Will you begin to do that this week? Will you begin to march on into this great adventure of living the Christian life by faith, trusting in the One who can deliver you from the power of sin?

Will you just begin this week to say, "Lord, that's what I want to be. That's who I want to be. I want to be a believer that lives moment by moment in dependence upon You. Because I'm tired of being dominated by sin. I'm tired of seeing the results of sin dominate my life, destroy my relationships, destroy even my quiet moments at home when I'm so anxious I can't even sit down. I'm so anxious I can't even go to sleep at night. I don't want that destruction in my life, Lord. I want to be somebody that learns how to rest, trust, and depend upon You."





# CHAPTER 33

## You Can Count on God's Provision

### Romans 6:8-11

We've really been covering a pretty deep doctrinal section in the book of Romans, but I want to encourage you to hang in there, because this is also one of the most practical sections in all the Bible. Practical as it relates to how you live your Christian life on a day-to-day basis. Most Christians would say, "I want to live a life that's glorifying to God. I want to live a life that bears fruit unto God. I want to live a life that He is going to state to me when I appear before Him at the judgment seat of Christ, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" That's what we all want, isn't it? Isn't that what we want out of our Christian life? And so this right here, this theological truth is again, God getting behind the kitchen window, so to speak. He's letting you inside the kitchen, behind the curtain to show you what He's done. Not only to save you from the penalty of sin - we covered that in the first five chapters of Romans - but now He's telling you what He's done to save you from the power of sin in your daily life.

And you know what, that hits us on Monday afternoon, doesn't it? That hits us on Sunday afternoon. In fact, if we're honest, sometimes it hits us in the parking lot on the way out of church on Sunday, when our kids are misbehaving, and we react in anger and yell at them. We need deliverance from the power of sin. If we don't get that, we will destroy our lives. We'll leave a mass carnage in our wake. As believers, we'll destroy relationships, we'll destroy fellowship with other believers, we'll complain, we'll gripe, and we will never experience the abundant life that God has in store for you and me.

And so as we've looked at this idea, there are two lessons that every one of us need to learn. And this is a repeat if you've been here the last couple of weeks, but if not, welcome to the two lessons that we need to learn. The first one is very important. In fact, it's kind of like Mr. Miyagi, if you don't have the first one down, when you get to number two, just read rule number one again. Because everybody on this earth needs to realize they cannot save themselves. It doesn't take much to realize that we're not good enough to get to heaven, that nobody's perfect, everyone will admit that.

You can take the most sinful person on the street who's just enjoying sin, and they would say, "Oh yeah, I'm not perfect." And what will the follow-up comment be? "But nobody is, right?" We all recognize that nobody's perfect, and to get to heaven, you've got to be perfect. To get to heaven you have to have a righteousness equal to God's righteousness. To get to heaven, you have to have somebody or someone willing to pay your sin-debt, your penalty, which is death.

See, the good news and the lesson that we can learn from the Bible, the first five chapters of the book of Romans, is something called the gospel. The gospel involves a Person and His work: Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again, and so we need to realize we can't save ourselves.

But you know what the good news is? God has sent a Deliverer; God has sent Someone who can save you. His name's Jesus, He paid the penalty that you deserve, and if He paid it, what penalty is left for you to pay? Nothing. Jesus paid it all, that's what the Bible teaches. And so if you put your faith in Jesus, you can be saved from the penalty of sin. That's lesson number one. If we don't have that lesson, don't even worry about lesson two, just go back to lesson one until that makes sense and until you personally put your faith in Jesus as your personal sin bearer. And the good news is He didn't stay dead, He rose from the dead. God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf, will you accept His sacrifice on your behalf by putting your faith in Him alone?

This second lesson is one that many of us need to learn in the Christian life, and that is this: you cannot live the Christian life. And if you have lived the Christian life for any amount of time, you know this is true, because the things that you want to stop doing, many times you can't stop doing. In fact, given the perfect set of circumstances, we could say that you *always* respond this way. When life circumstances begin to squeeze you, how do you respond? Do you respond by trusting the Lord, or do you react to the circumstances? Do you react to people causing negative circumstances? Do you get angry, do you shut down, do you run away, do you fight? How do you respond to circumstances?

We see this, and the thing that we need to realize in our Christian life is this: in the same way that God wants to save you from the penalty of sin, He wants to save you or deliver you from the power of sin. And guess what? The deliverer for both is the same man, Jesus Christ. And so where we've been talking through the first five chapters of the book of Romans about Jesus dying for your sins, what we're talking about in Romans 6 is a little distinction, and that is this: you died with Christ to sin. That's the distinction we're making.

Jesus died for your sins all by Himself, He paid that penalty all by Himself, but when we get to Romans 6, we see that God identified you with Jesus Christ, He took you out of Adam when you put your faith in Christ, He birthed you again into Christ, and He did that for a reason. Let's look at Romans 6. You'll see that one of the first things that He wants us to know is in verse 3, that you were baptized into Christ Jesus. Why? So that you could be identified or baptized in His death, His burial, and resurrection. That's why God did it, that's why He identified you.

And you might say, "Well that doesn't mean anything to me." It should, because when you go to the end of verse 4, there's a very practical reason why He did this. Look at that last phrase: "*even so we should also walk in newness of life.*" And then the light bulb should go off and say, "That's how I live the Christian life." See, God went through all of this identifying you in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ so that you could live a pleasing life to Him on a moment-by-moment basis.

In Romans 6 we talked about the keyword "know". Verse 3, you're gonna see the word "know." Verse 6 you're gonna see the word "knowing." Verse 9, which we'll get to today, you're also gonna see the word "knowing." There are things that God wants you to know, because if you don't know them, you can't benefit from them. If you don't know them, you can't count on them, which is what Paul's gonna tell us to do in verse 11.

And so what's the second thing God wants you to know in verse 6? He wants you to know that your old man was crucified with Christ. When He identified you in the death of Jesus Christ, He crucified who you were in Adam, and He placed you into Jesus Christ. That old identity in Adam no longer exists. John Clark in Adam no longer exists.

But He also did it for another reason, so let's continue in verse 6, "*That the body of sin might be done away with.*" Although we were crucified and our old identity in Adam doesn't exist, we still have indwelling sin with these human bodies.

I've used this example before, but it's not like He took you out of Adam and then changed your body. You still, with this human body, have indwelling sin. That's what Romans 6:6 is talking about, this body of sin. And remember, that definition *be done away with*, it doesn't mean annihilated or destroyed, it's still very much present, but it's been put out of business. You don't have to keep it in business by presenting yourself to sin.

When sin says, "Get angry." You don't have to say, "Okay." When sin says, "Lust." You don't have to say, "Okay, sure, let's do that." When sin says, "Get anxious." We don't have to say, "Sure, let me stew in my anxiety for a couple of hours and worry about everything I can worry about." We're free

from that. We're free from the dominion of sin through the work of God when He identified us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Again, notice the practical outcome in verse 6, that the body of sin might be put out of business. And look at that next phrase, *"that we should no longer be slaves to sin."* Now, what does that imply? That before you were saved, you were a slave to sin. That is the truth of the matter. You may have thought you had freedom in the things that you decided to do, you may have thought that you could have chosen to do right and chosen to do wrong, but God said that's not true. When you were unsaved, you were a slave to sin. And you know what, believers? Even though we're in Christ, even though we have all these resources, even though God did all this stuff behind the scenes, identifying you with Christ and placing you in, and identifying you with His death, burial, and resurrection, we can still present ourselves to sin and practically be its slave. We can still have sin reign in our mortal bodies.

And so the question becomes if God has got a solution, don't you want to avail yourself to that? Or do you like failing? Do you like struggling in life? Do you like making the same mistakes over and over? If I gave the assignment to dig a hole, would you want me to give you a toothpick or a pickaxe? And yet many people are living the Christian life digging with a toothpick, trying to overcome sin in their own strength. If I sent you on a mountain hike, would you want flip-flops or hiking shoes? I mean, the analogies can go on and on.

And yet many people, when trying to live the Christian life, leave on a Sunday with a toothpick in their hand and flip flops on their feet and say, "Let's go, I'm gonna Duke it out with sin this week." You will lose. You cannot live the Christian life in your own strength. You need God's provision, you need God's Deliverer, and that's what Romans 6 is all about.

See, in Romans 6:7, as we lead into today, says this: *"For he who has died has been freed from sin."* We used the example last week: in the days of the Civil War, if a slave who had been a slave all of his life received word that President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and yet he continued to go out to the cotton fields day after day, even though it was true that he was free and he was no longer a slave, he wasn't benefiting from that truth.

And see, many Christians don't know that they've been freed from sin. You've been freed from sin's dominion. Why? Because you're a great person and you promised to stop sinning? No, because of what God did by identifying you with Jesus Christ. You died with Christ to sin, you're free. We need to start walking in light of that truth, we need to start benefiting from that truth. Take the pickaxe with you out into your daily life, the pickaxe that God has provided, and leave the toothpick at home. Quit depending on the toothpick, let's start depending on the pickaxe. Let's start depending on the post hole digger, right? The one that's like charged up and jazzed up, let's depend on that. That's what we've got, not a toothpick!

And so as we get into Romans 6, notice that he keeps building on this truth. *Verse 8, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."* "Now if we died with Christ," this is not a statement that he's wondering the truth of. It's a first-class condition in the Greek, it means *since*. "Now" is also a transition word further explaining Paul's point. Paul's not saying this may have happened, this may not have happened. He's saying as a first-class condition in the Greek, "It *did* happen, and let's assume that it did for argument's sake." You could even translate it "since" here. *Since* you died with Christ... you *did* die with Christ, that is true of you as a believer whether you realize it or not. You have a death certificate with your name on it, already done. You're not killing yourself today, you're not crucifying yourself today, you're not dying today, you *have* died. That's what Romans 6 is teaching, this is an already accomplished event.

Again, notice that it's already done. It's not Nike, "Just do it" every day, it's already done. It's already been done; you've already been crucified with Christ. And so if it's done, how do you benefit from it? The same way you benefited from a finished work that Jesus did for you 2,000 years ago: you begin to trust it, you believe. It's a faith issue now, because God has put everything in place for you to benefit from it. Now will you benefit from it as you, in the Christian life, continue to walk by faith as you moment-by-moment depend upon God's provision?

Again, notice that in verse 8 we're talking about something that's of certainty, it's past tense, it's something that's already happened, it's a completed fact. In fact, he goes on to say that this death with Christ is so valid to God. God is not just going through the motions and just having fun up there, doing positive speech, and trying to magically give you mystical feelings. This is true, okay? This is not just God talking out into thin air or doing sleight-of-hand tricks and trying to convince you of things. This is true of you.

In fact, it's so valid that even though Hebrews 9:27 says it's appointed unto men once to die, do you know that there's one generation of believers that won't experience physical death? We call it the rapture. 1 Thessalonians 4, you can read about it there, this great catching up to meet Jesus in the air. And why don't those people have to die? Because they've already died with Christ. See, that's the truth of what happened here. When God identified you with Christ, you did indeed die with Christ, this is what Paul is trying to say here.

And based on this fact, Paul believes something. Notice in verse 8 he says, "*If we die with Christ,*" and again, first-class condition, "and we did". Notice that Paul says, "we believe" or "we're persuaded, we're convinced of something else." What's he convinced of? We're also going to live with Him. See, if you've been united with Christ in His death then it just makes sense that you're going to be united with Him in His resurrection, and that's what Paul is convinced of, that if God identified us with Jesus and His death, we'll remain identified with Him in our future life. In fact, you might say it this way: our unity or our union with Christ and His death guarantees our future eternal life with Him as well.

Why can you be eternally secure in your salvation? Why can you know for sure the moment you put your faith in Christ that you have eternal life, and you'll never lose it? Well number one, we're saved by grace. Unmerited favor. You can't do anything to earn it, you can't do anything to deserve it. And so if I can't get it by doing something I earn or deserve, I can't lose it by doing something to un-earn it in that way. It's never earned, it's a gift of God, and so we can be confident in that.

But even more so, God promised eternal life in John 3:16, and if you believe, He promises eternal life, He promises that you won't face the death penalty, you'll never perish, that's all part of it. But even more than God's promise, there's a basis for which God can make these promises. And you know what? It happened 2,000 years ago when the Son of God went to a hill called Golgotha, and He died for your sins, and He rose again. This is why God can promise. God's not just making promises He can't keep; He's making promises that have a basis to them. What's the basis to God's promises? Jesus paid it all. Jesus paid it all, and He rose again, and God accepted His work on your behalf, and if Jesus paid the penalty, what's left for you to pay? Nothing. That's why we can be saved.

But another reason we can be safe is this truth found in verse 8, that if you died with Christ when you put your faith in Christ, God identified you with Jesus in His death. God is also identifying you within His resurrection, and you will one day bodily resurrect. Why? Because Jesus did. And what happened to Jesus happens to you, and what's true of Jesus now becomes true of you. Why, because you earned it or deserved it? No, you never earn it or deserve it! Because God purposed in His heart that when you put your faith in Christ, He would put you in Jesus Christ. He's taking care of all of this, even behind the scenes, even when we don't realize it.

Now Paul's convinced of this truth because he knows something, and he's gonna let you in on what he knows. Look at verse 9: "*Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.*" What else does Paul know here? Well, He knows that Christ was raised from the dead, and so He's not going to die again. The implication is He's raised from the dead to live on forever, He's not going to die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him. And at a point in time Paul saw this, this word "know" means to see with perception. He made the connection that if Christ rose from the dead, He wasn't going to die again, He's already paid that penalty. He yielded himself to death at that moment for a purpose, but it's not that death can come back and regain mastery over Jesus Christ.

But guess why this is important? Because the believer is united with Christ. See, this is his whole point here. What's true of Jesus is now true of you. Do you know that when you rise from the dead, there is no chance that you'll die again? There's no chance that you'll have to face the penalty for your sin. Why? Because Jesus faced it, and Jesus raised from the dead never to die again, so you'll never die again. Your unity with Christ is so important that if Jesus dies no more, then the believer also dies no more following their own resurrection from physical death, or that generation that gets raptured. This is the guarantee, this is why you won't die again, because Jesus won't die again. You can see the connection here.

Notice that the text says that Jesus "dies no more", and the emphasis there is it's a present tense continual verb, in other words, He doesn't continue to die. Do you know that there are denominations and religions that teach that Jesus is put back to death on a weekly basis to pay for our sin? Do you know what the Bible teaches? Many times, just the opposite of what religion teaches, unfortunately.

Jesus died once. He doesn't continue to die, that would imply that the penalty still has payments. This isn't the layaway plan; this isn't God's sin penalty layaway plan where Jesus keeps making payments on a weekly basis or on a daily basis. Jesus dropped down the whole check at once, paid it in full, took care of everything all at once. And so even in the Greek emphasis here as Paul is saying, He doesn't presently and continually die, He *died*. A point in time in history, 2,000 years ago, a done deal, He took care of it all at that moment.

Now when Jesus submitted to His death on the cross, He submitted to death's authority or dominion, and at that moment, death reigned. Death had dominion. But I love it because death didn't keep its dominion. In fact, what happened three days later after Jesus died? He conquered death. Death no longer had dominion over Him due to His Resurrection. And what we're going to see is that when Jesus did this, not only was He submitting to die *for* our sins - which we talk about a lot here, and rightfully so - but in this section we're going to see that Jesus died *unto* sin (singular) source, the sin nature you might call it, the indwelling sin, the power of sin that resides in our mortal bodies.

Jesus not only died for our acts of sin and the penalty of sins (plural), but He died *to* sin. And there's a reason that He did that, and it's to change our relationship going forward to sin indwelling in us. Our relationship to sin is completely different than it was the day before you put your faith in Christ, and the reason for that is Jesus died to sin, and when Jesus died to sin, you died with Him to sin, we'll kind of unpackage that a little bit further.

However, being raised from the dead as verse 9 says, death no longer has dominion over Him. He'll no longer die, the debt was paid in full, the creditor cannot come back to the debtor, the debt is all gone. And because Jesus paid our debt, they can't come collect on us either. There's no debt left to be paid, Jesus paid it all, and so we see that there in verse 9. And as we've been saying, because this is true of Jesus, it's also true of us. It's been true of everyone who's been united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

And so you know what we find out in our identification with Christ, is not only are there present, practical benefits - we've been looking at those and we'll continue to look at those - from this identification with Christ, but there are also future, practical benefits guaranteed. The present, practical benefit is you can be delivered from sin's power in your daily life. You don't have to do what you've always done; you don't have to fail the way you've always failed, you don't have to struggle the way you've always struggled. In fact, God is not even calling you to struggle, He's calling you to trust, to depend, to rest. The future, practical benefits guaranteed include our future bodily resurrection, and then this guarantee that we'll never die again afterwards.

Now I'm gonna bring verse 10 up and I want to just really quickly show you this. *"For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."* I want to show you the distinction that Paul is making here, because many times when we talk about the gospel, we talk about Christ dying for our sins (plural) penalty. That's true, that's a justification truth. That's when we get declared righteous by God, that's when we are guaranteed that we won't perish and that we have eternal life, and many things happen at that moment.

But Paul is talking about something a little bit different here as it relates to our Christian life. Notice that Paul says, "He died *to*", notice he says "*sin*", not "sins", not plural. Died *to* sin. And so when he's here in verse 10, he's talking about the source of sin, the sin nature, indwelling sin. Christ died to - if you want to say it this way - the sin nature or indwelling sin. We're talking about a different aspect of His work. We want to definitely keep clear the first aspect of His work that He died *for* our sins, paying the penalty, but we don't want to miss that second aspect, because that is God's key to giving you the pickaxe for the Christian life.

Your relationship to sin has changed because Christ's relationship to sin is what it is. He's separated from it, He's not dominated by it. He never was dominated by it, but because God took you into His death, your relationship to sin, the sin nature, the source of sin in your life is the same as Jesus Christ's. So, when you are dominated by sin, it's because you are volitionally choosing to present yourself to sin, and you don't have to do that anymore. You don't have that direct connection anymore. And so we're gonna see this play out as we go on here.

So, this word "for" at the beginning of verse 10 just continues to give us a signal that he's further explaining the fact that Christ's death was a one-time event, and why this death with Him has this ongoing and present significance. Again, it was a one-time event, His death accomplished what God had set out for Him to accomplish. But we've got to understand this difference between sins.

So, it's important to know when we talk about Christ's relationship to sin - the power of sin, sin's nature - he was never connected to the sin nature. In other words, Christ never had a sin nature, okay? He's unique in that way, He didn't have a sin nature, nor was He under sin's dominion like it could be said of us.

Now, that was our inheritance, unfortunately. By being born in Adam, we have this physical human body that's dying, but also indwelling this human body is this sin nature directly connected and directly controlling everything we did as an unbeliever. But the moment you put your faith in Christ - although you don't get your new body yet, you will, and your new body will be completely delivered from the presence of sin nature or this power of indwelling sin - you still have this human body and you still have a sin nature, but here's the difference: it's no longer controlling you 24/7, all of the time. That power has been broken, and now the only way it can have dominion and power over you is if you volitionally present yourself to it.

So, God identified us with Christ to change our relationship to sin, to the sin nature, and that's what we see here as we're looking at verse 10. Let's read verse 10 again, *"For the death that He died,"* -

notice this - "*He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*" And so this was, again, a one-time event that Christ died *to* sin. And He died *to* sin specifically for the purpose to deliver us from it. It wasn't that Christ was dominated by sin (that's not true, and perish the thought!), but He died that death so that He could take us into that death so our relationship to sin could be changed, we could specifically be delivered from it.

And so as we pointed out, it's important to notice the contrast between *sins* plural, and *sin* singular here in verse 10. And really starting in about Romans 5:12 you're gonna notice that he's shifted, he stopped talking about sins (plural) and he started talking about sin (singular), or this source, this sin nature. So, Christ indeed did die for our sins to pay the penalty so our sins may be forgiven, but He also died *to* sin, and we died *with* Christ *to* sin, so that our sin nature may be condemned.

Notice He forgives *sins*, but He condemns *sin*, He condemns the source. And by the way, that's why when we get to Romans 8:1, one of our favorite verses in the Bible, it says there's now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Why aren't you condemned? Because the very thing that's the source of sin in your life, the sin nature, has already been condemned so that you can go through, that's why you're not condemned. God has condemned sin *in* you, and so we see that in our death with Christ.

And then he says this: in contrast to the finality and completion of His death look at verse 10, "*The death that He died, He died to sin once for all;*" There's a finality and completion to that but notice that next phrase - "*the life that He lives, He lives to God.*" There's a continual living component here. In fact, we see in the Amplified version it says that 'Jesus (or He) lives in unbroken fellowship with God.' So not only does He live, but Jesus's life right now is directed with the purpose He's living unto God the Father.

And see, here's what he's about to say, "Guess what? God wants the same for you, too." Look at "likewise" in verse 11. Just like Jesus, His relationship to sin is not in a controlling manner anymore. And just like He's presently living unto the Father, likewise that's exactly what God wants for you, He wants the same thing. And so as we said before, the believer does not need to die or crucify themselves to sin every day, that's not the message of the Bible. The message of the Bible is you *have* been crucified already, past tense, now what do you do every day? Well Romans 6:11 is going to tell you what to do every day: you are to count on that truth by faith.

And you know what, if this is a new concept to you, if you try to start doing that today and start to try to follow God's Word in this essence, you may be counting yourself dead to sin and alive unto God a thousand times a day! Because every time something comes up, you're gonna go back to this truth. But God has done this, and now everything's in place. And we've talked about this subjunctive mood that we keep seeing in Romans 6, this idea that everything's in place to *probably* happen, but it's not a guarantee. And the reason it's not a guarantee is this: can you guarantee me that you're gonna walk by faith every moment of the day? And if you could then you're gonna benefit from God's work, you're gonna benefit from God's provision, it's going to start to become very practical in that way.

I've got an illustration to read to you. Some of you may have heard this story before, but there was a Japanese soldier named Hiroo Onoda, and do you know that he continued fighting World War II twenty-nine years after the war had been officially declared over? Onoda was commissioned by some of his commanding officers to an island in the Philippines, and this happened December 26, 1944. The orders from his commanding officer were simple, they told him, "You are absolutely forbidden to die by your own hand. It may take three years, it may take five, but whatever happens, we'll come back for you. Until then, as long as you have one soldier (he had a group of men under his command), you are to continue to lead them. You may have to live on coconuts. If that's the case, then live on coconuts.

Under no circumstances are you to give up your life voluntarily. And you're to go and commit guerilla warfare tactics on the inhabitants of that island."

They dropped Onoda off on the island and he began following orders, but he didn't know that nine months after he was dropped off that Japan had been hit by two atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He had not gotten that word and didn't know that they had subsequently bowed out of the war a month later. And so the war was over, and yet here's Onoda out in the forest.

Well, these Islanders got sick of these guys taking out their farmers and taking out people that they loved. So, they tried to drop leaflets all over the forest saying, "Hey, the war is over. Just come out, go home, quit killing people. The war is over!" But these guys would get the leaflet, Onoda especially, and they'd look at the leaflets and say, "Oh, this is allied propaganda. They're trying to get us out because we're doing such a good job!" And so they ignored the leaflets and kept going about their guerrilla activities. Year after year, as they killed more and more people on the island, the Islanders began to drop leaflets this time from planes. They were renting planes and dropping leaflets all over the forest to tell them, "The war is over! Stop fighting! Come out, you can go home now!" And every time they got a leaflet, they didn't believe it.

Later, delegates were sent from Japan into the forest calling on loudspeakers and bullhorns saying, "The war is over, Onoda. Come home." And he wouldn't believe it. He thought everything was propaganda. Until one day - it's a really funny story - in 1974, 29 years after World War Two ended, a college student in Japan by the name of Suzuki decided he was going to travel the world for the year. He had three things on his bucket list: one was to find Onoda. The second was to see a living panda, and the third was a little bit more reasonable, he was looking for the abominable snowman. But you could see the level of interest this guy had, you know, he's just going out on an adventure.

This college student found Onoda, and he tried to convince him and show him that the war was over, and he could come home. And Onoda said, "No, I've got my orders." And by this time, all of his men had died, and he was the only one left in the forest, still carrying out guerilla warfare tactics when he could. And so finally, this young college student couldn't convince him and traveled back to Japan, and he found one of his commanding officers who was still alive, retired, working part-time at a bookstore. He took him back to the jungles, brought him with him, and finally at that point Onoda realized and believed that the war was over.

And you know, I think about that story because it just reminds me of Romans 6. And really the idea here is that the battle has been won. God has won the battle, and yet so many of us still think there's a battle raging. And we go out into our daily life to fight that battle, to struggle, to strive, to grit our teeth, to pull our bootstraps up, and to go after it again. I'm here to tell you today that the Word of God says the battle has been fought, that God has won, and now you are to take your position by faith and believe what God says about these things.

See, that's your challenge. Now you can respond just like Onoda, and you could say, "Oh, that's just propaganda. Of course we've got to do something!" That's how many people do respond, but I'm here to tell you that it's all been done, and this is Paul's message as we get to verse 11. By the way, we're in chapter 6 of Romans, we've been studying this book for a little bit less than a year now, and finally in verse 11 we come to the first command in the entire book. First command. We're six chapters in! And so for those of us that want to obey God, here's your chance.

Verse 11: "*Likewise you also, reckon*" - there's our command - "*reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Now I don't even want a show of hands, but mentally raise your hand, how many of you obey that command on a daily basis? How many of you even knew it was in the Bible? And if we did raise our hands, I would imagine that it would be a little sparse in the audience.



Because unfortunately, this is not how we naturally think. I catch myself all the time driving down the road, and maybe I've lost my temper with my wife, or I've lost my temper with my kids, or I've done something else sinful, and immediately I think to myself, "Oh man, it was probably because I only spent 20 minutes reading the Bible this morning, and I probably should have spent 30."

Now you can relate to that, right? But that's how we think. The issue was not the time I spent in the Word of God; the issue was I wasn't resting in the Lord. See, God doesn't want to deliver you through a to-do list, He wants to deliver you through a Person, and that Person has a name, and that Person did something incredible: He identified you with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And I wasn't counting on that, I'm trying to dig my hole in my Christian life with a toothpick, and then I wonder why my toothpick keeps breaking. I wonder why I'm not getting very far. "Man, this is crazy! I leave it, and a day later, water comes in, blows back over my hole and I've got to start all over. And I just keep after it with this toothpick." And that is the mindset.

So, Paul is gonna say, "Count on it, reckon on it. This is a faith word, this isn't a one-time faith word, I just reckon and now I'm just gonna live a perfect spiritual life. This is a moment-by-moment dependence, and does that surprise you that God set it up that way? No, because Christianity is not a list of do's and don'ts. It's not about coming to church, it's not about dressing up, it is about a living, vital, intimate relationship with the creator of the universe, and guess what? He wants to spend time with you. And guess what? He wants you to depend upon Him, just like we did when we were little kids.

You remember how it was. You took your parents by the hand, and when you were scared, you ran into their room, and you slept with them. And when you were hungry, you went to them to get the food off of the top shelf. You depended upon them; you trusted them. You didn't always do what they told you to do, but many times you did what they told you to do. And just like a little kid has that childlike faith, don't be that independent teenager-of-a-Christian that says, "I've got this, God. I don't need You; I can take care of it myself. I've got my toothpick, just get out of my way."

And many times, that's how we live the Christian life, just like an independent teenager who doesn't know any better. And God is saying, "No, no. Go back to when you were 2 years old, when you took My hand to cross the street. When the clouds started coming in and the thunder rolled, and you came and jumped into My bed because you knew I would protect you." That's the kind of relationship that God wants us to have with Him.

The word "reckon" translates the same word that's used 11 times in chapter 4 of Romans. Remember in Chapter 4 this word was used of how God counted something to be true, it's an accounting term. You take out an accounting ledger, and when you put a deposit in you write it down. So, you remember, you got it, you benefit from it. God used this as an accounting term to say, "This is where I reckoned or counted righteousness. I wrote it down to your account." And do you remember what the condition was to get righteousness written on your account? It was faith in Christ. The moment you believed in Jesus Christ you had righteousness written to your account.

Now God is giving you the pen. God wants you to start to count on His provision for you for deliverance from sin's power. And the question is, what are you gonna do with that pen? Are you just gonna hold it and look at it? Are you gonna put the lid back on? Are you gonna put it aside, or in a desk drawer? Or are you gonna start taking the pen that God gives you, and are you gonna start moment by moment writing it down? Writing it down, counting upon it, trusting in God's provision.

See, it's a faith. This is a faith issue, and this is why all the way back in Romans 1 he says, "Not only are you saved by faith, but the just shall live by faith." This is not a one-time event we're talking about. Salvation, justification, is a one-time faith event the moment you transfer your faith to Jesus

Christ, you're saved. Sanctification is an ongoing faith reliance upon God and His provision to deliver you from sin's power. What are you gonna do with the pen? Are you gonna write it down? Are you gonna start counting upon that in your daily life, or are you gonna still count on your quiet time?

Now, I've been hard on quiet time the last couple weeks, and I'm not saying don't read your Bible, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying don't pray. Some people depend on accountability partners, I might be saying don't have accountability partners (that's a whole other sermon), but I'm not saying that some of these things are good. Of course we want to read our Bible, we want to learn about God. But if you're depending on the amount of time that you spend in the Bible to deliver you from sin's power, you're depending on the wrong thing.

God is not a distant God who says, "Here's the list, just follow that, you'll be okay." No, God is an intimate, personal God. He wants to deliver you from sin's power, He wants your dependence upon Him, not on your list. And it's so crazy how religion can distract us, and how legalism can distract us, and how legalism can lead us into being dominated by sin. And because we read an hour today and we still sinned, then we think if we read an hour and a half tomorrow, we won't sin. That's a lie from the devil. That's a lie from the pit of hell, that's a lie from your sin nature.

The sin nature wants to keep you busy, and busy, and busy, and busy, anything but depending upon Jesus Christ. Anything. Give me *anything* but Jesus Christ, the sin nature will take that every time. Because he knows apart from God you've got no power, you've got no strength, and that's why Galatians 2:20 says, "*The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God.*" It's a *Person* who delivers you, not a list of do's and don'ts. Not your method of overcoming sin, not your strategy, your cleverly devised fables, not the latest bestseller at the Christian bookstore to tell you how to overcome sin. Jesus Christ, a *Person*. Just don't forget that. I mean, isn't that true? When we share the gospel, who do we not want to forget?

It's like when we do our survey at the fair and ask people, "How are you saved? Why would God let you into Heaven?" And they say, "Well, because I go to church, and I try to keep the Ten Commandments, and I give money, and I do this." And then we say, "Well what about Jesus Christ?" "Oh yeah, Him too." No, not Him too, *Him only!* And if you can remember that for your Christian life, you're gonna be a lot farther along tomorrow than you were today, right? And that's what we're talking about here, and Paul is saying not only do you reckon, but it's also a present tense word, *continue* to reckon. Start counting, go on reckoning, go on writing this down, go on counting on the Lord Jesus Christ. As the great theologian Carl Greene would say, "There's a lot more still to be said." But we're gonna end it right there today.

But I want to encourage you and challenge you at the same time. You know, you've got a week coming up, and my guess with this storm coming is that we're gonna face some level of trials, some level of disruption in our schedule this week, that's my guess. I'm not a prophet, but it just kind of seems that that's the way it's going. So instead of approaching this week and, as an old southern co-worker used to say, "Don't get wrapped around the axle." You know, and so many times we get wrapped around the axle with life circumstances.

So instead of doing that this week, instead of thinking about all the things that you need to do, should do, probably ought to do to be a good Christian - that's how so many of us live - instead of that, I want you to simply back up this week. I want you to simplify your Christian life.

I want you to take Romans 6:11 and I want you to say, "Lord, I want to obey that command this week. I want to begin to count on You that I have died to sin and that I'm alive unto God, and the life that Jesus lives to the Father is the same life You have designed for me to live." That's a faith challenge to you. I'm not asking you to believe God to move a mountain, I'm just asking you to believe

what God wrote in His word, right? And allegedly that's why we're here, to learn God's Word, and to believe God's Word, and to apply God's word.

And so I'm challenging you this week, and you know what? All I want you to do this week - if you're thinking about what you should do, and what you ought to be doing - just erase that from your mind, just this week. I know that's gonna be uncomfortable for some because we always want to be doing something. Will you take the posture of Mary this week and just enjoy Jesus Christ? He's enjoyable, He's incredible!

Would you just rest in what He's done for you and just rejoice in that this week? And I think you'll be surprised, because as you do that and you have this unhindered fellowship as you're living unto God, there's gonna be opportunities probably for you to respond to Him and what He wants to do in and through you. But it's always about what He wants to do in and through you, not what you decide you think you ought to be doing and you should be doing, it's fellowship with the Lord, enjoyment of Him, and a response to how He's working.



# CHAPTER 34

## Counting and Presenting

### Romans 6:11-14

For many in Christianity, their answer to sin in their life is to just stop it. That's the answer to sin. You're struggling with sin in your life? Well, just stop it. And if it doesn't work the first time, let me just yell it a little bit louder: STOP IT. How does that work out for many of us? You know what I find interesting about that “stop it”, it actually begs the question, “Okay, yes, I want to stop it, but how? How can I stop being dominated by sin?”

And you know what, this is where the wheels typically fall off in Christianity, because depending on where you go and who you study under, you can get lots of different “hows”. But I want to look today at the biblical explanation of how. We're gonna find that in Romans 6 starting in verse 11.

And as we start there, I want to ask a question. Actually, two questions. You tell me, it's an either/or question. One of these questions is correct if you answer it correctly, and one of the questions is wrong. Do you have to obey to be spiritual? That's the first question. Or do you have to be spiritual to obey? Do you see the distinction? One says, “I have to obey and do things in order to become spiritual”, and the other says, “No, I've got to be spiritual in order to obey.” And I believe the Bible teaches the latter, that you have to be spiritual to obey.

And what we're going to see today, and in the next two sections as we finish up Romans chapter 6, is that obedience is not the key word in the Christian life. Now that may sound shocking, and I'm not saying, “Go live any way you want.” Trust me, I'm not promoting licentiousness by any stretch of the imagination, I'm actually trying to promote spirituality. And if the way you lead out to live your Christian life is obey, obey, obey, you're like five steps down the road. Because as we're gonna see in this section, obedience is a byproduct of faith. Faith must come first. Faith, resting in God's provision, and then obedience follows. In fact, when we start putting this together in the next couple weeks, we're going to see that obedience is fifth on the list. Fifth, not first.

And we'll look at that as we go, but it goes like this, we've been studying it in Romans 6: “know”, “reckon”, we're going to look at another word today, “present.” Whom you present yourselves to you will become slaves, and who you are slaves to you will obey. It's fifth on the list. And so we need to just back up the cart sometimes, because so many times the wheels fall off, and we realize, “Why can't we just obey? I want to obey. Just stop it, just stop it, just stop it.” This is why you can't stop it; we need the *how* behind the stop it.

And so today we're gonna get into the mechanics of how all of that works. And what we're going to see today - one is a review because we touched on it last week in verse 11 - but there are two faith words. Two words that require you to trust in God's provision that we're going to see in today's section. This is not “stop it”, this is not “start doing this”, this is “stop what you're doing and start trusting and resting in what God has done to free you from sin's power.” It's a totally different approach. You're not trusting in anything you can do; you're trusting in what God has already done, and that's what we're going to see today.

And so in Romans 6:11 we read this: *“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* And we see this verse starts with the word “likewise”, and without reviewing the entire chapter that we've studied so far, it tells us to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to *the* sin. Notice again in Romans, when he talks about sin, we're not talking about acts of sin in Romans

6, we're talking about sin singular. Sin articulated, *the sin*, which causes you to ask the question, "*The sin what? What are we talking about?*" We're talking about the source of sin that indwells these human bodies, that's the source of all acts of sin that you and I commit. That's what we're talking about when we look at *the sin*, that's what we're referencing here. And so you need to count yourselves to be dead indeed to *the sin*, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And you know we've talked about this before, but it never changes. The word "death" in the Bible means *separation*. We see that clearly in physical death where you go to a funeral, your friend's body is laying in the casket, but your friend's not there, because the body's been separated from the soul or spirit. And your friend is not there, their body's there, but they've had a separation occur. That's what happens at physical death.

When the Bible speaks of a second death, it's talking about permanent and eternal separation from God in a place called the lake of fire. That's death, that's separation. So, when we talk about being dead to sin, we've got to understand that we have been severed from the sin nature. In other words, it's an automatic dominion of your life that existed before you were saved, and it's no longer automatic. You're not bound to obey sin.

I have a big pile of slime here to represent *the sin*. And what I want you to notice as you watch it throughout the sermon, is how shifty this slime is, and how it just keeps moving and spreading itself out, and that's exactly what indwelling sin does. It figures out different ways to trip you and I up, to deceive us, to get us to obey and to present ourselves to it so that we might be slaves to it and its dictators, versus being slaves to God and what He wants to accomplish in and through our lives. And so I want you to notice that as we go along.

But understand that we've been severed from the sin nature. This is a death, our relationship to sin is no longer ever the same. Once you get saved, once you're identified with Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection, your relationship to sin is the same as Jesus's relationship to sin. And I'm talking about sin the source here, sin the noun, sin singular, not acts of sin. All acts of sin spring forth from this source, that's what we believe the scripture teaches.

And so when we look at this idea to reckon ourselves or to count ourselves dead indeed to sin but alive unto God, notice that first word there in the verse "likewise". What's he referring to? Well go back one verse to verse 10, it says, "*For the death that He died,*" - who's speaking of who? Jesus, we're not talking about the aspect of His work here where He died *for sins* (plural), the penalty for sins, we're talking here in verse 10 about His death *to sin* (singular), the source.

He says in verse 10, "*For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also.*" So, the same relationship that Jesus has to *the sin*, and the same relationship that Jesus has to God the Father, we're to be that also, that's to be our relationship. And so he says, "Likewise. Likewise, you are to live your life unto God." We're to do the same as Jesus has done.

This word "reckon", as I mentioned two weeks ago, is the first command in the book of Romans. And I asked last week, and I didn't want to embarrass anybody because I might be embarrassing myself, but I asked everyone to raise their hand if they obeyed this command just in the last week. And again, I wouldn't do that because I would be frightened to see. Because I think this is not an emphasis in our thinking, but it needs to be an emphasis in our thinking. This needs to be where we live when the rubber hits the road on Monday morning, this needs to be on our mindset.

Are you reckoning yourself dead to sin and alive unto God? Is that how you're living your Christian life? Or are you waking up saying, "Well, I better get 2 hours of my quiet time. I better get an hour in prayer. I better get this, I better get this, I better get that, I better start doing this, I better stop doing this, I better, I better, I better." Is that your mindset of the Christian life?

Paul has built this whole case, and now he gives us the first command in the book of Romans, and it says, "Count yourself to be dead to sin and alive unto God." And my question is why aren't we obeying that command? Why is that not even a part of our thinking? Do we understand its value? Maybe that's why. We need to understand its value, because if we're not counting on God's provision for the sin nature, we will be utterly powerless against it.

That's why if I ask the question, "Is anyone satisfied with where you're at in the Christian life today? Are you satisfied with the fact that you don't sin the same way or the same sins that you used to sin on a more consistent basis?" Most of us wouldn't be able to raise our hand because there's still something holding us back, and we're just living our Christian life a different day, but it's the same day every time. Has anyone seen the movie "Groundhog Day"? How frustrating is that, to go on in life struggling with the same sin, after sin, after sin, and then reading a book that says, "Do this and this will change for you."? And you read the book and it kind of works for a couple weeks, and then you're right back into doing the same thing you've always done. And see, God's got a solution for you, but you've got to rest in it by faith to benefit from it.

And so if we don't even know what God's done, we're not practically and mentally counting on God's provision, we'll be powerless against it. And we can keep living life that way, "Well, the things I want to do I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I just keep doing those things, and well, I guess that's just me." No! Don't accept mediocrity, don't accept failure in your Christian life. That's not the normal Christian life, that's not what God had designed for you when He saved you, when you put your faith in Christ. That's not what God had designed when He identified you with Christ, when He went through all this work behind the scenes to co-crucify you with Christ, to co-bury you with Christ, and to co-resurrect you with Christ to newness of life. You've got something much better than what oftentimes we experience.

Just like salvation from the penalty of sin, God's got one method, that's it. He's got one means, one method to deliver the Christian from sin's power, and this is it. It's you by faith, counting, reckoning, it's a faith word. You're resting in what God has done to deliver you from sin's power, and that's a faith word. He's not asking you to do anything other than actively trust or rest upon His provision for sin's power in your life.

See, it's not counting upon yourself. It's not counting upon self-help. It's not counting upon yourself to perform spiritual disciplines. It's not counting on yourself at all! It's counting upon your death to sin and subsequent resurrection from Christ. All I'm saying is this: the Christian life begins by faith at a moment in time, when you quit trusting in yourself to get to heaven, and you put your faith in the One who died for you and rose again. And all I'm saying is that day two, you keep trusting and resting in that Person who died for you and rose again. But you do it with knowledge. Romans 6 wants you to know some things. Not only did He die for you, but you died with Him, and God wants you to begin to count on that.

Remember the word "count on" is an accounting term, it means *write it down*. Back in Romans 4 we see that when we put our faith in Jesus Christ that God wrote down righteousness to our account. In Romans 6, God is giving you the pen. And He's now saying, "You have died with Christ, you've been raised to newness of life, and now you have the pen." And moment by moment, day by day, you are counting on your death to sin with Jesus Christ and your resurrection and newness of life with Him. What are you doing with the pen? See, this is where you actively walk by faith. So many people say, "Walk by faith? Oh, that's so nebulous, I don't know what that means in the Christian life." Here's a great practical example: take the pen and start writing it down. Start counting upon it by faith, that you are dead indeed to sin and you are alive unto God in Christ. And the same way that Jesus lives unto

God, *you* are to live unto God. Can we start believing that? Can we start resting on that truth? That's what he's encouraging here.

See, the Christian life is designed to be lived by Jesus Christ, in and through the believer. Notice it's *by* Jesus Christ. The Christian life is to be lived *by* Jesus Christ. Not your best imitation of what Jesus would do, but *by* Jesus Christ. It's not designed to be lived by you. You are designed to walk by faith so that the Spirit of God can produce the life of Christ in and through you. That is the Christian life. The Christian life *is* Jesus Christ, *is* a Person, not a list of do's and don'ts, and we just can't forget that.

In fact, I would venture to say that the sin nature wants you to trust in anything other than Jesus Christ, even if it's religious sounding. *Anything* but Jesus Christ. Give me *anything* but Jesus. And the sin nature, indwelling sin, is okay with that. Because that's not where your deliverance is found. Your deliverance is not reading a sheet of paper every day or reading words off of a page. Your deliverance is found in a Person, Jesus Christ, Whom you died with, and Whom you were buried with, and Whom you rose again with to newness of life. And this is why the same life Jesus is living unto the Father is the same way we are to live unto God.

And then notice the basis for Paul's argument. If we go to the end of verse 11, he says, "*But alive to God,*" - notice that next phrase - "*in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" We are *in* Christ; we've been identified with Christ. This is the key to our victory. And so as we see the first command in the book of Romans in verse 11, Paul is now going to rattle off three additional commands just in the next two verses, verses 12 and 13. Let's look at those.

Verse 12 is based upon God's provision. And what I'm illustrating here is really what we find off of this word "therefore", are you now resting in this truth? Based on what's happened, based on the fact that you're counting yourself dead to sin and alive unto God, Paul is gonna have a command for you. And the command is (verse 12): "*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*"

"Therefore", again, always an important biblical word to know what it's there for, what it's referring to, what it's going back to. Well in this case, it's based on the fact that you are dead to sin, alive to God, and you're counting on it. Okay so if you know that today, if you're not counting on it, it's going to be impossible to fulfill the next three commands. See, "therefore" based on the fact that you know this, based on the fact that you're counting upon this, now here are some commands. And that first command is really simple, basically, do not let sin reign.

And again, we're talking about sin singular, we're talking about sin the source. And you see how this slime I have up here is shifting and dripping, and doing all sorts of things, and that's exactly representative of what sin does. It shifts, it moves and deceives, and comes through the backdoor, it comes through the front door, and comes through the side door in order to get you to obey it in its lusts. And what Paul is saying is, "Therefore based on the provision of God, don't let sin reign in your mortal body."

Which really brings up a good question, "If I'm dead to sin, how can sin still reign?" Let's be honest with ourselves. What are you saying here, God? I mean, if I'm dead to sin, how can sin still reign? How do I let sin still reign? And you know what we're gonna find is that sin has no control over you, sin has no jurisdiction over you, sin has no ownership over you. Sin can have no dominion over you except to the degree that you allow it.

See, for the first time in the history of your life when you got saved, you don't have to let sin reign. You do not have to obey sin, the source, in your life. For the first time you're free. Now, what the Bible is gonna tell us is that it's very possible for you to still be under the dominion of sin, but it's



because you've actively put the handcuffs back on. That's what happens in a very practical way, is that you're putting that enslavement back on you.

We notice that this command is in the present tense. We might say, "Do not go on letting sin reign or rule in your physical body." It might be better said, "Stop letting the sin nature rule." Now remember, this isn't "Stop sinning", that's not what we're talking about. We're saying, "Don't let the source of sin rule in your life." Why? Remember the "therefore". Based on the fact that you're counting on God's provision, you don't have to let sin reign in your life.

Notice too that your mortal body is not sinful, but rather that the sin nature or indwelling sin indwells our human bodies. God's got nothing against your human body. I mean, they are dying, ask any of us that are getting older each day, the creaks and the moans that we have getting out of bed, even. My Achilles tendons have been killing me lately just getting out of bed in the morning, and I know I'm getting old, I'm 40! So, it's like all downhill from here, right? So, we know the human body is decaying or in the process of death, we got that, we understand it, but there's nothing inherently sinful about your human body.

What we've got is two sources from which you can live life: you can live life from the source of sin, or you can live life from the source of the indwelling Spirit of God. And whoever you present yourself to, that is who is going to manifest themselves through your human body. It's like putting on a glove. The glove is neutral in and of itself, but when I put a hand in there and start doing the work, the glove is moving around with me and I animate the glove, the source of life animates the glove. It's the same concept here.

And so when we talk about the mortal body, look at verse 12, he says, "*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body.*" Your mortal body is not the problem, indwelling sin is the problem in your life. One day when we shed these mortal bodies and we get immortal bodies, the reason that that's going to be a great thing is because sin is going to be destroyed. Sin is not going to be a part of those new glorified bodies.

And so sin is the issue here, and I only say that because if the body was the problem, then he couldn't go on to say as he's about to, "present your bodies to God." See, God wants to use your human bodies. God wants to use your human bodies to fill the world with Himself. And every corner of the world where a believer is not allowing the life of Christ to live through him, that is a blank space, a void space in this world and against the very thing that God is trying to accomplish. He wants to fill the world with Himself. How does He do that? He does that in and through our mortal bodies.

And so my sphere of influence might be just this little circle up here, but hopefully someone's other circle is butting up against mine, and hopefully someone else's circle is butting up against theirs, and we fill the world with Jesus Christ. Wouldn't that be cool? I mean, wouldn't it be awesome if we could do that? That would just be incredible! You talk about the world getting flipped upside down on its head, which would really be right side up, man what an encouragement! What a blessing!

And see, many of us spend all our time worrying about someone else in their little section of the world. "Man, they're not covering their circle." Again, get your eyes off of other people's circles and start focusing on where your feet are. Where are your feet planted today? Where will your feet be planted five years from now? You don't know, but you know what, the mission doesn't change. Even if some of you decide to go live on the moon, your feet will be somewhere, right? Just kidding, I don't think that's gonna happen.

Notice that the very fact that Paul commands the believer to stop letting sin reign implies that there's a possibility that sin *can* reign if you allow it. The very fact that he has to command not to let it reign implies that it's a possibility that that could happen. And how does this happen? How do you allow

sin to reign? Well really simply put, as we just saw right here in this passage, when you don't reckon yourself dead to sin and alive unto God, when you don't know and you're not resting upon your co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Christ, sins gonna reign. Because that's God's solution for it.

You can't come up with your own solution. In fact, if you just trace that mindset throughout the Bible, God rejects man's ideas, man's ingenuity, man's solutions, He rejects it all throughout the Bible. Why would it be any different with sin's power and His provision for that? Why would God say, "Oh yeah, well he's trying really hard, so I'm gonna give him victory over there." No, He wants you to trust in His provision. He has made a solution; He wants His solution to be your solution. And so if you're not reckoning yourself dead to sin, you're not resting in that truth, you will not benefit from freedom from domination by sin. But it's yours to be had, and all you have to do is trust in it. All you have to do is rest upon it.

There's another comment here I'd like to make, and that is just this idea of this last phrase in verse 12 "*that you should obey it in its lusts.*" And it really just shows that the sin nature or indwelling sin, the power of sin, has lust, has desires. And as we read more about it in scripture, we find out that all of these desires are selfish desires. But what many people don't realize is that the sin can exhibit its lust in many different ways.

Now, the ways that we naturally think of it are what we would call the bad ways like anger, murder, lying, envy, anxiety, gossip, manipulation, scheming, controlling behind-the-scenes. And we all recognize that that's coming from the sin nature, that's coming from the source of sin that indwells us, that's evil, that's bad. You know, drug use, alcohol abuse, all these things that we think are the Dirty Dozen, we recognize those very much so.

But do you know that the sin nature can also manifest itself in religion? And just to give you some examples, and I don't know if that will shock you, I hope not, but I'll just give you some real-life examples and give you some biblical examples. I used to know a lady who was in a church setting, and everyone thought very highly of this woman. She played the piano, she was just viewed as a godly woman, and everybody wanted to be like her, everyone wanted to get her opinions.

And I remember the day that they were having family over for lunch, and her husband was supposed to go out and pick tomatoes from the garden. And of course, this nice, sweet, godly woman said, "Well honey, remember, I reminded you to just go out to get the tomatoes from the garden. And remember, when you pick them, you're going to bring them in and put them right here." No, that's not what she did. She ripped that guy's head off. She belittled him in front of the entire group, and she went rage-monster on her husband because he didn't get the tomatoes the right way out of the garden. And I think, "How could that be?" Here's this spiritual, godly woman - allegedly.

And then we've got another story, a guy I used to work with in San Antonio who was a Hispanic guy, just a great guy. A Sunday school teacher, and just a model example of being on time and doing a good job at work. Until one day we couldn't get a hold of him. He was on his work truck, and we couldn't get a hold of him, couldn't find out where he was. He was supposed to be cleaning out a building - I worked in real estate at the time. Next thing we know, we see his face on the news, and he had not been where he was supposed to have been. He was having an illicit affair with another man, and he killed that man. And this was a guy who was a Sunday school teacher! This was a guy who looked pretty good!

I think of - I can go on and on - the serial killer "BTK". When they finally found him years later, he was a Sunday school superintendent, and he was a code enforcement officer for his city. A highly thought of man in his community, and yet he had all of this in the background.

I think of young people who go to church and who memorize all the right answers, and memorize all the books of the Bible, and memorize Scripture, and give all the right answers, and yet the second their feet hit the outside of the door, they're a totally different person. In total rebellion against their parents, in total rebellion against authority. And you say, "How can this be?" Well, do you know that the sin nature in its lust wants one thing, and that's not to be yielded to the Lord Jesus? *Anything* but that.

And has this happened elsewhere in scriptures? Well look at Cain. Cain was a religious man; he brought an offering. But you know what? Cain brought the offering that he wanted to bring, and God rejected it. But you see that even the sin will produce religious things that seem to look good. In fact, who were the most religious people of the day in Jesus's time? The Pharisees. Not exactly a model of spirituality, but a model of morality, a model of goodness, a model of, "Wow, they've really got it all together!" And all I'm saying is that this thing called "the sin" is a deceitful, untrustworthy thing, and that's why when we talk about Christian good works and Christian activity, you're gonna see that the question in Scripture is not just about activity, it's about source. What source are you living your life from?

And so many people think, "Well, I'm preaching, I'm studying the Bible, I'm praying, I'm doing all these good works, I'm giving, and so I must be living from this source." Not necessarily. Because if you're not reckoning yourself dead to sin and alive unto God, if you're not in fellowship with the Lord, you might be living out of the sin source, doing a bunch of good things, just like the Pharisees of old. And when you get to the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ, you might stroll in there and be like, "Yeah man, this is gonna go well for me!" And the next thing you know, everything around you is gonna be burnt to toast. Because the evaluation of your good works was coming through an incorrect source.

And so when Paul says, "Don't let sin reign in your mortal body," he's not just talking about the "Dirty Dozen", he's talking about source. What source are you living your life from? It's not just being content that you wake up and go to church every week, it's not just being content that you wake up and read your Bible every day, that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about *source*. What source are you living your life from? Well, that's the first command.

The second command is found in verse 13: "*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*" And so when we talk about this first command, this is a great illustration of what present means. It means *to present yourself, to be available, to be near*. And so the first command that we see is, "*do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.*" And so we've got to look at a couple of words there to get our meaning.

But he says, "don't present your members" or "don't present your human body parts to the sin nature." It might be better said (because it's a present tense command), "*Stop* presenting your body parts to the sin nature." By the way, presenting is also a *faith* word. Because you're not doing anything other than standing near, and hopefully not standing near to the sin nature. He's saying, "Don't present, don't go on presenting yourself there, but start presenting yourself to God. Start standing near to God, start being available to God.

And what that doesn't look like is, "Well, here I am Lord. I'm presenting myself to you, but I really want to go do this ministry over here, so why don't you go ahead and send me over." That's not it. That is presenting yourself to God and by faith, resting right there. And if God says, "I want you to stay put for a little while." Then you're okay with that. And if God says, "I want you to go over here for a little while." You're okay with that. You don't get to decide, you're just simply presenting yourself, that's your mindset.

I've used the example about going into Kroger, right? I've had a busy day and I just want to get home, and Carrie says, "Get some milk, get some bread, get some eggs." And I'm already walking into Kroger, I've got my strategy down. I know where the aisles are, so I know what side of the store I want to park on. I know where everything is, and I want to just go boom, boom, boom, straight line, in-and-out, self-checkout so I don't get caught in a conversation with the lady checking me out. I want to get it done, and I want to get home as quickly as I can.

That's not presenting myself to God. That's me deciding what I'm gonna do, and in essence, when I'm not presenting myself to God, I'm presenting myself to sin. I'm doing what I want to do. And how many of us live our life in just that manner, doing what *we* want to do, doing what seems best to us, doing what we feel like doing? It's quiet, because I know you're human like me, you can relate to those days when that's exactly what we do.

And Paul is saying stop presenting yourself, your body parts, to sin. You might say, "Quit making yourself readily available to the sin nature or indwelling sin to carry out its desires and lusts." Do you know that every time you commit an act of sin - and I'm talking about action verbs, when you actually commit an act of sin, we actually do something sinful - do you know why you did it? Do you know what the basis for that was? Maybe unbeknownst to you or maybe volitionally, you presented yourself to sin. That's what you did.

Now you may not have known, you may not have actively said, "I'm gonna present myself to sin." You may not have even known that's what you're doing, but biblically that's why we commit acts of sin, is because we have presented ourselves to sin. We have stayed near; we have made ourselves available to sin.

That might even start with entertaining a sinful thought, and then just taking it for a ride in our head for a little bit, swirling it around like a laundromat, and just enjoying that thought or playing it out a couple of miles long as we drive. And in essence what we're doing is presenting ourselves to sin. We're making near, we're being available to what sin wants to accomplish in and through our mortal bodies, and thus we become its slave.

Since this is in the active voice, it basically says that each time you commit an act of sin, it's because you volitionally chose to present yourself to the sin nature. This word "present" which we talked about means *to cause to stand near or before, to place nearby, to set before someone or something*. And it was used in a sense of placing something at hand and being in a position of use.

So those of you who have served in our military, you know exactly what this is. The commanding general comes into town, and he wants the unit to present themselves, and that's exactly what they do, don't they? They come together, they get in rows, they line up, they're at attention, and they're presented to the general. And the general could say, "About face!" And they would about face. And I mean, I don't know if he gives those types of commands, that's probably beneath him, he's got bigger things to fry than to march people around, but if he were to say, "About face!" they would not even think about it. They're presented to the general, whatever the general's got for them, they do.

But it's not because they showed up necessarily to obey the general to turn around, they showed up just to simply prepare or present themselves to the general. Now what the general wants to do with them is his business. He could send them off to war, he could send them home for the weekend, that's his decision. But they stay presented, they stay near, they're presented to him.

The third command is very similar, we are not to go on presenting our members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but we are to present ourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. So, in contrast to continuing to present our human bodies to sin, we should present our bodies to God.

And you know that at every moment of every day, you are either presented to God or you are presented to sin. There's no neutral time, there's not, "Hey God, I just need a timeout from life, I'm just gonna go lay on the couch for a couple hours." That's not it, you don't get to call a timeout in this game called life, in this game of "who are you presented to?"

And that's why when we talk about the Christian life, our goal is to be mentally engaged to the point that we *know* what's happened to us in our identification with Christ, we're counting upon that, and then we are mentally by faith presenting ourselves to God, moment by moment, all throughout the day, that is what's called walking by faith. That's the practical side of walking by faith.

Remember, faith always has to have an object. Faith always has to have a truth that you're resting upon. We're not creating things out of magic, out of thin air, when we talk about faith. We're saying you've got to believe something. "What must I believe? John, tell me what I must trust in?" Romans 6, the first 14 verses. Know, reckon, and present. And the question is today: are you presented to the Lord? And the question before that is: are you counting on your death with Christ to sin and your subsequent resurrection? And the question before that is: do you even know about that? And you just work through that process, a mental faith, trust, walk activity, but it's a faith walk. Those are faith words; we're trusting the provision that God has taken care of.

And so in contrast to this ongoing, what I would call "continual, mindless, default presentation" this mindless default, our bodies are naturally going to present itself to sin because of the nature of these bodies, we have to be actively thinking, and actively trusting, and actively presenting our bodies to the Lord. It's this idea of over, and over again, continually at each moment of our day, presenting ourselves to the Lord. And you know what? This is exactly what Jesus Christ did when He lived on earth. This is how He lived to God, and you can trace that through the book of John. "The things that I say, I don't say of Myself, I only say what I hear my Father speak. The things that I do, I don't do myself, I only do what the Father has shown me." He lived this life, He's the example of how to walk by faith, how to be presented to God.

And we'll notice that the key part of this verse is found at the end of verse 13. We're presenting ourselves to God, notice that next phrase - "*as being alive from the dead.*" Again, this is a faith reckoning, we are counting on the fact that we are alive from the dead, that we're alive unto God, and we're depending upon that, and based on that trust and reliance upon that truth, we present ourselves to the Lord. So it's a mindful presentation of the work that God has accomplished on our behalf.

And then you'll notice this next phrase in verse 13, that we are to "*present our members as instruments of righteousness to God.*" And these instruments here can be translated "weapons." So, living unto God as Jesus does represents consciously presenting ourselves and our human bodies to God as instruments for what He wants to accomplish in and through us. Instruments, again, a military term usually translated as "weapons." Just imagine that in the area of military. What if you had a group of soldiers and they presented their weapons to the enemy forces, what do you think would happen to them? I mean, clearly, they'd die. Clearly, they'd be executed.

You don't turn over your weapons to the enemy, and yet many times in our own Christian life, that's the exact thing that we do. By presenting ourselves to sin, we're turning over those weapons to be used for sin's purposes. And what does sin want to accomplish? The same thing that the devil wants to accomplish: maim, kill, destroy, separate. That's all this source can produce is total carnage, total destruction.

I'm talking about wrecking marriages, I'm talking about wrecking relationships with kids, I'm talking about people who can't hold a job because they're so rebellious against authority, they get fired or they quit every three months. I'm talking about total carnage in someone's life relationally, maybe

even consequentially, total and absolute destruction based on volitional choices to either present weapons to your enemy or presenting your weapons to God. And so there's a choice, it's a faith choice that's involved here. Again, it's through our bodies that we serve God on earth. This is why He wants to use them as instruments of righteousness both to others, and for others.

Mark mentioned something in Sunday school this morning, it's a great comment, and Paul does this a lot in Romans as well as in 2 Corinthians but look at verse 14. Notice that very first word in verse 14, it's the word "for", and it introduces further explanation of what he's been talking about. Let's read verse 14: "*For sin shall not have dominion over you,*" - notice the next "for" - "*for you are not under law, but under grace.*" So again, "for" further explains why we should obey the previous three - or you could even say four, going back to verse 11 - imperative commands. Reckon, don't let sin reign, stop presenting your bodies to sin, and start presenting your bodies to God. Those four imperative commands that we just looked at further explains why we should do that.

And you know what, when the rubber meets the road, the reason we should do that is because you don't want sin to have dominion over you. You don't want sin to dominate you and reign over your life. "*Sin shall not have dominion over you.*" The word "dominion" is an interesting word, because it's a verb form of the Greek word "*kurios*" meaning *lord*.

And so you don't want sin lording or exercising authority over you, and the only way sin can do that is if you volitionally by faith present yourself to sin. You're giving sin the right to Lord and rule over you as an authority. And who do we want to be the Lord of our life? Who do we want to have lordship, mastery, and rulership in our life? We want God to do it. We want God to be leading and guiding us, and thus the command is to present ourselves to God.

You know, sin will not be lording itself over you or functioning as master when - and again, that's a *big* when - when you count on being dead to sin and alive unto God, and when you present yourselves to the Lord. Why is this the case? Well look at the very next phrase. Why will sin not have dominion over you? Notice what's also changed in your new identification with Christ: "*you are not under law but under grace.*"

Notice again that God's means of salvation from the power of sin is the very same means that He used to deliver you from sin's penalty. You know what that method is? It's called *grace*. Which means you don't deserve it, which means God has done everything on your behalf, because you could not do it for yourself. Does that sound familiar? That's the whole message of the first five chapters of the book of Romans!

You cannot save yourself from the penalty of sin, thus God provided a solution that you could not provide, He's giving it and He's making it available to everybody on the basis of His grace. Nobody earns it, nobody merits it, but if you'll simply trust in what God's done for you, you can have eternal life. You can have your sins completely wiped out, never to be held against you again, and you'll never face the death penalty, and you'll have a righteousness equal to God's. And I could just go on and on extolling the benefits of our justification, but you know, the very same way He saved you from the penalty of sins is the same exact way He wants to save you from the power of sin.

You cannot do it on your own, you need help from the outside. God has made a provision so that sin does not have to dominate or rule in your life. Will you, by faith, rest in what God has done? You don't deserve it, you never will deserve it, it's by grace, but He's offering it freely because He is the one who accomplished it on your behalf.

We don't have time to look at Titus 2:11, but grace is God's only means given to the believer to be delivered from the lording-over dominance by the sin nature. Write that verse down and check it out

on your own, but Titus 2:11 just basically says it's the grace of God that teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, it's God's grace that does that, it's not God's law.

In fact, we see the contrast in law, and I will say this: if you take the opposite of verse 14, look at what he says if I just switch it around, "Sin will have dominion over you because you're under law and not under grace." But if you try to live the Christian life under law, I will guarantee one thing: you will fail, sin will dominate you, that's what the opposite of verse 14 says.

And you know what, we're gonna see a vivid personal example by the Apostle Paul in Romans 7 of a man who tried to make himself holy by law keeping. It doesn't work. That's not God's method for delivering you. Now there's nothing wrong with the law of God, Paul is going to defend that the law of God is good, but this is not how you're made holy by trying to keep the law. Now we're not promoting lawlessness, all I'm saying is this: the Spirit of God, the One who actually penned the law is the One living inside of you, who wants to lead you and guide you. And you know what, I'm ok trusting the Spirit of God to produce spirituality, righteousness, and everything else that the law requires in and through me as I just walk by faith in Him. See, I don't get spiritual by observing a list of do's and don'ts, I'm spiritual the moment I'm walking by faith in the Spirit of God, who will never lead me into a pothole and who will always be my source of life.

And so if somebody tries to live the Christian life by keeping the law, here's the one guarantee I can promise you: you'll be dominated by sin. You will experience continual failure over, and over, and over again. Most Christians mistakenly think that the law keeping is the only way we can be made holy in the Christian life. In fact, many think that this is why we have the Holy Spirit, so that now we can keep the law.

We're gonna see in Romans 8, and I hate to jump that far ahead, but it's really important. Notice Romans 8:4. Romans 8:3b, that last part there, says that God condemned sin in the flesh - speaking of our co-crucifixion with Christ. Why? Verse 4, "*that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*" See, God wants to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law in you, but He's not going to do it through law keeping. He's not going to base it on your ability to keep the law or your ability to keep a list of do's and don'ts, He's gonna do it in and through you as you walk by faith in His provision in the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. That's how He's going to do it, that's how He's going to accomplish it.

So, to say that we're not under law, I'm not saying we're lawless, I'm not saying go out and be licentious, I'm not saying that at all! I'm saying don't live from sin's source, and if you try to keep the law, you're living from sin's source, and you will fail. God doesn't want you living by that source, He doesn't want you getting holy by keeping the law, He wants to make you holy as you rest and depend upon the Spirit of God to make you holy. So, it's only as we look to God for His solution to the power of sin that we will be delivered from it.

In the next section we're gonna see how all of this just continues to practically work itself out in life. And I love the way Paul starts verse 19, he says, "*I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.*" Praise God that Paul was that sensitive because this is some deep stuff! But like I said a couple of weeks ago, it's deep but it has very practical influences. So, we need Paul to "take those cookies" as they say, take them off the top shelf and put them on the bottom shelf for us so that we can understand that. May God give us this understanding, and may God convince us of the value of the work of Jesus Christ.





# CHAPTER 35

## How to Be the Right Kind of Slave

### Romans 6:15-19

Turn with me to Romans chapter 6. We're in a spot in the book of Romans where we are talking about sanctification. That's a big five-cent-word, or however many syllables that is. We've dealt with justification; we've already talked about in Romans the salvation from the penalty of sins. We realized that once we were persuaded that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for *our* sins, in *our* place, as *our* substitute. We were persuaded that He accomplished that work on our behalf, and that God raised Him from the dead, accepting His work on our behalf, and when we simply believed in Jesus, that we were saved - past tense - from the penalty of sins. And we shout, "Glory, hallelujah!"

In fact, when you realize that for the first time and the burden of your sins is lifted, and you realize that your sins have been forgiven, and that God Himself has declared you righteous, that's a great day! In fact, the Angels rejoiced in heaven the day that you made that decision to put your faith in Jesus Christ alone.

But we're talking about something different today in Romans 6, we're talking about sanctification. And I love some of the music we were singing today, because the Lord *is* our salvation, not just from the penalty of sins, He's also our salvation from the very power of sin. That's where you and I live, that's where you and I walk, that's what we do in time and space history, from the moment we get saved until the time that we die and get put in the grave, we are living in this world and we're dealing with sin's power in our daily life.

God did not leave you in a lurch. God did not leave you alone to figure out how to overcome sin in your life, He also made provision for that. And so in Romans 6, we're looking at salvation from the power of sin as a source, sin as an indwelling entity if you will, that's trying to lead you and draw you away from God. Sin as an indwelling source that's trying to make you it's slave. And do you realize that today as you sit here, you're a slave to something?

Romans 6 is going to tell us there's only two entities that can control you, that can be your master, that can be your slave owner. One is God, and the other is the sin nature, "the sin" as we looked at in Romans 6. Remember in Romans 6 we're looking at sin as a source, no longer sin as activities or acts that you commit, we're looking at the source.

You might view it this way in terms of a tree: we're not looking at the fruit on the tree, we're actually looking at God's solution for the root of the tree. If you've got a bad tree, you could spend all your days running around the tree picking off bad apples, just getting rid of all the bad fruit. But eventually, you realize that the tree produces nothing but bad fruit, and you wish that you just had a chainsaw and a stump grinder, and you just want to get the roots out of there, you want to pull it up out of the ground.

Well, here's the good news: God has provided that kind of solution for you, for sin's power in your life. He has dealt a blow to the root of sin, and that's what we've been looking at in Romans 6. And I mentioned last week, but I want to bring it up again, because many people confuse the means of spiritual growth with the results. And what do I mean by that? Many people think that if I can just obey God and learn how to obey, and obey, and obey, then I'll become spiritual. That's typically the order we think of in our Christian life, and we're confusing the means with the results.

What we're gonna see in Romans 6 today is that you have to be spiritual to obey. Obedience is a result, obedience is not the cause of spirituality, spirituality is the cause of obedience. We're going to see that order today, and I mentioned it last week, but when you look at the grand scheme of the Christian life, obedience is fifth on the list according to Romans 6.

Because Romans 6 says you've got to know something, that you died with Christ and that you were raised with Christ. You've got to start reckoning on that, that's Romans 6:11. You've got to start counting on that as your mode of deliverance, Romans 6:12-14 and actually the rest of the chapter. You need to stop presenting yourself to sin, your body members, and you need to start presenting your members to God, that's third on the list. And whoever you present yourself to, that's who you're going to be a slave to, and whoever you're a slave to, that's who you're gonna obey.

And so to come out in the Christian life and say, "Obey, obey, obey.," that's like putting the cart before the horse. And that's why many of us who have lived our life saying obey, obey, obey realize that we don't have the strength. We've got the desire, that's not wrong, but we haven't found the strength to execute obedience. The reason is it's not about obedience, it's about who you are presenting yourself to. Because the second you present yourself to the Lord, you become God's slave and obedience will follow, obedience will be a result, that's what we're gonna look at today.

And so Romans 6:15, if you want to break up Romans 6 into two sections, those of you that think orderly in just kind of an outline form, you can break Romans 6 up into two sections. Really it has to do with the questions that Paul asks. The first section, verses 1-14, notice he anticipates a question in verse 1. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* The rest of those first 14 verses attempt to answer that question. The answer is, "God forbid!" Why? Because you died to sin and you're alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's the answer to that question, that's why you shouldn't continue in sin. And the reason he anticipates that is because of what Romans 5:20 and 21 said, which says this: *"But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."*

And so he anticipates this question, somebody saying, "Wait a minute, you're saying I can get saved and I should just go live any way I want to? Just dive headlong into sin?" And Paul is saying, "No, you shouldn't because you died to sin. Your relationship to the sin nature has changed. You have been severed from your union with it, you no longer have to obey it, it no longer has to be your taskmaster, you've been freed from sin." That's his answer there in the first fourteen verses.

But now Paul moves into a different section in verse 15, and he asks this question: *"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!"* Now if you underline in your Bible, I want you to take that word "sin" and I want you to underline it, because it's a unique use of the word "sin" in Romans 6. And the reason it's unique is because it's a verb. Now Paul is talking about an act of sin. Before he was talking about the source of sin, this indwelling sin nature that produces acts of sin, but now he's saying something else.

He said, "Should we sin?" Can we just dip our toe into sin every once in a while? What's wrong with that? I'm just going to dip my toe in." You know how that is. Has anyone ever tried to dip their toe in a swimming pool when it wasn't swimming season and fallen in the pool? Has that ever happened to anybody? I have a friend up in Minnesota, right there on Lake Superior, and it was his goal as a young man to jump into Lake Superior every month out of the year one year. And we're talking about clearing some ice out of the way to jump in, I mean this was not a good idea, hypothermia, all that kind of stuff. But when you're 20 years old, you're ten foot tall and bulletproof, you don't think about those kinds of things.

But you know when we think about dipping our toe into sin, what we don't realize, and what Paul's gonna basically say in terms of a principle, is there's an anaconda right below the surface, that the

moment you dip your toe in it's looking to grab you, strangle you, yank you in, drown you, and become your master. And so this is the natural question following verse 14.

Again, Paul anticipates what his readers are going to say, because remember in verse 14 he said, "*For sin shall not have dominion over you,*" - why? - "*for you are not under law but under grace.*" And so the thought then is, "Well if we're not under law, it's okay then for me to dip my toe in sin once in a while. Because I don't have this regulation telling me not to do it anymore. So, I can just kind of play with sin, dabble in it, dip my toe in it." And Paul's gonna say, "No, don't do that."

In essence, there's an anaconda, there's green slime, there's indwelling sin that the moment you dip your toe into sin, you have presented yourself to sin and now it becomes your master. And it is not an easy task master, it is a master that wants to destroy you, wants to maim you, wants to destroy every relationship that you have in your life.

And those of you who have walked according to the sin nature at any moment of a given day, you know exactly what that looks like. You know exactly what that feels like. You know exactly what it feels like to have this sin in your life that you cannot overcome, and it just dominates you like you're some poor little puppy dog.

And you just can't stop doing it no matter how much you want to, no matter how much you try to, no matter how many books you read, you can't conquer this thing, it dominates you. And it happens every time a certain set of circumstances hits your life, you fall just like that, it's predictable. If Vegas was running odds on you, there would be no one betting, because we would know exactly what you and I would do every single time, given the opportunity.

And so what Paul is going to say here is simply this: don't dip your toe into sin. Don't even think in that way, because the moment you do, you become a slave to the sin nature. And so he anticipates this question that we said, and Paul is anticipating that people are now gonna think that they're free to sin because they're not under law.

In fact, when a lot of people hear verse 14, what they hear is, "Oh, well then that means we can be lawless. We're no longer under law, we're under grace. And what you're saying when you say that Pastor, is that people can just live lawlessly, they can just live any way they want to." When you teach that people are not under law and are now living under grace, some people think you're saying they can just do anything they want to, completely lawless, no consequences, etc., and you've heard those accusations.

I'm here to say something much different than that. I'm here to say grace is your only chance to live a life pleasing to God. I'm not even saying the law is an inferior choice, I'm saying the law is *not* a choice. The law will cause you to be dominated by sin, that's what verse 14 says when you read it in reverse, "*for sin shall not have dominion over you.*" Why? "*for you're not under law but under grace.*" Implying that if you place yourself under law, sin will dominate the daylight out of you.

And you know what's interesting about that is we're not even talking about the Mosaic law there. The law in verse 14 is not articulated, it's not under *the* Mosaic law, we're talking about legal principle in general, which means anything that you devise in your own strength to overcome sin's power in your life is going to fail. Why? Because God has provided a solution! God wants you depending on His solution, and then God wants you by faith, presenting yourself to Him to be slaves to Him, to carry out His righteous desires in your life.

And so not only is this not teaching that we are free to be lawless, what it's teaching is that the only chance you and I have to live a righteous and pleasing life is if we learn to live by grace. If we learn to live in dependence upon what God has done. God has provided a solution for sin's power; the question becomes just like it was in salvation from the penalty of sin: will you trust in God's provision

for sin's power in your life? You can go on living a failure of a Christian life, that's your decision, God gives you that volitional choice. That's what Paul is going to teach against here as we continue to go on.

But we notice that Paul answers this question with an emphatic, "Not a chance!" Shall we sin, shall we commit acts of sin? Not a chance! May it never be, may it never come into existence. The truth of the matter is our only chance of living a holy life, free from sin's dominion is via grace, it's not by observing law, legal principle. Legal principle being, "If I do *this*, *then* spirituality will happen. If I don't do *this*, *then* spirituality will happen."

No, if you're trusting in God's provision, you're spiritual, you're walking by means of the Spirit of God. You're depending on the very thing that God has done and accomplished on your behalf by taking you into Jesus Christ's death with Him, co-crucifying you with Him, co-burying you with Him, co-resurrecting you with Him, and you're depending on *that work* on your behalf to free you from sin's power in your daily life. That's walking by faith, that's how you put feet on walking by faith.

You're not gonna trust your quiet time anymore, you're not going to trust your hour of prayer, you're not going to trust your Bible study, you're not going to trust your attendance at church, you're not going to trust this or that, or any other religious thing that you can trust in, because even sin, the source of sin, is okay with you trusting in all those things to deliver you from sin's power. Why? Because it knows that none of those things can deliver you from sin's power, that a person named Jesus Christ is the only One who can deliver you from sin's power. That's what Paul's gonna realize at the end of Romans 7. "*Who*" - not "what." Not what lists, not what books, not what spiritual disciplines - "*is going to deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" I thank God that Jesus Christ my Lord can deliver me.

And when we talk about God's salvation being complete, we're not just talking about the penalty of sin. That's an aspect of it, and hallelujah for that! I'm telling you you've got victory as a believer, you've got resources as a believer to be delivered from sin's power in your daily life, why aren't we resting in that? Why aren't we trusting in God's provision? Why aren't you?

Is Romans 6:11 becoming a part of your thinking as we study through this? Is this becoming a part of your thinking on a weekly, daily basis? Are you starting to count on your death with Christ to sin the source, and counting on your resurrection with Christ to newness of life? Are you doing that by faith, are you walking by faith in those truths?

You know, the sad truth for those who feel like law-keeping as a safeguard, many people think, "Well, I'm gonna keep the law. It's kind of safe to be there, I feel better about it. It makes me feel safer." The crazy thing is that this is the only way to ensure that the sin nature will dominate your life, it's the only way to guarantee that that's gonna happen!

When we look at verses, like 1 Corinthians 15:56 - we won't turn there - but you know the verse, it says: "*The strength of sin is the law.*" The very thing that arouses, and strengthens, and enlivens this thing indwelling you is the law. It's like kicking a sleeping dog, right? If you are gonna go in somewhere to a building, and they have this big guard dog, and you're a little scared - it's a Rottweiler, Doberman Pinscher, German Shepherd mix, let's just throw it all out there - it's a big, vicious, nasty dog, and you're just trying to get into the door, and the dogs asleep right there. On your way into the door, are you gonna kick that thing? Seriously? You might lose your foot; you may never get your foot back! Of course you wouldn't kick it! You wouldn't do anything to arouse that dog.

And yet well-meaning Christians designed to live holy lives do the very thing that we're talking about by trying to live a Christian life via law keeping. Doing or not doing to become spiritual. God doesn't want us living that way. He doesn't want us arousing sin to dominate us. In fact, it accomplishes the exact opposite for many people for what they're trying to accomplish.

You know, as we move into verse 16, we're gonna notice a couple things. You're gonna notice that whoever you present yourself to, you become its slave. And so you've got a choice: you can present yourself to God, and you can become a slave of righteousness, or you can present yourself to sin and you can become a slave to the sin nature. You have that choice now as a believer.

In fact, as we read this in verse 16, I just want you to know that the word "slave", in either the verb or noun form, is used 8 times in the rest of this chapter. This is all about who are you going to be a slave to? You're gonna be a slave to one of these two entities if you want to say it that way. The choice is who are you gonna be a slave to? And it's not about who you obey or not, it's about who you present yourself to. Because when you present yourself to one of these two, you become a slave, and whoever you're a slave of, that's who you'll obey. It's a result, and we'll see that play out here in verse 16.

And so in verse 16 it says, *"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"* This Greek word translated "know" here is "*oida*", there's a couple of words for knowledge in Greek. But it just means that you *see or understand with perception*. In other words, as Paul communicates this truth, you might be sitting there saying, "Oh yeah, I see that. I can relate to that! I see that happening in my life, or I see that happening in other people's lives." You begin to relate to the truth; it starts to ring true that what he's saying is accurate.

And so what do they know? Well, they know simply this: that whoever they present themselves to at any given moment, at any time of the day, they will immediately become slaves to obey. Do you know that the reason you sin is a direct result of who you're presenting yourself to? If you're looking for a reason why you can't obey God, look no further than this truth right here. The reason you're not obeying God is because you're not presenting yourself to God, and you are still presenting yourself to sin on a consistent basis.

See, all obedience does is expose who you're presenting yourself to. And we talk about presenting, remember, it's a really simple concept. In fact, let's not read works or activity necessarily into presenting, because presenting is a faith word. And presenting is this: placing myself near, making myself available, and basically presenting myself to function in the dictates of whatever source I'm going to live from.

Now last week what we looked at, Paul said, "Don't go on presenting yourself to sin. Don't go on making yourself available, standing near." I used to love - of course they grow up and they change in many ways - when I would finish the sermon in Texas and some of my younger kids would run up to me right after the sermon. It was great! I couldn't even get down to get to the back before they're up there giving me a hug, and it was a small enough church where that was fine. So, they would come up and immediately ask me if they could do something for me. And I love that! And so I would give one my sermon notes and then they would run off and fold it up and guard it with their life on the way home. And then I would give one my Bible, and I might give one my cup.

But I used to love that image because that's what presenting is. As I finished my sermon, my little kids came right up to me and said, "Hey Dad, I'm here. Do you need anything, can I do anything for you? I'm available. Where do you want me to go? Send me." And sometimes as they get older, I wish that would remain the same, but they're growing into adults as well, aren't they? And they're beginning to be independent, and they're growing up, and so they're making some of their own decisions.

But you know, that's all it is, and God just says, "Hey, stop presenting yourself to sin and start getting near and putting yourself in position where I can be your Master." You just present yourself to the Lord. And it's a faith word, it's a presentation word, and then from there God sends you out to do

things. God sends you out to live the good works that He's designed for you to walk in before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 2:10. That's what God is all about.

So rather than just saying, "Hey, I'm gonna go do this for God." back up a step and say, "No. I'm gonna present myself to God. I'm gonna be available to Him. I'm gonna be near Him, I'm gonna just be close by so that I can execute His plans and what He leads me to do."

Paul is saying that whichever of these two the believer presents themselves to will become their masters and they will of necessity become their obedient slaves. Look at verse 16 again. "*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey,*" And so again, obedience is an effect, it's not the cause. Don't get the cart before the horse, it's so easy to do this in the Christian life.

Because is obedience a biblical word? Of course it is! Of course it's a biblical word. Obedience is not wrong, there's nothing wrong about obedience, we're not saying you shouldn't obey. All we're saying is live in such a way that obedience can happen in a consistent way, consistent with God's purposes, consistent with God's will, and the only way that's gonna happen is if you're counting on your death to sin with Christ, counting on your resurrection to newness of life, and you're presenting your members to God. That's the only way genuine, acceptable obedience is going to happen, and that's a faith walk.

And you know, it's much easier to give you a list and let you just check off your list on a daily basis. Read my Bible, prayed my prayers, did this, led a Bible study, went over here, and helped this person. It's much easier to give you a list, because at the end of the day you say, "Ah okay, I'm gonna take a break now and get my lazy chair." Walking by faith is so much more difficult, yet easy.

Jesus says, "Come to me and my burden is light." But you know what, Jesus's burden, so to speak, and entering into that life with the Lord is gonna require mental consistency, and activity of faith, and trusting in Him, not just shifting your brain into neutral. That's what many Christians do: shift my brain into neutral, go through the motions, read my Bible, pray my prayer. How many people have read their Bible in their quiet time and not even known *one* thing, remembered one thing that they read about? And yet you checked it off, and you felt pretty good about growing spiritually that day. And yet if someone had said, "What'd you read about today?" "Man, I don't know. It was words on a page. I read that they were in English, I read them, but I don't remember a cotton-pickin' thing about what I read."

That is not what's going to make you spiritual. You are not to shift your life into neutral and sing Carrie Underwood's song, "Jesus Take the Wheel". That's not what we're talking about here in spirituality. We're talking about being mentally engaged, mentally trusting, mentally depending upon the One who took you into the death with Jesus Christ to free you from sin's power. Are you mentally engaged in your Christian life, or are you in neutral?

Who you present yourself to is who you're going to be slaves to obey. Notice that the argument here is to stop presenting yourself to sin and start presenting yourself to God. That's the argument that Paul puts forth here. Notice the argument is not, "stop sinning".

We watched that video last week, the lady who was fearful about being buried in a box, and the advice to her was, "Stop it!" Two-word advice, great psychologist there, he only charges five bucks for the first five minutes, yells at her, "Just stop it!" And she says, "Well, I've been doing it since I was a kid." He's like, "No, no, no. We don't go there. Just stop it."

And how many of you have been told that in your Christian life? Maybe you've talked to somebody, and you said, "Man, I'm struggling with this sin. I'm struggling over here, I'm struggling with this, I'm having problems in this area." And you know, probably the substance of what somebody told

you was, “Just stop it.” How's that working out for you? “Oh, just stop it? Oh yeah, I wish I knew it was that easy. Okay, now I can just stop it.” It doesn't work that way, does it?

And so he's not saying necessarily “stop sinning” here, but a step further back, stop presenting yourself to sin, *the* sin source, stop presenting yourself to sin, start presenting yourself to God. You know, some will say that the reason you still sin, I've heard people say this before, is because you're just not committed to Christ enough, that's why you continue to sin. That's why you can't overcome sin.

I've heard people say the reason you still sin is because you don't love God. I even heard a pastor on a Q&A session recently say, “The reason people don't stop sinning is because they don't love God, and I love God.” Wow! What an arrogant, obnoxious person. “Y'all don't love God, but I love God a hundred percent. And so the reason I don't struggle with sin is because I love God, the reason you struggle with sin is because you don't.” Many people will tell you that.

They'll say the reason you still sin is because you might not even be saved. You need to check your salvation. People will say many other things, but you know here's why you sin: you're not reckoning on God's provision for sin's power, and you're presenting yourself to the sin nature, that's why you're sinning. That's the answer, that's the biblical answer. The solution is start counting on God's provision, stop presenting yourself to the sin nature, and start presenting yourself to God. Those are two faith words that you can immediately start to avail yourself of on a daily basis.

And do you think God wants you mentally engaged with Him throughout the day? Do you think God wants a relationship with you where you're actively depending upon Him, actively thinking about Him, actively occupied with His work on your behalf? You better believe that's what He wants! He's a relational God, He wants relationship with you, He wants fellowship with you, He loves you more than you could ever imagine or realize! He's not the one distant from you, He's right there. If you want to switch it around, God is presentative, in a sense, to you. He's presenting Himself to be available to you as your resource, the resource you need to live a holy and pleasing Christian life.

You know, obedience is merely an outcome of who you're presenting yourself to by faith. Let that sink in. If you're struggling right now, and I would guarantee that many of us are because we're human, we struggle with sin, we struggle living a daily life, things pop up in our circumstances, and we react to the circumstances instead of responding to the Lord.

Stop your thought process that you've probably carried on for many, many years - I know that even I have this tendency to go back to this concept of obedience - and understand that the reason that you're engaging in acts of sin is because you've got a presentation issue. You've got a faith issue; you've got a reckoning issue. You are not depending on God's method of freeing you from sin's power, and thus you're not presenting yourself to the Lord, you're continuing to go on presenting yourself to sin.

Obedience is an effect, a result, not a cause. Presenting by faith is the cause. Again, the issue is not law keeping. “Oh, maybe if I got up a little bit earlier and I did this, this, and this, then I could start getting victory.” It's not law keeping. The issue is who are you presenting yourself to? That's the issue, and it's this one issue in your Christian life that's going to determine the quality of the holiness of your life. It's this one issue in your Christian life that's going to determine the type of acceptable fruit that you bear, and that's rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. It's this issue, it's a source issue. What source are you living your Christian life from?

In fact, we see in verse 16 as we go back there that there's really two different results based on what source that you're gonna live your life from, look at verse 16. *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourself slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”*

And so we see this first result: when you present yourself to sin, the result is going to be death. Now death by definition is *separation*, and we know from scriptures, we know from the first five chapters of Romans, that our eternal death penalty, our separation from God for eternity in the lake of fire, that debt was paid by Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. When He died by Himself, alone, for your sins, and rose again from the dead, that death was paid for, never to be faced by any person who puts their faith in Jesus Christ.

That's why John 3:16 specifically says that "*whosoever believes in Him,*" - first promise there - "*shall not perish*", shall not face the second death that the Bible talks about, this eternal separation from God. But you know, there are many other forms of death that the believer can face as they present themselves to sin, allowing sin to dictate and be a master to this believer.

What are some of the deaths they can experience? Well, they could experience an earlier physical death. You know that when God divinely disciplines his sons and daughters, that at some level if they don't respond, that final straw, if you will, could be an early, untimely, physical death. God may just take them home, take them out of this life. That's one possibility of death.

Another possibility, and this happens immediately, is this idea of death to relationships. Death to a fellowship-relationship with God. It's like when you're a kid and your dad says, "Quit bouncing the ball in the house." and you bounce it one more time, you're out of fellowship with your dad. You may not get dinner that night, and that's gonna be a real bummer if he's grilling steak, that'll be a really bad punishment. But we're talking about a fellowship separation there.

We see this in marriages, we see this in work, people that can't hold a job longer than three months because, "The boss just never seems to recognize my value to the company, and everywhere I go they just keep making me work these menial jobs and I should be in management by now." And so on and so forth for every three months of their life, because they're walking according to the sin nature, and death separation relationally happens when you do that. There are natural consequences.

If you decide as a young man or a young woman, "I'm gonna go paint the town this weekend, woohoo! I'm just finding a reason to celebrate, and maybe it's because I got a great grade on a college test. And so now I'm just gonna go paint the town tonight, and I'm gonna go out, and I'm gonna get drunk, and I'm just gonna have a good time with my friends!" And then you get behind the wheel of a car and you take somebody's life. That's a natural death consequence of presenting yourself to the sin nature, and sometimes that happens naturally in our lives. And so you see that the believer, as they present themselves to sin, many of these consequences can happen to them. You can just go on through the list there.

Divine discipline, these trials and tribulations that never seem to shake your life. Part of those are God's method of restoring you to fellowship with Him, but part of those are a direct result of you presenting yourself to sin, you suffer the consequences of those actions. And then we've mentioned loss of future rewards.

And you know, this is why when you dip your toe into sin it's such a big deal. Because to dip your toe into sin, so to speak, or to sin as Paul says in verse 15, this verbal action form, to actually commit an act of sin, means that two steps before that, you presented yourself to the sin nature. And guess what happens there? The second you present yourself, you become its slave. And you may have thought, "Oh, I'm just dipping my toe in. Yeah, I know so-and-so gossips, and so when they call me to gossip, I'm just gonna listen to it. I'm just gonna dip my toe in. I know that's wrong; I know that's against the Bible, I know I shouldn't gossip, but I'm really fired up right now and I just need to tell somebody. And so I'm gonna just dip my toe in sin." You know the moment you do that, you become its slave.



And now guess what? Now he can start spinning you around, over, and over, and over again, and you just wanted to dip your toe into gossip. And the next thing you know, you're relationally dysfunctional within your marriage, you're relationally dysfunctional with your kids, you're relationally dysfunctional at work, you're starting to suffer natural consequences in this area, in that area, and the reason why is you thought, "Well I'm just gonna dip my toe in the sin of gossip." But you didn't realize that a chain came with that. You didn't realize that a step before that, the reason you did that was because you presented yourself to sin, and you became it's slave.

But there's another option we find in verse 16, and that's when you present yourself to the Lord. You present yourself as an obedient slave to God, and it's gonna result in righteousness. Do you know that our positional righteousness, our legal standing of righteousness, you get that the moment you put your faith in Christ? That's called justification, and it's unchanging. The God of the universe, the Judge of the universe banged His gavel down at a point in time when you put your faith in Christ and said, "You're righteous. Period." And that's true of you whether you act like it or not. Your standing never changes.

But what we're talking about here in sanctification is being made practically righteous. This is something that happens, not with a one-time moment of faith, but an ongoing moment by moment walk of faith. And what are we trusting in? Anytime we talk about walking in faith, we always have to have an object. What or who are we trusting in?

Well, we're trusting in what we know: we died with Christ to sin, we were buried with Christ, we were raised with Christ, we're counting on that work on our behalf, and then we're presenting ourselves to the Lord by faith. That is our moment by moment walk of faith, and this is how God has determined to make a believer practically righteous or exhibit the righteousness that they have now that they're in Christ. This is a manifestation of what we have in Christ, and this happens as we moment by moment walk by faith.

Let's jump into verse 17. Your relationship to sin the source changed when you got saved. Your relationship before is you were on autopilot, that's all you had. You were completely connected to sin the source every second of every day. And that's why in Isaiah 64:6 when he says, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." - menstrual rags, I mean it's really just nasty, gross rags - the reason he can say that is because as an unbeliever, you're chained to sin, and so everything you produce is coming from this source. And there's faultiness, and motives, and all sorts of things when that happens.

But in verse 17 Paul says, "*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*" And so he says that they *were* slaves of sin continually in the past, and this is when they were unbelievers. And do you know that when you were slaves to sin as an unbeliever, you could only present yourself to the sin nature? That's the only option you had. And it doesn't mean that you didn't do something good once in a while - good from a human perspective. For instance, I've had unsaved neighbors mow my lawn one time when Carrie was pregnant with Abby, and she delivered Abby and came home, and one of our neighbors had mowed our lawn. That was really nice, I appreciated that! But they were an unbeliever, and so the source from which that good work flowed was from this sin nature, they had no choice. That was who they were presented to continually, and they were a slave to it, just like any of the rest of us were.

But something happened at a point in time, hopefully somebody presented the gospel to you: that Jesus died for your sins and rose again, that you don't have to pay for your sins yourself, you don't have to spend an eternity in hell, that you don't have to try to achieve a level of righteousness and hope that God might accept you, but that you could have all of that in the gospel.

And so he says, “*yet you obeyed*”, and notice they obeyed at a point in time. What did they obey? Well, the first obedience was from the heart, notice in verse 17. We're not talking about an action here, he says, “*that you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*” You can say that their obedience here sprung from a proper internal motivation. What did they obey? Well, how do you obey the gospel? What's the obedience required in the gospel? Well, it's a finished work, so God's not saying, “Hey this is a finished work, now go do this.” It's not a finished work if there's still something left to be done. He's saying this is a finished work, and how do you obey the gospel? You believe it. You trust in it. You trust in the Savior who died for you and rose again. That's how you obey from the heart, the gospel.

But secondly, notice that they obey by faith the form of doctrine to which they were delivered or given over to. Again, initially this was the gospel, but additionally this form of doctrine as we're looking at it, I believe, is referring to our identification with Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection. That's what we were delivered to, and they're obeying this again by reckoning on it, by counting on it, and then by presenting themselves to the Lord.

Verse 18. Not only have we been delivered from sin or from that slavery, but in verse 18 it says that we've been set free from sin, we also became at that moment, slaves of righteousness. And so the moment you put your faith in Christ, not only were you delivered from sin's slavery, but you were delivered to another form of slavery, you are now a slave of righteousness. That happened the moment you put your faith in Christ.

Notice this first part of this verse, “*having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*” This is in the past tense, this is an accomplished result, you have been set free. I know that there are days you don't feel free from this. There are days I don't feel free from this, I feel like this thing is just going to dominate me until the day I die, and I don't feel or experience the freedom that God has designed for that, and we'll talk about why that's the case. But whether or not you feel it, it's true of you. You've been set free from sin; you do not have to go back and present yourself to sin.

Again, this is not something we're striving after, we're not striving to be set free, this is something that's already happened to us, look back at Romans 6:7. “*For he who has died has been freed from sin.*” Did you die with Christ? According to the Word of God, you died with Christ. You've been set free from sin, that's already happened to you. It's a done deal, past tense event. Again, this is something that's already happened to the believer.

And so in addition to being set free from the sin nature, Paul also says that we became slaves of righteousness at this very time as well, look at verse 18: “*And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*” Again, it's a point in time emphasis, it's a past tense emphasis, you are now a slave to righteousness. This is the position that God has got you in, and He wants you to live out by faith. However, here's the rub: each time that we practically trust in our freedom from sin via our co-crucifixion with Christ, and present our members to God, we're slaves of righteousness.

The question becomes: what goes wrong then? If the overall setup is in place, and that's true, I've been freed from this and now I'm a slave to God, what goes wrong then? Why doesn't that impact me on a consistent, daily basis? Why do I have trouble living that out and benefiting from that? Well, it goes back to what we've been looking at, we don't count on God's provision, we come up with our own solution to overcome the dictates of sin, we're not trusting in what God has done to us in crucifying us and raising us with Christ, and then we don't present our members to God. We just continue to present ourselves, we continue to stay near, if you will, to execute the desires and dictates of the sin nature.

So that's what goes wrong, and Paul is gonna say, “You know what? Let's simplify this a little bit.” Look at verse 19. He starts by saying, “*I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.*” He's

been talking about some deep, heady stuff here, but he's gonna say, "Let me bring it down a little bit. Let me just give it to you straight, let me speak on human terms." If you haven't understood anything up to this point in time, he's gonna try to make it very understandable here in verse 19.

And so how does he do that? He says this: *"just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness."* Easy stuff, right? Just like you always have presented yourself to sin, stop doing that and put it in reverse now. Stop doing that just like you *always* did that, and now do the same exact thing, except present yourself to God. That's what he's looking at here.

He uses this emphatic adverb "just as", and in just the same way you used to present your members to the sin nature, we're now to present our members to God. And the question becomes, "Okay, if I'm supposed to do it "just as", how did I do that? How do you present yourself to sin? Can you see that in your own life? Can you see patterns of how that works out in your own life?"

When the sin nature plants thoughts in our head, you know what happened? You took the thought and you began to run with it, and you began to develop that thinking a little bit more, and you began to just kind of soak in that thinking, and you began to just take that thought even though it came from Satan, and you began to kind of get nearer, and nearer, and nearer, presenting yourself to sin so that now you can execute that thought.

I'll give you a really simple one that I see in my own life, and that's just laziness. There's an old cartoon, it's really funny! It's a husband and a wife, and they're going about their day, and this is right after the wife has got a bunch of little kids running around, three kids that look under the age of six. And the husband is all dressed for success and he's out in the business world, he's on his way home and in his thought bubble, all he's thinking about is getting in the lazy chair and reclining, watching some TV, just kind of unwinding from the day.

And then it shows the wife's thoughts, and she's been chasing the three little kids around, and her thought bubble is she's gonna have her knight in shining armor, her husband, come home and the second he walks through the door, *she's* gonna be in the lazy chair and he's going to be playing with the kids, fixing dinner, and doing the whole works, and that's her thought bubble.

Needless to say, in the next scene the thought bubbles crash into one another, because both of them want to be on the lazy chair, both of them are thinking about what's best for them and not what's best for the other person. And you know as a husband, I've been guilty of that many, many times in my life. I come home and it's all about me, and it's all about my day, and it's all about what I want to do tonight, and it's all about how I just want to get to my lazy chair, and how I just want Carrie to clear the kids out of my space so I can have some peace and quiet, and I want to watch my football game, and I, I, I.

That's how I present myself to sin. That thought was planted into my head on my way home from work, and you know what, I just enjoyed it. I soaked in that thought, "Oh, that would be nice. It'd be great if Carrie pulled out some warm water and washed my feet, too!" And that's how I think, just being honest with you. And that right there, those sorts of thoughts are coming from the sin nature. You know how I know? Because it's self-focused.

And you know what? If we're honest with ourselves, we love us some us. We're all about us, we're all about ourselves, and that's exactly how we've done this our whole life. It's all about me. When I'm thirsty, I get up and get a drink for myself, or I expect someone else to get it for me. But I never get up saying, "I wonder if my wife's thirsty. I wonder if my kids are thirsty. I wonder if my parents are thirsty." That's not how we think, it's all about us. I'm hungry, I'm gonna get up and make a sandwich for myself, not, "I wonder if so-and-so is hungry, I wonder if I can get something for them."

And see, in the same way we would present ourselves to sin, where sin is gonna have these thoughts driving in your head that are all self-focused, that are all self-gratifying, that are all about you, the very opposite is gonna happen when we present ourselves to God, because God's gonna have you others-focused. Let that one encourage you. And we don't have time right now, but I would encourage you to look at all the "one anothers" of Scripture and see where God's focus is. See what Jesus's mindset was in Philippians 2. He wasn't all about Himself, He was all about other people. And that's how you can start to tell, "Where is this thought coming from? Where are these desires coming from? Is it coming from the sin source or is it coming from God?"

# CHAPTER 36

## Freedom and Fruit

### Romans 6:19-23

We're gonna be in Romans 6, and Lord willing we'll finish chapter 6 today. And thanks again to my daughters who have allowed me to use this slime representing (as we mentioned) the sin nature. And that's what we've been talking about, but it reminds me this morning of a question that I've asked multiple times during this study in Romans 6, and it's something that I want you to think about, it's a question that requires you to think, and that is this: do you have to obey to be spiritual, or do you have to be spiritual to obey? How would you answer that question?

Well hopefully if you've been here for the study of Romans 6, and as you have read through the text and we've tried to describe what Paul's describing here in terms of your victory over the sin nature, hopefully you understand that you have to be spiritual to obey. Hopefully you've seen and we've been able to develop that if obedience is the first word that you lead out with in your Christian life, I can guarantee one thing: you're a legalist and you fail, and you fail often, because that's not the mode of victory that Paul's outlined here for you to have victory in the Christian life. It's not obey, obey, obey, stop doing this, start doing this. That's not the message.

The message is: your God, the same God who sent His son to die for your sins and rise again so that you could be declared righteous when you put your faith in Him alone, that's called justification, when He saved you from the penalty of sin. That same God has done something for you so that you can be delivered from the power of sin, and He doesn't expect you to figure it out or duke it out with sin yourself, He's actually made a provision.

And if you recall, the provision was that He identified you with Jesus in His death, His burial, and resurrection, and that first word in Romans is, "Do you know that?" Do you know that you were crucified with Christ, that you were raised to newness of life with Christ? Do you know that your relationship to this sin nature has been forever altered, that you've been severed from its automatic domination in your life, do you know that?

He says "know" three times in the beginning part of Romans 6, and then he says, "Once you know it, in order to benefit from it, you have to start counting on it by faith." And that's when we see the first command in the book of Romans, chapter 6, verse 11 when he says, "*Reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

And so, "Do you know it?" is the first question. Are you counting on it moment by moment in your daily life? And then when you begin to depend upon the Lord in faith, and you begin to rest in His provision for your victory over sin, are you now mentally and by faith, are you ceasing to present your members - your body parts - to sin, to carry out its lusts and desires, and are you presenting yourself now to the Lord? Those are faith words, counting, and presenting by faith.

And you know what, there's an outcome. Depending on if you know these truths, if you're counting on these truths, and if you're presenting your members to the Lord and you've stopped presenting yourself to sin, there's an outcome. And we looked at that outcome last week, it's slavery. And so the Bible is very clear that as a believer, to whom you present yourself to, to that one you will be its slave. And guess what? When you're somebody's slave, guess what you do? You obey them.

Obedience is the fifth thing down the line for the Christian, and yet for many of us that's the first thing we think of. And you can't obey just by wanting to obey. In fact, we're gonna see a man in

Romans 7 who wanted to obey. Do you know that passage? Didn't he want to obey? So, for me to tell that type of person "Obey.", he's gonna say, "I got you, man, give me something else. How do I do it? What are the mechanics behind how I do it?" And the mechanics are found in Romans 6. Obedience is going to be a result of who you present yourself to. And so we're in the middle of all of that, but I wanted to give that introduction.

In verse 19, Paul is gonna say, "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh." And I think the reason he says this is because I think Paul knows this is a deep concept. I think Paul knows this is going to require a little mental energy to think, this isn't the sound bite of our era. You know I heard Twitter just doubled the number of characters. Wow! 280, now there's an opportunity to say something really deep, right? Before it's like I was really limited, but now I can say a lot more. But this is the society we live in.

In fact, quick question: when was the last time you individually either took a newspaper - and kids, that's a paper version of the news that you get online. It's going out of style, I get that - or you took a story on your news app, and you read the entire article? But the point is this: we live in a sound bite culture. We can't even finish a news article written many times at a 7th grade reading level, which means it's easy to understand, doesn't require a whole lot of thinking, it's just right there on the bottom shelf for us. Paul understands that this is a difficult concept. But I want to challenge you, engage in your thinking! Don't say, "Man, I've already heard this before." Because for many of us, no we haven't. We haven't heard it the way that Paul wants us to hear it.

Because this is the key to the Christian life, and I've told you before, if Romans 6 is not a part of your thinking on a daily basis, you are trying to live the Christian life in your own strength, you're probably making a valiant effort. But if honesty came out and we knew exactly what was going on behind the scenes, you would have to admit that you fail, and you fail consistently.

And I'm not pointing my finger at you, I'm coming alongside you because I want you to benefit from this, I want to benefit from this. Just knowing it is great, but actually counting on it and beginning to consistently apply this in your life is life abundant. Not eternal life, that's a free gift when we put our faith in Christ and what He did for us one time.

But I'm talking about this moment-by-moment dependence that leads to an abundant life in Jesus Christ. He doesn't want His believers just moping through life, complaining like Eeyore. You know, "Well, I guess my tail is over there. I don't know where my tail is." And that's how many Christians live the Christian life. "Oh, I guess my tail is over there, I don't know. It probably caught on fire."

And that's how we walk through life, and God doesn't want you to live life that way, Paul doesn't want you to live life that way, and so he's gonna say, "You know what, let's simplify this a little bit." But just because he simplifies it doesn't mean you can stop thinking, we've got to stay engaged here.

And so in verse 19 he says this, "*I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members*" - remember those are our body parts - "*as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.*" So, he says this, he uses this emphatic adverb "just as." The same exact way that you have *always* presented yourself to the sin nature, just do that in reverse now, just do the exact opposite. One time a friend of mine told a friend of his who was not doing a very good job in raising his kids, "I'm pretty sure that if you decided what you want to do with your kids and then just did the opposite, you would make much better decisions raising your kids."

And you know for many of us, think of it that way, we're simplifying this. What you have always done, what you get into a habit of doing, do the opposite. What's the opposite or how do we do this? I

think we started to talk about this last week. How did we present ourselves, our members, to the sin nature? How did that work? How did that look?

Well, here's how it worked: when the sin nature plants thoughts into your head, you respond to them. And what do I mean by that? You can't control the thoughts that come into your head, the sin nature is gonna raise those up and that was really discouraging for me as a new believer, because I thought, "Man, I'm supposed to be new. I'm supposed to be growing spiritually. Why do these things keep coming up into my head? Why do these thoughts keep coming up?" It's coming from your sin nature.

And by the way, your sin nature just gets worse and worse. And that's why if you talk to an 80-year-old man in here, he's not gonna say, "Oh yeah, it gets much better." No, if we're being honest with ourselves, it's still there. It's still there.

And so how do you respond to those thoughts? Do you immediately recognize it is coming from this source? Or do you say, "Hmm, that's an interesting thought." You start swishing it around in your head like a washing machine, bounce it back and forth a little bit. Has anybody had a conflict with somebody else and ran an entire conversation in your head of how that was gonna go when you confronted them? "And when they say this, I'm gonna say this. Oh no, I just thought of something better, this will really body slam them. I'm gonna say this if they say this." That's a great example of what I'm talking about.

That's a thought that comes into your head, you responded to it by thinking about it, and considering it, and starting to make plans, and then guess what you did? You put yourself in position to execute those thoughts. And every time you commit an act of sin, whether you realize it or not, that's the process you go through. That's the process we go through every time we commit an act of sin.

And so the answer is to catch that thought on the front end and say, "That's coming from the sin nature. I died to sin, that's my reckoning, I'm alive unto God. And God, instead of presenting or putting myself in place to execute the desires of the sin nature, Lord, I'm gonna present myself to You by faith." And you know what, that may have to happen a thousand times a day. And for some of you really big sinners, that may have to happen ten thousand times a day. But you know what? It doesn't matter if you're a big sinner or a little sinner, God has made provision for you. God has solved your problem. The question is will you take advantage of it?

And so this is how we did this. So, in the same way that you did that, now we're to do it the exact opposite in terms of presenting ourselves to God. And this comes out in all sorts of situations. I shared last week about me being lazy and wanting to come home, and I know Carrie's been working hard all day, but I just want some couch time, or I just want some recliner time, and I just want the TV on, and I just want people to serve me hand and foot. And I just want to be able to shake my glass when it's empty and I want one of my kids to race in there and fill my cup up with sweet tea, and it's all about me. And life becomes about the two-foot circle that I can draw around these two feet, and that's where life revolves around.

And so if you're like, "Man, is this thought coming from the sin nature? Is this thought coming from God?" I guarantee if it's inside that circle, it's probably coming from the sin danger if it's outside that circle it's probably coming from God. So that's kind of a good rule of thumb, is it about you? And like I said last week, when it comes down to it, if we're honest with ourselves, as a friend used to say, "We love us some us." And that is the truth of the matter. We love us some us! We *like* to think about ourselves, we *like* to meet our needs, that's the only thing many times on a daily basis that drives us. And so this is how this looks, this is how we did this.

When the sin nature tried to control our emotions, we reacted immediately. Sin nature said, "Get angry." And we said, "I present myself to you to get angry, to blow up, to explode." And see, this is why it's so ridiculous. And I'm criticizing myself here, because this happened to me just a couple weeks ago where I lost my temper with somebody in my family, and you know what's really sad is I can't even remember who it was, because it happens pretty consistently sometimes.

So, I don't know if it was my kids, I don't know if it was my wife, I just remember getting angry at somebody and realizing it. Sometimes you realize it in the moment and you're like, "This is wrong, and I probably shouldn't be doing this." And sometimes you just don't realize it, but this was one of those situations where I cut it loose. I cut it loose on somebody. I got in the car later and I said, "That was sin. I lost my temper. The things that I said were sarcastic, they were biting, and I was wrong." And you know the immediate thought in my head was, "Maybe I should be praying a little bit more. Maybe I should be reading my Bible a little bit more." And you know what? That's the thought that, many times, comes into your head. And I'm here to tell you that's not the solution to anger.

The reason you blew up, the reason I blew up in anger is because of this: I presented myself to sin, and sin took me out as its slave, and it carried out the desires through me. The issue was not reading my Bible or spiritual disciplines, the issue is I was not resting in God's solution for this thing at that moment, so I presented myself to sin, and guess what happens when you present yourself to sin? It's a domino effect. You become its slave, and guess what you do? You do whatever it wanted to execute through your members in the first place, and you carry it out.

So, the issue is not did I read my Bible, did I pray enough, did I do spiritual disciplines, am I being honest with my accountability partner or whatever other thing we put in the place of trusting in Jesus Christ. See, that's the thing we don't understand, is we will trust in *anything* else but Jesus Christ. We will trust in *anything* else besides God's provision for sin. We will read *any* book that pops on the Christian bookshelf that tells us to trust in something other than God's provision for sin.

And you know what? Many times, we get exactly what we deserve. Which, we're going to see the result of doing that is death. And that's how life looks like for many of us, is this bad fruit, this death, because we think that we have to obey to be spiritual. And so we are going to just duke it out, and crank it up, and get better at obeying and doing our spiritual disciplines, when all the while God is trying to show you there's failure in that mode. Now I'm not saying don't read your Bible, I'm not saying don't pray, don't misquote me. All I'm saying is, are you gonna depend on what you can do, or are you gonna depend upon what God has done?

See, when you frame it like that, it's an easy answer. Of course I want to depend upon what God's done, and that's the exhortation here in the verse.

Now notice that when we present ourselves, our members, our bodies to sin, that we're slaves of the two following things (we see this also in verse 19). The first one we see there is that he says we're slaves of uncleanness. Now this word just means *complete and utter filth*, any kind of unnatural pollution. Sounds like a great thing to be a slave to, doesn't it?

In fact, how many would go in a really dark alley, on a bad side of Atlanta, and find a drug junkie on the side of the road and say, "Here dude, hook up a chain to me. Hook up a handcuff to me, let's just go do what you do." Anybody want to do that? Nobody would do that, and yet when it comes to sin in our life, this source of sin, that's exactly what we do every time we present ourselves to it. We present ourselves to an entity that's unclean, that wants to lead us into uncleanness, complete and utter filth, and pollution. That's what we do every time, and so we become its slave.

Notice this: "*lawlessness leading to more lawlessness.*" Violation of the law, an intentional disregard for the breaking of the law. And you remember that question back in verse 15, "*What then? Shall we sin?*" And I



used that illustration “Should we dip our toe into sin?” Verse 14 says we're not under the law anymore, we're under grace, so it's probably okay if I just dip my toe into sin once in a while. I'm not under law anymore.

Do you remember the illustration I used last week? We dip our toe into sin, and we don't realize there's an anaconda just underneath the surface looking to grab your toe, yank you in, and drown you. That is the danger of that, this is why we don't dip our toe into sin. This is why it's not good for a believer to say, “Yeah, no one's looking, I'm just gonna dip my toe into sin.

We always think of sin in terms of the “dirty dozen” right? And as long as we're not doing the “dirty dozen” - whatever that is in whatever culture, but usually drinking, smoking, chewing, gambling, having immoral sexual relationships, murdering people, and whatever else. Those are the “dirty dozen”, and as long as we don't do that, we think we're spiritual. Wow! What a low standard. That's not God's standard of spirituality just because you didn't kill somebody in the last week.

I'm talking about when you engage in gossip. I'm talking about when you listen to somebody else engage in gossip. I'm talking about when you lose your temper with your children. I'm talking about when somebody - whether it's a spouse or a co-worker or a boss - says something to you and knocks you out of fellowship with the Lord. And all you do is stew all day, just that washing machine in your mind, swish, swish, swish. And you just stew, and grind and grit your teeth, and clench your fists, and those kinds of things knock you out of fellowship.

And here's the crazy thing about sin, is giving it one toe is not enough, it wants to drag you in. Notice that, “*lawlessness leading to more lawlessness.*” It wants to dominate you; it wants to control every aspect in your life. And when you think, “No one's looking, let me dip my toe into sin, that anaconda is ready to pull you down. You chose *this* sin, and before long you're doing all of these sins. And you say, “Wow, how did I get there?”

How do people who are held up in the public eye as being spiritual leaders have these incredible falls? Like, how in the world could this guy get up and preach every week, and yet he's back there doing things that are ungodly and unseen? Let me tell you how it happens: it started with the toe dip, and it was a consistent presentation, putting myself in position to execute the desires of this indwelling source of sin, that's how those things happen.

These are masters over the ones who present his or herself to sin. And see, this is why the source from which you're living the Christian life is so important. It's not just curbing external actions. I don't know how to communicate this well enough, and I probably am not communicating it well enough, and I apologize for that. I really want this to be understood: the Christian life is not externals. Do you understand that everybody born into this world has sin indwelling them? And you know, there's some pretty religious things that can come out of the sin nature, religious activities.

You don't believe me? Look at the Pharisees. Look at Cain. Look at every religious, unsaved person in the Bible! They had a sin nature, and it produced some pretty incredible religious feats, so much so that in the day of Jesus, what did the people think about the Pharisees? “Oh man, those guys are untouchable. Oh, those guys are righteous.” And you know what? They're a perfect example of external, religious garbage that comes from this sin source, because in one hand they have a Bible, in another hand they have a knife.

Was that true of Cain? In one hand he had an offering to God, in the other hand he had a knife to kill his brother. The Pharisees would say, “We tithe off of our mint and cummin!” you know, the smallest spices in their gardens, and yet they're plotting behind the scenes to kill Jesus - who never did anything wrong - because He was going to take their power, their position, and their authority.

When we think about the Christian life, many times we think, “Well, I'm reading my Bible. I'm praying. Man, I'm struggling with this sin, maybe I should serve at church. Maybe I should do some more religious things.” And we think in terms of external, external, external, do, do, do. And like I said before, that is a bunch of doo-doo, and that's exactly what it is. It's exactly what it sounds like! It's not the key to spirituality, and we think if we just obey, we're going to be spiritual, and we don't realize that the issue is the source. You have to be spiritual to obey, you have to be presenting yourself, you have to be counting on God's provision on your behalf in order to be spiritual.

We've got to understand that all of these externals, both religious and licentious, can come from the same source. If we don't understand that, then we're gonna think Christianity is all about what we do and we don't do, and we're gonna be sadly mistaken. We're gonna be sadly mistaken, sadly frustrated, sadly turned off. And that's why we can sit in a sermon or sit in a Bible study week after week and say, “Oh yeah, I already got that. Give me something new.” So, we don't have any value even for the Word of God.

We think we've got it all together because we're buttoning our top button well, and we're polishing our shoes well, and everything's ironed and creased, and we just look like the real deal. But you know what? When it comes down to it, we know it's phony. I don't know about you, I'm just tired of being phony. I'm just tired of being fake. I'm just tired of trying to be something that I'm not.

That's one of the beautiful things about grace, is grace lets you put your hair down. Even if you don't have hair, it lets you put your hair down. It lets you be yourself, it lets you accept who you are in Christ, because you realize that you are in the most valuable position in the world's history, you are *in* the beloved, you are accepted in the beloved. You don't have to walk around this world wondering whether or not God accepts you, He accepts you the moment you put your faith in Christ.

And so the issue now is I just don't want to live from the sin source anymore. The sin source will destroy me. I want to live from God's source, because as I present myself to the Lord and I rest in His provision for my sin nature, then I can live a life pleasing to Him. I can live a fruitful life to Him. I can live a life that glorifies Him.

And so in the same way that you did before, you're going to present your members to God in the very same exact way. As Paul mentioned in verse 16, to whom you present your members to, to that one you become its slave. You know, I think all of us would agree, we want to be a slave of God. We want to do the things that God wants us to do. That's our heart's desire.

So how does that happen? Stop presenting yourself to sin. Notice I didn't say “stop sinning.” See, that puts on you more than what you can handle. That gives you something that you can't do. You can't stop sinning, *but* you can, by faith, stop presenting yourself to sin, which leads to sinning. It's a faith twist, we're resting in God, we're resting in His promises, we're resting in His provision, not resting in our ability to do fill-in-the-blank, whatever that is. We're not trusting in our ability to do something.

So, in this case when you present yourself to God, you become a slave of righteousness. How does this look? We talked about how it looks when you present yourself to sin, we can all relate to that. How does it look when you begin to present your members to God? What is that going to look like? Well that means that when you have sinned and commit an act of sin, and God brings it to your mind, instead of justifying it, instead of explaining it away, instead of saying, “Well I'll deal with that later, I'm gonna enjoy my little swim in the cesspool of sin.”, at the moment that God reveals that to you, 1 John 1:9 says “confess it”, say the same thing about it, and God will restore you to fellowship.

And you begin to realize as a believer that the most important thing in your Christian life is whether or not you're in fellowship with the Lord. That's where it's at. God wants an intimate relationship with you. He doesn't just want you in the house, over in a back room. He wants you in the

room with Him. He's your daddy, He's your Abba Father, He wants you up on His lap, leaning on Him, hugging on Him, trusting Him.

Did you ever have a bad day at school, you're just bawling your eyes out on the way home, or maybe you didn't cry but you felt like it? And you had a parent, whether it's a mother or father, that you could just come as a little child and sit on their lap and cry on their shoulder? Don't we need that some days? Don't we need that type of relationship with the God of the universe who wants that type of relationship with you? We don't even realize how important it is to be in fellowship.

So, it would look like that, confession of sin. You know, as you're presenting yourself and your members to the Lord, you're resting by faith in what God's done to give you power over the sin nature, your life's gonna look a lot more about what's outside of this two-foot circle around my feet. In other words, it's gonna look a lot more about others. Hopefully it starts in your family, and hopefully it spreads itself out from there. It's no longer about you, it's about others.

And you start to think about the lost, and you start to have a concern about the lost, and you start to come to church saying, "How can I get better at sharing the gospel? Because I have a heart for the lost, I don't want to see anybody go to hell." Versus, "I wonder what time the Falcons are on today. I wonder when this pastor is gonna get done so we can get to the Falcon game." Because we love us some us. We love us some two-foot circle around our feet, that's what we love, that's the most important part of the earth for most of us.

And you know what's crazy, is when we go through trials, and suffering, and tribulations in this world, guess what those are designed to do, and guess what they typically do? They're designed to get your focus off of that two-foot circle and put it on the Lord and begin to enjoy fellowship with Him, who's then going to turn your focus out horizontally to other people.

But typically, what happens when we go through trials and suffering? Spotlight. Drop the spotlight please, right here on me. That's what happens, the exact opposite design of what God does is the exact thing that goes on. And some of you can relate very closely to what I'm saying because you're going through a trial right now, and as you look back over the last 24, 48, 72 hours, you have loved you some you. You have been occupied with you; you haven't been occupied with anybody else but you.

And trust me, I'm not pointing a finger. I'm not pointing a finger at you. I am too, that's exactly what happens to me, and that's why I know that that happens, unless I'm the weirdest one in this room - which is a possibility, I understand that. But I think that happens to all of us. And so as you're presented to the Lord, you care about the lost.

Do you care about your neighbor? And I'm not talking about the people that live physically next door to you, I'm talking about the people you come in contact within your life. You know, when you look at the parable of the Good Samaritan, I think that's the lesson. God dropped that man in your life that day. He's not your neighbor, but He dropped you in his life that day, and thus he is a neighbor-type of person, one that you want to minister to if you can.

Do you value, do you notice, are you aware of all the "one anothers" in scripture? Do you care about your church body? Do you engage with people other than sitting in your chair, warming it for about an hour, and then racing right out to leave? I know you engage with the church building: you come through doors, you drink from the water fountain, you might use the restroom, you sit in a chair, you walk on the carpet, I get that. You engage with the church building.

I'm talking about engaging with church *people*. Do you have any relationships? Do you know anybody? Do you benefit from somebody else's faith walk the previous week? Because that's one of the reasons we get together, to rub shoulders, talk about the Lord, fellowship in Christ, tell what God's teaching you, so that I can be spurred on to love and to good deeds.

See, if you're missing out on that aspect of fellowship, what's spurring you on? It's really easy to then become that person - and there's many people in this country that are doing this - sitting at home in your underwear, tuning into the sermon off of YouTube and saying, "Wow, this is church. This is great! I'm in my underwear, I don't even have to get dressed, I've got a cup of coffee, I can pause it if I need to go to the restroom. I just go to the restroom, I just pause the sermon, I come back, I get some more coffee, let me see if I've got any cinnamon rolls in the fridge and I can make that as I'm watching church, too." That's not church. That's Bible teaching, you can get Bible teaching that way. Church has got something much more. I am getting way off track, and I am so sorry. It's just coming out! And some of those things have just been on my heart, so you'll have to forgive me.

For many of us, we live the Christian life like we're taking a selfie. People are there, but they're in the backdrop though, right? It's all about me. As we present ourselves to God, hopefully your life is about others. It kind of reminds me of another guy in the Bible that thought of others before Himself, it's talked about in Philippians 2 - I'm being sarcastic, it's Jesus.

And see, that's the thing, as we present ourselves to the Lord, guess what the Spirit of God who indwells us wants to do? He wants to produce the life of Jesus Christ in and through us. So that's what it's gonna look like, it's gonna look just like Jesus did, considering others as more important than Himself.

Verse 20: "*For when you were slaves of the sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*" And so Paul is going to talk about their pre-salvation state, when they were slaves of sin. And you know when you were unsaved, you were continually, every day a slave of sin, that was what was true of you. Now as I said last week, you might have thought that you did some good things before you were saved, or you might even be thinking about a person who was never saved who was a really good person. That's fine, from a human perspective I can totally agree with you!

One of the sweetest ladies that I ever knew in my life was my grandmother on my father's side. She was a saint! If you knew what she had to put up with from my grandfather... she had 11 kids, so right there you ought to give her a crown! She was the sweetest lady I ever met, but you know what? She never put her faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, she laughed at the cross many times, which breaks my heart.

But this is one of those things that when Paul is talking about being its slave, it's saying that whatever this thing wanted you to do before you got saved, you did it, you were chained to it, you had no option. You were totally dominated by the sin nature, and you had no other option to do anything different. But you know what, when this was also the case, something else was also true of us, look at verse 20 again: we were "*free in regard to righteousness.*"

The free just means that you were capable of movement, you were unconstrained, you were unfettered, or one who is not dependent on another. If the handcuffs I have up here were an actual chain, and I was chained to sin in my previous state, I could only get so far, but it was where sin wanted me to go. But I could get way far away from righteousness because I wasn't even chained to it, I wasn't even connected to it, so I was completely free from righteousness. So, in this case, the believer in his unbelieving days had absolutely no connection or the possibility of being anywhere near righteousness.

And see, this is why God can say in Isaiah 64:6, which we quote a lot in evangelism, that all our righteousnesses are like what? Filthy rags. Why? We're not even close to righteous, we're totally free from righteousness, and so the very things that we're doing are all emanating out of the corrupt source of sin, even what looks good. And so that's why He can say that all of our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.

Look at verse 21, *“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”* And so as it relates to Paul's statement in verse 20, he asks a question: remember back when you lived like that, when you were free from righteousness, what fruit did you bear? In other words, he might say, “What was the result? How'd that work out for you? What benefit did you gain when you were free from righteousness and a slave to sin?”

I don't know why, but there are sometimes believers longingly look back across the aisle to that life before you were saved. “Oh, I remember those days.” And it reminds you of the nation of Israel who were slaves in Egypt, and as they come out in the wilderness, “Aww, that we could go back to Egypt and eat those garlic peels! We had food to spare, and it was so great.” And Moses is like, “What are you talking about? You were a slave! How can you longingly look back?”

I think of kids who grow up in Christian church, and many times they longingly look at a worldly lifestyle and say, “Oh, I wish I had that. The world's having so much fun!” I can tell you a little bit about that. Yeah, it's really fun to go to sleep at night puking your guts out and sleeping in your own vomit, that is just a blast. I mean, I *long* for those days. I long for the day that I woke up passed out on the side of a road behind a car. I wish I could do that every Friday night, that was a blast! I'm lucky I didn't kill somebody, I'm lucky I'm not in jail right now.

You know, this is the type of thing that Christians, many times, they think, “Well, I'm just gonna dip my toe. I'm just gonna dip my toe, it's so much fun over there.” And Paul is trying to convince them, “Remember when you've done this, remember the results, remember the fruit, why would you even consider that? Why would you even consider dipping your toe into sin? Don't you remember what that was like?” And this is his message.

And so Paul clearly states that the things that a believer used to do as an unsaved person are things that they're presently ashamed of, and so Paul answers the question for them, the end of those things, the fruit, the result, is death. There's no more despicable, gross, disgusting way to describe the result of those things than death. Death is a great description of how these things turn out.

Do you remember how the sin nature can result in damaged relationships? Some are irreparable, you can't fix them. Heartbreaks, tragedies, sorrow, addiction, with all of their unpredictable and unintended negative consequences. And as I've said before and I'll say it many times, you get to choose your sin, but you do not get to choose your consequences, and just remember that. When you dip your toe into sin, you think, “I'm just gonna get away with it, no one's looking.” There are consequences, and you don't get to choose them. And so Paul is saying, “Don't go down that road. Don't take this lightly. Don't think, “Well I'll just present myself to sin. No one's around, this isn't gonna impact anybody. This isn't gonna hurt anybody.”” And you know what, the second you start thinking that way, you should be hearing it ringing in your head me, me, me, me.

There's an old country song by Toby Keith and he's talking about a girl that he's dating, and he just says, “You know, I want to talk about me.” He's like, “We talk about you, and we talk about your car, your work, we talk about how your boss is a jerk” - it rhymes all the way through - and he's like, “Man, I want to talk about me. I want to talk about me!” And so many times, that is our Christian life. I want to talk about me.

In fact, husbands, I would challenge you just this week, when you come home from work, or wives if you're working and you come home from work, the first question that ought to be out of your mouth is, “How'd your day go?” not, “Sit down, let me tell you about my day.” And you know for many of us, that's how we live our life. Again, it's all about me.

Verse 22. One of my favorite words in the Bible is the word “but”, because this used to be how it was, and you can still live that way if you choose, *but* God has got something much grander and better

for you, and we read about it in verse 22. *“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”* You know, a new day has dawned as a believer, you are in a different position, you are now identified in the One who died for you and rose again, you've got a totally different relationship to sin, everything is different now, so why go on living like you've always lived?

And according to this verse, there's a couple of things that have already happened to you. The first thing we see is that we have been set free from “the sin”, the sin nature. You have been set free. It's a past tense word, it's done. So, every time you're dominated by sin it's because you've chosen to present yourself to the sin nature, that's the only reason you can be dominated by sin now as a believer. You've been set free, that's a done deal! When we were unbelievers, it says we were free in regard to righteousness.

Now that we're believers we are free, we have been severed, we have been taken out of the handcuffs attached to sin, and we have been attached to God, and this is now who we are in Jesus Christ. That is who you are. You don't have to go back and continue to present yourself to sin. In fact, if you did, Paul's saying think about the results, it's just death. Why would you want death? Why would you want corruption? Galatians 6 says as we sow to the flesh, we reap corruption.

So, this is our new position, our new relationship to the sin nature. Why? It's because we died. So, the believer has been liberated from sin's power positionally, and now what's the result? You can presently bear fruit to God, practical sanctification. For the first time, you can actually bear fruit. It's God who produces the fruit through you, but you bear it. And how do you do that? Well John 15 says you abide, you rest. By faith, you're presenting yourself to the Lord, you're in fellowship with Him. And as you do that and enjoy the Lord Jesus, He's gonna produce fruit in you, you get to bear it, and it's gonna be acceptable, a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord Himself.

But we also see that something else has been true of us now that we're saved, and it's that we become slaves of God, we see that in verse 22. *“And having become,”* again, past tense, this is a done deal. So, in contrast, when we were unbelievers, we were slaves to sin, we were free from righteousness. Now, just the opposite is true. We're slaves to God. This is what is true of us, but this only practically works itself out if we will by faith reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God and present ourselves to the Lord. That's how it practically works out, that's how we experience freedom from sin and a slavery to God, and we begin to obey what God wants.

And so since we've been made a slave to God positionally, we can now presently bear fruit in practical, daily sanctification as we present ourselves to God. And the final, wonderful result, the end result of this position, is eternal life. He says in verse 22, *“and the end, everlasting life.”* And just remember, when we talk about everlasting life, we're not always just talking about life that starts after you die, we're talking about right now, it's a present possession, you can enjoy abundant life. And it's gonna continue to go for eternity, that's by definition what eternal life is.

That's why when the Bible says, *“If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll have everlasting life.”* It just means that once you put your faith in Christ, you have everlasting life, and everlasting life, by definition, lasts forever, and that's why we believe you can't lose it. It was a grace operation to start, it's a grace operation to finish. God gives eternal life as a free gift.

And so God is going through great lengths to liberate us from the sin nature and to make us slaves of Him. This end of sanctification will result in our glorification, which is also guaranteed. Once you get saved, once you put your faith in Christ, your glorification - that final stage of your salvation when you're completely delivered from the very presence of sin in your new glorified body - that's also guaranteed in Romans 8:30, *“Moreover whom He predestined...”* All of these verbs in Romans 8:30 are aorist

tense, which means they're a done deal. So, God can speak about something that's going to happen in the future as something that's already finished and already completed.

*“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; whom He justified, these He also glorified.”* So, the moment you put your faith in Christ and you're declared righteous by Him, you have a date in the future to be delivered from sin's power, and that's called glorification. God guarantees it, and quite frankly, that settles the whole debate. This is why we're confident when He says, “You have eternal life.” We don't think that God is a life insurance salesman who's selling me temporary life that I can convert to whole life later if I'm really a good little boy. That's not what He's saying. He guarantees it out of the shoe the moment you put your faith in Christ.

And then finally verse 23, a very familiar verse, especially in evangelism. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Now it's interesting, although a new day has dawned and you're in a much better position, do you know that if you continue as a believer to go on presenting yourself to the sin nature, do you know that you can still experience death as a consequence? That's a natural consequence of you presenting yourself to sin, whether you're a believer or an unbeliever.

Now we typically use this verse in evangelism, in gospel presentations. I still think it's a good verse to use for it, because it communicates the general principle. But in this context, we're talking about the *believer*, we're not talking about the unbeliever here. The primary interpretation is if you go on presenting yourself to the sin nature as a believer, you're going to experience death as a consequence. That may be in relationships, it's definitely to your relationship with God in terms of a fellowship aspect, but it's gonna result in a lot of things. It could result in jail time, I could have had jail time for driving drunk, I could have killed somebody, that would have been a consequence of presenting myself to sin, even as a believer.

*“The wages of sin is death,”* is a general principle which is true of either believer or unbeliever. And so he's writing in the context of a believer living life in victory over the power of sin, so primarily I believe he's referring to the natural consequence of death for sin in their life. Again, this can in no way refer to the ultimate, eternal death penalty in the lake of fire. Why? Because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for that. If Jesus paid the penalty, what penalty is left for you to pay?

See, sin is not even the issue anymore for a believer, as it relates to whether or not they have eternal life. Because we have a sin bearer, we have a substitute who paid the penalty for sin, so when he says the wages for sin is death for the believer, it's not that if you sin as a believer that you're gonna have to go to hell. No, your penalty has been paid. And if the penalty has been paid, and if God be for us, who can be against us? And if God justified us, who can bring a claim against us? We'll get to that in Romans chapter 8.

But I believe it refers to all of this that has been mentioned: damaged relationships, heartbreaks, tragedies, sorrow, addictions, with all their unpredictable and unintended negative consequences. Again, you get to choose your sin, but you don't get to choose your consequences. And you know, I think Paul's main point is none of these things just go away when you're a believer.

Have you ever noticed somebody on death row, and maybe they get saved or as they like to say, “I found religion in jail.” And then they make an appeal to a Christian governor and say, “Hey, I became a Christian in jail, reduce my death penalty to life in prison.” And I'm always like, “No! Why would they do that?” They committed a crime, there's a consequence. And a spiritually minded believer is gonna recognize that.

“I may not like the consequence, but you know what, I'm gonna take my medicine. I'm gonna take responsibility and accountability. You know why I'm going through this consequence? It's because

I presented myself to sin.” Or it might even be a consequence that you presented yourself to sin, presented yourself to sin, “Wow, I'm getting away with it! Okay, I'll keep presenting myself to sin.” and then you get nailed, and you realize that part of that is because of your choices, and you realize some of those consequences. That's what Paul is saying here, they don't just go away when a person becomes saved.

But again, this truth is also true of an unbeliever as it relates to the penalty of sin, and ultimate eternal death. We find that truth communicated all throughout the Old Testament, so it's not like this is where we get the concept, it's just a very succinct verse and people typically understand wages, it's something you earn, something you deserve, something you worked for or did something to earn or deserve.

And although Christ died for the sins of the world, every person must personally put their faith in Christ for His death to count in their place. If they don't, justice will indeed fall on them and they will pay this eternal penalty, and that's why we use this verse in evangelism. And we've got to all understand, and if you've never understood this before, you've got to understand that if God gave you what you deserved. If He gave you your wages of what you deserve, you deserve death. You deserve hell. You deserve the lake of fire. That's something that we all, hopefully, have come into an understanding of.

And that's what makes what the Savior did so incredible and so amazing. Because now God - because of what Jesus did - can give you something you don't deserve, that's called grace. And salvation is by grace, salvation is a free gift. You never earned it, you never will earn it, and so we can just trust in the finished work of Christ in our place as our substitute, and God says, “I'll save you, I'll give you eternal life, I'll forgive your sins.” I don't have to do anything to earn that, to merit that, to hold on to it. God is, in a sense, holding on to me. And so that really reflects this next phrase.

When you look at the scriptures, this is why the issue is the Son. Sin's not the issue anymore, the solution for sin's penalty has been taken care of, so it's not like we're where we need something else to take care of that. That's been done. Now the issue for every boy, and every girl, and every man, and every woman is simply this: will you trust in the work that Jesus did for you or not? That's the question, that's why in John 3:18 it says that the condemnation is gonna fall on those who don't believe. Belief is the issue; will you trust in Jesus and what He did for you?

But God's free gift marks off a huge contrast here. Again, if we all got what we deserved, we would all get hell. Additionally, if the believer presents his or herself to the sin nature, they will reap death and destruction, and deservedly so, this would be their wages. But if the believer presents his or herself to God, then they can reap eternal life, they can reap abundant life, they can live life the way God has designed them to live.

And so just in conclusion, I think I know the answer to this question, but I want to ask it to kind of generate thinking. Do you want to live a life pleasing to God and free from sin? If you say “no”, you might be in the wrong place today, there's probably a good restaurant you could be watching a football game at. But I hope those in this room would say “Yes! I want to live a life pleasing to God. I want to live a life free from sin.”

And so my follow-up question is: do you know that you died to sin, and you rose with Christ? Are you counting on that in your daily moment-by-moment walk with the Lord? Are you resting in that truth by faith so that God can practically free you from that in your life? Are you mentally and by faith presenting your members to the Lord? Your eyes, your tongue, your hands, your mouth, your members. Your body parts.

God wants to manifest this life through you, and you know what? The way you'll know whether or not, is if you're honest with yourself and you will see whom you're a slave to. Because the one you're



a slave to, that's the one whom you're going to obey. And so if we want to live a life pleasing and honoring to the Lord, my prayer is that we will take to heart what we find in Romans 6, because that's where our deliverance is found.



# CHAPTER 37

## We Are Dead to the Law

### Romans 7:1-4

Let's continue our study in the book of Romans, and to do so I want to give a visual. I don't know about you, I still read cartoons in the newspaper. I like pictures, I like visuals, sometimes words work out great too, but seeing the pictures really can put things into perspective.

We have been talking about this Lord of our salvation in the book of Romans, we've been talking about the whole concept of salvation. But remember this, when we talk about salvation, it comes in three different tenses, three different phases. If that's totally foreign to you this morning, just let me encourage you to focus on the first phase, okay? That is the salvation from the penalty of sin that we need in order to get to heaven, to have our sins forgiven.

The way to be saved is easy, in fact it's easier than most churches teach, it's easier than most religions teach, because it's a free gift, God's done all the work and all you have to do is receive the free gift, and you do that by faith. Jesus Christ paid it all. Now why is that important? Well, we see from the Bible, and this is what we've learned in the four and a half chapters of the book of Romans, is that man is sinful. That means that if you lined up each one of us against the holy law and holy standard of God, we would all fall short, that's what the Bible teaches, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Now you might say, "Well, that's okay. I'm in ICU, there's people next to me who are worse off than me. I mean, I sin, yes, I've made mistakes, yes." In fact, you know when you talk to people and you ask them if they've ever stolen anything, do you know the only time people steal is when they were three years old and they grabbed a cookie? That's the only time anyone's ever stolen anything, just so you know. That's what our society thinks in terms of stealing.

But we all know that we've stolen, we all know that we've lied, we all know that we've lusted or desired something that didn't belong to us, and we all know that we've been angry, or we've hated somebody, and the Bible calls that murder. So judged according to that standard, we fall way short of God's righteousness. And remember, the book of Romans was designed to show us systematically that you need righteousness, you don't have enough righteousness to get to heaven, and God provides righteousness in the gospel. That's the whole message of the first four and a half chapters of the book of Romans.

And so the moment you transfer your trust to the finished work of Jesus Christ who died in your place - that was the penalty you deserved - He rose again, He paid the penalty for your sins, there's no more penalty left to pay. Are you trusting in Jesus Christ or not, for your salvation? That's phase one of our salvation, and the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work, God declares you righteous.

The judge of the universe, the only One whose opinion matters, He says you're righteous. Not based on your righteous living or your promise to live better but based on the finished work of Jesus Christ and His righteousness, God can declare you righteous, it's a free gift, all you have to do is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. That's what the Bible teaches.

And so when we look at this concept of justification, we're looking at a one-time moment of faith, it's a transactional event. That's why God, when you put your faith in Christ, He can promise you in John 3:16 you'll never perish, and you have eternal life. If you presently possess something that lasts

forever, by definition can you ever lose it? No, because it lasts forever. And this is why God can make these promises because He's determined that whoever puts their faith in His son and His finished work get all of these benefits: eternal life, forgiveness of sins, you don't have to face a penalty, and you've now become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. You have a righteousness equal to God's righteousness, and God can justly and lovingly allow you into a heaven that you don't deserve, that you'll *never* deserve, that you can never *hope* to deserve, and that's called grace, that's a gift. And so that's a one-time moment of faith.

And by the way, this is a positional standing, it's something that cannot change. You are who you are in Jesus Christ, that can't change. But what we've been looking at here in Romans chapter 6 is the believer's walk. We're looking at salvation in the second tense. We've been saved, past tense, from the penalty of sins. What we're talking about is how you are saved daily, present tense, from the power of sin in your life.

Remember in Romans 6 we learned that the believer still maintains an indwelling source of sin called the "sin nature." If you don't remember that, do you remember the slime that was on the stage in previous sermons? That indwelling source of sin, that sin nature that desires to draw, and drag, and pull you away from God's best for you into sin in your life. And the reason that we commit acts of sin after we've gotten saved is because we're presenting ourselves to the sin nature to be its slave.

And as we present ourselves to sin, we become its slave and we begin to obey what the sin nature wants us to do. It begins to manifest in our mortal bodies, in our hands, and our feet, and our eyes, and our mouth, and our lips, and our tongue, and our tongue, and our tongue, and that's usually a lot of places that it manifests itself is the way that we talk to people, the way we talk about people, the way that we view things.

And so how do we grow? Unfortunately, growth is a process. I wish God could just download the latest version of sanctification on me while I'm sleeping. Just like I did with my iPhone last night, right? I downloaded the updates, and I wish God would do that, it'd be so much easier. But He requires in you and in me an ongoing walk of faith, faith rest, trust, dependence upon His truth and upon His power to live His life in and through us on a daily basis.

And so we need teaching from the Word of God, we need to know what the Word of God teaches, especially in Romans 6, that's the first word that we have there as it relates to our key to sanctification or being delivered from the power of sin. We need to reckon, and this isn't southern, "Well, I reckon I'll be there, I reckon I may not." It's not like that, it's like you're counting on this thing.

You're counting on God's method of deliverance, you're not counting on yourself to be more spiritual, you're not counting on your Bible reading, you're not counting on your prayers, you're not counting on all these things, and many of those are good things. You're counting on the Lord who *is* your salvation. You're counting on the Lord who identified you with Jesus Christ, took you into His death, took you into His burial with Him, and took you into His resurrection with Him.

That's the key to your Christian life, that's the key to salvation in this second tense. And as you count upon God's deliverance from the sin, you begin to present your members mindfully and by faith, presenting yourself to the Lord, no longer presenting yourself to the sin nature.

And then guess what we're gonna learn about in Romans 8? The Holy Spirit is indwelling you to actually empower you to live this life. God's not just telling you, "Here's the list of do's and don'ts, go figure it out, crank it out, get it done." He's saying, "Here's the Spirit of God, in you, who wants to live in and through you as you walk by faith." And that is our role.

And so whereas justification was a one-time moment of faith, sanctification is a moment-by-moment, ongoing walk of faith. And we saw that as we studied through the book of Romans. And that

is, are you counting yourself dead to sin and alive unto God, and are you presenting yourself to the Lord? Or are you not even aware and not counting upon God's provision for you, and do you continually day by day, moment by moment present yourself to sin? And we kind of fleshed all that out the last couple of weeks as to how that would look.

Hopefully as we walk by faith, and hopefully as we grow spiritually, this righteousness that we possess based on our faith, our one-time faith in Christ, hopefully becomes more and more consistently manifested in our daily life. That's the goal, that's spiritual growth, is that we would grow spiritually resting in the Lord's provision. And as we become an adult or spiritually mature, hopefully those two lines begin to intersect a little bit and not be so far apart.

And then ultimately, our third phase of salvation is glorification, when (praise the Lord!) we'll one day be delivered from the very presence of sin in our life. And that's the day that we look forward to, and we'll learn more about that in Romans chapter 8. But as we leave the sixth chapter and enter the seventh, I think this is important to understand, this quote from Alva McClain who's a Bible commentator captures it well. He says, *"In the sixth chapter of Romans, God gives us the right way to be sanctified and in the seventh chapter, He gives us the wrong way to be sanctified."* You know quite frankly, that's probably why many of us can relate to chapter 7 better than we can relate to chapter 6, because we've experienced this failure.

In fact, when you look at the entirety of Romans chapter 7, you're gonna see a chapter that reflects powerless sanctification. Powerless. You've got the right desires - we're gonna see from Paul - but we don't have the right understanding of the power that God has at our disposal to carry out these desires.

In fact, just having the right, correct internal desires to live a holy life, do you know that just having that's not enough? Believer, have you experienced that that's not enough? Just wanting to do the right thing, just wanting to stop doing the wrong thing. Has that worked for anybody? Just deny yourself, just stop it. Just knock it off, just stop sinning. How's that working out for us? It doesn't work too well.

But you know what, we've got the right internal desire, so what's the problem? In fact, I'll go one further, we're gonna see this in Romans 7, you've got the right internal desires *and* you've got the law of God, what's the problem? Why can't you do it? Why can't I do it? Well see, what you're gonna find in Romans chapter 7 is that sanctification by the law does not work. That's not God's method to give you the law and say, "Now do it. Keep it. Just stop not doing what you're supposed to be doing and start doing what you are supposed to be doing. Here's the law, you've got the right internal desires, so now just stop it. Do it. Get it done." That's not how it works.

And God's gonna take an entire chapter in Romans 7, and I think He's doing that because our natural tendency is to say, "I've got the right internal desires, I've got the law, that's enough, I can get it done." And that's how we try to live the Christian life. Paul and the Spirit of God who authored this chapter, is going to try to convince you otherwise in this chapter. Because what we're going to see in Romans 7 is the Apostle Paul, the epitome of what a Christian is in terms of one of the greatest examples of a Christian that we could find in history, and we're going to see that Paul was completely dominated by his sin nature. Because he was trying to live the Christian life by being sanctified by the law, and he's going to passionately try to implore you not to do it that way. And so we're gonna see that in Romans chapter 7.

Turn with me there to Romans 7:1 and let's read the first four verses. *"Or do you not know brethren, (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man she will be called an adulteress; but if her*

*husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.*” And let's just stop there for just a second.

So, what do we know, what is Paul talking about? Well, what we know is this: it's a general comment concerning law. Now, he's not talking about God's law yet, we're gonna get to that. But in verse 1 he's making a point to the believers in Rome, and they understand this concept, that laws in general only have dominion over you as long as a person lives. Romans 6 had a keyword, an often-repeated word, and it was the word “sin”. Singular, noun-form, articulated, *the sin*. That was the key word in Romans 6.

We're gonna see the key word in Romans 7 is the word “law.” He's gonna use it a couple of different ways, but in this case in verse 1 as we start, he's using a very general principle that he's gonna build upon. And so he asked them, “Don't you understand this? Don't you perceive that this is true, that what I'm about to say about the law's jurisdiction, it only applies to somebody while they're alive?”

And so simply put he says, “This law has a dominion over a person as long as he lives.” This word “dominion” means to *have or exercise rule or authority over*, and we know this. If you're involved in an HOA and you want to build a shed in your backyard, you're subject to the laws of the homeowner's association, you can't just rip off and do things. And I know you're in America and I know you're free, I get it, I'm with you on all the arguments. But you understand that if the HOA says, “Come and remove that or pay a penalty or fine.” you don't really want to go up against the HOA. You've got laws in the community, you've got civic laws, you can't speed, you can't go over the speed limit or you'll get pulled over. All of those things are true and you're only subject to those as long as you live.

Let's talk about this: if a man or a woman is alive, they're gonna have this law dictate some aspect of their daily life. But what about a bank robber who robs a bank, and in his desire to get away from the bank and get in his getaway car, let's say a police officer shoots him and he dies in the getaway. Are they going to take that bank robber and go through a long criminal trial to prove his innocence or guilt? Are they gonna take that bank robber and prop him up in the witness stand, and clean up his wound, and poke open his eyelids with toothpicks so that he looks like he's there, or does the law cease to have dominion over him once he's dead?

You see, we understand that. That's a general principle. Clearly, they're not going to go to court. We understand that the law only applies while you live. Now, he's going to go from that general principle, this general truth about law, and he's going to move it into a specific law, the law of marriage. That's what we're going to go into in verses 2 & 3.

So, what we see in verse 2 is that *“The woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.”* Okay, well this is pretty simple, right? That makes sense. So, he's gonna use this illustration of marriage, the woman's bound, meaning tied together, fastened together, and she's tied to him as long as he lives. Now when did this happen? Well, this happened the day of their wedding. And the verb tense in the Greek says, “It happened at a point in time, and it continues.” In other words, she remains bound to her husband as long as her husband's alive. He's using this now as a specific illustration.

But in contrast, what happens when he dies? She's free. She's free from the law of marriage. She doesn't have to take him to a taxidermist, stuff him up, embalm him, and then set him in the living room in a case for people to observe. That's not required of her. In fact, if she did that, we might want to invest in some mental health care for her. That would be a little odd to come into somebody's house and see a stuffed husband who had died. So, she's clearly freed from the law of marriage when her husband dies. If the husband dies - and hypothetically let's say he does. It's a third-class condition, if or

he doesn't, but let's say that he does - at that point in time, the wife's free, she's released from the law of her husband.

Now I'm gonna make a little bit of a big deal about this word here, because it's gonna come in, Paul is using this example to teach spiritual truth. And I think he purposely uses this word here, if you look in verse 2 it's the word "released", "*she is released from the law of her husband.*" If you go back to Romans 6:6, it's the same word that's translated in Romans 6:6 "be done away with." The word means *to render ineffective*; it means *to render inoperative*, it's the Greek word "*katargeo*", and as it relates to the law of marriage to her deceased husband, that law has been rendered ineffective, rendered inoperative, - and remember I used the phrase even in Romans 6 - "put out of business". In other words, she's no longer required to obey that law. Why? Because if death happened to her husband, she's been released, that law has been rendered ineffective for her.

Now why is that important? Well, if you jump down to verse 6 in Chapter 7 - sorry to jump ahead, a little spoiler alert on where we're going - he says, "*But now we have been delivered,*" - there's our word - "*from the law.*" So, he's going to take this example of marriage, that when a death happens, that law of marriage has been rendered inoperative, it's been put out of business, and in the same way, our death to the law has put the law's jurisdiction out of business in our life. See, that's the connection he's going to make. And I know that's a spoiler alert, so if you are lacking sleep and want to catch up on a nap, this would be a good time, because we're gonna look at that in more detail here in the next couple verses.

So, the wife's marriage to her husband is immediately rendered ineffective or useless the moment he dies. And you know, all of us can understand that example. "Yeah, that makes sense. If a spouse dies, they're free from that marriage, they're free to remarry." And that's what we're gonna see in verse 3. Not only are you free to remarry if your spouse dies, but if he *doesn't* die, this kind of stuff shouldn't be going on. There shouldn't be another relationship, you are not free to remarry if your spouse is still alive.

Look at verse 3, "*So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.*" So, in other words, she loses her husband, now is she free to remarry? Yes. If her husband's still alive, is she free to remarry? No, that would be against the law of marriage. In other words, in order to be free from the law of marriage, a death has to occur for one to be freed from the law of marriage. And so if she marries another man while her husband still lives, and hypothetically let's say that she did, this second marriage would be in clear violation of law. Common sense, he's just building a commonsense case. But in contrast to the previous example, this law-breaking remarriage, if the husband dies, she's free to remarry, period. Again, just common sense, he's building off of this example of marriage.

Now according to the law's demands, why would she be free? Because she's free from the law of marriage due to his death. Again, according to law's demands, this woman could not be called an adulteress because her husband has died. And again, why? Verse 1 tells us the law only has dominion over somebody as long as they live. So, if there's a death involved, the law no longer has jurisdiction.

And so finally here in verse 3, because the husband died, the woman is free to remarry another man because she has been released from that law. Okay, the simple part of the passage. We understand his point, in fact he makes it very clearly over, and over, and over again, we get it. Now I want you to read verse 4 with me, and I want you to try to individually look at verse 4 and see how he switches the example on us. Because he's going to say, "therefore", which means he's making an application from the truth that he just taught. But notice how he changes the illustration here, see if you can pick it up.

Let's read verse 4 and then we'll talk about it a little bit. He says this, *“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”* Did you see that subtle twist there? We'll come back to it; I just want to leave that there for you to think about it.

But I want to read what I think is a good illustration taken from a book called, *“The Normal Christian Life”* by Watchman Nee. This is how he describes the two husbands of Romans 7, he says, *“Notice there is only one woman, while there are two husbands. The woman is in a very difficult position, for she can only be the wife of one of the two, and unfortunately she is married to the less desirable one. The man to whom she is married is a good man; but the trouble lies here, that the husband and wife are totally unsuited to one another. He is a most particular man, accurate to a degree; she on the other hand is decidedly easy-going. With him all is definite and precise; with her all is casual and haphazard. He wants everything just so, while she takes things as they come. How could there be any happiness in such a home? And then that husband is so exacting. He is always making demands on his wife. And yet one cannot find fault with him, for as a husband he has a right to expect something of her; and besides, all his demands are perfectly legitimate. There is nothing wrong with the man and nothing wrong with his demands; the trouble is that he has the wrong kind of wife to carry them out. Thus the poor woman is in great distress. She is fully aware that she often makes mistakes but living with such a husband it seems as though everything she says and does is wrong! What hope is there for her?”*

And this is exactly how the law is. The law is perfect, the law is good, there's nothing wrong with the law, the demands of the law are not wrong, those are God's righteous demands. Nothing's wrong with that, the law is perfect at every point, it's black and white as it relates to right and wrong. You know what, though? The law is unable to assist fulfilling those demands.

And so in a marriage, the way this would look is the husband would say, “Honey, I wanted my eggs over-medium, and you did them over-hard. That was wrong, you cooked it wrong. You burnt the eggs.” He would say, “Honey, I came into the driveway and the car was parked crookedly.” Not trying to be harsh, just accurate, right? Just saying exactly what it is. “Honey, the kids have dirt behind their ears.” Just accurate, right? “Honey, you know the bed's not made right, the corner wasn't tucked in.” “Honey, yes, that dress makes you look fat.” Just brutal honesty, right? Now, no husband would ever do that, hopefully. But the law, because it's true, and perfect, and black and white, and it can only render an accurate verdict without even care, per se, of the feelings of another, that was the first husband. That's what's represented here in this passage.

And so Watchman goes on to say, *“If only she were married to that other Man, all would be well. He is no less exacting than her husband, but He helps much. She would fain marry Him, but her husband is still alive. What can she do? She is “bound by law to the husband” and unless he dies she cannot legitimately marry that other Man. The first husband's the Law; the second husband's Christ; you are the woman.”* - This is the shift in his illustration. It's not about a husband dying now, it's about your death with Christ. You died with Christ, and because you died, you're free to marry another. That's the shift in his illustration. *“The Lord Jesus requires just as much, yea more. But what He requires from us, He Himself carries out in us. The law makes demands and leaves us helpless to fulfill them; Christ makes demands, but He Himself fulfills in us the very demands He makes.”*

He's like the law husband, but in reverse. “Honey, you burnt the eggs, let me re-cook them for you.” “Honey, you parked the car crooked, let me have the keys, I'll go fix it for you, you sit down and rest.” “Honey, you didn't make the bed the right way, this was a little off here, let me remake it with you.” “Honey, the kids have dirt behind their ears, you sit down, let me go give them a bath and I'll scrub that down for you.” “And of course, you don't look fat in that dress, honey, I love the way you are. I accept you for who you are.”



See, this is the husband that we're married to. This is what Paul is trying to communicate in this passage. To bring the law into your Christian life is like stuffing your first husband, embalming him, and putting him in the living room between you and your new spouse. It's like taking him out of the box and cramming him in your bedroom at night. That would be most awkward, to say the least. And yet, that's what we do in our Christian life. Every time we go back to the law, every time we go back to sanctification through self-effort, we are rejecting our Second Husband that God has married us to, because we died with Christ and we were raised with Christ for that very purpose, to be married to Him, Christ risen.

What husband do you want? The guy that's pointing out all your faults and saying, "Get with it, get after it, do better, get it right." Or do you want the dream husband, Jesus Christ risen from the dead, who actually empowers you to do the things that He desires for you to do and He's there with you every step of the way? I know what I'd vote for. And so we go back to verse 4, let's just look at this a little more clearly. We used that illustration and I hope that was helpful here.

But again, notice this significant change. It's not, "your spouse has died." Please don't misunderstand, the law has not died. The law is still good, still perfect, it's the eternal Word of God. Nothing's going to change from the law, Jesus said not one jot or tittle will be changed from the law. We're not saying the law died, we're saying the law is still in existence, you just died to *it*. You're no longer married to the law, that's what this is saying. You've been crucified with Christ, you've been buried with Christ, you've been raised to newness of life with Christ. That marriage has been rendered inactive in your life, and now you're free to marry the risen Christ, and begin to live your life in a new way from this point forward.

And it just begs the question: again, who died? We want to see it from the text. Well in verses 2-3, the husband died and then the wife was free to remarry another man, that's how it normally works. In the application *you* died, the wife died to the first husband (the law), through the body of Christ, so that you are free to remarry another, and this is Christ risen from the dead.

And this is why we go through that whole section in Romans chapter 5 about our identity in Christ, and we see how important our identity in Christ is in Romans 6, because God took you out of Adam, placed you into Christ, you shared in His death, you shared in His burial, you shared in His resurrection. This is why all of this is so important because God was doing things behind the scenes, He was doing that for a reason. Romans 6 we saw the reason He did that is so He could free you from sin's dominion. Here we see that He did that because He can free you from the law's dominion in your life.

And by the way, if you go back to 1 Corinthians 15:56, what goes together? Sin and law. Because what does it say there? 1 Corinthians 15:56 says, "*The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.*" And you see, the law wants to work with your sin nature. We're going to see that as we continue into Romans 7. The only thing you as a believer can guarantee if you want to live your Christian life by the law, is that you will be arousing your sin nature to want to break it. Don't believe me? Wet paint: don't touch. What do you do? You touch it! I mean, that's what we do.

And so when you put yourself under law, "I'm gonna start waking up every day for an hour to read my Bible, and I'm gonna start spending an hour before I go to bed reading my Bible." and you start developing this legal principle of sanctification, and you're gonna find that when you get up to read your Bible, the snooze button is going to become even closer to your hand. You're not gonna be able to fulfill it. You're gonna find that as you want to pray or even stay awake in church, you won't be able to do it. As you pray, you're gonna be falling asleep, you're not going to keep the law. You're arousing the sin nature to want to break it. We'll look at that more closely as we go through Romans 7.

This is why understanding our relationship to the law is so key. God's design was not to give you new desires and the law and say, "Go have fun! You're gonna be sanctified." No, He wants you to trust in Him. The same way you got saved, you trusted in a finished work, now trust in the finished work of your co-crucifixion, your co-resurrection with Jesus Christ for your Christian life. That's walking by faith, that's trusting in God's provision for your Christian life.

So, the same law of marriage principle applies, death frees you from the law of marriage, but in this case it was your death with Christ that freed you from law-keeping. Now, let me just say this before I get off of this topic. Because I know what some people hear when this is taught, is that now we're teaching people they can live lawlessly. "Wait a minute, we're not under law?" That was kind of the concern back in Romans 6:14, *"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."*

"Whoa, wait a minute. So, you're saying we can live lawlessly?" No, let me tell you why this is a safe teaching. Because if we go back to Romans 4, we're dead to the law, but we're united to Christ. See, that last phrase makes it safe. You're not just dead to the law to live lawlessly, you're dead to the law and you're married to the risen Christ so that you might actually bear fruit unto God, that's what we're gonna see in verse 4. And so it's not saying "live lawlessly", but it's actually giving you and I the only chance we have on this earth to live a holy life in a very practical way, when we understand our relationship to the law.

See, as a believer, we need to understand this: your relationship to the sin nature has been forever changed, it no longer has automatic domination of your life like it did before you got saved, it doesn't have to. You can give it domination by presenting your members to it if you go on doing that in your life. If that's what you decide to do, you can put yourself back into slavery to the sin nature, but your relationship to sin has been completely changed.

What you also need to understand is your relationship to the law has been completely changed. "Have become dead" indicates a completed event that happened to you. When did you die to the law? Well, it's when you were crucified with Christ, it's the moment you put your faith in Christ. God took you into Christ and identified you with Him in His death. You have been - past-tense - crucified with Christ, and God completed this action when He identified you with Jesus. Notice that phrase in verse 4, it's *"through the body of Christ."*

And again, remember, death means separation. Anytime you see that in the scriptures, you should say, "Separated from what? What am I separated from? What is the separation?" And so in this case you've been separated or severed from the law, and its rule over you as a Christian. Many people are thinking, "Well how do you even live holy then? If we've been severed from the law and it's not over us anymore, how do we live holy?" Let me give you a sneak peek into Romans 8:4, and this answers the question for us. Verse 4: *"that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*

How is the righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us, is it by trying really hard to keep the law? No. In fact, we're gonna see in Romans 7 a man who tried really hard to keep the law. It doesn't work, it's a powerless sanctification. Because what Paul is missing in Romans 7, he picks up at the end of the chapter and it carries over into Romans 8. In fact, you'll not find one reference to the Holy Spirit in the entire chapter of Romans 7. What you're gonna find a lot of is, I, I, I, me, me, us, it's all him cranking it out, it's all him trying to do it on his own, and thus you're gonna see failure. You're gonna see failure of the utmost proportions, because a guy who knows what's right, wants to do what's right, can't do what's right. A guy who knows what's wrong, doesn't want to do what's wrong, but can't help but do wrong. You're gonna see that play out.

And so how is the righteous requirement fulfilled in the believer's life? Well part of it is understanding that we're no longer married to law, we're dead to the law. And it's not through a legalistic effort that we're made righteous. In fact, we're gonna see in Romans 7:4 that Paul uses two "that" words, or two purpose words. Let's go through and look at verse 4 again. He says, *"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ,"* - notice that first "that". Why did God go through this whole process of crucifying us with Christ and changing our relationship to the law? Well, that first "that", *"that you may be married to another."*

So that's His first purpose. Our death to the law was enacted upon us so that we might be married to the One who was raised from the dead, this better husband, who not only has high standards, but also gives us the empowerment to fulfill those high standards. That's why He did it, in order for you to remarry, that was the purpose. How did God do that? Again, He identified you and united you with the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Now why did He want you to have a new husband? Well, that's the second "that" in verse 4, let's look again. *"that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead,"* - notice that next "that" - *"that we should bear fruit to God."* So, what did God want to accomplish in this new marriage? He wanted to accomplish fruit bearing in your life. You know what that implies? That if you keep your stuffed old husband, the law, in your life, you're not going to bear fruit to God. And isn't that what we want to do in the Christian life? Do we want to go back to the old husband and not bear fruit to God, but really feel like we're accomplishing something because we're trusting in our ability to do all of these things? Or do we actually want to rest in God's provision for our sanctification? Do we want to enjoy our new relationship with this risen Christ that we're now married to? Well, clearly that's what we want to do.

Notice a couple of things though as we talk about fruit bearing, and this is just kind of some general principles on fruit bearing. And that is this: the Bible is really clear to make this distinction. You don't produce fruit; you simply bear fruit. The distinction is this: God is the production agent, and He produces in and through you, just like a branch just sits there and the fruit hangs off of the branch. But it doesn't hang there because the branch did something special other than stay connected to the tree.

In John 15 when Jesus talks about "abide in Me and you will bear much fruit", that's what He's talking about. It's a bearing of fruit, but never put pressure on yourself in the Christian life to produce fruit. You're not the production agent, you are the branch. Your role is to abide, that's a faith word. And as you abide and you enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ, fruit will flow up through the vine, in through your puny little branch, and before you know it, you're gonna have some apples hanging off the side of your branch. But you didn't produce them, you just simply get to bear that fruit.

And so you'll notice that distinction as we look through the scriptures. In fact, I've never walked by a fruit tree and heard the branches groaning and straining to produce fruit, they simply rest in the trunk, and the trunk provides all the nutrients, it comes right up through the trunk and into these branches to produce the fruit that the branches simply bare.

And so we see that in Romans 7:4, that we should bear fruit, not produce fruit. In fact, what kind of fruit are we trying to bear? Well tie in Galatians 5, hopefully we're trying to bear the fruit of the Spirit of God, which, notice too, whose fruit is it? It's the spirit of God's fruit, and we want to bear that fruit in our lives. We don't produce it, the Spirit of God produces it. Implied in this statement is that without this identification with Christ and His resurrection, this remarriage, we could not have borne acceptable fruit to God.

In other words, let's just take it a step back. If you want to live your Christian life based on legalistic do's and don'ts, you will not bear fruit to God. That's just what this passage is teaching. God specifically altered your relationship through your crucifixion with Christ, to the law, so that you could bear fruit. Implying that if you don't recognize that change, you don't accept that change, you don't adjust your thinking in that area, you won't bear fruit to God, because everything you are doing is based on a list of do's and don'ts, rather than a relationship with the risen Savior.

And see, this is why when we talk about walking by faith, hopefully it's not this nebulous, weird, mystical term, there's actually feet on this, like feet that you walk through life with. And it's all there in Romans 6 as we've been studying the mechanics behind all that, but here too, it's something else that we need to know.

Another thing that we need to talk about with bearing fruit, is this is the only position dead to the law from which one can bear fruit to God. We've got to understand that when Jesus says in John 15 "without Me, you can do nothing.", that's what He means. Nothing. Now can you go mow someone's lawn? Can you crank out a couple of good works, can you crank out a couple of religious things, can you give money? You can do "good things", but as it is evaluated one day at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ, is it going to be acceptable or not? And the only works that are going to be acceptable are the ones that are done empowered by the Spirit of God as you walk by faith while doing them. See, it has a whole lot more to do with your internal mindset and motivation than it does all your external actions, and yet many of us get very caught up in external actions.

But I think one of the things we've got to be convinced about - in fact, go back to Romans 6:4, another kind of outcome of our crucifixion, our position, our identification in Christ, in His death, and His burial, and His resurrection. Romans 6:4, *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* And then Romans 7:4, *"you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead"* - notice that purpose clause - *"that we should bear fruit to God."*

Why did God go through all this pain? Well, an effort, and struggle to identify us with Jesus Christ. For the most part, many people might think it's so that believers can ignore the fact that He did that. Because that's how we practically live our lives, we just ignore a lot of these truths. We're not resting in these truths, we're not thinking about these truths as we live on a daily basis, largely. We think about a whole lot of other things.

God went through all that effort so that you could see an impact in your Christian life. You could actually live a practically righteous life. You could actually experience victory over the power of sin. You can actually bear fruit that brings glory to God. Isn't that what we want? And so I would just challenge you to take these thoughts this week and begin to swirl them in your head, and begin to meditate on these things on a daily basis. And I would encourage you that as you do, you are walking by faith, and you'll begin to see God do work in and through you.

# CHAPTER 38

## Arousing the Sin Nature

### Romans 7:5-8

Today we're going to look at a really interesting concept that's taught here, because if you haven't seen it before, it may honestly shock you. And I hope the shock is the realization of how deceitful and wicked your sin nature is, this indwelling sin that we have, I hope that's what shocks you.

Last week we looked at a quote from a gentleman by the name of Alva McClain and he said this in the sixth chapter of Romans, "*God gives us the right way to be sanctified, and in the seventh chapter He gives us the wrong way to be sanctified.*" And many of us are familiar with the end of chapter 7 when Paul describes the frustration that only so many of us can understand completely, and that is the things I want to do I don't do, the things I want to stop doing, those are the very things that I do. So, this chapter has also been titled, many people have called it "powerless sanctification".

And so when we talk about the word "sanctification", we're talking about growing spiritually and learning how to be daily delivered from sin's power in our life. And that's an ongoing process as we walk moment by moment by faith in the provision that God has put in place for us for sin's power in our life, and we read about that and have studied that in Romans 6.

So, one of the things we learned last week is in Romans 6 we died to sin, we saw that very clearly in Romans 6. In fact, that's probably the key word in Romans 6 is "sin" singular, it's talking about the source of sin, sin nature, sin's power, indwelling sin, whatever you want to call that thing. It's "*the sin*" in the Greek, it's articulated with the word "the". But we died to sin, and last week we saw that there was something else we died to. Now this is God's doing, this is God's design, this is God's plan to free you from sin's power, and one of the things that we need to know in Romans 6 is that we died to sin. The other thing we need to know in Romans 7 is that you died to the law. That might be a new concept for some of us.

In fact, as we saw last week, it is interesting that as he's introducing this concept of law in verse 1, that general law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. Then he goes to the law of marriage, verses 2 and 3, and basically says, "If you're married, you don't get out of that marriage unless your spouse dies. That's the law of marriage, then you're free to marry another, and if your spouse doesn't die, then you're bound to that spouse."

But then he does a little twist in verse 4 - and we noticed it last week and hopefully brought that out, and that's still something swirling in your mind - your spouse didn't die spiritually, you died to it. Who were you married to, who was your first spouse? The law. But you died to the law for the intent purpose - now this is God's action as we saw in verse 4 - that you may be married to another. A death has to happen to free you from the law of marriage, and so God crucified you with Christ, He buried you with Christ, He raised you to newness of life with Christ for the intent purpose that you might be married to another. Who? The one who's raised from the dead, Jesus Christ raised from the dead. And why did He do that? Verse 4 goes on to tell us that we should bear fruit to God. That is how we bear acceptable fruit to God.

Now, many Christians decide that they're gonna live their life either ignorant of this truth, or not depending upon this truth. And then we try to crank out the Christian life in our own strength, working against the very thing that God has so delicately and intricately put in place, your new

relationship to the sin nature, your new relationship to the law. And here's the thing that we're going to realize today: indwelling sin and the law are inextricably tied or bound together. They go together.

Now this is going to show us how desperately wicked and deceptive your sin nature is, because it's going to take the holy law of God - there's nothing wrong with it at all, it's perfect, it's never going to change, it's God's holy law, everything is right about it - but your sin nature is gonna take that very good thing, and it's gonna use it as a jumping-off point or starting point for sin in your life. And this is why for the believer who thinks, "Well, I've got new desires." And you do, you've got a new nature, you want to do good, you want to do right, you want to stop doing bad, and the natural tendency that you're gonna gravitate toward is going after this legal principle that if I do this, and if I stop doing that, then God's gonna be pleased with me, and I'm gonna spiritually grow.

And God is saying, "Pump the brakes. Because just like you couldn't save yourself from the penalty of sin, you cannot save yourself from the power of sin. I *have* given you new desires, I *have* given you a new way to live, a new way to think, I *have* given you the desire to fulfill the law, but you're not going to do it by cranking it out in your own strength. You're not going to be doing it by keeping a list of do's and don'ts and thinking that all of your spiritual growth, and spiritual vitality, and spiritual life is going to be dependent upon you." Just like in justification, God wants you to take your focus off of yourself and He wants you to rest, and trust, and count upon what He has done to free you from sin's power, that's what we saw in Romans 6.

But what he's going to point out in Romans 7 is, "Now you've got new desires, and the natural tendency is to want to pick up the law of God, and it will result in failure, after failure, after failure." And yet, there's nothing wrong with the law of God. What's wrong is that by taking that up, you're presenting yourself to sin. That's what we're gonna look at today.

And so as we go to verse 5, we look at this whole concept of bearing rotten fruit. We came out of verse 4 and he tells us the whole reason that He went through this new positioning, if you will, this new relationship to the law, that you're dead to the law. The whole reason He did that is so that you would bear fruit to God. But notice what verse 5 says, "*For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.*"

And so in contrast to bearing fruit to God, as a result of this new marriage relationship, married to the one raised from the dead, our previous relationship - i.e. married to the law - only produced fruit to death. Now you're gonna see that phrase "in the flesh", he's gonna play that out a little bit more in Romans 8. But when he says, "when we were in the flesh", he's talking about when you were unsaved. No longer could anyone describe a believer as being in the flesh. Now, believers can walk according to the flesh, and that's the distinction we're gonna see in Romans 8, but you are no longer in the flesh, you've been removed from Adam, and you are now in Christ, that's an unchangeable position. And so when he says this, "when we were in the flesh", this is a way of saying "when we were in Adam." When we were so-and-so in Adam. When our identity was in Adam, and it's when you were always and only connected to the sin nature. The sin nature had automatic domination of you at every moment of every day, that was true of you before you got saved.

And so what we're gonna see here is that when you live from sin as the source, death is going to be the result. And isn't that what we just saw in Romans 6, that if you go on presenting your members to the sin nature, what's the result? It's death. Romans 6:23, which we use in evangelism, and I think it's an appropriate verse, but it's actually in the context of Christian spiritual growth. "*For the wages of sin is death,*" when you present yourself to sin and you commit acts of sin, the result, even in the Christian life, is going to be death. Now, not eternal death, we've gone through that before because once you're saved,

you're saved. But we're talking about a death-like existence, separation of relationships, destruction, corruption, all sorts of bad, negative consequences that result.

So, when this was true of us, what we're gonna see is this: the law, although good, does something. It's like if you're ever going to rob a house - and I wouldn't recommend that - but if you're ever gonna rob a house and the guard dog is sleeping, don't kick the guard dog. You know what I'm saying? Step over the guard dog, go a different way so as not to wake it up.

And what ends up happening as we see, is that the law, although good, if that's your basis for being spiritual and that's how you're gonna crank out the spiritual life, you're kicking the guard dog. You're arousing, you're waking up the sin nature inside of you to want to break it, and you do that every single time that you revert to law, and you don't trust in God's provision for power over sin. You actually give fuel to the fire; you actually give the enemy a way to step in there and accomplish the exact opposite of what you're trying to accomplish. And so we see this in verse 5.

So, when this was true of us, the results of life were flowing from this source, this sinful source. We see this idea that the sinful passions were aroused by the law, the sinful passions were woken up, if you want to say it, by the law. These passions, sinful passions, just simply mean those passions that are bad or desires which are evil and notice where they're at work at: they're at work in our human bodies. That means the sin nature still resides in you.

You know, once you get saved, I wish we had new human bodies. The moment I put my faith in Christ, I wish I had my glorified body, and I could just live my existence out on this earth with that glorified body, because sin would be completely removed, and I wouldn't have to deal with myself anymore. You know, that's the biggest problem in my life, is *me*. I get in *my* way; I trip over some *me*. That's my problem.

And so I wish I had a new body, but we see that we don't. You don't magically get a new body. I was joking with someone that it'd be great if you got saved and there was a halo over top of your head, and you got your new body, and you just looked different, you acted different, you behaved the right way, but it doesn't happen that way. You still have these neutral human bodies, and yet these sinful passions, this sin nature works in our members, inside the spot, this internal sin.

Now, notice what stirs up the sinful passions. This is what's crazy about the sin nature, it is so deceptive, it is so wicked that it's going to use something good and turn it into something evil. Now, it doesn't turn the law into evil, what it's going to do is it's going to use the law as a jumping-off point to do something evil. How does that work? Well, the law says, "Don't do this." And when the sin nature hears that, it wakes up and it says, "I want to do that." Stuff you never thought you wanted to do before, when you start putting yourself under law, the sin nature is gonna want to break it. That's what he's saying here.

So of course, that's not the key to the spiritual life. We're gonna see this concept taught over, and over, and over again in this passage. You're gonna see it down in verse 8 (which we'll cover today, so I won't read that), you're gonna see it in verse 11, "*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it, killed me.*" You're gonna see it down in verse 13, "*Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good,*" - what's he talking about? - "*so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.*"

See, sin is gonna use the law as a jumping-off point to lead you into acts of sin. You see how deceptively wicked that source that's dwelling inside of you is? When we talk about living from the source that is the life of Christ and we say, "Don't present your members to sin for a second." Do you see why that's so important? Because that thing is so deceptively wicked, you could even be going *religiously* after the law, and *religiously* trying to grow spiritually, and that sin nature is gonna use the very

thing that you're chasing and trying so hard to do, and it's gonna use it against you to fail, to break down, to mess everything up, to actually become more sinful than if you'll just learn to walk by faith in God's provision for sin's power in your life. This is what's crazy about this thing.

I like what one commentator said: "The law can never conquer my passion; it can only arouse my passions." It can only do the exact opposite of what many of us think it's there for, it's to curb and control passions, and we'll look further at this as we go forward in this passage. Notice again, the law rouses or incites the sinful nature to want to break it. We joke all the time, but the easiest illustration of that is: wet paint, don't touch. And you know, if they would have just left the sign off of there, no one would touch the dumb thing! But when they put the sign on there, everyone wants to touch it. The fact that the law is there is what incites you to want to break it. If I told you that we painted that wall in the back, don't touch it, many of you would try to touch it when no one was looking! But if not, you're just gonna walk through the doors and leave, you're not gonna pay attention. But the law is what stirs it up, the law is what stirs up that desire to break it.

1 Corinthians 15:56 tells us that the law and the sin nature are inextricably combined to one another. The sin nature jumps on to the law and uses it for improper reasons, and we see this in 1 Corinthians 15:56, the same concept communicated here when he says, "*The sting of death is sin,*" - and then notice that next phrase - "*and the strength of sin is the law.*" The strength and it's *the* sin there, it's talking about your sin nature, the strength of your sin nature is the law. So, do you want to pump up your sin nature and get it strong, and healthy? Then put yourself under law, you'll strengthen sin that way. That's what it's talking about here.

That's not the design to be sanctified, that is not God's plan for you to grow in holiness and righteousness, and yet it sounds so spiritual, doesn't it? Because what could be wrong with the law of God? That's the point: there's nothing wrong with the law of God, there's something wrong with you and your ability to keep it. And so God has devised a totally different way to produce righteousness and holiness in your daily life, and it's through the work that He did crucifying you with Christ, burying you with Christ, and raising you to newness of life with Christ. And the question is: are you counting upon that in your daily life, and are you presenting your members to the Lord as those alive from the dead? That's the question, that's God's provision for that, not law keeping.

And you know what's really sad is that these sinful passions, verse 5 tells us, are productive, they produce. They're not just lazy, falling down on the job, they are actively producing, and if you will present yourself to sin, this is what's going to happen. It will produce, it's going to bear fruit to death, and that's what you're gonna experience in your life: broken relationships, all sorts of stressed-out anxiety, all sorts of sinful desires, all sorts of things that you thought you had under control just pop up in your mind. The things that you want to stop doing, you're not going to be able to stop doing, and then when you do them, you're gonna feel guilty because you knew you shouldn't have done it in the first place, but you still do it, right? Can I get an "amen" there? I mean is that how life goes sometimes? That's exactly how life goes sometimes.

And you know what we do to solve it? "Well, I should be reading my Bible more. Oh, I only read it for an hour, I should read it for an hour and 30 minutes now." And what you have done is put yourself under a legal principle. It's like trying to blow out a fire. Has anybody ever tried to blow out a fire? What typically happens? You stoke it a little bit more! That's how you stoke a fire.

And so when you think the solution to spirituality is, "I've got to read my Bible 30 minutes more", you're putting yourself under legal principle, you're feeding right into the enemy's hands. "Oh, I should pray 15 minutes more." You're putting yourself right into the enemy's hands. Deliverance from sin doesn't come by praying more, reading your Bible more, or going to church more. Those are all good



things, don't get me wrong, I'm not putting them down. Your solution to sin's power are not those things, it's what God has done in your co-crucifixion with Christ when He buried you with Christ, and He raised you to newness of life. That is where your deliverance is, that's the only means by which you can be delivered from sin's power.

And in Romans 6:6 he talks about putting sin out of business, and isn't that what we're after? We're after the source being put out of business. We want to begin to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead. And so the sin nature is always trying to bury us under law.

This is why law-based Christianity cannot produce the desired outcome of holiness or fellowship with God. And this is why it was necessary for God to do what He did by crucifying you with Christ so that you died to the law. See, He's not just making stuff up here, this was necessary. This is necessary for your spiritual growth. Do you want to live your life at the end of Romans 7 where you can just say, "Amen!" to Paul? I want to one day look at Romans 7:13-25 and I want to say, "I used to be able to relate to that, but now I'm walking by faith." I don't want to read that every time and go, "Amen, that was me this week. Amen, that was me yesterday. Amen, that's how I'm feeling right now." I want to know what victory looks like. How about you?

See, victory is in your grasp. You've got the resources for victory, the question is will you trust in God's method, or are you gonna come up with your own method? That's the question, that's what's before us here. Do we believe what God says in His word, or do we just like to show up and read it once in a while? Do we actually believe that there's an engagement, a response needed? Trusting God, believing God, resting our very lives upon the Word of God and what He says here, believing that if this is His method, I want no other method. Get all the other methods out of my face, they're distracting, I want Jesus. Give me Jesus, give me Him alone, give me His Word alone. That's what I want, and I know that's what you want.

And we come to the Word of God, and we see what God has done, He's gone through great efforts, and this is what we're trying to communicate here. Why on earth would we play to the strengths of our enemy? The strength of sin is the law. Why would we go about living our Christian life that way, believing that spiritual disciplines or leading out every sentence with "obey" - and not realizing that obey is a result of whether or not we're walking by faith and presenting our members to God, resting in the provision that God has made for sin's power - is the answer? Why on earth would we live our Christian life that way?

I don't know the answer to that. I think that we need to be reminded of the truth, and I think we need to be encouraged to rest in the truth, and I think that when somebody does encourage you to rest in the truth, don't get mad at them because they're correcting you. The Word of God is largely corrective, and largely involves rebuke. Because we naturally think, "I must do *this* to accomplish *this*." And God says, "No, no. You're saved by grace from the penalty of sin, and you're also saved by grace from the power of sin." We need that reminder, and that's probably why we slip in and out of that.

Let's go to verse 6. We see that, "*we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*" So, in stark contrast to our old position in the flesh - again, that's describing our experience as an unbeliever - we've been delivered from the law. Why? So that we can serve acceptably.

See, this is the other thing we don't understand, and I've heard Christians actually say this, "Well yeah, I understand what you're saying, but I think the law is safe. I think if I just live under law, that's probably the safest place to be. It's not the safest place to be! That's the only attitude that can guarantee failure in your Christian life. It's not safe, it's a wicked place to be, it's a sinful place to be. Now is there anything wrong with the law? No, nothing's wrong with the law.

But we've got to understand the wiles of the devil, we've got to understand what the devil's strategies are, and he's got a sin nature indwelling you that wants to use the law as a starting point to sin. So why on earth would we put that into the hands of our enemies?

He says that we've been delivered from the law. This word "delivered" we've seen in Romans; we saw it in Romans 6:6. It's the word used in Romans 6:6 to describe how the body of sin or the sin nature has been rendered idle or inoperative in our lives. The word means *to render inactive, to render useless, to render ineffective*. This is where we said in Romans 6:6 that he's put it out of business. And you know how the sin nature still remains in business? Do you know the only way the sin nature remains in business in the believer's life? You know, flip the "open" sign on in the morning, lift up the gate to the facility and open the doors. You know the only reason the sin nature stays in business is when you as a believer present yourself to it. When you present your body to the sin nature, that's how it stays open for business.

See, God's put it out of business. We're keeping it in business by putting, and resting, and presenting, and being near to the sin nature to accomplish what it wants to in our lives. But it's been put out of business. And in the same way, the law has been put out of business as it relates to producing practical holiness in our life. How are we delivered from the law? How are we put out of business to the law? Via our death with Christ to it. Are you starting to see a theme in Romans 6 and 7 that's very important? And that is, not only did Christ die for us, but we died with Christ. That's an important thing, and we've got to get that truth, because this is the key to our new relationship to sin and the law.

The law here is personified as holding us, we see that in verse 6, "*having died to what we were held by.*" And this word "hold" means *to hold fast, to retain, to hold down, to quash, to suppress*, and this is how the law is personified here. We know from justification it could not produce the law, could not produce a positional righteous standing. Keeping the law never gets anyone saved. That is the lie of religion that has been permeated throughout the centuries, that in some way if you keep a list of do's and don'ts, you will please God and thus be acceptable to Him, and thus earn your way to heaven.

There is nobody that's ever lived that's ever gonna earn their way to heaven by doing enough good works. I don't care if they've got the name "Saint" next to them or not, even those people don't have enough good works, nobody can keep the law to get a positional righteousness before God. Because the moment they sin - or even the moment they're born because they've got a sin nature, let's start all the way back there - their water cup is poisoned. They don't have a chance to produce the perfect righteousness needed to get to heaven. But you know what? The law can't produce a practical righteous lifestyle either for the believer. We've got to understand this. This is one reason God has delivered us from it, is to put it out of business so that we can actually live a life that glorifies and pleases Him.

We just came out of this illustration of marriage; we're married to the risen Christ. This is what God has undertaken to do, to change our relationship to the law and to basically unite us to Jesus Christ, the one risen from the dead. And so we have been rendered inoperative, put out of business as it relates to law keeping, for practical holiness. So, if God has put that method out of business, why do we keep going back to the well? Why do we keep going back to the very thing that God has put out of business that He wants inoperative in our life? Why do we do that?

It'd be like in a marriage relationship if your first spouse died - and like we joked last week, obviously people don't do this - you wouldn't stuff your first spouse. You wouldn't embalm them; you wouldn't bring them into the living room and put them in their favorite chair still. Nor would you take them out of that box at night and put them in the bedroom with you in between you and your new spouse. That's just not something we do. That is not an illustration that even remotely makes sense in

any part of the world, that would not happen, and yet in spiritual growth that's exactly what we do. We take the old husband - the law - and we try to bring that and associate that in our new relationship with Christ.

I remember what it meant to get married to Carrie. We didn't have Facebook, and Twitter, and Snapchat, and Instagram, and I'm probably missing the newest and coolest thing, but we didn't have all of that then. But I can tell you what, if I had that then and I got married to Carrie, guess who would be getting unfriended (if they were my friends)? Any old girlfriends. They're off the list! I'm not calling them and checking to see how their day went, I'm not even calling them to see how I can pray for them. My relationship to them is dead. Why? Because I'm married to Carrie.

So, I wouldn't bring old girlfriends into the relationship, I wouldn't be checking on them, I wouldn't be sending them emails, I wouldn't be connecting with them on Facebook. Why? I'm married to Carrie. All my relationships before, I'm dead to those relationships. Now it doesn't mean that all those girlfriends are dead, it means I'm dead to them. And I say "all" like there were so many and there really weren't.

Again, the law is not rendered inoperative or destroyed, notice that we've been rendered inoperative to *it*. We've been put out of business to *it*. We are no longer designed to function in that way to produce practical holiness in our life. As this picture on the screen showed us, the bridge is out. There's a new way that God wants you to walk. In fact, we see that at the end of verse 6, "*that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*"

So, if the bridge is out and God's got a new way, why do we keep going down the road where the bridge is out? Would you do that in real life? Drive down and go, "Oh man, it's out, I guess we'll have to turn around and go." No, of course you wouldn't.

In fact, this is an interesting picture because this is somewhere where the bridge is out. You can see it's been turned sideways, and you can see little kids, and women, and dads with their little kids. And I think it was taken in Malaysia or Indonesia - I meant to look at that again, I don't know for sure - but this is their only way to school in the morning. They've gotta cross over this broken bridge. And you know, I hope that's a lasting visual for you and me as to how, many times, we live our Christian life. That's how we're trying to walk spiritually.

God's got a whole different road, a whole different method, and yet many of us are climbing, holding on for our lives, thinking that if we can just obey the law the *next* time we'll start growing spiritually. And that deceptive carrot just keeps an arm's-length out that we can't quite reach, and that's because God has changed your relationship to law, so you won't keep going back to this broken bridge, He's got a totally new way.

So, we've got two service options we pick up in verse 6, we can serve in the newness of the Spirit, or we can serve in the oldness of the letter. It's your choice, God's a gentleman, He's gonna let you make your decision as a believer, but He's gonna strongly exhort you, "Don't choose to serve in the oldness of the letter, that will just result in failure."

God has a totally new way to produce a holy and acceptable life in your daily living. He's got a totally new way; we've been looking at that in Romans 6. But the believer does have two options, one is via the law, which by the way, contradicts and ignores who God wants us to do business with, which only leads to fruit unto death.

So, God says, "I don't want you doing business with the sin nature anymore, I've put that out of business. I no longer want you doing business with the law, because this little rascal over here is gonna use that against you. And so I want you to do business with Me. The way that I took care of sin's power by crucifying you with Christ, I want you to start resting, and trusting, and walking by faith in

that truth, and then I want you to immediately present your bodies to Me by faith. That's how I want you to walk." And yet so many times in our Christian life, we just ignore, we just contradict.

I love hearing stories of the old days, like when you could send your little kid down the road to a grocery store to pick up some groceries, and not even worry about their safety. I mean we hear those stories now it's like that could never have happened, that's just Fantasyland, right? But I remember I'd hear these stories, especially those in my grandparents' age, where their mom and dad would give them a dollar, and a dollar went a lot further then, and they could buy eggs, milk, butter, and they had a whole grocery list. They'd send an eight-year-old kid down there to buy the things in the store.

But what if those parents said, "Here's a dollar. I don't want you to go to Jones's Grocery Store anymore, I want you to go to Smith's Grocery Store." And what if that little kid just said, "Ah, they're both the same. I'll just go down to Jones's." Of course, they wouldn't do that! Well, some kids might, but most kids would understand that there was a reason that their father, their parents said specifically, "Don't go to that store, go to this store."

And yet in the area of spiritual life, God has put a couple of people out of business and yet we keep them in business. We keep them in business because we continue to present ourselves to sin, and then when we fail, we think, "Oh, I better start ramping it up on this do's and don'ts list so I can control sin." And we don't even know that that's the exact thing that's arousing sin to want to break it even more.

Our second option is we can serve via the indwelling Holy Spirit. Which, by the way, coincides with our new identity, it's in conjunction with our new position in Christ. And when we do that and we walk by faith, and the Spirit of God is the one empowering us to live the Christian life - which we'll read about in Romans 8 - then we can bear acceptable fruit to God. And we start to see that the Christian life is not so much about externals, but it's about source. What source are you living your life from? Are you mindful of what source that you're living your life from? You know, both of these service options are viable, but only one is acceptable. One's a new way, a fresh way, one's an outdated way. And so the question before us is: how are we gonna serve the Lord? Are we gonna recognize what He's done and what He's made true for each one of us, or are we gonna go about doing our own thing just like we've always done?

Now Paul has used this strategy a couple of times in the book of Romans, but as we get to verse 7, you're gonna see this transition. He's going to transition with a question, because he's anticipating a question that maybe many of you have, or many of you might have thought as we were studying through those two verses, and that is this: if the inclination to sin comes from the law, then is the law sinful? If sin is taking advantage of the law, then is the law bad, should we just do away with the law?

See, that's the question that he anticipates, and he answers really clearly, "No, may it never be!" There's nothing wrong with the law of God. There's nothing sinful about the law of God. The problem is the sin nature, that's the issue, and the way it misuses and misabuses the law.

So, in verse 7 he says this, "*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'*" And so as mentioned, Paul anticipates this question and what he's saying is if the law arouses the sinful passions within us, isn't the law also sinful too? And he could not have agreed with it any more strongly in the Greek language than what he did "*me genoito*" may it never be, may it never even enter your lips is what he's saying there.

That's not what he's saying at all. The law is good, he's gonna go on and really describe that as we go through Romans 7. The law is good, the law is holy, the law is spiritual, there's nothing wrong

with the law. What's wrong with the whole situation is that your sin nature is gonna capitalize and misuse the law, hence God's reason for delivering us from it. And so that's what we're gonna look at.

The law brings this knowledge of the sin. He says in verse 7 that he would not have known sin except through the law, and again, it's articulated. He would not have known *the* sin, that there was a sin nature there, unless the law had shown that to him. Again, he's speaking of sin's source here, not a specific act of sin. He dealt with that back in the first 3 chapters of Romans, this whole concept of the law revealing acts of sin, how we knew something was exceedingly sinful because the law said it was. Here he's speaking more about the nature, the indwelling source of sin. So even the law gives us an understanding that there's an indwelling source. How do we know that? Because every law that's presented, we want to break it. There's something internal. Even though we've got these new desires, we've also got something else inside that wants to break it, that wants to disobey it, if you will.

The law not only speaks against detailed out workings of the sin nature, acts of sin, but also reveals or exposes that a sin nature exists. And so in other words, the law clearly defined acts of sin. We see that: don't steal, don't lie, don't commit adultery, etc. But Paul also gained the knowledge from the law that something inside of him, something was drawing him to want to break God's revealed will as it relates to holiness, as it relates to righteousness. And then he goes on in verse 7 to give us a specific example of the law of covetousness. He gives a specific sin, a specific law that he read, and he realized something inside of him wanted to break it, and that's what he's talking about here when he relates this specific sin or specific act of sin called covetousness.

Then we move to verse 8, *"But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead."* Notice again, that whole concept that we've been talking about is that sin, the sin nature, does what? It takes opportunity. How does it take opportunity? Well, it takes opportunity by the commandment. This word "taking opportunity" means *to seize upon an opportunity*. It can also mean *to create a starting point*.

I can't communicate this clearly or repetitiously enough, so if you've already heard this, great! For those of you that are like me and need 7 times to hear something before you remember it, I don't know if I'm up to 7 yet, but I'm working my way there. Your sin nature is so deceptively wicked and evil that it uses something good like the law of God to create a starting point in your thinking to want to break it. This is why God has taken great pains to deliver us from the law. It's not that the law is bad, it's just that the sin nature, which is still present, has this natural inclination to try to use the law - something good - as a starting point to lead you to commit acts of sin. This is what we're seeing here in this passage.

The sin nature literally uses the law as an opportunity or a starting point to cause in us evil and sinful desires. We've got to recognize that this is aggressive, the sin nature's aggressive, it's productive, it wants to accomplish things. In fact, we see even from this passage that it carries out its desires to the full. The sin nature is anti-God, it's rebellious, it's a hundred percent self-focused, and it's going to use the law as a jumping off point to lead people into sin.

This is why legalism is so dangerous, this is why legalism is not neutral, this is why legalism is not safe. Don't buy into that. If you're in a setting where people are just dropping rule after rule, after rule to be spiritual, you are setting that person up to fail. That is not safe. The safest place is to bear with people, to be patient with people, to teach them the truth of what God has done in provision for their sin nature, and to begin to teach them and model for them how to walk by means of the Spirit of God. Because guess what the Spirit of God does according to Romans 8:4? He produces the righteousness requirements of the law *in us*. The Spirit of God does.

See, we don't need the law, we've got an indwelling Spirit of God that as we walk in dependence upon Him, He actually produces righteous and holy living in and through us. And it's not by means of you checking off your list, it's because you're learning to walk by faith in the Spirit of God, who's producing the life of Christ in you. That's His goal.

The sin "*produced in me all manner of evil desire.*" The word "produced" is a compound word in Greek with an intensive preposition on the front. When you put it together it means *to carry out a task until it's finished*. See, sin is aggressive. It doesn't do a half-hearted job; it is trying to destroy you. It's not gonna say, "Aw yeah, I just got him to get a little bit angry in his mind." No, sin wants to take it all the way through. Do you know what the end result of anger is? This is why Jesus says in Matthew 5 that if you are angry with a brother or you hate somebody that God considers you a murderer, because if you let anger go to its natural course, it will result in murder. That's what the sin nature wants to accomplish in your life.

Some people just say, "Oh yeah, I get angry once in a while, but that's just how I am." Garbage! You're presenting yourself to sin, and if you keep doing that, the end result one day could be murder. And you say, "Aw, not me." Go ask any murderer that sits in the penitentiary, they probably said that about themselves one time. "Oh, not me. Never." You put yourself in the right circumstances and sin wants to accomplish the tasks that it's setting forth, and it is destruction of your life, it is fruit that leads to death. That's what it's trying to produce in you, and it's aggressive, and it's active, and it's using the perfect law of God as a starting point to do it. Wow! That thing is deceptive, and evil, and wicked. It's using it as a starting point to lead people into acts of sin.

You know, when you don't take advantage of God's provision for sin's power in your life, you will naturally gravitate to a legalistic, law-keeping version of spirituality, that's just going to be natural. Because if you're not resting in God's provision for sin, you are constantly in a state of presentation to the sin nature. And so you're gonna gravitate toward the law, you're gonna gravitate toward legalistic thinking, you're gonna have a bad day and you're gonna immediately think, "Well, it's because I haven't been to church two Sundays in a row. I better get back to church so my life can get back on track."

Don't get me wrong, we love having you at church, but that in and of itself is not going to get your life back on track. It is going to be taking the truth that you understand in the Word of God, and then on Monday afternoon, resting in that truth, walking by faith in that truth, allowing the Lord to deliver you from sin's power, not just sitting in a chair at Grace Community Fellowship. I don't read that in Romans 6, that's not your deliverance from sin. It's knowing the truth that's here, and it's resting, and trusting, and depending upon that truth when the going gets tough, in the exact moment that you need to walk by means of the Spirit. Again, we don't want to live that way, we don't want to play into the hand of our enemy.

I love this cartoon, you'll read the law here. The sign says, "Absolutely no machete juggling." And the husband turns to his wife and says, "Suddenly I have an urge to juggle machetes." That is a great illustration of the sin nature using the law as a starting point. You'll see here, "No unicycles beyond this point." The husband turns to his wife, "You know, up until now I never had the urge to ride a unicycle." And it just illustrates this point of what the law does.

There's an old story about a train that used to travel, this was in the days where many people in the Old West used to chew tobacco and spit their tobacco. It was a beautiful train and they set up this sign, "No spitting tobacco juice in the train." And it only took one trip down the road and what did that train car look like? Full of tobacco juice. And so they put up more signs, and the train was still full of tobacco juice. And finally, one day they cleaned it out and said, "Let's just take down the signs." And

you know what? The train was clean. That's a true story. There's something inherent about law that makes us want to break it.

This picture says, "I don't always touch wet paint, but when I do, it's because I saw the wet paint sign." There's something inherent about seeing a law that makes you want to break it. We see a lot of these in our day, "Don't get mad, get Glad." Or the big summary, "Stop sinning. Just knock it off. Just stop it."

It's probably good for me to say this at this point, because I am NOT against all the Christian conduct commands in Scripture, which you see in the New Testament, don't lie, don't let corrupt communication come out of your mouth. I realize those are there, but you also realize and understand that the one who wrote that also understood the truths that we're studying as the foundation for fulfilling those commands and living those out. Those were not designed to be a law for you to crank out and keep, and "Don't get angry." "Okay, I'm gonna count to 10 and then I'm gonna take 10 deep breaths, and then I'm not gonna be angry." That's not the solution to anger.

He's not saying, "Don't be angry, and the way you do that is count to 10, and take 10 deep breaths, and then come back to the situation." Or "Think of lollipops and flowers, and then you won't be angry." No, I think if he gave the whole teaching "don't be angry", it's gonna be "Rest in what happened in Romans 6, what's described there. Will you start counting yourself dead to sin and alive unto God? And instead of presenting your emotions to the sin nature, will you go on and present your emotions to God? Will you present your lips to God so that you don't haul off and say something that you're gonna regret because you're angry?" That's the basis for all the Christian conduct commands in the scriptures, not just "Quit sinning, knock it off, crank it out, do the best you can." Everything we're looking at in Romans 6 and 7 is the foundation for all those Christian conduct commands.

So, let's finish here, verse 8. He says this, "*For apart from the law sin was dead.*" Paul describes sin nature being dead when the law is not in the picture. What does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist, it just means it's dormant, it's inactive. If you're not putting up a law, there's not going to be this desire to break it, per se. Now sin still exists, right? We looked at that in Romans 5, everyone died from Adam to Moses, even when there wasn't law. And so sin still took place, but you know what happens, is there's not a defined starting point. The second you introduce law, you introduce a defined starting point for sin to want to break it. There's something about the law that stirs up and gives opportunity to the sin nature to jump on and produce evil desires.

As we close today, do you recognize - and I hope you do, and I hope you're encouraged by this - God has gone through great lengths and great efforts to change who you're doing business with? He's put you in an incredible position with an unlimited amount of resources so that you don't have to do business with the sin nature anymore, and you don't have to do business with the law as it relates to practical holiness. He's got a whole new way designed for you to experience practical holiness and victory over sin's power in your life.

See, we keep sin in business by presenting ourselves to it, and we keep the law in business by trying to keep it and grow in holiness. We go back to that well, we go back down that road that God says, "The bridge is out, don't go back down there. There's nothing there for you."

And then he says in Romans 8:4, as a conclusion - well, that last phrase in 8:3 - "*He condemned sin in the flesh,*" He condemned our sin nature in the flesh. One day we'll be completely removed from that. But in verse 4 he says why: "*that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.*" Does God want to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in you? Yes. But He doesn't want you to do it by trying to keep the law, He wants to accomplish it as you walk by means of the Spirit of God.





# CHAPTER 39

## Sin Is Exposed

### Romans 7:9-13

Join me in the book of Romans chapter 7, we'll pick up our study there. We jumped out of it last week, and so just in terms of a reminder and a review of where we're at - I've shared this quote a couple of times as it relates to the seventh chapter of Romans, which is where we're gonna find ourselves today - Alva McClain says it well, he's a commentator, and he said, *"In the sixth chapter of Romans God gives us the right way to be sanctified, and in the seventh chapter He gives us the wrong way to be sanctified."*

And one of the things that we want to make sure that we communicate today, along with Paul, is anytime you start teaching through the first part of Romans 7, what it appears that is being said is that the law is bad, that God's law or God's Word is faulty, that there's something wrong with God's law, and we're here to say unequivocally that that's not the case. There's nothing wrong with God's law. God's law is holy, God's law is just, God's law is good and we're gonna read that today.

But we have to say this, that God's law was never designed to be given to you as a means by which you would be sanctified. In other words, it's not designed to give you a standard by which you become more holy. Now that's a foreign concept to many people, but does God want to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in our lives? You better believe it! He just doesn't want us to crank it out in our own efforts, trying to keep the law. There's something that's working against us if that's our approach to the Christian life.

And so before we hop into Romans 7, let me read Romans 8:4, because this is where we're going. Romans 8:4 says, *"That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit."* So, does God want the believer to live righteously? Yes, unequivocally yes. The problem is many of us don't take up His method to live righteously. We try to do it in our own strength, we do what comes natural to us, we've got new desires and so we want to take the law of God and start to crank out success in the Christian life, and it doesn't work that way.

In fact, he's gone through great pains in Romans chapter 6 and 7 to give us the mechanics behind the Christian life, and that is this: you died to the sin nature so that you wouldn't have to be its slave anymore, so that you would be free from its dictates, so you need to start counting on your death with Christ to sin, *the* sin, we're not talking about acts of sin, we're talking about the source of sin. You died to the source, so it no longer has this automatic domination of your life, but you have to, by faith, count on God's work for you on that behalf, His provision for sin's power in your life, and then you need to stop presenting your body to the sin nature to carry out its lust and desires, and you need to start presenting yourself to God. Those are both faith words, we're trusting and resting in God's provision. But you died to sin, we need to know that from Romans 6.

Romans 7 began to teach us you died to the law. And what Paul has been explaining in these first few verses that we're looking at in Romans 7 is why that was necessary. Here's what we learned a couple of weeks ago when we started this: your sin nature is so deceptively wicked, so deceptively evil - did I mention it's deceptive? I'll probably mention that a couple more times - it's deceptive because it's going to take the holy law of God and it's going to use the very thing that expresses God's holiness, and character, and righteous standard in the perfect way that only the Word of God can, it's going to take that very thing and use it against you if you try to get sanctified by the law. The sin nature is going to do that.

In fact, we saw last week when we studied that it's the law that arouses the sin nature, pokes it with a sharp stick, right? "Wet paint, don't touch." All of a sudden, I want to touch it, right? Remember that cartoon, "Don't juggle machetes on this corner." All of a sudden, I want to juggle machetes, right? That's what the law does. The law is not wrong, the sin nature just uses it to take advantage of it, misuse it, and use it as a starting point to accomplish its end and goal. And what is the sin nature's end goal for you in the Christian life? Lack of fellowship with God, death. Because the wages of sin is death, even for the believer. Death like existence, death like experience.

If you are a Christian and you're walking around in this life feeling miserable, you've got no joy, you don't have a heavenly perspective, you know what death feels like because you live it every day. Some days you can't even get out of bed, you don't *want* to get out of bed. There are things going on in your life, there's relational conflicts, whether that's at work, whether that's among family, you know what death looks like. You know how sin leads to death, this death-like existence for a believer. We've seen that and we've experienced that. So, Paul is going through great care to undertake, to say, "Don't try to take the law and make yourself holy by keeping the law, you're only playing into the enemy's hands." And so we're going to continue our study this morning looking at that.

And remember in 1 Corinthians 15:56 we have a related verse that says, "*The strength of sin*" - the sin nature - "*is the law.*" Why? How could the sin nature take something so holy, just, and good, and use it against us? Well, it does that very thing by creating a desire in us. Once it sees the standard, it creates a desire in us to break the standard, which then produces death, lack of fellowship, and so the sin nature uses that to accomplish its goal.

So, let's go on to verse 9. There was a time that Paul was living in ignorance of this truth, but what we're gonna see at the end of the chapter is he was no longer in ignorance. And remember, we jump into verse 9, but we're really answering the question from verse 7. Paul asked a question in verse 7, and then he uses the next few verses to explain his answer, and in verse 12 we're gonna get the "therefore", his conclusion to that question. But remember the question that was asked in verse 7, "*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not!*" And then he's gonna go on and explain why the law is not sin, because it sounds like he's blaming the law. He's not blaming the law; he's blaming your sin nature for what it does with the law.

And so we get into verse 9 which reads this: "*I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*" What does he mean, "*I was alive once without the law*"? Well, I think he's describing - and he is, it's a past tense concept - this past experience before he was fully conscious of the law's demands. And it was probably when he was a child, it was probably before his Bar Mitzvah before he officially became the son of a covenant.

And you know this with children, sometimes they don't understand the full ramifications or consequences of rules, do they? "Don't touch the hot stove." And then they touch it and they're like, "Man, Dad and Mom are wise. That hurt! I don't want to do that anymore." And so there was a point in time in Paul's life where he wasn't fully aware, or he was ignorant, you might say, of being under the law and what its restrictions were. You might say that he was free from any of the known restrictions or known consequences, and thus was not subject to conflict with any known authority. When you don't know there's a law, you're not in conflict with it.

Years ago, the state of Montana didn't have a speeding limit, so there was nothing in you that desired to break a law, to go over a limit. I was talking with someone about speeding in Newnan on the bypass. And this road out here, doesn't everyone agree it should be 55 miles an hour at least? It's a separated highway, there's no way that road should be 45 miles an hour. But you know what? Because

it's a 45, guess what we want to do? We want to go 50. And some of us want to go 55, and this guy I was talking to last night wanted to go 60, because he just felt like it *should be* 55.

But I relate to that, I understand that, but the point is this: if there wasn't a speed limit on the bypass, guess how fast you'd probably go? You'd probably go 55 miles an hour, or 45, or whatever. It wouldn't even be a thought, you would not even have this inner desire to just one-up the rule, which is what the sin nature ends up doing. You might say that Paul was undisturbed, or not convicted, or ignorant, if you will, of the law's demands when he says, "I was alive once without the law."

It reminds me of - those of you that can relate that have had these embarrassing moments - when you get food on your teeth, and you've had lunch with somebody, and you see the food on your teeth after lunch and you're like, "How long was that food there? Did that happen on my first bite, or did that happen on my last bite? And number three, did that person see it? And then number four, if they did see it, why didn't they tell me there's food on my teeth? But you just don't realize until the mirror gets in front of you, and you say, "Oh man, food on my teeth!" Otherwise, you're just cranking away with your story, your big smile, and you got this big green piece of lettuce sticking on your teeth and you don't even realize it. There's an ignorance at some level, not that you're stupid, but you just don't know. And in this case, I think that's what Paul is talking about, that at one point in his life, he was alive once without the law, it was not disturbing to him, he wasn't really aware of it. He was living all right, but he was living in complete ignorance as it relates to the law.

But notice that something happened. Something happened in verse 9, he says, "*but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*" And again, this doesn't speak of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, but it speaks of the point in Paul's life that he became aware and understood the implications of the law for him personally. And notice what happened when he understood this - and I think this probably happened as he began to study the law, we know that he trained under the great rabbi of his state named Gamaliel, and it's probably when he began to understand these personal implications for himself. But notice that when this understanding came, two things happened.

When this understanding of the law came via the commandments, those are specific commandments, two things happened according to this verse. Number one, sin revived. It's the sin nature, it's the source. It came to life, it revived, it finally had something to target to want to break, it revived in that sense. So, without the law, the sin nature was in a somewhat dormant state, in the sense that it didn't have this clear standard compelling it, stirring it on, poking it to want to break it.

I used to teach high school math, and I used to approach these kids differently. You know, at the time I was 23 or 24 and I thought, "I've got to be smarter than these kids. I can kind of outsmart them." And some of them proved me wrong, I was in over my head on a couple. But there were a couple of times I just tried to challenge their thinking and correct them in such a way that was different from any of their other teachers.

I remember one kid in particular, his name was Will. I still remember him to this day. I had a large class size of 30 kids or so, he sat right in the middle of my class, and he would just put his head down right in the middle of my lecture and go to sleep. He was doing it for attention, I just knew intuitively he was trying to get attention, this was a way that he felt like he was going to gain some cool points with the other kids in school. I don't understand that, but teenage boys, you know, God bless them. He thought that that was going to get him attention, make him look cool to everybody else in school. And he became a major distraction in my class, because every time he fell asleep, he would make a big ordeal about it and everyone would start looking at him, and no one was paying attention anymore. They didn't pay attention much to begin with, and that made it worse when Will would fall asleep.

So finally, one day I said, “Will, pick your head up.” And he's like, “Oh, I'm sorry Mr. Clark, I'll never do it again.” And I said, “No, no, it's okay. If you get tired, I just want you to go out in the hall and lay down. It's very uncomfortable to fall asleep at a desk like that, so I just want you to go out in the hall and spread out. There's nobody out there during class, I mean, you can just get all the sleep you want.” And he's like, “No, no, that's okay. I'm fine.” I was like, “No, no, you don't have an option today. You're gonna go out to the hall and I want you to go to sleep. Will, I just want to support your sleep efforts.”

And I'm just going through this in front of the whole class. “Will, just go right outside, man. And in fact, I've got my jacket here, you can roll it up and use it as a pillow. Just go to sleep and just snooze, man! We'll wake you up when the bell's about to ring so you can get to your next class.” He was shocked. Everyone else in the class was shocked. But you know what, I just told him, “If you come into my class and sleep again, you're gonna go out to the hall to your new place of sleep. That's where you're gonna go from now on.”

You know what was crazy? Will never slept in my class again. He never even put his head down in my class again because I removed this tension for him, because he just knew, “Hey, if I'm tired, I can just go out in the hall and sleep.” And then guess what? He never got tired again. When you remove that law, that restraint, now he doesn't want to break it, and now he doesn't even know what to do with himself. I think he started taking notes, I couldn't believe it after that situation.

But you know, sin will revive. The law will stir it up, the law will poke it with a stick, the law will alert it to a problem, the law will say, “Here's a standard.” Then sin says, “Yes, finally, a standard! I can break it. I can lead this person to break the law.” And so we see when Paul came back to this understanding that sin revived, we see the second thing that happened, the consequences. In fact, it says, *“and I died.”*

The sin nature does what it always does. Make no mistake, when you present yourself to sin, it's going to do what it always does, there's no other result that's possible. And the result is death. The sin nature does what it always does, it entices, it provokes us to break the law, and then it will produce death in your life.

Make no mistake, there is no such thing as a little sin. There's no such thing as dipping your toe in sin, there's no such thing as saying, “Well, I'm going to do this sin, but I'm going to avoid all these other sins.” Because the moment you present yourself to sin, sin's got you, you're its slave, and you'll obey the one to whom you're a slave of, Romans chapter 6. So, when you say, “Well this is just miniscule, I'm just gossiping.” No. Garbage! That's dipping your toe in sin and putting yourself in slavery to the sin nature. And today it's gossip, and tomorrow it's going to be something ten times worse than gossip.

In our thinking, we categorize sins, don't we? Gossip is a very acceptable sin in churches, especially. For whatever reason, that's very acceptable. Now, living in sexual immorality? That's very unacceptable. But you know in God's mind, they're all unacceptable! We need to start seeing that the way God sees it, we need to start having a divine viewpoint on some of these things and understand that when you play with fire, you'll get burnt. That's the deal with sin.

And so sin's going to do what it always does. Sin is going to use the law to try to entice you, and provoke you to break it, and when it accomplishes its goal, it's going to produce death in your life. In fact, we see this pattern in Romans 6:23, we see the pattern in James 1:14, where our desires lead us astray, and sin produces death, that is what happens in our life. Every time you present yourself to the sin nature and it executes acts of sin through your body, through your thinking, through your emotions, it's gonna produce death. Always. That's the natural consequence of walking by means of the sin nature.

So, the law or commandment, notice again it plays a role in stirring up the sin nature to want to break it. This eventually leads to death, the consequence of acts of sin. Can you understand why God went through so much effort to crucify you with Christ, so that you would die to the law, even? Again, there's nothing wrong with the law other than it can't make you holy. Your enemy is going to take advantage of that type of thinking in your Christian life to cause you to fail, to break the law, to produce death in your life.

The commandment cannot bring what it said it could bring. The commandment cannot bring what it was designed to bring. Verse 10 reads, *"and the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death."* See, the commandment was designed to bring life, it was designed to give us the standard by which we could obtain, and live, and merit heaven. The problem is you've got a problem with man keeping the law, this is what he's referencing here Leviticus 18:5: *"You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord."*

See, God's a fair judge, we looked at that back in Romans 2. If you can live a perfect life, God would welcome you into heaven and say, "You earned it, you merited it, come on up, you deserve it!" The problem is, nobody deserves heaven, because the law just exposes the fact that none of us are perfect. We saw that in detail as we were studying through the first three chapters of the book of Romans. This is the very thing that Paul found or discovered for himself. In fact, the word carries over the idea that it became clear to him at some point. The law can show the standard, but the law cannot give life. The law can show what the standard is, but it cannot help you keep the standard. And incidentally, it actually arouses the sin nature to want to break it.

This is why God's changed your relationship to the law because He wants you successfully living the Christian life. Do you think God wants us to go around and live in abject failure day, after day, after day? Does anybody believe that's the normal Christian life? Like, that's the life God designed for us? I mean, clearly, He hasn't, because every time we live in failure, we're out of fellowship with Him, and that's what He wants more than anything. He wants relationship with you, He wants you to walk in dependence upon Him, He wants you to trust in the provision that He's made for your sin nature, and that He's made for the way the sin nature misuses the law, and He wants to produce a righteous lifestyle in and through you via the life of Christ as you walk by faith. That's what God wants.

So why do we go against His plan for your sanctification? Why do we live in such a way that contradicts everything that He's teaching us here? I don't know. If I ever figure it out, I'm gonna write a book, because it's gonna be a best-seller! Because we all gravitate toward trying to crank out the Christian life in our own strength. I don't know why we do it, it's a natural gravitation, and we need to stop doing that and start believing what God has written in His word, what God has determined is the solution.

You know, the law ends up being misused as a tool in the sin nature's hand against you, and this is the tragedy that most Christians don't recognize. I'm just gonna say a couple things and I don't want to offend anybody, but if I do, I'm sorry in advance. Just come talk to me later and we can talk in more detail if I offend you. But you know what? Musical instruments have nothing to do with spirituality. In fact, years ago you could go to church and the piano would have been considered sinful. We all know the history, but why do we get caught up with musical instruments as if that is how we're spiritual? Where is that in the Bible? Where is that in Romans 6? We're spiritual the moment we're walking by means of the spirit. Period. Not when you've got the right musical instrument.

We can take that a lot of places, can't we? It's not how you school your kids that makes you spiritual. We've got home schoolers, and private schoolers, and public schoolers represented in this group - some are a majority representation, I know that - but you know that that doesn't make you

spiritual. Your decision on how you're going to school your kids, that doesn't make you spiritual. That's not in Romans 6, that's not how God frees you from the sin nature.

It's not about what clothes you wear. Now, do we want to be modest? Yeah. But does it matter if ladies are wearing dresses? Does it matter if guys are wearing ties? Is that really how we're gonna determine spirituality? You know, I can find any bum on the street. I can find a drunk lying in a gutter, I can take him to Goodwill, put a suit on him, and put him in the church. That doesn't mean he's spiritual! That doesn't mean he's depending upon the Lord's provision for spiritual life.

You can have all the spiritual disciplines in the world, you can wake up and read your Bible for two hours, that activity in and of itself is not going to make you spiritual. Are you depending upon the Lord 30 minutes after you finish your Bible reading? Are you resting and trusting in His provision, are you walking by faith? That's what makes you spiritual. I'm not against reading the Bible, I'm not against praying, I'm just saying if that's what you think it takes to be spiritual, you're missing out on what the Word of God teaches where God wants you to rest and trust in His provision moment by moment as you walk through the day.

It's not the kind of food you eat. I told this story before about a guy that was talking about Jesus being the bread of life and then he would say, "Yeah, He's the brown bread of life." Because he had this thing about brown bread being spiritual. And then one of my friends said, "Well, what about places around the world where they don't eat bread, they eat rice because bread is too expensive?" And he said, "Yeah, the brown rice." You think I'm making that up, I am not making that up. And as an old pastor used to say, "I don't care if you grind your flour with your own knuckles, that's not gonna make you spiritual."

We have to get out of this thinking that "If I do *this*, then I'm gonna be spiritual." An external is not the method to spirituality! In fact, if you live life that way, you will guarantee one thing: failure, and sin, and death. That's what you'll guarantee. That's what Paul is teaching here, that when you live life by means of the law, any legal principle, you're going to arouse the sin nature to want to break it. And he's trying to convince us of this truth. Get away from this line of thinking, start walking by faith in the solution that God provides in His word.

Again, sin is gonna seize the opportunity, we're gonna see this in verse 11. "*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.*" And so we're gonna see that Paul repeats his point from verse 8. The sin nature took occasion, notice that, *took occasion* by the commandment. I mean, how wicked is this thing that indwells the believer? And this word "take occasion" means *to seize upon an opportunity, to take a starting point.*

And you know that the sin nature literally uses the law, literally uses even human commands as a starting point to cause evil and sinful desires in us? That's what it does, it's so deceitful in that sense. In fact, I didn't share this last week, but this word "take occasion" was a military term that meant to take up a base of operations. Isn't that something, that the sin nature is taking up a base of operations in you, just waiting for you to put a law out there that it can incite and entice you to want to break?

That's what sin does, and this is like a sniper attack, its covert, you don't even see this coming. Because you think, "I've got new desires, I love the law of God!" And good for you, that's great! But understand that just those desires and just the law of God is not enough to cause you to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. We saw that in Romans 8:4, I'm kind of giving you the spoiler alert. You need the Spirit of God in your life to execute the righteous requirements of the law. Just having the right desires is not enough, and that just drives me crazy.

Here's another thing that drives me crazy, and again, I'm not trying to offend. But a lot of people will say, "Well, you're struggling with sin because you don't want to stop hard enough. You're still struggling with sin because you just like the sin so much that you don't even want to stop." And I'd say that might be true for some people, but what about the guy in Romans 7 that we're going to be looking at in the next couple of sections? It says, "The things that I don't want to do, I keep doing. The things that I don't want to do, those are the things I want to stop doing." What about that guy? What about the sincere, genuine guy that wants to stop sinning but doesn't know how? What about him?

Paul's writing about himself, but you know what? He's writing about me. That's me in Romans 7. You can probably relate with that too, if we're being honest with ourselves. That's *you* in Romans 7. What about us? What about that guy that wants to stop? What about that guy that's tired of the destruction and death that he sees played out in his life? Every time he presents himself to sin and the destruction in his relationship with his spouse, and the destruction in his relationship with his kids, and the destruction in the relationship he has with others, and the natural consequences of these secret sins that he or she thinks they're getting away with, and yet there's misery on top of misery, and days where you don't even want to roll out of bed. What about that person?

Well, I've got good news for you: God has a solution for you. And it's not what religion gives you; it's not waking up earlier and reading your Bible more. It is knowing what God has done for you and start trusting in the God of the universe Who's created a solution for you. That's the answer, not all of these other things that we put in its way.

Calling you a legalist is akin to calling someone in the south a liberal, right? It's just not taken very well. But I'm just here to tell you, again, I'm not trying to offend. Everyone in this room is a legalist, a recovering legalist - I hope - and not a continuing legalist. We all have legalistic tendencies, because every time something breaks down in our lives, we naturally gravitate toward law as the solution.

"Why did you sin yesterday?" "Well, it's because I didn't have my quiet time." That's a legalistic solution to the problem! The reason you sinned is because you're not trusting in God's provision and you presented yourself to the sin nature, that's the reason. It's a faith issue. It's not a read-your-Bible issue. It's not a scripture memorization issue. And I'm for all of that stuff, trust me, I'm not trying to minimize that. But I'm just saying in the heat of the battle, the reason you fail, the reason you commit acts of sin is because you're not resting in God's provision.

Now notice what happened as Paul describes us in verse 11. "*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment,*" - in other words, using the commandment, the law of God, as a starting point, notice a couple of things that it did - "*deceived me and by it,*" - by the commandment - "*it killed me.*" And so we see that the sin nature uses the commandment to deceive us. One of the biggest ways that the sin nature uses the commandment to deceive us is to convince us that we can live the Christian life in our own strength. Just try a little bit harder, just crank it out a little bit more and you can do it. That is one of the main ways that it can deceive you, because if you keep living that way, the sin nature is going to just keep using that law as a starting point to break it, and to accomplish and produce death in your life. That's the nature, and it's so deceptive in that way.

Notice again, the sin nature uses the commandment in a twisted way to actually lead me into evil. Can you imagine taking the holy law of God and using that to twist it in your thinking so that you'll do evil? That's exactly what sin does. Every time you put yourself under law, it's going to do that to you, and it's going to produce death.

The second thing, "*by it,*" Paul says, by the commandment "*sin killed me.*" What does he mean by that? Well, the word "kill" means *to violently slay or to kill outright*. Again, notice that the sin nature uses the commandment in a twisted way to accomplish its end goal of violently killing us and producing all

sorts of death in our life. The sin nature actually uses the law as a harmful weapon in our life. Do we understand that? Do we see that? So many Christians think that living under the law is a safe place to live, it's actually the most dangerous place to live. Because it's so deceptive, you think everything's going okay, and yet sin is using it as a starting point to break the law and to produce death in your life, and by it, it will kill you, it will violently slay you, and the consequences are guaranteed.

But having said all of that, Paul makes a conclusion in verse 12, he says, "therefore." So based on what he's saying, what he's trying to say is the law is not the problem, the sin nature is the problem. Do you see that? The law is not the issue, the sin nature is the issue, the law is holy, and just, and good.

Look at verse 12, *"Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."* And so he concludes his argument from the question he started in verse 7, and he basically says this: "the law is holy and the commandment holy." What is he talking about? He's talking not only about the entirety of the Mosaic law with the first phrase, but he's also saying each individual commandment. There's nothing wrong with any individual part of the entire Mosaic law, it's all good, it's all holy, it's all just, it's all righteous. Everything contained within the law is holy.

And I like this quote from a pastor in Connecticut, George Zeller, he says it so well: *"The law is holy, but it can't make me holy. The law can never sanctify, it can only show me how unholy I am. The law is just - or righteous - but it can never justify me, it can only condemn me. The law is good, but it can never make me good, it can only show me my wretchedness and the evil that dwells within me."* Again, nothing wrong with the law, everything wrong with us. It's more specifically the sin nature that indwells us, because it takes this beautiful, glorious revelation of God's truth and it uses it in a twisted way against us to destroy us, and that's what's going on here.

So, in verse 13 we're gonna see this new section that he starts. In fact, I don't know if you've noticed or not, but starting in about Romans chapter 6, every time Paul starts a new section, he asks a question. Romans 6:1, *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* Romans 6:15, *"What then? Shall we continue in sin?"* Romans 7:1, *"Do you not know brethren that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?"* Romans 7:7, *"What shall we say then? Is the law sin?"* And then Romans 7:13 *"Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful."*

Now, I'm going to repeat this in the next section, so if there's something you don't want to remember today, you'll get it in the next section. But here's the thing: starting in verse 13, working our way to the end of the chapter, you're gonna see first-person pronouns in this section, "I", "me", "my", if you just count them all up, you're gonna see them 40 times in the next 13 verses. You're gonna see these personal pronouns "I", "me", "my", and you know what that shows us? This is a man who is focused on keeping the law for sanctification, and he's completely focused on himself. Completely focused on himself to grow spiritually, completely focused on his own activities to grow spiritually.

And what you're going to see is when it's all about me, and my', and I, and did I do this, and I need to stop doing this, and I, I, I, you're gonna see failure. Failure over and over again. There's no trust, there's no rest in the Lord, this is all about you and me duking it out with the sin nature and trying to use a law to make ourselves holy, *and it will not work.* This is why God has gone through so much effort to free you from domination by the sin nature, and to free you from the domain of the law, because the Spirit of God wants to live a life in and through you - as you walk by faith - that produces this righteous lifestyle, it's just not by you trying to keep a list of what you're doing and what you're not doing. It's as you're walking in a relationship with the Lord that He produces this life in you.

And so Paul says, *"Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not!"* And when he talks about what is good, he's talking about the law. "Has this law, this good thing, become death to me? Is the law



the cause of death in my life? Is the law the reason that I'm experiencing all of these death-like things in my life?" And his answer is an emphatic, "No!" So, what is Paul saying then? Well, the sin nature is being exposed or brought to light through its incorrect use of the law by producing its desired outcome, death.

You know, one of the things we've got to understand about sin is it is productive. If you owned a business and you were looking for a model employee that would be productive and produce every time, you wouldn't want to hire sin, but that would be the type of employee you would want, that same characteristic. It is productive, it produces, it's not laying down on the job. It's not slacking off at 4:50 counting down the remaining 10 minutes till 5 o'clock, and having you pay for that. Sin is productive, that's what we read in this verse.

Look at verse 13, "*But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me,*" and what is the sin nature after? It's the same thing that Satan's after, and it's destruction. That's to destroy you, to produce death and misery, to knock you out of fellowship with the Lord. That's what sin is trying to produce. And it's relentless, and it's aggressive, and it doesn't stop, and it uses the law every chance it gets as a starting point to say, "Hey, let's go break that law!"

You know, I'm not trying to step on any toes, but I find it comical when I hear stories - and I've had a lot of friends that have attended some maybe stricter private Christian colleges where there's some rules - and I find it comical because every guy that I talk to that attends one of those schools, I like to get them aside and I like to say, "So where did you hide your rated R movies?" And you know what? Every one of them is like, "Man, how'd you know?! Yeah, I put it in a cereal box." Or "I put it up in the tile of my ceiling." Or "I had this special carve out in my bed." It is just crazy to know that that is a consistent approach to that particular law.

When you place it out there then it gives these young men a desire to say, "I'm gonna live on the edge a little bit. I'm gonna break this law, and I'm gonna do something with it." It's just ironic, but it illustrates the point again that sometimes what happens is when law is presented to you, one of the benefits of that (if there is a benefit to it) is it exposes the depth of evil that lives within you. That's what Paul is talking about here, because he says, "*sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.*"

When you begin to see laws and you have something internal that flips in your mind and you say, "I want to break that law. Fifty miles an hour? Now I'm going 51!" We think this way! I'll tell you right now, there was a credit card bill that we paid a little bit late last month, and so inevitably, I get this extra charge, this late fee, and immediately what's my first inclination? I'm gonna see if I can get away with sending it in late. I'm gonna call and say, "I've been a loyal customer for X amount of years, and I mailed that bill before the due date, it just must have gotten delayed in the mail, and I want you guys to give me credit back." Now, part of me doesn't want to lose money, but part of me wants to see if I can break the law.

That's the natural response, and I see a lot of blank faces like nobody can relate to that in here at all, but we know that that's the natural tendency. See, you are a natural legalist whether you agree with it or not. I won't call you liberal, how's that? But I will call you a natural legalist.

But the thing is, we want to see that sin is productive, the sin nature cannot be trusted, and so we need to rethink the way that we're gonna take the Christian life from this point forward. We can't just live it the way that we're going to be comfortable and think that if we're gonna wake up and read the Bible for an hour, and pray for an hour, and wear a dress to church that we are on our way to spiritual maturity. That alone is not going to do it. I have nothing against dresses, I have nothing against reading the Bible, I have nothing against praying. All I'm saying is this: that's not the steps. That's not the mechanics that God puts forth in His word in Romans chapter 6 and Romans chapter 7.

In fact, when we see that the commandment or the law is clearly defined, it's inflexible, it's very black and white, you know what? It's easy then to detect when the sin nature has persuaded us to break it. It gives us a very clear picture because we know what's clearly spelled out, and if we have this desire within us to break it, we know where that's coming from, we know what source, and it exposes sin in that way.

And so for this reason, we can see through the commandment that sin is not just a small thing. Please understand, don't tell me you're dipping your toe into something small, because the second you begin to present yourself to sin, it will dominate you. You will become its slave. And the thing that you thought you were controlling, "Yeah, I'm just going to do this once in a while." Before long, it's gotcha and you're doing many other things, it's going to be executing its desires. And guess what? Like I've said a million times and I'll probably say a million times again, you get to choose your sin, but you do not get to choose your consequences. And that's very important to understand as we look at this.

This word "exceedingly" is a phrase, it's very emphatic in the Greek. It's comprised of an intensive preposition and a compound word, with another preposition, it means *to throw beyond, to surpass, to do so in the highest possible degree*. Sin, you might say, is a bad dude. The sin nature is a bad dude, you don't want to get caught in an alley with it, you don't want to get caught presenting yourself to it, it will take you over and dominate your life, and it will produce death. And rest assured that one of the reasons Paul is going through all this detail is because of the deceptive way it's going to use God's law to accomplish that very purpose, and many of us aren't even aware of the wiles of the enemy in that area. And so Paul takes great care and pain, I think, to even describe this, and he's going to go on and describe his personal experience.

The next couple of sections we're gonna look at this very familiar portion of scripture, and I say "familiar" because you've read it before, you're familiar with it, but you're probably familiar with it in experience too, that would be my guess. Here's the thing: the reason Paul goes into this is because he wants to clearly show a life of somebody depending upon the law to make them more holy, and to show you that when you do that, you're only playing into the hands of your enemy. You're working against yourself, there's going to be no success for you there if you're trying to keep the law to make you holy.

And so my prayer is that we understand. My prayer is this: I'm not here to criticize anybody at all. I'm here because my desire is for you to know you don't have to live your Christian life that way. We don't have to live the Christian life this way, we actually have good news.

You know, there was a time in my Christian life before I began to understand these truths, and God began to teach me through men who cared about me and wanted me to understand these things. Do you know there was a time I actually thought, "Well, the good news that Jesus died for my sins and rose again so I can go to heaven, that is great news! But I wish there was something more. Because man, I'm struggling. I'm just dying inside. I'm miserable, I've got no joy in my life. The things I read about in the Bible, this hope thing, this peace thing, this abundant life thing, that's just a farce. It's all garbage, it's fake, I don't get it. I'm not getting that, I don't have that, I'm busting my tail, I'm waking up two hours early, I'm even punishing myself."

I used to punish myself when I would sin and sleep outside on a concrete floor, because I wanted so badly to walk with the Lord. I wanted so badly to enjoy fellowship with Him and experience this abundant life that I read about in the scriptures. And I almost just said, "You know what, I give up on the whole thing. I'm glad I got my ticket punched, I'm going to heaven, and I'm just gonna go live any way I want to."

I was at that point when a dear, sweet brother began to share these truths with me. And I said, "You know what? There's good news for the Christian. Hallelujah!" You mean there's good news for

the struggling Christian who is dominated by sin? I'm here to tell you friend, the good news doesn't just stop with the fact that Jesus died for your sins and rose again. The good news goes on to say that you died with Christ, you died to sin, you were raised to newness of life with Him, you died to the law, and God has given you an indwelling Holy Spirit to execute the righteous requirements of the law so you can actually enjoy your relationship with the Lord and experience abundant life.

And so keep coming out, let's keep studying this together. And next week as we just wrestle through the end of Romans 7, hopefully you'll begin to say, "I used to see myself in that man, but I no longer do, because I know how I'm delivered from sin's power."



# CHAPTER 40

## Paul's Epic Failure Part 1

### Romans 7:14-17

Let's continue our study in the book of Romans chapter 7. And to give us a running start this morning, remember in Romans chapter 6 Paul has spent a great deal of time to convince you and to instruct you and I of the truth that we died to sin with Jesus Christ, that is God's means and method for delivering you from the power of sin in your daily life.

Remember, salvation comes in three tenses: it comes in the past tense where we've been saved or delivered from the penalty of sin, that's what we call "justification", that's what the first four and a half chapters of the book of Romans covered. What we're looking at now is this second tense of our salvation, sanctification, which is salvation from the power of sin in our daily life. God hasn't just left you alone to duke it out with your sin nature to try and grow spiritually, and to achieve holiness. And then one day we will be forever delivered from the very presence of sin, that's what we call glorification. We're going to get into that when we make our way into Romans chapter 8, so that's what we've got to look forward to.

Today we're picking up in Romans 7:14. And you'll notice I titled the sermon, "Paul's Epic Failure Part 1", because we just can't cover the whole section today. But we're going to see Paul, the great apostle, and we're going to get a glimpse into his failure.

And for those of you who have ever failed in the Christian life, this passage is designed not for you to stay in and relate to and say, "Yes, that's my Christian life." But I think many of us will be able to relate to this failure, we'll be able to relate to this feeling that he expresses here in Romans chapter 7. But remember that Romans 7 is just a pathway to get us to Romans 8. So don't get stuck in Romans 7, don't hit a boulder there and get your wheels stuck, don't let your wheels start spinning in Romans 7.

There's good news for the Christian life, there's good news for the Christian. God has made a way to deliver you from sin's power, that's good news! And in fact, it's good news on par with the good news that we heard once before, which was that Jesus died for your sins and rose again so that you wouldn't have to pay the penalty for your sins, all you simply have to do, the Bible says, is to put your faith in Jesus and His finished work for you. Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again? The Bible says if you believe that, if you're trusting or have trusted in Christ that you have eternal life, and you'll never face the death penalty. Well, I've got just as good of news for you today as a believer: you don't have to be dominated by sin. That's the message of sanctification.

And so in order to convince us of that, Paul is going to walk us through his failure to say, "Don't get stuck here with me." And you know part of his failure had to do with what he was trying to explain to us in the first 13 verses of Romans chapter 7, and that is this, another concept that we don't really bank on too much: we're also dead to the law. And that seems almost like we're saying something anti-Christian when we say that, or anti-God.

And so he's gone through the first 12 verses to show you the reason that we died to law, the reason that God placed us and identified us with Christ, the reason that He went through all this trouble to do that, to change your relationship to the law, to put the law out of business to you as it relates to the sanctification, and the reason is this: you've got something indwelling you called the sin nature, indwelling sin, the power of sin, whatever you want to call it, whatever phrase you want to give it. The Greek text calls it *the* sin.

The problem with indwelling sin - using our military terminology - the indwelling sin nature uses the law to take up a base of operations against you, to actually accomplish the exact opposite of sanctification, domination by the sin nature. And the sin nature is so deceptive, and evil, and unruly that it's going to use something as good as God's law to use it against you. And that's what we've been looking at.

And now Paul is going to give us a personal example, showing how before he learned this truth, what life was like trying to be sanctified by the law, and we're gonna see that it was an epic failure. I mentioned this in the last section but starting in verse 13 to the end of the chapter, you're gonna see that Paul uses first person pronouns 40 times. "I", "me", "my", from verse 13 to the end of this chapter. And you know what this shows us? This shows us a man, determined and persistent to want to grow spiritually, but he's not utilizing God's resources to do it, he's thinking it all depends on him, and his mode of getting more spiritual and more holy is to try harder, work harder, do more, do less.

And what you're gonna see if that's your approach to the Christian life, you will live a life of failure, abject failure, guaranteed you've got no chance. Because you're not designed to grow spiritually trusting in yourself, just like you weren't designed to be born spiritually by trusting in your good works to get you to heaven. In sanctification, God wants you to trust in the provision that He's made for you, the same way you trusted in His provision when Jesus died for your sins and rose again.

What's the provision He wants you to trust *in* for sanctification? We've already been looking at that. You died with Christ to sin. Romans 6:11, you need to start, by faith, counting yourself dead to sin and alive unto God, and by faith, Romans 6:12-13, you need to start presenting your members to God and stop presenting your members to the sin nature. That's the key, that's the mechanics behind it. But Paul's going to show us in his life when he did not function according to those mechanics, and he was trying to deliver himself to his own strength, according to his own efforts.

And so in verse 14 he says this: "*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*" And what I want you to make note of here in verses 14-25, is all of the present-tense verbs that he's using. He's not talking about something that happened to him in his pre-conversion life, he's not talking about something that happened to him before he got saved, he's talking about something that happened to him while he was saved. And quite frankly, if he decided to take up this mode of sanctification again, it could have happened to him again.

This is not something that we're just delivered from at a point in time when we say, "Oh yeah, that was dumb. I won't do that again." It just doesn't work that way. You're always a recovering legalist. Remember I called you a legalist last time and I said it's like calling you a liberal, and politically it can be very offensive to say, "You're a liberal!" Or "You're a legalist!" But you know, legalistic thinking is the way that we will naturally gravitate when we fail in the Christian life. And if you don't believe me, remember the last time you failed, and the immediate thought was, "Man, I didn't get up and read my Bible this morning, that's why I failed. I'm not praying as much as I should have, that's why I failed. I'm not doing devotions with my family right now, that's why I failed."

No, the reason we fail is because in that moment we are not resting in God's provision to deliver us from sin's power, and we are presenting ourselves to the sin nature to carry out and execute its lusts, that's why we fail. It's not because you didn't read your Bible for an hour. You know, if that's what we think, what if you read it for 59 minutes? Is that still close enough or is that gonna cause you to fail?

See, the thing about Christian life and living that we've got to remember is it's not a list of do's and don'ts, it is a Person. That is so easy to forget, isn't it? This is a relationship we're talking about; this is a Person that we're talking about. In fact, not to give you a spoiler alert - I'm really good at doing that I think - but if you go down to the end of Romans 7, what does Paul say in Romans 7:24? "*O wretched*

*man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" His deliverance is in a Person, and what that Person accomplished with you by taking you into His death with Him.

And see, deliverance is found in a person, not in a list of do's and don'ts, not dependent on your ability to be spiritual. It's dependent on a simple ability: will you trust in what God says is your deliverance from sin's power? That's what it's dependent on. And so obviously we have to know what that is, which is why he spent so much time in Romans 6.

Now this experience here that Paul is going to detail for us is a real experience, but notice this, it's not ideal. Don't ever just get into the habit of accepting the fact that you live in Romans 7. Don't ever accept that, that's a mediocre, failure Christian life. I know we can all relate to Romans 7 and what he's about to say, which is basically this, we could summarize the whole section with this: "The things I want to do, I can't do. The things I want to stop doing, those are the very things that I do." We all can relate to that. Whether or not we'd raise our hand in a public meeting or not, deep down we know what Paul's talking about, we've experienced this before.

But you know, people who understand their way of deliverance from sin's power, they naively think that it's in keeping the law that will make you holy. We naturally gravitate toward that thinking, that if we could just keep the law better, if we could just do these activities better, if we could just get more disciplined in these areas, that would make us holy.

I'm gonna break from Romans really quick, I want to show you something in Colossians chapter 2. And some of you say, "Yeah John, I see what you're saying from Romans 6 and 7. Why do we naturally gravitate that way? Why do we keep going back to legalistic thinking, and do's and don'ts, and I got to do this more, and I got to do this better." You know why we do this? Colossians 2 is gonna tell us: because it looks good, it sounds good, it sounds spiritual, it sounds right. But you're gonna notice that every solution that man comes up with puts the solution onus on the back of you. Have you ever noticed that?

In fact, when we talked about what the gospel is and what it's not, we talked about all those false cliches that are thrown out there: ask Jesus into your heart, walk the aisle, pray the prayer, and we said, "No, we want to keep the focus on Jesus and His finished work." And what do all those cliches do? They take your focus off of Jesus and His finished work and put the focus on something *you* must do.

We do the same thing in sanctification, we will not simply rest, and trust, and depend upon, and cast our weight upon what God has done to deliver us from sin's power. Why? Because it looks spiritual, look at Colossians 2:20: "*Therefore, if you died with Christ,*" - there's Romans 6, we died with Christ to sin, we've been raised to newness of life - "*if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-*" - notice this - "*Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,*" that's exactly what legalistic Christianity looks like. You can categorize everything that we do in a legalistic manner, trying to make ourselves more spiritual or holy, in those three categories. Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.

Look at verse 22, "*which all concern things which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body,*" - but notice that last phrase - "*but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*" You know why they're of no value against the indulgence of the flesh? Because that's not God's method of delivering you from sin's power. They have no value because God is not taking you to that well. He's put that bridge out of business; He doesn't want you going down that path anymore because it's not going to deliver you from sin's power.

What it's going to do is it's going to give you the Christian life experience that Paul is describing for us in Romans 7. And if you don't believe me, just keep going down the path and give it time. At some point this will make sense and you will be disgusted with your Christian life the same way that Paul was in Romans 7:24 when he says, "*Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" And that's what Christianity is gonna feel like to you if you try to become holy by keeping the law. It's gonna feel like a body of death, it's gonna be miserable, it's gonna be frustrating, it's gonna be this constant, "Why can't I do what I know God wants me to do consistently? Why do I keep failing in this same sin? Why am I not able to do this?"

And you're gonna see that that's exactly what God wants you to avoid. This is exactly why Paul is taking us through this section, so that when we get to Romans 8 we're gonna say, "I know the bad news Paul, give me the good news. Paul, tell me how I can be delivered from this thing! I can completely relate to what you're saying in Romans 7." And so that's why we're going there.

Jump back with me into Romans chapter 7. Paul knows a few things here, and he's going to expand on his previous argument, he's gonna give us a personal example. He's gonna say, "for we know something" in verse 14. He's gonna give us three things that he knows. And the first thing that he knows, and this knowledge here is a knowledge that we gain intuitively. In other words, over time we start to see, "Yeah, I don't need convincing that this is true, I can see it. I got this, Paul."

And one of the things that Paul got was that the law *is* spiritual. And when it says 'is' it's a present and continual-tense verb, the law is spiritual, meaning it proceeds from the Spirit of God, it's holy, just, good, perfect. We saw that back in verse 12. There's nothing wrong with the law, we've said that a number of times. The law is completely holy, there's nothing at all wrong with it. In fact, it clearly reflects God's high and lofty standards, it shows us His character, it shows us what true righteousness looks like.

And so nothing wrong with the law, and this is why we naturally think, "Hey, we're a new creation, we've got a new nature with new desires, we've got God's spiritual and perfect law, and so thus I must grow spiritually by keeping the law." That's the natural math equation that we put together. We say, "New creation, new nature, spiritual law, one-plus-one-plus-one-equals-three, and this is how we get spiritual." And that's a natural way to think, and this is why Paul is going through so much effort to show you - hopefully on the front end so that you don't have to live this experience too long - that you've been delivered from the law. Why? Because your indwelling sin uses that as a starting point, a jumping-off point to lead you into sin, which then leads into death, which then leads into misery, which leads into frustration. All of those things are incorporated in that word "death."

So why is this the wrong equation? Well, it's based on the second thing that we know from verse 14. He says that we know not only is the law spiritual but notice that big "B word" there which gives us the contrast: *But* the problem.... And this is all good, but there's a problem. The problem is I'm carnal, and it's also a present tense word. In other words, he's presently or continually carnal. I think there were times where Paul was walking by means of the Spirit consistently. I don't mean he's saying he's carnal all the time in terms of practicality, but I think what he's implying is that at every moment there's weakness, there's frailty, there's imperfection present, just waiting to pounce. The sin nature is on its tippy-toes ready to go at any minute, you might say it that way. And so Paul is describing that this is the issue, this carnality.

You might say something like this: apart from God's deliverance he would remain in this state, this would be his continual state. Susceptible to the sin nature's influences, susceptible to the sin nature's control, and if the sin nature controls you and you present yourself to the sin nature, what happens? Acts of sin come out of that source. And when acts of sin come out of that source, the result is always



death. And that's why people who are living in carnality, presenting themselves to sin, knowing better than that, that's why when it comes down to it, they think they're making choices that are going to make them happy, and then they're down the road a couple of steps and all of a sudden, they're miserable. Life has no meaning, life has no purpose, everything about them has turned from joy to misery in a second, and it's because they have made the decision to present themselves to sin, thinking they know better than what the Word of God teaches.

And I'm just here to tell you, you'll never outsmart the Word of God. You'll never outsmart the Spirit of God, and if you're saved, there's a living, vibrant Holy Spirit living inside of you that wants to lead you in ways of righteousness, wants to lead you and deliver you from sin's power. And yet many times because the sin nature is on its tippy toes, so to speak, ready to pounce, if you're not by faith resting in God's provision, you will present yourself to sin and that will occur.

And so Paul knows that the law is spiritual, but that he is carnal. In fact, we know that this word "carnal" never describes an unsaved person in the Bible, it always describes a saved person who's walking by means of the flesh or the sin nature, walking under its influence and control.

And so the third thing that Paul knows, he says in verse 14, "*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal,*" - and he knows this, that we're - "*sold under sin.*" And on the screen, I put the word "the" in there because that's there in the Greek, and we're talking about the source of sin, we're sold *under* the source of sin.

Now this word "sold" means *to sell or traffic someone as a slave*, and we've looked at this concept of slavery as it relates to being a slave to God, or a slave to the sin nature. And whether or not you're a slave to God or sin nature has everything to do with who you are mentally, by faith, presenting yourself to. That's what Romans 6 taught us, that when you present yourself to sin you will become its slave, and when you become its slave, you will obey its desires and lusts.

You see, we talked about that when we were going through Romans 6, obedience is the fifth thing down the list. *Fifth*. Why in so many Bible teachings and Christian circles is obedience the first thing that people want to throw out as the key to the Christian life? Obedience is a result of four steps before it in Romans 6: know, reckon, present, you become a slave, and then you obey. That's the order. And so the emphasis shouldn't be on obedience, it should be on the faith that leads to the obedience.

What are we trusting in? When we talk about faith, we're talking about resting or trusting in an object of truth or a provision that God made. What are we talking about in Romans 6? We're talking about resting in our co-crucifixion with Christ, the only means by which we can be delivered from sin's power. Counting on that truth in your daily life, by faith presenting yourself to God, and then you're gonna see obedience flow out of that being rightly related to the truth of God's Word, rightly depending upon God's method of deliverance.

You know, the sin nature has dominated Paul in the past, and in his personal example that he's sharing right now, it continued to do so. And you may say, "Well wait a minute John, I thought we were freed from sin. I mean, isn't that what we studied in Romans 6, we're freed from sin?" But you know practically speaking, if you present yourself to sin, you willingly put yourself in a slavery relationship to the sin nature. You willingly do it, although you don't have to. In other words, the handcuffs have been taken off, but by presenting yourself to sin you've taken them and slapped them back on. That's what you do every time you present yourself to sin, and Paul is describing that here.

In fact, remember, we're talking in terms of interacting with the law of God in the appropriate way, not trying to keep it to grow spiritually. And remember back in Romans 6:14, he said this, it was kind of a precursor to Romans 7, but I just want you to see this isn't a new thought, he's been developing

this line of thought the whole time. In Romans 6:14 he says, "*For sin*" - the sin, sin nature - "*shall not have dominion over you,*" Why? "*For you are not under law but under grace.*"

And we said it then, and I'll say it again, what does that imply? If you put yourself under law, you'll be dominated by the sin nature. Why? Not because the law is bad - that's what we've been looking at - but because your sin nature will use the law as a jumping off point, a starting point to sin. That's why that will happen, that's why God delivered you from keeping the law as your form of sanctification. He wants you to trust in His provision.

And so Paul uses this phrase of being "sold under sin" to conjure up this slavery that the sin nature is going to exhibit. In fact, you'll notice Romans 7:15 starts with the word "for". And this word "for" just explains the expression "sold under sin" in a little bit more detail, and so we're gonna look at that in the next couple of verses. What does it mean to be sold under sin? Well first of all, we noticed in verse 14 it didn't say that we were sold *to* sin. In other words, sin doesn't own us, it doesn't have to. But notice we were sold under sin, and by a volitional choice of ours to present ourselves to the sin nature, we can be under the domination of sin again. But it's not because it owns us, it doesn't. We weren't sold *back* to sin, that's not what he's saying. We were sold *under* sin, you notice he uses that word clearly, it's "hupo" in the Greek. And so he goes on in verses 15-16 to explain what this slavery looks like.

Verse 15, "*For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.*" It's a little bit of a tongue twister in there sometimes, isn't it? But you know, Paul sees something that even though he knows that the law is spiritual, and even though he has a desire to obey and fulfill it, guess what? He's having trouble executing it. He knows the law's good, he wants to obey the law, and yet he can't execute it. He can't do the very thing that he wants to do. In fact, he says, "For what I'm doing" presently and continually, means he sees something here, he sees what's being played out in his life.

This word "doing" means *to work out or to carry out until a task is finished*. I like what one commentator said: "*What is a slave? A slave is a person under the domination of another, and because of this he cannot do what he wants to do, and he must do what he does not want to do, even what he hates.*" Could you imagine a slave in the 1800's saying, "No boss, I'm not gonna head out to the cotton fields today. My feet are a little bit sore; I think I'm gonna rest today. In fact, I might take a couple days off." Can anybody imagine seeing a slave do that in the 1800s? That wouldn't happen, would it? In fact, it was like, "I don't care what your feet look like, get out there. I don't care that your feet are busting open, I don't care that you've got an infection in your back where I whipped you, get out there and do it. I don't care." And that's exactly the definition of a slave. And so he's explaining how the sin nature has taken him back into slavery.

So, he's talking about as he steps back and looks at his life, what he's seeing is that the stuff that he's doing, the stuff that he's executing is such in contrast to what he wants to do, and the very things he hates and doesn't want to do, he still does. Has anybody here ever - as a Christian - committed a sin and almost just punched yourself in the face when you did it more than once, and you couldn't stop doing it? And you think, "Deep down I *hate* this, why do I do this? Why do I keep falling to this, why do I keep succumbing to this sin?" You just feel like banging yourself in the head! Why do I keep doing this to myself?

Well, if you've ever felt that way, you can relate to the strong language that Paul uses here. He hates it, but he can't stop it. He hates it, he doesn't want to do it anymore, but he can't stop it, he keeps doing the very thing that he hates. That by definition is a slave. In fact, he uses this phrase, "I don't understand." You see that in verse 15? "*For what I'm doing, I do not understand.*" I just don't get it. And in

the pattern of his life as it plays out, it's not making sense to Paul. Surely with the right standard, surely with the right motivation I should be able to accomplish what I'm trying to accomplish. Surely, I can grow spiritually. I've got every puzzle piece in place; I've got everything in place. I, I, I, do you hear that just ringing through? This is kind of what he's thinking here.

And you know what, this is where the frustration comes in. This is where the frustration comes in in the Christian life. "I've got new motivations, I've got the right standard, I know what I want to do, I know right from wrong." In fact, how many of you - again, don't raise your hand - have committed a sin as a Christian, that before you did it you already knew it was wrong and you did it anyways? And then after you did it, you hated yourself for doing it. You said, "I'll never do that again." Until a week later, or two weeks later, you did it again.

And you've lived what appears to be a duplicitous life, where you're just back and forth, the things you want to do, you don't do and it's this confusing, contradictory thing, and this is where the frustration comes in. Because what's typically the answer that we come up with in order not to do those things again? "Well, I better start trying harder. You know what, I'm only going to Sunday morning service, I'm gonna start going to Sunday school too. And I'm gonna start going to Sunday night." And you just try harder, that's the answer that we come up with, and we just work a little bit harder.

Or we say, "You know what, I just haven't read enough. Maybe I need to read another book. What's on the bestseller list, what books are the prominent Bible teachers on the internet selling? That's probably what I need, I'll just read another book." And we read another book, and yet we remain a failure. "I got it, I'll just listen to more sermons. The one on Sunday is not enough, I'm gonna just start listening to a sermon every day. I'm gonna stop listening to a certain type of music, I'm only going to listen to Christian music that plays the piano and that doesn't have any other evil instruments in it." Or whatever, and we start to think that's the answer, and then we still realize that we fail.

And we say, "You know what, I'm gonna get up earlier. That's the problem, I'm sleeping too much, and I'm lazy, and I need to be more disciplined. I gotta get up earlier and start doing more Christian things." We think that's the answer and we still fail. We say, "Well, I've gotta witness to more people, I haven't witnessed to anybody in five years, I've gotta start witnessing to at least one person a day, and that's how I'm gonna grow spiritually." And then we still fail.

We should have done this, we ought to do this, and it just becomes this cycle of I, I, I, me, me, me, my, my, my, we, we, we. We just think the answer is in us. We think the answer is something in us. And you know what I read in Galatians 2:20? "It's not I, but it's Christ." You see, that's the Christian life. It is not I, but Christ.

And you know when we get into Romans 8, you're gonna see a new character introduced to this whole topic of sanctification, and guess what? He's the key to fulfilling it and executing God's righteous demands in your life. His name is the Holy Spirit. He's indwelling you; He wants to execute the desires that you have, and He's not going to do it by you walking around checking off a list of do's and don'ts. He's gonna do it, He's gonna fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in you as you walk by faith in Him and in God's Word. That's the answer, that's the solution.

But you can see why a Christian would get frustrated. This doesn't make any sense, this is super confusing, because the things I want to do I can't do, the things I want to stop doing, those are the very things I do. I hate those things, and yet I keep doing them. I know how destructive those things are, and yet I keep doing them. I know what I want to do, and what I want to accomplish, and yet I don't have the power to do it. And see, we're missing a character in Romans 7 that we're gonna get introduced to in Romans 8, and again, His name is the Holy Spirit.

So, what he sees playing out in his life, Paul being sold under sin, it perplexes him mightily. And it perplexes him because of the following two scenarios: he can't do what he wants to do. In fact, what he wants to do, he's unable to do consistently. We see that phrase in there, "*for what I will to do.*" You know, Paul has the desire to do the things that God wants him to do. He has the desire to execute God's will, to live in a way that would please and honor the Lord, and this describes his continual heart's desire.

That's the thing with many Christians. We fail, yes, but for many of us, it's not because we want to fail. I have met some Christians that say, "You know, I'm blowing this whole thing off. I'm just living any way I want to; I don't care. You can stop me if you want. Try to!" I've met some Christians like that, but I've met a whole larger group of Christians that say, "I don't want to live like this anymore. Where does deliverance come from? I don't want to be this person anymore, and I can't stop."

Those are the majority of people that I meet in Christendom, and this is where Paul is right here. His desire is to please the Lord, but guess what? The things he wants to do he can't do; he doesn't practice consistently. Even though his "want to" is there, his "can do" is lacking, his ability to execute is not there. And so what he's trying to convince us of is this: just knowing God's law and desiring to perform it is not enough to execute it consistently. We've got to be convinced of this truth. Because if we're convinced of that truth, the question that should be running through our head is, "Well then how are we delivered from sin's power? How can we live a life that's glorifying to God?" I'm glad you're asking those questions, because there's good news for you in this section of scriptures. God has made a provision for your sin nature, and God has given you the indwelling Holy Spirit to execute the new desires that you have now, but you've got to rest upon Him. It's not about you getting your act together and performing in such a way, it's trusting in the Spirit of God to produce in you what you could not produce in yourself.

What about the second scenario? Well, the second scenario is that what he doesn't want to do, he's unable to stop doing. You know if you've ever experienced this, sometimes you feel like you can't stop. You can't stop. This is the most helpless, frustrating, and discouraging feeling that I think anybody can ever feel. You know something's wrong, you *bate* it, you don't want to do it, and you *can't* stop. Well, maybe you can stop for a couple days. Maybe you've gotten good, and you've stopped it for a couple of weeks. Maybe you've gotten really good, and you've stopped it for a couple of months. The problem is typically when you stop it for a couple of months, you get really proud of yourself and then you fall back into the thing that you're trying to avoid.

This is what Paul's talking about here, what he does not want to do he's unable to stop doing. In fact, he says, "*what I hate.*" He continually hates them, implying that he's got ill will towards this conduct. But the very things that he hates and adamantly doesn't want to do, are the very things that he continually does, he can't stop doing them.

Now can you see just from this description, and maybe in your own experience, how twisted and confused the sin nature can get you? Do you see how living this type of life could lead to despair, frustration, wanting to quit, wanting to give up? Because when you're engaged with the sin nature like this, and you're trying your best, and you're trying harder to be spiritual, and your two left feet just keep tripping over yourself, and tripping over yourself, and then you try to do something good and that doesn't even work out, and you're just one big failure. It's like every morning you wake up and you drink your cup of failure, right? You're not eating your apple for the day; you're drinking your big cup of failure every day. And that's exactly what Paul is feeling like.

But here's what's interesting, as you jump down to the end of verse 16, notice he says this: "*If, then, I do what I will not to do,*" - notice what he learns here - "*I agree with the law that it is good.*" Now, this is weird because he learns a lesson in this. And this is a lesson that we need to learn even in the midst of

this failure, and the lesson is simply this: by feeling these two different ways, he's actually giving internal testimony that the law is good. Otherwise, he wouldn't care that he was breaking it, he wouldn't hate anything, he wouldn't care.

So, by feeling this way he's giving internal testimony the law is good, but what do we want to learn from that? And that's kind of the point here. So, he's seeing things the right way, the law is good, he's desiring to do things the right way, he's desiring to stop doing the wrong things, and yet he has no power to do either.

And so every failure in these two areas supports this very truth. You know, he knows, I know the law is good. There's nothing wrong with the law, I've got new desires, I've got a law and the perfect standard, the question now should be why can't I execute what I want to do? I agree the law is good, that's the whole reason I'm having this internal discussion or tension. But what do I do? And so this lesson we're gonna see here that he learns in verse 16 is going to lead to a conclusion. He's starting to connect the dots for us as to why this contradiction is happening.

And so we move to verse 17, which says this, *"But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."* You see what he's saying here? The law is good, but indwelling sin is bad. That's the summary, right? And not only is the law good, but I'm not even the one who's the source of this sin, my new nature is not the source. There's nothing wrong with what God has created, there's nothing wrong with my identity in Christ, the problem is indwelling sin.

Now it sounds like Paul's shirking responsibility for sin in his life, right? Like the old comedian, Flip Wilson, who used to say, "The Devil made me do it!" And so it's not Paul saying, "Oh yeah, it's not my fault, it's sin's fault. I don't have to take responsibility for that." No, no, he is honestly recognizing why this contradiction is happening, why this confusion is happening. Why can't I overcome it? I have the right desires, why can't I execute them? Now Paul is saying, "You know why I can't? Because sin is indwelling me, sin the source is leading me into acts of sin. That's the culprit, that's the real culprit, and that explains why things are happening." And so he is just acknowledging the source of all acts of sin in life.

When you lose your temper, it's not because you didn't get enough sleep. It's not because your spouse said something a certain way, "And I've told her a million times if she talks to me that way, that I'm gonna... I just can't help it!" That's not why you lost your temper. You lost your temper because you presented yourself to sin, and sin enticed you to lose your temper and explode, because at that moment, you were convinced that was the best way to handle your issue.

Why did you succumb to lust? Well, it's not because certain things are happening in your life, and it's not because the world system is putting billboards all over, it's because at that moment, you presented yourself to sin, and you obeyed its lust, to lust. Why do you gossip? Why do we speak negative words to people? Why do we do any of those things? It's because of sin that indwells you. Why do you get so focused on yourself, and so depressed, and so anxious about life's trials? And when you stub your toe, why do you fly off with a 4-letter filth word? It's because at that moment, you're presenting yourself to sin. Sin is the source of all of those things in your life.

Paul's just acknowledging that. That's why there's this confusion. That's why there's this frustration. Because Paul is not at this moment - as he's describing this example - utilizing God's resources to be delivered from sin. He's trying to combat it on his own, and it's not gonna work, that's what he's finding here.

*"It is no longer I who do it."* Paul says. Why does he say it this way? Because Paul's in Christ, he's a new creation. He's not his old identity, he's in Christ, he will always be in Christ. It's not his new identity in Christ that sins, it's coming from the source of sin, this old sin nature. In fact, verse 22 is

gonna tell us about Paul and his inward man. *“For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.”* So, there's this new nature, this inward man that *loves* God's law, that has the right desires. This is why he wants to do the right things.

This is what 1 John is talking about when John says in 1 John 3:9 that the part of the same person that's born of God does not sin. He's not saying a Christian never sins. What he's saying is this, 1 John 3:9: *“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”* What's he talking about? He's talking about this inward man; he's talking about this new nature. This is why as a believer you have the desire to keep God's law, this is where it comes from, it comes from this new nature.

But notice Paul sees something here, let's go back to verse 17, *“But now it is no longer I”* - again I, Paul of Christ, this new nature - *“who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”* And so he's talking about the source of sin. Sin, sin nature, indwelling sin is presently dwelling in Paul, just like each believer in this room has a sin nature presently indwelling you. It is the source of every act of sin that you commit, and its desire is to dominate you, to dominate you and to put you in slavery.

So, what has Paul learned here? Well, what he's learned, and he's going to go on telling us what he learned, is the reason he can't execute his desires or his will is because of sin which dwells in him. That's why he can't execute it, he doesn't have the power to overcome it in his own efforts, he needs something much greater than that, and we're gonna find it's the Spirit of God when we get to Romans 8. Because the sin nature uses the good law inappropriately to create a desire to break the law, and then suffer the consequences. Isn't that exactly what sin does? It entices you to break the law, but it never brings up the consequences.

It's like a salesperson that just sells you on all the benefits, but then never tells you about the fine print where you really get stuck holding the bag, and that's exactly what the sin nature does to us. *“This'll be fun! This will be exciting! This will bring you pleasure; you'll enjoy this! Oh, and by the way, death is coming with it.”* That's the fine print that's never brought up.

And you know what, there's nothing wrong with the new nature, God did not make you defective. There's nothing wrong with the law, God did not make the law defective, but indwelling sin has deceived us regarding how we should live the Christian life via law keeping. It's convinced us that we have to live the Christian life by trying harder, working harder, doing more things, and God is here to tell you that that is not how you're delivered. *“I’ve already made provision for you; it's called the truth in Romans 6 where you were crucified with Christ. You've been severed from sin's dominion, and not only that, but I delivered you from the law because the sin nature is using the law in the wrong way to hurt you as well. That's the deliverance.”*

We'll continue looking at Paul's failure as we move on in the next section.

# CHAPTER 41

## Paul's Epic Failure Part 2

### Romans 7:18-23

We're gonna continue in Romans chapter 7 today. It's really an uncomfortable chapter in many ways, and it's because Paul is really revealing this failure that he's experienced in his life, but he's doing it for a reason. He's doing it because I think many of us can relate to this frustration and this agony of dealing with sin, and the power of sin in our life, and for many of us, dealing with it in the wrong way, trying to overcome it through our own strength.

But he's doing this as a pathway to get us to Romans 8 where there's a victory. We're missing something from the equation at this point in the narrative, we're gonna get that added piece, that bonus, and it's better than like... Michael Jordan showing up for your pickup basketball team. It's gonna be way better than that! So, we'll have to stay tuned, and like I said, I'm not too big on keeping those details from you. It's the Spirit of God, it's the Holy Spirit that we have indwelling us that's going to empower us to live this Christian life.

But to start today, I wanted to share a letter that I came across, which I thought did an excellent job of explaining this struggle. This was a letter written by, as you'll see, a very sincere person, written to his pastor, but living here in Romans 7, and you'll see even the quotes here. He says, *"Dear pastor, I've been attending your church for several years. As a result of growing conviction in my heart, your preaching, and my seeming powerlessness against the temptations which arise in my heart, and which I constantly succumb to, my growing doubts have led me to believe that I'm not saved.*

*"How sad it is, John,"* (he's speaking to the pastor) *"for me to not be able to enter in because of the sin which clings to me and from which I long to be free. How bizarre for one who has had advanced biblical training, who teaches in Sunday school with heartfelt conviction! So many times I've determined in my heart to repent, to shake loose my desire to sin, to forsake all for Jesus, only to find myself doing the sin I don't want to do and not doing the good I want to do.*

*"After my fiance and I broke up I memorized Ephesians as part of an all-out effort against sin, only to find myself weaker and more painfully aware of my sinfulness, more prone to sin than ever before, and grabbing cheap thrills to push back the pain of lost love. This occurs mostly in my heart, John, but that's where it counts, and that's where we live. I sin because I'm a sinner. I'm like a soldier without armor running across the battlefield getting shot up by fiery darts from the enemy.*

*"I couldn't leave the church if I wanted to. I love the people, and I'm enthralled by the gospel of the beautiful Messiah. But I'm a pile of manure on the white marble floor of Christ, a mongrel dog that sneaked in the back door of the King's banquet to lick the crumbs off the floor, and, by being close to Christians who are rich in the blessings of Christ, I get some of the overflow, and I ask you to pray for me as you think best."*

Now that ought to break your heart to hear that. There are people in this room that can relate to that, every line. *"I'm like a soldier without armor running across the battlefield getting shot up by fiery darts from the enemy."* Or *"I'm a pile of manure on a white marble floor of Christ, the mongrel dog that sneaked in the back door of the King's banquet to lick the crumbs off the floor."* And see, this is the experience, this is the wording of somebody who understands the dilemma that Paul is describing here, the frustration in Romans 7. Some of you have been here, some of you might be here today in this very letter. You could have penned that letter to me, possibly, or maybe in the past you could have penned that letter to me. And so this message

today, and the whole chapter of Romans 7 is for people like you, if you can relate to that at a time in life.

And you know when we started this whole talk on sanctification, we got into Romans 6 and we said, "Hey, we're gonna be leaving justification." Now remember justification: you're saved by faith in a moment when you put your trust in the fact that Jesus died for your sins and rose again. And you're saved eternally, your sins are forgiven at that moment because Jesus paid the penalty that was due for you. He paid your penalty as your substitute.

But remember what we said in sanctification, there's another thing that you have to understand. In fact, you've got to understand this phrase in two aspects: that you can't. And at one point in your life, you realized that you couldn't get to heaven on your own. You realized that you weren't good enough to get to heaven on your own. You realized that you couldn't do anything to have your sins forgiven on your own, you needed a savior. You needed a solution outside of yourself, and you realized you can't do it. And someone presented the gospel to you and told you that Jesus died for your sins and rose again, and He paid the penalty for you, and if you simply put your faith in Him, not only will your death penalty be paid for, but God will credit righteousness to your account because Jesus Christ actually becomes your righteousness. That was the first "you can't" that we needed to realize.

Just as we are dependent upon Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins, we're just as dependent upon Him for deliverance from the power of sin. If you're a believer here today and you haven't realized that you *can't* live the Christian life, you need to realize that. In fact, the reason I think Paul even has this section in here is to show us that even if we think we've got all the tools and all the right desires, and we've got the law of God, and if we try to live the Christian life, cranking it out in our own strength, you can't do it. You are going to experience what he's talking about here.

And so this is one of those realizations that we need in order to live the Christian life. You can't do it. In the same way that you needed a Savior to deliver you from the penalty of sin, you need a Savior to deliver you from the power of sin as well. And until we realize this, we are going to be on this cycle of being manure on white marble floors and feeling that way about ourselves too.

And so let's jump back into Romans 7:18. And what's going to be interesting today as we look at Paul's continued teaching here, is now he's gonna see this apparent contradiction, he's gonna start making sense of this contradiction, and remember the contradiction is this: since I got saved, I have new desires, I have a new heart. I love God's law, there's nothing wrong with God's law, in fact it sets up the perfect standard, but when I seek to live out the Christian life in my own strength, keeping an eye on what I should do and what I don't do, something really off happens. The very things that I want to do, I can't do. And the very things I want to *stop* doing, those are the very things I do.

And it's this consistent failure over, and over, and over again. And so Paul is now getting into the section of Romans 7 where he's going to say, "You know what though, I'm figuring something out." And what he's figuring out is although I have all the right desires, I've got every resource available to me, I've got God's Word, I've got God's law, I'm still missing the power to actually execute my desires. And on top of that, I've got evil present in me that wants to break the law and wants to use God's good law as a starting point to sin. That's what he's going to start realizing.

And so he's not shirking his responsibilities, let's go to Romans 7:17. We looked at this in the last section, he says, "*But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*" Remember last time we said he's not shirking his responsibilities, he's not saying, "Oh, it's not my fault, the devil made me do it. I have no responsibility here." He's just clearly saying, "No, the new me, the new ID, this new man in Christ is not the one sinning. I've got this sin, indwelling sin, sin nature, that every time I commit an act of sin, I know now where it's coming from. God didn't create a faulty new creation. It's not this new



creation in Christ that's sinning, it's not, 'Am I saved or am I not saved?', it's every time I sin, there's a reason for it, there's a source."

And I'll tell you what it is. Every time you commit an act of sin, you know the reason why you did it? It's not because you didn't get enough sleep last night, it's not because you didn't wake up early enough to read your Bible, it's not because you didn't pray for two hours - you prayed for one hour and 59 minutes, and that just isn't going to cut it in your sanctification - it's none of those things. It's that at the moment in time where the sin nature wanted to dominate you and control you, you presented your members to it just like you did when you were unsaved.

That's the reason you sin, and Paul's just identifying, "Hey, there's a source here, and so I have to deal with the source." And what he's realizing is just wanting to deal with the source, just wanting to keep God's law is not enough to take care of the source of sin. You're not gonna overcome sin's power just by wanting to and trying to keep God's law, trying to be obedient, right? Because we looked at that in Romans 6, where does obedience fall? Well, it's fifth down the list after a bunch of faith issues: reckoning yourself dead to sin and alive unto God and presenting yourself to the Lord. So that's what we're looking at here.

So, in verse 18 he says that he knows something. Verse 18, "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good, I do not find.*" And so Paul knows something, and his knowledge has to do with this source. There's a source of sin indwelling each believer, and Paul is recognizing that apparent contradiction, "Wait a minute, I thought I was saved. Why am I still doing this thing?" "Wait a minute, I thought I was saved, but how come I don't want to do this thing?" "Wait a minute I thought I was saved, how come this particular sin keeps tripping me up? I mean, I know it's wrong, but why does this keep happening?" Paul's saying there's a source issue here. There's something inside of me, evil is present within me, this is where it's coming from, and Paul realizes this.

Now in verse 17 he realized that when he does what is wrong, and when he does not want to do that, these actions spring from a sinful source from within him. He also realizes something else, we're gonna see that come out in Romans 8. The answer is not "try harder". I feel like we should say that out loud! We need reminders of that. The answer to overcoming sin is not trying harder! In fact, what was the answer to getting saved? Romans 4:5 "*But to him who does not work,*" to him who stops trying hard, to him who stops trying to be good enough to get to heaven, because nobody's good enough to get to heaven. "*But to him who does not work,*" But does what? Believes. That's the person who's justified, that is the person that God declares righteous.

Because God - if you want to say it this way - put all His eggs in one basket, and it was in the basket sitting at the foot of the cross 2,000 years ago when His son Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, died for your sins, and rose again, and God - remember in Romans chapter 3 - is pointing to that Man. He's pointing to Him. That's where God's eggs are in His basket, and the question is where are your eggs? Who are you trusting in to get you to heaven? Are you trusting in yourself?

I mean, we've been over this a million times, we can't even trust ourselves to get the trash out to the curb on the right day. We can't even trust ourselves to remind ourselves of when daylight savings time is. Now we've got smartphones to help us, but before that, you had people showing up an hour late and an hour early for things for a couple of days.

So, it's not about trusting ourselves. The solution is not about trying harder, the solution in sanctification is the same solution in justification: will you trust in God's provision? God has a solution for you to overcome sin's power in your daily life, will you rest in what God provided for you? That's

the question. Do you want to grow spiritually or not? That's the question before you. Will you walk by faith in God's solution for indwelling sin?

Paul says this, "*in me (that is, in my flesh)*" notice that "*that is, in my flesh*" is in parentheses, he's further clarifying here. But he's saying that in his flesh nothing good dwells. So why does he make that clarification? It's an interesting point. Well, I don't think he's talking about the body here, we'll kind of look at that here in a second. He's talking - I believe - about indwelling sin, the source, when he uses the term "flesh." And so we're gonna see this word "flesh" used synonymously for indwelling sin, we find that in Galatians 5, right? The flesh wars or lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. But he's talking about this indwelling sin, this power of sin that we're looking at, not just a certain act of sin.

But you know why I don't believe he's talking about his body here? Because we do have something good dwelling in our body as believers, what is it? Or *Who* is it, is a better question. It's the Spirit of God. We do have something very good dwelling inside of us. And so when he says in verse 18 "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells;*" I don't think he's talking about these human bodies, I think he's talking about our sin nature, this flesh, this indwelling sin that we've been looking at. And you know what? When he says "nothing", he means *nothing*. That's deep, right? I mean, we're just taking the word at face value. But he's saying *nothing*. The sin nature is corrupt continually, it's a present tense aspect there. Continually corrupt, nothing good to build from, nothing good to build with, no reason that a believer should ever walk according to the flesh. There is nothing but corruption there.

"Hey, I got a good deal for you! I'd like to sell you this product and it will never work." You want to buy that product? "Hey, I fixed your car by doing nothing to it. That'll be 500 bucks." You want to pay for that auto repair? And yet consistently, this is the well we go to in our Christian life. Consistently we coast through our Christian life.

If you are not a thinking Christian, you are a carnal Christian. If you are not swishing God's Word around in your mouth, in your mind, if you have no understanding of what God has done to free you from sin's power, you are a carnal Christian, you're walking according to the flesh, and look out. Because today it might look religious, it might be acceptable, tomorrow it's gonna be licentiousness as the place where people who sin a lot end up. It goes from religion to licentiousness overnight. That's why this is so dangerous.

This is why when we talk about the corruption of sin, when Paul says there's nothing good that dwells in my flesh, he wants us to know that if you coast in the Christian life, your default mode will be to walk according to and from this source. It's like the kids in our church nursery, we are not teaching the kids back there to learn how to not share toys. They've got that covered, right? That's default mode. My toy, my way, right now, get out of my face. We don't have to teach them to hit other kids, they do that naturally, that's default mode.

And you know what default mode is for the believer? Carnality. And I'm not talking about licentious carnality, I'm talking about religious carnality. That's the deception of the flesh, that's what we're looking at in Romans 7. If you think you're sanctified by keeping some kind of law, a list of do's and don'ts, you're being deceived, you're walking according to flesh, and you are carnal. You're not trusting in God's provision for sin's power in your life.

This is what we've got to understand, because the second you walk according to sin, or you walk according to the flesh, guess what? You're capable of any sin under the sun. Ask any believer who's had a major lapse in moral responsibility, and they will tell you they didn't go from A to Z overnight, it was step-by-step-by-step. They were coasting in their Christian life, they were entertaining thoughts from the flesh, they were presenting themselves to sin over here, they were presenting themselves to the sin

nature over here, and before long, sin was dominating them and they were doing things that they didn't want to do, and they couldn't stop. Ask any Christian that's had a major moral lapse, that's what they'll tell you.

This is why when Paul is talking about indwelling sin, he wants you and I to know there's nothing, nothing, *nothing* good. If you are not walking by means of the Spirit, you are playing with fire in your Christian life. Not fire like you're going to lose your salvation and go to hell, that's been settled. Jesus Christ died for your sins, there's no penalty left to pay, I'm just talking about the consequences. Because when you walk according to the flesh, sin brings forth death, that's the consequence in every believer's life. God doesn't want you living that type of life as a believer, He loves you, you're His child, He wants you walking in fellowship with Him. And so Paul's saying this is a key way that sin deceives us, and be aware of it.

So even though Paul knows this, this is where the frustration comes in. Let's kind of read verse 18 again, because he knows this thing. Notice that next phrase after "nothing good dwells", he says, "*for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*" So even though he knows this, even though he describes his struggle, he doesn't know how to do the good things that he wants to do.

Can anybody relate with that statement? "Man, I want to stop doing this dumb old sin that I keep falling into, I want to start doing these good old things over here, I just can't find the how. Every time I turn around, I keep tripping over my own two left feet. I trip on everything! I can't execute the very things that I know I want to execute."

And you know how most believers respond? Eventually most believers respond white flag, give up, I'm just throwing it in. This is as good as it gets, I'm gonna settle for mediocrity, I'm gonna settle for second best. I'm gonna settle for whatever this is because I don't have the emotional fortitude to keep dealing with this frustration in my life. So, I'm gonna settle with it, but I'm gonna learn really good how to cover it up so that nobody else can see it. I'm gonna struggle, I'm gonna be in my bedroom at night crying over my life and feeling like a pile of manure on white marble floors.

And yet, when I come to church, I'm gonna paint a better picture. Because I can't let other people know I'm a pile of manure on white marble floors. Trust me, it's okay, we're all piles of manure on white marble floors. Everyone that you're sitting next to is that way. Nobody's got this whole thing put together. We all need to depend upon the same Savior to deliver us from sin's power. We all need that! The temptation though is just to settle.

"Well, I can't get rid of this thing, so I'm just gonna get really good at covering it up. I'm gonna get really good at hiding this. I'm gonna get really good about pushing and blowing past it." And you know, some people, they don't even go that far. They say, "I can't get this figured out, so I'm just gonna quit going to church, I'm just not gonna go anymore. I mean, look at these people! They've got it all together. You should see this group of people; they've got it all together! They've got it all figured out and I don't, I'm just a pile of manure on a white marble floor. So, I'm just not gonna go." This is how people respond here. There's good news for the believer, that's what we've got to understand. There's good news for the believer, it doesn't have to be this way. And so Paul is expressing everything that we understand.

Do you know that most Christians have an understanding, a good understanding, of what they should and should not do? Wouldn't you agree? Most Christians, if they're doing something that's wrong, very rarely do you find someone that says, "That's really good how I cheated that guy out of money. You know, that's biblical!" No, they know that's wrong, you don't have to convince them of that. They know what's wrong, they know what's right.

The problem is, how? How do I stop? How do I start? How, how, how, that's the million-dollar question. Don't tell me *what*, I already know *what*. You know, Captain Obvious here. I know what I should be doing, I know what I should stop doing. Can you tell me how to do it? Does the Bible give how? And this is what Paul is recounting here in his experience. At this time, he didn't know how. In fact, he goes on to say, "*to will is present with me.*" To do the right thing is always continually present with him. In fact, the word "present" communicates this idea of being at hand, to lie near, to be ready to go. I want to do the right thing, I'm ready to go. Just tell me how and I'm ready to sprint out of the box. This is kind of what's being communicated here.

So, although he's struggling with the "how" to accomplish things, he still is recognizing that he's got this present and continual desire to do good. And so the question becomes how to perform the good. I can't find it, I don't know how to do it, I don't know the 'how'. And so this word "perform" gives us some additional insight, it means *to work out, to carry out a task until it's finished, to execute a plan*. And that's really where it boils down to.

Even though Paul knows what he wants to do, knows exactly how it should look and how it shouldn't look, he's got no power to execute the plan. This is the most frustrating and hopeless position I think that anyone can ever be in. This is why you see in this section - you see in the letter that I read earlier - total despair. Because when you realize what it should look like and you don't know how to get there, that's frustrating.

To use a real common example, has anyone ever tried to build a big Lego set with one of their kids without the instructions? That's frustrating, right? I mean, all these little pieces, you see what it should look like on the box, but it's like, "Where do I start? How do I even get there?" You know, thousands of pieces of Legos just sitting there in a pile. And that's why they give instructions. Because if they didn't sell instructions, they probably wouldn't sell a lot of products, because people would be too frustrated.

This is kind of what Paul's going through. He sees on the box what it should look like, but he can't execute it. He doesn't know how to get there, he doesn't have the steps or the mechanics on how to look like what's on the box, look like what God has revealed to him a believer should look like in terms of holiness, and so there's this frustration. Again, the law can tell him what's good, the law can provide a plan, but the law can't provide the means to execute a plan.

Anybody that's ever watched a football game knows exactly what I'm talking about, because does the offense go up and write up a play that's designed for the running back to lose five yards in the backfield? No, I mean the way it's drawn up and designed is everyone's on their block and the running backs going for a touchdown, right? And the problem is that the plan was great, but there was an execution issue with one or more of the players. And that's what we're looking at here. The plan's great, we know what the target is, how do we hit the target? That's what Paul is struggling with.

And then he says this, and many of us can relate to this: "*I do not find it.*" Presently, continually, although we're searching diligently, we're trying hard, we cannot get to the solution. The solution is evading us. And so in verse 19 he shows us again that he's just a walking contradiction. You'll notice the word "for" used a lot in this section, he's just further elaborating on each point, that's how he's just connecting all of these thoughts. But verse 19 says, "*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*"

And so we've been talking about this, I mean he's repeating himself now, but he's a walking contradiction. The things that he wills to do, these two things, they're continual. He wants to do good things, things acceptable to God, things in accordance with his law, and he wants to stop doing evil things. He wants to stop committing sinful actions. But we have the big word "but" there, he fails, he

continually does not do the things that he wants to do, and he continually does the things that he does not want to do. And so you see this walking contradiction.

Verse 20, he's gonna start explaining though. What's going on, why this contradiction, why does he want to do these good things but why is he not able to execute them? What's happening behind the scenes? Because if he can tell us what's happening behind the scenes, then guess what? You and I, hopefully, will realize that there's a solution for it. We don't have to live in confusion wondering, "Am I schizophrenic? I mean, how can I go to church and just have this wonderful experience at church, and sing these beautiful songs, and I even have tears coming to my eyes, and then later that afternoon I can do something totally carnal and out of character, and in total contradiction to my experience at church that morning? How can this happen?"

Well, many people when they ask that question say, "Well, I must not really be saved." And you could see that was the outcome of the gentleman's letter that I read at the beginning of the sermon. "I'm not even saved, but I can't stop going to church because I just hope I can get a couple crumbs from the rich blessings, that all the other people who have it all together there can just throw that off of their lap so I can pick up a crumb." That's the mindset, so Paul's gonna explain this apparent contradiction.

Let's look at verse 20, he says, "*Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*" And he uses a first-class condition here and he's saying, "If I do what I will not to do, and let's assume that I do. In other words, I am doing those things, the very things I don't want to do." Then he realizes something. In fact, his explanation for this apparent contradiction between his desires and his doing is explained as a distinction, I believe, between who he is in Christ and the presence of indwelling sin.

You know, Paul is not trying to shirk responsibility here, he's just calling it like he sees it. This is exactly why every believer sins. It's not the new creation, God didn't create a faulty new creation, He didn't give you a faulty new identity, He didn't say, "Oops, I didn't quite get to finish that one, and that's why they keep screwing up." No, your identity in Christ, your resources in Christ, your new nature in Christ is perfect, it's born of God, 1 John tells us it does not sin. So how can we explain sin in the believer's life? How can we explain this apparent contradiction? And so that we don't think we're schizophrenic, or begin to question our salvation, or begin to think maybe we're not really saved because we still do evil things, he's telling us, "Guys and gals, you still have indwelling sin present in your bodies. You still have this source of sin that is anti-God, anti-others, pro-self, pro-selfishness, pro-pleasure, pro-anything-at-any-cost-to-get-what-I-think-I-need residing inside of you.

And so in verse 20 when Paul says, "*Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it,*" it's not the new nature, it's not Paul in Christ, but it's sin. It's the sin nature that dwells in me that's leading me to do wrong things. And it's not that it's out of control, I have a part in that too. What's my part, according to Romans 6? Well, I'm presenting my members to sin, to participate in whatever it's trying to lead me to do.

And so, "*it is no longer I who do it.*" Again, Paul is not trying to shirk responsibility for sin in his life, he's not trying to just excuse his mistakes, he's just simply stating the fact that we pick up in 1 John. And that's: the new creation in Christ doesn't sin. The new creation in Christ would never lead you to sin. Your new nature would never lead you to sin. So that's not the source of sin in your life. It's not a faulty manufacturing job by God the Father. You're born of God, 1 John 3:9 says, "*Whoever has been born of God does not sin.*"

So again, where does sin come from? It comes from a different source that's indwelling you, it's this indwelling sin that we're talking about. I believe Paul is talking about identity here. This is why in Galatians 2:20 he says, "*it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;*" You see that? It's not that he's saying,

"I'm dead. Oh, I don't live. I'm gonna lay down." That's not what he's saying at all. He's just saying this old identity in Paul doesn't live anymore, that doesn't exist anymore. Christ now lives in me, I've got this one nature, this one identity that God has birthed, if you will.

And so we'll say that his old identity in Adam's completely gone, but here's the key: indwelling sin is not. That's what we have to understand. Your old identity in Adam is gone, but indwelling sin remains in these human bodies, until when? Well, until the third tense of our one great salvation called "glorification", when we're completely delivered from the presence of sin, and that's gonna happen at the rapture of the church.

And so he's talking about sin dwelling in him, again, it's when he presents himself to the sin nature that resides in him. And so even though he knows this, the sin nature is so deceptive. You'd think, "Okay, well once I know this, I'm gonna stop presenting myself to sin." Right? "That's easy. Now that I know this, I'm just gonna stop presenting myself to sin, and I'm just gonna walk by faith and present myself to God." I hope you are thinking that way, but understand that sin is so deceptive, that many times we still present ourselves to sin even when we know better than to do that. Or we walk just kind of in default mode, and we just coast in our Christian life, and we're walking according to the flesh whether we realize it or not. Again, what is Paul recognizing here? What he's recognizing is that just wanting to do what is right and just to stop doing what's wrong is not enough to live a successful Christian life.

I have been in Bible studies with people before where somebody has been very honest. I remember sitting in a study, and I knew the people I was in the study with, and I just knew they were the type of people that you could be open with to a certain point, but you couldn't be really open. Do you know what I mean? Have you ever been in one of those studies? And I remember this guy sat down in the study and he's like, "Yeah, I've got a prayer request." And he said, "Yeah, this week I was driving in San Antonio, and I was just going there for work, and I was tempted to pull into this bar in the middle of the day, and just get drunk."

And I thought, "Oh man, that's not gonna go well for him in this study." You can share that you struggle with pride, that's acceptable. You can share that maybe you lost your temper and kicked the dog, or maybe you didn't kick the dog, maybe you just kind of nudged him with your foot - I mean, that would be what you would share. You couldn't share something this dramatic, and gross, and perverted. And I just remember sitting there in the study as he was sharing and thinking, "Oh man, he's about to get it. You just can't share this kind of stuff in this study, that's not gonna go over very well."

And I remember sitting there in the study, and one person piling on top of another person saying, "Do you know why you wanted to do that? Because you love sin more than you love Jesus Christ." "You know why you wanted to do that? Because you don't want to stop sinning bad enough, and that's why you still want to do those things."

Friends, that's not the message. I mean, if you can point to me in Romans 7 where I see a man who wants to keep on sinning, and doesn't want to do good things, show me where it's at. I see just the opposite. I see the man in my study representing Paul here more than anything saying, "I don't want to do those things. I can't stop doing those things. I don't know why or how I can execute the things I want to do." It's not about wanting to do more. It isn't about trying harder, it's not about getting up earlier, that's not Christian sanctification. Christian sanctification is the same way you got saved: we're trusting in somebody else to do it for us. We're trusting in the work of another to accomplish for us what we could not accomplish for ourselves, and we cannot accomplish for ourselves.

And so in verse 21 as we continue, he says this, "*I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*" This is how we live our Christian life just like this picture I have on the screen: It's

a scary clown inside of an old shack with a sign that says, "Free hugs." And then the caption says, "Yeah, it seems legit." I'll just run over there and give that clown a hug in this hole in the ground, right? I mean clearly, we would view that situation with suspicion. We would say, "This is dangerous!"

And do we understand what this verse is teaching in verse 21? I find that a law, it's a principle, evil is present with me. Do we understand that? Do we walk around our life, living our day, recognizing that evil is always present with us, ready to pounce at a given moment? If my wife says just the wrong thing at just the right time, boom! Pounce, get angry, get upset. If somebody at my work, a customer that I'm dealing with, says just the right thing or does just the wrong thing at the exact time, boom! I'm ready to pounce. Right? And insert your own sin if those don't fit you.

Do we realize that evil is present with us at every moment of every day, and how significant and how important it is that you're walking moment by moment in dependence upon God's provision? Are you by faith reckoning yourself dead to sin and alive unto God, and are you mentally, by faith, presenting your members to the Lord for His use and righteousness? Is that even part of our thinking on a daily basis? That's where true deliverance is found, that's where God dealt with the power of sin.

He doesn't want us taking up the law, that's why He put the law out of business, we died to the law Romans 7 taught us. He doesn't want us taking up legal principles, trying harder, doing more, not doing this, trying to do this, and keeping this mental list that, "If I just do this, if I just do this external action, it's gonna make me more spiritual." He doesn't want us there. That's not the solution, He's already provided the solution.

And so Paul has discovered this unique principle as it relates to godly living, and here's the principle: even though he's a new creation in Christ, even though he's been freed from sin's dominion, even though he's been freed from law keeping, and even though he has the desires to do good and stop doing evil, guess what? Evil is still present in him.

If we don't understand that, we're going into the battle not aware of what our enemy can do, and we're in big trouble. Because if I think my enemy only has a knife, I'm not gonna worry about him out in the woods over there, because unless he's Stretch Armstrong, he's not gonna reach me. Right? But if I don't know the guy's got a sniper rifle with a scope, and he's pretty good he can hit from 300 yards out or whatever (I just made that up, I don't even know if that's possible), but if we know *that*, we're probably not gonna be walking out here with our heads held high, we'll probably be ducking a little bit, just give him a little smaller target to hit.

But we've got to understand that evil is present with us at every point in time. In fact, this word "present" is a continual tense verb, it means *to lie near, to be at hand, or close by*. In other words, this indwelling source of sin, this capability to commit acts of sin is never too far out of reach. Don't think because you went to a Bible conference all week that you're set for a little while. "I went to a Bible conference, sin's probably out of reach for at least a week. You know, I bought myself some breathing room." No, it's always present. You had a great worship experience at church? Don't think that you're clear the rest of the day. "I can just take off the rest of the day. I cried, I had an emotional experience, I felt something in my stomach. Man, that was good! I'm just gonna take the rest of the day off." No, sin is always present, sin is evil and corrupt, and always ready to pounce, never too far out of reach.

This too, is a law or principle that's true of every believer at any moment in their life. That's why 1 Corinthians 10:12 says - we're all familiar with it - "*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*" Evil is always present. Don't get so proud that you haven't committed a certain sin in two weeks, and now you've got that thing licked, and mastered, and you'll never struggle with - oops, and there it goes again. "Look what you made me do, it happened again." is kind of the idea. And so this is a principle that's always present.

And I think it's probably wise to say something here as it relates to spiritual maturity, because spiritual maturity is not measured in years or gray hairs. Can we all agree to that? Have we ever met somebody that's an elderly saint that should be spiritually mature, but is one of the most immature believers that maybe you've ever met? I'm not criticizing, I'm just saying that years of being a Christian and just the number of gray hairs doesn't make somebody spiritually mature. It's the people who have learned to consistently walk by means of the Spirit of God that are spiritually mature. That's where spirituality comes from, that's where spiritual growth comes from.

Maturity is walking by means of the spirit in a more consistent fashion, day by day, moment by moment. It has nothing to do with how long you've been a Christian, how many gray hairs you've had, or how many years you've been in a church. You would think it should, but it doesn't, it's not a direct correlation. And so when we talk about this spiritual maturity, we're talking about a consistency here of walking by means of the spirit, trusting and resting in God's provision to live the Christian life.

Now verse 22, he says, *"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."* And we see that Paul rejoiced in God's law according to this inward man, and notice he provides that caveat. What is the inward man? Who's he talking about here? Well, I believe he's talking about this new creation again, who Paul was in Christ. We find that in 2 Corinthians 5:17, this idea that *"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."*

But what's really interesting about this whole concept of the inner man, is this new nature is great, there's nothing wrong with the new nature. It produces the right desires, new desires. It produces right thinking, you want to do what's right, you want to be in line with God's law. But you know what? The new nature itself is not powerful enough to execute these desires. This is what Paul's finding in Romans 7. It's not enough to want to do the right things and to want to stop doing the wrong things, that's not enough.

Now, it's good that we've got that new nature, that's where those desires are coming from, but we're missing something from the equation. And as we look at and trace this idea of inward man in the scriptures, we're gonna see that the inward man *must* be empowered by the Spirit of God in order to execute the desires. Paul is looking for "the how". "The how" is encompassed in a "Who". *How* do I live this out? *How* do I walk and grow in righteousness? It's encompassed in a *Who*. This new nature needs to be empowered by the Spirit of God.

And so we see this in Ephesians 3:16, it's in the middle of a prayer that Paul offers for the Ephesians, and he says this: *"that He"* - speaking of God - *"would grant you, according to the riches of His glory,"* - notice this next phrase - *"to be strengthened with might through His Spirit"* - where? - *"in the inner man."*

And so your new nature is like a car: it can look nice on the side of the road, right? "Wow, this is a nice car! Look at that paint job! I mean, look at the rims on that thing!" But then you go pop the hood and there's no engine, it's not gonna get you anywhere. It looks good, right? It's perfect, actually. It just doesn't have the energy, the power, the empowerment behind it. And that's what we need, the Spirit of God is going to provide that. That's what we're gonna get in Romans chapter 8, he's gonna put this whole equation together and say, "This is how we're delivered."

In fact, as you go down to Romans 7, he's gonna say, *"Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* It's a Person, it's the Person and Spirit of God who's going to empower our new nature to execute God's desires. We see that this inward man is being renewed by the Lord day by day as we learn to trust Him and as we learn to trust in His word. We live life day by day. And then we saw this inward man is born of God, cannot sin, and will always desire what is right, and deplore what is wrong.

Alright, put on your seat belt, let's try to finish verse 23. Notice that 23 starts with the word "but", so he's contrasting. Verse 22, *"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."* Verse 23,



*"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."*

So, let's just start working through this. Again, "but" is going to contrast what he said in verse 22. If having all the right desires was all you needed to live the Christian life, Paul had it, but... there's a "but", there's something else going on here, which is what he's been talking about. There's another law in his members, in his body. Notice he changes the phraseology there, "in my members", and it's a totally different kind of law, a totally different kind of principle within him.

And that would make sense. You've got the law of God, holy, righteous, you've got something totally different residing in him, again, talking about this sin nature. This law is said to be warring against the law of his mind, against his new nature, against his new desires. This warring against is a present-tense participle, it just gives us the idea that there's ongoing continual conflict internally between these two laws. And so the word itself means *to lead an army*, or *to lead an army out to war*. And this is what we would say is true mortal conflict, this is the tension that's going on, and this battle that rages inside of every believer is explained here, but notice this: when we look at the participants in the battle, do you know what many Christians think? "Well, I'm fighting against my sin nature. I'm fighting against the flesh. I gotta buck up and I gotta struggle, and I just gotta really clamp down a little bit harder so I can beat this thing." That's not what the Scriptures teach. In fact, the battles between the Spirit of God and your sin nature, it's not even your battle!

It reminds me of the story back in 2 Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat he says, 'Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, it's not your battle, but God's.' The same same thing is true in our sanctification, it's not your battle! If you're talking about beating down the flesh, and struggling against the flesh, and beating it up, and kicking it out, and you're not even thinking biblically. Even though it sounds like you're doing something exciting and spiritual, that's not even biblical. It's not your battle! Let the big dog fight the battle, right? Let the varsity team get in there and you, JV, go sit down. Rest in the Spirit of God to take care of this and to empower you to do what you cannot do.

Could you imagine in a battle, a foot soldier out there by the camp drawing up battle plans in the dirt, when the general's in the tent and has already got this thing figured out? How ridiculous would that be? "Hey guys, I got a plan. Yeah, see this dirt? Okay, we're gonna go up here around this rock, that's that hill over there." And the general has already got it figured out! He's in the tent, he's got the intel, he's got the maps, he knows the terrain, he knows everything. He's got the plan worked out; we've just got to trust him. We've just got to trust the general, not trust this little foot soldier sitting at this makeshift fire pit drawing stuff in the dirt.

Again, believers have a new nature with new desires which loves God's righteous law. Two questions for you: who's winning the war in your life as a believer? Who's winning the war? There are only two possibilities to that, the Spirit of God or the sin nature. Now, the way you know is what's being manifested in your life. What's showing up in your actions? What's showing up in your thinking? What's showing up in your emotions? Who's winning in your life, who's winning that battle?

And then here's the follow-up question: what are you gonna do about it? Are you gonna just try a little bit harder? Just crank it out? Just really put in the effort, put the screws to it? Are you gonna try a little bit harder, or are you gonna realize today that you can't do it? Is that gonna really settle into your thinking so you can say, "I can't. This is too powerful for me, this is overwhelming to me, I'm not utilizing the resources the right way, I can't do it." And will you start trusting God's provision for you to live the Christian life?

If you're not sure, you're not convinced, life is probably gonna look a lot like Romans 7 for you for a time. If you're convinced but you're not sure how to execute the plan or how to walk by faith, life

may still look like Romans 7 for you for a time. There is good news: God does not want you trusting in yourself. God has not left this for you to figure out, He's not left this for you to fight your own battle, He's taking care of it all. The good news is going to start manifesting itself in your life as you learn to trust in what God has done for you by taking you into the death of Jesus Christ with Him, bearing you with Him and raising you to newness of life with Him. Will you trust God's provision?

# CHAPTER 42

## No Condemnation

### Romans 7:24-8:3

We're going to get out of Romans 7 today, so I hope that encourages you in light of what's been shared in Romans 7. We want to get out of it, not only in our study, but also practically in our daily lives. And you remember last time in verse 23, we saw that there's a battle raging. If you're a believer, you don't need somebody else to tell you that, you *know*. You've experienced this wanting to do the right thing, but not being able to, and wanting to stop doing the wrong thing, and not being able to do the good, so you don't need somebody to tell you that.

But in verse 23 we see that he says, *"I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,"* - he uses that mortal combat type word, that word "warring" - *"and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."* And so we've been looking at this battle raging within Paul, the last couple weeks we've called it his "epic failure", which is a failure that we can all relate to. But you know that his failure resulted from a failure to realize that his deliverance must come from an outside source.

See naturally, when something goes wrong in our Christian life, we automatically assume that there's something we can do to correct that, there's something that we can do to solve that problem. And Paul has been spending this entire chapter trying to figure out how to solve this issue of sin's domination in his life, and what we've seen is failure, after failure, after failure. But also, he's starting to realize what's going on here, that there's this hypocrisy, if you will, because he's got this new man, this new nature inside of him called "the inner man" that delights in the law of God, that wants to do the right things, it has the right desires. He's wired for sound, so to speak, to want to try to please God, and yet he finds there's something else internally, evil present with him that's short-circuiting that process.

And so what Paul has found out is this inner man, this new nature, is not strong enough in and of itself to overcome indwelling sin. We've got to understand that as a believer, because if we don't, we're gonna think the same way and we're gonna utilize the same equation that Paul used in Romans 7 which is: I've got a new desire, I've got a new nature, I've got the holy law of God, let's crank it out, let's do this sanctification thing. And if you take that approach to your sanctification, you'll come out of Romans 7 whimpering just like the Apostle Paul. That's the Christian experience of trying to crank out your own holiness in your own strength, just based on the desires of the new nature.

And it's like any recipe if you're missing a single ingredient. Now, there's some recipes you can make and miss an ingredient. There are some recipes that if you leave out a single ingredient, there's no telling what you've got. And for many of us, it might not even be edible, even for dogs, if you miss a single ingredient.

And so what Paul has been describing here in Romans 7 is he's got all of the ingredients in order except he's missing a key ingredient. Do you know what the inner man needs? An empowerment outside of itself, we saw that last week. Look at Ephesians 3:16. We're picking up in the middle of Paul's prayer for the Ephesian Church, and he says this: *"that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory,"* - now notice this next phrase - *"to be strengthened with might through His spirit in the inner man."*

And you see the missing ingredient that Paul's been missing in Romans 7 is the Spirit of the Living God. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the one who empowers this new nature to actually execute what God desires for us to execute. That's what he's been missing. In fact, we made the comment before in Romans 7, you don't have one reference to the Holy Spirit, that's why you see failure.

So, we're gonna look at Paul's understanding this morning as we move on in Chapter 7. Look at verse 24, he says this, "*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" You know this word "wretched man", it's pretty self-explanatory, but what's interesting about the word is it actually comes from a root word in the Greek "*talas*", which means *suffering*. That's the root word that this word "wretched" comes from, and it means *afflicted, wretched, miserable, distressed*. In fact, we find the same word used to describe the lukewarm Laodicean Church in the book of Revelation. The same exact word is used to describe them, and so it's a fitting word for a carnal Christian.

And when I say, "carnal Christian", that conjures up a lot of images in our mind. And all I mean by carnal Christian is you can be spiritual-carnal. What I mean by that is you can be trying to crank out spiritual fruit in your own strength, and that's still carnal when you're doing it in your own strength. You can also be licentious-carnal. There are really two categories there, but it's all coming from the same source.

We find that in the religious Pharisees of Jesus's day, they had a religious carnality about them. And so we shouldn't be surprised to see that in Romans 7. We've got a guy that wants to keep the law of God, and yet he's walking by means of his own sin nature, he's walking by means of his own strength, trying to crank this out in his own efforts.

Vincent's word studies go on to describe this word that originally meant *to be wretched through the exhaustion of hard labor*. And this is what Paul is saying, "O wretched man that I am! O exhausted man that I am through all of this labor!" What's he laboring to do? He's laboring to live the Christian life. I mean, can anybody relate to that statement? This wretchedness, this laboring, being worn out trying to do what you cannot do, trying to stop doing what you can't stop doing. This is what Paul is talking about.

In fact, this is the exclamation of a man who had tirelessly worked and made an effort to overcome the sin in his own strength. And you could say that his failure was definitely not due to one thing - it wasn't due to lack of effort. He was making an effort. In fact, he was making so much effort he was wearing himself out and suffering in the process.

And so as Miles Stanford wisely said, "This was not a shout, a scream, this was a whimper." "*O wretched man that I am!*" I don't love the way the message Bible puts a lot of things, but I like the way it puts it here. "*I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me?*" Isn't that just telling?

And you know what's interesting, and I don't know if you see the small shift, I've made this statement a couple of times, but notice for the first time he gets to the end of himself, and now he's looking where? Outside. Look what he says, "*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*"

See, if you haven't gotten to that point in your Christian life, you're still on the treadmill of Romans 7. You still think there's something within you that can crank out the Christian life, and you need to realize that you can't do it, but God can. We've got to come to this point, because at this point, when he's tried everything, he's exhausted, he's worn out, he just says, "Uncle! My arms are behind my back. White flag! Somebody out there, who can help me? Who can deliver me?" And he's finally at that point where he's ready to look outside of himself.

Paul had figured that he had everything he needed in his new nature, but he was lacking something, and he didn't realize it until now. He was lacking empowerment by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is the one that needs to animate our Christian life, not us trying harder and working harder. In fact, you notice he says specifically, not *what* will deliver me, but *Who*.

You know as Christians, we think in terms of the *what* more than we think in terms of the *Who*. In fact, it shouldn't surprise us that that's a carnal way to think, because how do unbelievers think? What's it take to get to heaven? They think in terms of the *what*, they don't think in terms of the *who*. They think in terms of, "Well, I've got to start giving money to the church. I better start going to church, I better start doing good works." Whatever the *what* is, insert it, that's how they think you get to heaven, until they come face to face with the fact it's not about the *what*, it's about the *who*.

And when we talk about justification, we're talking about "the who" of Jesus Christ who died for your sins and rose again. And when you put your faith in Him, the Bible says you have eternal life, your sins are forgiven. And so we realize that in justification, and we've got to understand this in sanctification. It's not the *what*, it's not the latest book at the Christian bookstore that's gonna set you free from sin's power. It's not your effort to wake up a little bit earlier, it's not a step program, it's not this unique and special teacher who's got 4 million followers on Twitter. That's not what you need. You don't need the *what*, you need the *Who*.

Paul realizes that in verse 24, he finally says, "It's a *Who*." He's moving in the right direction because it *is* a *Who*. It is the Spirit of God that's going to empower him now with his new desires, with his new nature. And he's not going to fulfill the law himself, but the law of God is gonna be fulfilled in him by the Spirit of God. And do you see that subtle distinction? It's not up to him to crank it out, it's up to him relying upon the Spirit of God to produce it in and through his life, and he finally is there.

It's not a *what*, it is a *Who*. Deliverance is found in a Person, not in the method. The same Savior who died for your sins and rose again is the same Savior that wants to break sin's power practically in your Christian life. And God has gone through great efforts to identify you with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection so that you also died to sin when Christ died to sin, you also died to the law when Christ died to the law, and now you want to take your position by faith and begin to reckon on those things to be true, and begin to present your bodies to the Lord by faith. That is the key to sanctification, that is God's method of delivering you from sin's power. And the question is: will you stop trusting in the *what* and will you start trusting in the *Who* of how God has accomplished this?

One of the reasons we struggle is because methods look good. Let's just be honest and not try to sweep that under the rug. They look good! It looks good when I read a book and they say, "The reason you're not overcoming sin is because you're sleeping in until 8 o'clock. If you would just wake up at 7, and you would spend an hour in prayer, and then you would call in sick to work for the first hour, and spend an hour reading your Bible, if you would just do those two external things, you'll grow spiritually. You'll be delivered from sin's power."

And we say, "That sounds good!" Doesn't that sound spiritual? Doesn't that sound religious? "You know, I'm gonna stop listening to this type of music on the radio, and I'm gonna start only listening to this music." And that's how books sell, because it's the newest thing, and we just say, "Oh, I've never tried that before! Let me try that method." Methods are not where God wants you to go.

In fact, turn with me to Colossians 2. I've read this a couple times in this study, and I'm probably wearing it out, but that's ok. Let's wear it out a little bit more. Because you know, the Scriptures realize this too. Methods look good, but they don't have any power to deliver you from sin. Methods look good, they sound good, they smell spiritual. They even pass the smell test many times, but they have no impact on helping you be delivered from sin's power.

Look at Colossians 2:20-23, "*Therefore, if you died with Christ*" - by the way, first-class condition, you *did*. If you died with Christ, and let's assume that you did for argument's sake. *Since* you died with Christ, you could say - "*Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations - 'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle', which all concern things*

*which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body," - but notice this next phrase - "but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh."*

Do you see why we lean toward methods? They look good! They look spiritual. They look like they're gonna get us there. They look like that's the key to the Christian life, and Paul is saying, "Not *what's* gonna deliver me, but *Who's* gonna deliver me." So, you can still wake up early and pray, you can still read your Bible, but if you're missing the *Who* in that equation, you might as well just sleep in because you aren't getting anything out of it anyways.

We can't miss the *Who* for the sake of the *what*, and so many times that's exactly what we do when we're trying to grow spiritually. In all sincerity we're trying to be what God wants us to be, we're just leaving out the empowerment that God has designed for us to utilize, which is the Spirit of God.

It's God and Him alone who can deliver us from sin's power, just like it was Him and Him alone who already delivered us from sin's penalty. If we don't understand that, we're gonna be just stumbling along and tripping over our own feet in our Christian life. We've got to get to this point, we've got to be convinced of this point. It may take us time to learn how that practically plays itself out in our lives, but we've got to at least come to this point and say, "Yeah, I agree with that. I'm all-in. That's money, I'm gonna bank on that!" We've at least gotta get there and not think, "Yeah, I don't know about that. We've still got to do something." If that's still the attitude, well you're probably going to just stay on the Romans 7 treadmill, because you've got to come to verse 24 and realize it's not a *what*, it's a *Who*. We've got to get there, and Lord willing that we would get there quickly.

Interestingly enough, what we find from this word deliverance, it's an interesting word when he says, "*Who will deliver me?*" It's a word that doesn't just mean *draw or snatch from danger*, but it means drawing the rescued one then to yourself. I'll give you an example. We've got a road right in front of the church and whoever put the playground in the back, wise decision, right? We wouldn't want to put that down by the street. But let's say that we had put it down by the street, and one of the kids wandered out of the fence line and walked right into the road, and there was just a big pickup truck just coming down the road at full speed.

And so one of us saw that and we ran out and we just pushed the kid out of the way and saved their life. That would be just the word "deliver" here. We save them, we snatch them from danger, we rescue them. But now imagine if it was your child, or imagine if it was your niece or nephew, or one of the many relatives that you might have at this church. And you go out there and instead of pushing them out of the way, you grab them, and you hold them, and you walk them over to the side, and you just comfort them because they've been frightened.

That's what we get in this word right here. It's not just a save, that's one thing and I'd be grateful for that if someone pushed my kid out of the way and saved their life, but this is something more than a save. This is then bringing that rescued one into me closely, and I'm caring for them. This is the word that Paul uses here. Who will deliver me? Not just push me out of the way, but who's gonna take me out of the way and draw me to themselves? See it's a more intimate term, it's a more loving term that he uses here.

And again, he's not looking at the law, because the law can't help him here, he's already realized that. The law can't make him holy, the law can't sanctify him, we're gonna see later that the law can't be fulfilled *by* him. Many Christians say, "What's the goal of the Christian life?" and they say, "That we can start keeping the law. Now we've got the new nature, we've got the Holy Spirit, and now God wants us to keep the law." That's *not* accurate, and you're gonna see a distinction here in Romans.

The way that we fulfill the law is not by trying to keep it, but by walking by means of the Spirit, the Spirit of God then fulfills it in us, that's the distinction. But it's not our goal. We don't have the law printed out and we're just carrying it around and trying to keep it now, it's the Spirit of God fulfilling the law in us. And so that's what Paul is going to be teaching here.

So, notice for the first time again in this chapter, the first time we see him, he's actually looking for deliverance outside of himself, and that's where we want to stay in our thinking in the Christian life. Now he uses this phrase, 'body of death', "*who will deliver me from this body of death?*", and I believe this is referring again to the sin nature. He calls it 'the law of sin', he says it's 'in his members', remember, it's in his physical body. And we've seen that as we've studied, we've tried to keep that consistent as we've studied that there's this indwelling source of sin. We're not talking about a specific act of sin, we're talking about the indwelling source of sin that produces all the acts of sin that you see externally manifested in your life. And so he is looking for deliverance from this indwelling sin, this power of sin.

In verse 23 he says, "*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into the captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*" This is what he's talking about, who's gonna deliver me from this? Remember in Romans 6 the sin nature was referred to as 'the body of sin', interestingly enough here in Romans 7:24, the same entity is referred to as 'the body of death'. And that makes sense because what does sin produce? Death. And it's automatic, so they're likened synonymously here.

And so what does Paul find? Well in verse 25 he finds that he's got the same Savior for both the penalty of sin and the power of sin. Verse 25 reads this: "*I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*" Again, notice that the deliverance that Paul is seeking comes from God. And it comes from God through - it's the Greek word "*dia*" which means *right through* something, not around, but right through - Jesus Christ our Lord. And again, we're gonna see that Paul goes back to identification.

Remember when we were coming out of chapter 5, we said, "Why is chapter 5:12-21 right here? Why is this identification section even here?" Because this is how God accomplished everything that we've been looking at in Romans 6 and Romans 7. He identified you with Christ in such a way that you shared in His death to sin, but you also shared in His resurrection to newness of life, so that you could live a life now pleasing to God. You also shared in His death to the law. Why? Was there something wrong with the law? No, we've been over that a million times. Nothing's wrong with the law, but the fact that you've got indwelling sin that uses law as a jumping pad to commit acts of sin, that was the problem. And so God puts the sin nature and the law all out of business in the Christian's life so they can now walk by means of the Spirit, and actually produce fruit that's pleasing to God. And so remember, our deliverance from sin's power comes via the same Savior as our deliverance from sin's penalty.

And so he makes his conclusion in verse 25, he says this as it relates to the reality for the Christian living on earth: "*So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*" Do you know that so as not to go crazy in your Christian life, you've got to come to this realization? I've talked to a number of people over the years just about sin in general and growing in the Christian life, because it's always been something I've just been very fascinated with. And so I'll talk to older people, I'll talk to younger people, I'll talk to people who really know Greek and Hebrew, I'm picking people's brains all the time on these kinds of things.

And there are some people that are honest that say, "You know what, I may not commit this sin anymore, but those thoughts keep coming at me hard and strong, and I've learned to depend on the Lord, and that's the only way I've been delivered." And then I've actually had people tell me, "Well just

wait until you're 65 or 70, you won't struggle with those thoughts anymore.” And I'm thinking to myself, “That doesn't even relate to Scripture!”

Because this is the conclusion that Paul comes to, he says at the end of verse 25 that this is going to be a constant thing in his life. In fact, when you look at the armor of God in Ephesians 6, what is the one thing that you can't stop? You cannot stop the fiery darts of Satan. But you can learn how to use the shield of faith.

The fiery darts always remind me of those tennis ball machines. Anybody play tennis or maybe you've seen it on TV? They've got those machines they set up when they practice, and they just load them full of balls and they just keep shooting balls, and that's how these guys practice. I kind of liken Satan's fiery darts to those tennis ball machines, except someone's there to just keep filling the tennis balls, and so it never stops.

But the Scriptures never tell us to go on the other side of the net and shut down the tennis ball machine. That's not what the whole armor of God talks about. It says you've got a shield of faith. He's going to keep throwing those darts your whole life, but hopefully, gradually, we're gonna learn how to utilize that shield of faith more consistently, to dodge those darts, to take the darts for us, etc. etc.

And so when we see what Paul is saying here, it's not that as you get older things are going to get easier. Man, I wish that was the case. I wish I could tell you that. I wish that was true. What he learns though is really two things, he's got two conclusions here as we see at the end of verse 25. *“With the mind I myself serve the law of God.”*

In other words, his new nature - if you're a believer here today, *your* new nature - is presently and continually a servant or slave to God's law. You are gonna want to do the right things, you're not gonna want to keep doing wrong things. You may have periods of life where you engage in a lot of wrong things, but ultimately that new nature will *never* want to break God's law. He realizes that about himself, that's what explains this apparent contradiction.

But even more so, he also understands that with the flesh he serves the law of sin. He's got these two warring factions in him that will naturally gravitate to one or the other, and the question becomes like it was back in Romans 6: to whom are you presenting your members to? To whom are you trusting in to deliver you from sin's power?

And so Paul's old sin nature is presently and continually a servant to the law of sin and death. And do you know that your sin nature, this indwelling sin will never get better as a believer? We are not part of the old sin nature improvement society, that's not what the Christian life is about. It's learning to stop yielding and presenting ourselves to that source as a life source for us, that's what it's about. It gets no better.

In fact, there's probably arguments being made from Ephesians that it gets worse. Because it gets more and more deceptive, and as you learn more and more truth and apply it in your life, it is going to get more and more deceptive trying to beat you at the truth that you know. And so Paul realizes this, this is why it's so important as we've emphasized not to trust in a *what*, but a *Who*. See, the Spirit of God can't be confused. The Spirit of God is the varsity team. The Spirit of God is the all-star on the varsity team. He knows how to deal with sin and hold it in a place of death so that we can be free to serve the Lord and please Him.

And so as we jump into Romans chapter 8, this is one of those unfortunate chapter divisions. Sometimes you'll see that clearly in the scriptures. And I forget who the guy's name was that actually did all the work labeling verses and chapter divisions, but I think the story is that sometimes he was riding in the countryside in a horse and buggy and he was writing these down, and then he hit a bump and his pen jumped up and he started a new chapter. And I think that might have been what happened



here, because this really flows. Because what does he start chapter 8 verse 1 with? “Therefore”. He's making a conclusion based on what he just said in Chapter 7, and so that gives us a clue.

So, as we go into Chapter 8, I want to point out a couple of things: we labeled chapter 7 “powerless sanctification”, powerless because he was depending upon himself and his new desires to free him from sin's power. What we're gonna call chapter 8 is “powerful sanctification”, because we're gonna see practically, Paul looking outside of himself for deliverance, and that's where the power is in the Christian life, when we're being empowered by the Spirit of God. In fact, as I mentioned in Chapter 7, the Holy Spirit was not mentioned once, but in Chapter 8 He's mentioned 22 times. See, Paul's getting the *Who*. The *Who* is becoming a real, practical reality in his life, he's finally getting that.

And so as we jump into Romans 8:1, we see this beautiful verse where he says, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,*” - and then we have this extra phrase - “*who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*” And you're going to notice this is one of those areas of textual criticism, there's a variant here in the Greek text.

And normally I don't bring these up because they don't really have an impact per se on the meaning, but this is one of those areas where if you've got an NASB, or an ESV, or an NIV, or one of the translations based on more of the minority text, you're gonna find that your verse ends, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.*”, and you don't have that last phrase. Some of you have that out there and you're kind of noticing that that last phrase isn't there. I think that's actually the better translation here, because I think the point he's trying to promote here is one of security. There's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, he's not putting a condition on that.

So, you say, “Well, where does that phrase come from?” Look down to verse 4 where it fits a little bit better, and I think that a scribe probably accidentally brought it up into verse 1, that's usually what's described as probably what happened in verse 4. “*that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*”

And so I say that just to say, to add that condition at the end of verse 1, it adds a little bit of uncertainty in the verse, and I don't think that's what Paul is concluding there. “Therefore, if you behave the right way, then there's no condemnation. But if you don't...” I mean, he hasn't been behaving the right way, right?

In fact, he's gonna go through the next couple of verses, he's gonna explain why we're not condemned, and guess why you're not condemned? Two reasons: Jesus Christ has been condemned for you, as your substitute already. And secondly, the very thing that's causing you issue in the Christian life, this indwelling sin, God has condemned sin in the flesh. That's why there's no condemnation for you. And so we'll look at that as we continue going.

So, “therefore”. Again, we see this word “therefore” in verse 1 based on chapter 7. Even though we've got this warring inside of us, even though we fail, even though we have a new nature and it's got new desires, and it's contrary to what the sin nature desires, he makes this conclusion that we're not condemned, even though this is apparent hypocrisy.

Ever felt like a hypocrite as a Christian? I mean, if you haven't, I'd like to meet you! We all feel like that. I'll tell you when I feel like more of a hypocrite: it really comes out clear when I'm trying to explain to my kids how they should be living, and in the back of my mind I know, “Man, I probably should listen to this message as well.” I get to do that every Sunday with you, by the way. Everything I'm saying in the back of my mind I'm like, “Wow, I better listen to that as well, it'd be good for me.”

But hypocrisy is exactly what he's describing in chapter 7. And even though this is going on in your life, do you know that you can be confident that at this moment, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ,

you are not condemned. You can never be condemned. You will not *ever* be condemned. This word “no condemnation” means *not even one, not the least, none at all, no not ever*.

In fact, it really reminds me of a fun time in Liberia one time, and I say “fun”, it was kind of scary too. But they called me up on a Saturday morning, we were done with the workshop, and they said, “Hey, we're coming to pick you up. We're taking you to a wedding.” Now in Liberia, that needs to be translated, because that might be ‘I'm just attending a wedding’, or ‘I'm performing the wedding.’ They don't typically tell you until you get there. So immediately I'm thinking, “I better have a wedding message ready to go. Okay, so I gotta go preach this sermon.” And that's just typically how it goes there.

But this one I got to attend the wedding, I didn't have to perform it, it was really nice. And so I came in, and the pageantry of the wedding was just very fascinating to me. I walked in and sat down, and just enjoyed what was going on. And as I walked down, the bridesmaids were dancing in the aisle, and the groomsmen were over there dancing, and I thought, “Okay, did we miss the wedding? Is the wedding over?” And my guy is like, “Oh no, no, we're in the middle of it right now.” And I said, “Well, why are they dancing?” And he looked at me and said, “This is a celebration. This wedding's a celebration.” I said, “Man, you should see weddings in America! They're like funerals, we don't say anything.”

So, I just sat there and just enjoyed this wedding that was so crazy by American standards. And you remember the line, I think they've taken it out of most American weddings, “Is there anyone here that has anything to say against this couple, why they should not be married?” We've taken that out, I mean I haven't heard that line in a long time. They still use it in Liberia. And so it's really incredible because they say that line, and the whole place goes deathly silent. Like for 30 seconds. And then someone hollers from the back, “No one!” And everyone just starts saying, “No one! No one can condemn them! No one can say anything negative!” And they just start hollering, and then the bridesmaids start dancing again, and it's just this big party.

But I'm telling you, this is what's going on in heaven, if you will. No one can be condemned. No one! Not even you, you hypocrite. Me, hypocrite. You can't be condemned because Jesus Christ has been condemned in your stead. And we're going to see in verse 3 that your sin nature, the real culprit, the source of all sin that's manifesting itself in your life has been condemned as well. You're free from condemnation because that's the way God set it up. And so we see this beautiful truth here.

In fact, this word “condemnation” means *to form or to make a decision against somebody*. It's a condemnatory judgment. And you know what? Guess what aspect of the Word of God condemns you? The law. Because the law is black and white. All the law can do is say, “You are wrong.” or “You are right.” And so when you do something wrong, immediately the law says, “You're wrong. You're condemnatory. You have the ability to be condemned because you've done something wrong.” But you know what? Because God has taken your place in the person of Jesus Christ, this type of verdict can *never* be rendered against you, *ever* be rendered against you as a believer, and that is good news!

“To those”, he says in verse 1, let's look at it in the text. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are*” - there's that phrase again - “*in Christ Jesus.*” Do you think Paul is hung up about our identification in Christ? Do you think he's actually resting in the fact that we're united with Christ? He loves that truth! Because if God could ever get upset with Jesus Christ, then He can get upset with you. If God could ever condemn Jesus Christ, then He could condemn you.

But guess what? Jesus Christ is un-condemnable. When God the Father looks to the right at where His son is seated right now, He smiles at Him, He is completely pleased with Jesus Christ. And because you're in Him, when He smiles at Jesus, in a sense, He's smiling at you. You are accepted in the

beloved. Friends, we've got to understand this. This is the proper motivation to live the Christian life, not fearing that you're gonna lose your salvation because you don't behave a certain way.

No, you are un-condemned because you are in Jesus Christ, and He is not condemnable, thus you are not condemnable. That is the beautiful nature of the gospel. That's why all three phases of our salvation are in place so that you can benefit from them. That's why God can say whoever has been justified - we'll learn at the end of Romans 8 - those are the same group of people that are going to be glorified. God doesn't lose anybody along the way, like a little kindergarten field trip line where somebody happens to let go of the rope and gets lost. That's not gonna happen in God's salvation economy.

So, Christ's deliverance from sin, not only its penalty, but its power, and its presence is guaranteed to be full, complete, and to the very end. Why? Because He was condemned in our place. That's the beautiful thing about having a Savior. A savior saves. A savior saves by definition, that's what he does. We've got the greatest Savior that the history of the world has ever known! The perfect son of God who did everything right, did everything perfect, and pleased His father. And so no condemnation is a guarantee based on Jesus Christ and His merits. Aren't you saying, "Glory, hallelujah!" that it's not based on your merits? Aren't you saying that?

In fact, if you just honestly agreed with what happens in Romans 7, Paul didn't deserve to go to heaven. But that's in accordance with grace, right? That's grace. God gives you something you don't deserve. Even Paul didn't earn heaven. Paul got something he didn't deserve because Paul deserved hell just like the rest of us. And as we've said, we'll receive no condemnation because our Federal Head, Jesus Christ, won't receive condemnation.

Verse 2. You see this word "for", it's an addition that's further explaining. So, when he uses the word "for" he's expanding on or further explaining what he's been saying. You're gonna see 17 "fors" in this chapter. And so he's just expanding a logical argument here, and so he continues doing that in verse 2. He says, "*For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*"

And I want to point out something here, because Paul is gonna switch his terminology, and I think it's very significant. He switches his terminology, but I think he does that because he's reflecting his new understanding of *theology*. Now what do I mean by that? Well, notice what he says in Romans 7. In Romans 7 he recognized that there was an inward desire, his new nature, which he called the law of my mind. We saw that in Romans 7, the law of my mind. And it was warring against the law of sin and death, or his sin nature.

Now I want you to pay attention there in Romans 8:2. He switches his terminology here, and notice what he switches to. Due to his recognition at the end of chapter 7, that his deliverance is found in a Person, notice what he changes his terminology to in verse 2. He changes from the law of his mind to what? To "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.*" You see, it wasn't just about his new desires anymore. That's important, that's there, but now that he recognizes that his deliverance is in a *Who*, notice who He recognizes as where his deliverance is coming from. Who is the only thing that can deliver you from the law of sin in your daily life as a Christian? It's the Spirit of God, that's it. No method, not trying harder, not working additionally, it's learning how to allow, by faith, to walk in dependence upon the Spirit of God, who is the *only* One who can free you from the law of sin and death, and this is what Paul is realizing here.

The Spirit of God has set us free. In fact, "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.*" This is the Holy Spirit who is indwelling every believer, and He is the empowerment that's needed to experience freedom from sin's dominion. See, this was the missing piece from the puzzle of Romans chapter 7. This is the

missing ingredient of Paul's pie recipe, so to speak, called sanctification. The Spirit of God was the missing piece, he didn't have this.

I used the example last week, the new nature is perfect, there's nothing wrong with the new nature. The problem is if it's like a brand-new car and it's parked on the side of the road, and there's no engine in it, then we've got a problem. Because there's nothing that's going to make that car go. We need this empowerment; we need this engine. And in the case of Christian sanctification, the new nature, new desires, the law of God, that's not enough. You need the Spirit of God, your engine, driving and animating your life.

We've seen how a recipe is missing one ingredient, we've seen how football teams missing one star player impacts the entire team. And in this case, that one variable to that equation of Christian sanctification - the Spirit of God - is so key to sanctification, that without Him, none of this works. Even though you've got all the tools necessary to grow spiritually and to walk in a way that pleases God.

We want to notice a couple of things about this verse, a couple of verb tenses. "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free*" That's a past-tense event, that's a completed action. The Spirit of God has set you free from the law of sin and death, and the word means *to make free, to liberate*.

And so you ask the question, and it's a great question, "Then why do we still sin if He set us free?" Well, truth tells us that if a believer is still being dominated by sin, it's because of his or her own choice to go on presenting themselves to the sin nature. That's what explains it. But we've been set free, the handcuffs have been taken off, we can go back and put them back on in a figurative sense and put ourselves under dominion of sin.

Now, I think a great illustration of this is in terms of a law. Now when we talk about law here in verse 2, we're really talking about a principle. The principle of or the law of sin and death is simply this, that if you sin, death will result. It will happen every time, that's exactly what goes with sin. Sin, death. Sin, death. If you present yourself to the sin nature, you'll commit acts of sin and that will lead to death in your life, and that is a law. That's a principle. It's never going to be broken.

Just like if I drop this clicker right now, which direction would it go? Down. But if I was on the other side of the world in Australia, it would go up, right? No. It's the law of gravity, right? In fact, if I just let go of the clicker and it stayed in place, you'd think that was crazy, right? But if I dropped this, it would go straight to the ground. No one would disagree with that because that's the law of gravity.

But you know what, there's a stronger law at work right now than the law of gravity, and it's the law of life. I'm a living person, I've got life in this hand. And you know why that clicker's not going to the ground right now? Because there's life underneath it, there's a greater law superseding the law of gravity.

We see this all the time. You know, we've got a lot of airline personnel and former airline personnel, but airplanes are a great example of this too. The law of aerodynamics supersedes the law of gravity. Now if you took a plane, painted it real nice, took the engine out and said, "We're gonna go fly this thing." How's that gonna work out for you? It's not. I wouldn't advise that, that'd be a very dangerous thing to do.

But many times, that's how we attempt to live the Christian life. We need a stronger law than the law of gravity to hold this clicker up. We need a stronger law than the law of gravity to have aerodynamics fulfilled, and in the case of the Christian life, we need a stronger law than the law of sin, and by God's grace, we've got it. He calls it in verse 2 "*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*", we've got the Spirit of God doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. We could not empower ourselves to execute the Christian life.

Let's start verse 3 and we'll finish in the next section. Notice again in verse 3 another word "for", so he's continuing to expand and explain his argument. "*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,*" And we just want to look at a couple of things here with these words. The word "Could not do" just means *without power*. The law just didn't have the power to make you holy. The law doesn't have the power to make you sanctified. Now the law can tell you everything that a holy person should look like, and the law can tell you everything a sanctified person should look like, it just doesn't empower you to become that person. It can tell you what it should look like, but it can't tell you how to look that way. It can't provide the means for you to look that way and to grow spiritually. You could say it gives you the plan, but it's got no power to execute it.

And then it's also described in this verse as weak, that the law was weak, meaning *without strength, powerless, or with infirmity*. Aren't these two descriptions exactly what we saw in Romans chapter 7? They could not sanctify you, it was weak to give you strength to actually grow spiritually, and to be a spiritual believer, because the things that you wanted to do you couldn't, and things you didn't want to do, you kept doing.

And so I think as we close here, I want to look at the end of verse 3 one more time. This is probably just an overarching principle, it's true in justification, but it's also true in sanctification and that is this, when God makes a promise there's a basis for that promise. God doesn't just make promises to make promises sometimes, there's always a basis for it. It's usually an aspect of His character, but in the area of justification, you know why God can promise eternal life? Because Jesus died for your sins and rose again. That's why God can promise it, it's based on the gospel.

And so when we get into sanctification, why can God tell you in verse 1 that there's no condemnation, not even one, for anyone who's in Christ Jesus? Well again we've stated that Christ was condemned in our place but look at the end of verse 3: "*He condemned sin in the flesh.*" See, the condemnation that was due you was executed on your sin nature. And guess what? God is gonna fulfill that condemnatory sentence the day of your glorification when He executes that sin nature, removes it from your body, and you will be delivered finally in the third tense of your salvation from the very source and presence of sin.



# CHAPTER 43

## The Proper Mindset Part 1

### Romans 8:3-7

I want to take a moment to bring us up to speed as to where we're at. So just really quick review points. The first is that Romans 7 was filled with hypocrisy, and it was filled with hypocrisy because as a believer Paul now wants to do the right things, he wants to stop doing the wrong things, and yet he can't find the power to do so. And as we looked at Romans 7, one of the reasons for that was he kept looking for the solution to his sin problem - sin as a power in his life - in himself. And if you remember, we pointed out the fact that in Romans 7 - I think it was something like over 40 times - he uses a personal pronoun from verses 14 to the end of the chapter, "I, me, my" he's looking for the solution to deliver himself from sin, in and of himself.

The second thing we're gonna see is at the end of Romans 7, he finally realized that victory needed to come outside of himself. In fact, if you remember, he realized something significant that each one of us needs to realize, and that is your deliverance from sin on a daily basis is a *Who*, not a *what*. It's not a method, it's not trying harder, it's not getting more disciplined, your deliverance is found in a Person, and that's what Paul found at the end of chapter 7.

And then the second summary of what we started to get into in chapter 8 last week was this: we've got two warring factions inside of us. He says that this is mortal combat, we learned about this in Galatians 5 where the flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit wars against the flesh. There's this mortal combat going on, we do things we don't want to do, we don't do the things that we want to do consistently. And even though that's true, Romans 8:1 says you can never be condemned as a believer. And he gave the first reason in verse 1, it was a subtle reason, but look at 8:1: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."* See, you're not condemned because you're in Christ, and because Christ was condemned for you, you'll never face condemnation.

But he gives a second reason why you're not condemned, that's where we're gonna pick up today in verse 3. We're gonna see that in verse 3, you're not condemned, nor can you *ever* be condemned, because sin, the source of sin that's indwelling your human body, has been condemned. So, Jesus was condemned for you in your place, and the very culprit that is the source of every sin you committed as a believer has also been condemned. There's nothing left to condemn, folks. You cannot be condemned because you're in Christ. This was the good news that we looked at last week.

But let's look at verse 3 in a little bit more detail. Verse 3 says this, *"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh."* And remember this word "for" is important because he continues to build his argument from verse 2. And what could the law not do? Well, the law in context couldn't set you free from the law of sin and death. We saw that play out for us before our very eyes in Romans 7, when all of us sat there and listened to the way Paul described the Christian life and said, "Oh yeah, I can relate to that. Oh yeah, I understand what he's saying there."

See, just having the right desires and having the right standard can't free you from the law of sin and death. We needed something more, and that's what verse 2 provided. Again, He's a *Who*, right? We're talking about a person, the Person of the Spirit of God who is indwelling you, Who is the only Person who can free you from the law of sin and death. That's what we looked at.

And so he's going on, "*For what the law could not do,*" the law could not do something. The law is without power in this area, impotent, not able. He describes it in another way, he says, 'the law was weak' meaning *without strength, powerless, to be infirmed*. And you know these two descriptions of the law were clearly borne out in Chapter 7, we saw that the law in and of itself can't make the believer holy. In fact, we saw a couple things about the law in the book of Romans so far. The first four and a half chapters, we saw that the law can't justify you before God. The law cannot make you righteous enough to go to heaven.

In Chapter 7 we gained a new understanding of the law: it cannot make a Christian holy. It cannot sanctify a believer, even though the believer has the right desires, even though the believer wants to keep the law of God, he or she cannot do it just based on trying to keep the law. Keeping the law by trying to keep the law will never work.

It seems backwards, right? That's not how our culture views things. If you want to do something just buckle down, try harder, lock it in, you can get it done, you can push through. That's not the spiritual method of growing spiritually, that's not how it works. You cannot keep the law by just trying to keep the law.

In fact, we learned something else from Romans 7 and that's this: the law could not curb or regulate with success the sin nature. In fact, it just exacerbated it. And when we talk about sin nature, we're talking about the source of sin, *the sin that's indwelling our human bodies*. Remember the wording he uses in Romans 7, the law aroused sin, it woke it up, it sparked it to interest. You remember the illustration: wet paint, don't touch. Immediately, what do you want to do? You want to touch it. And so the sin nature uses the good law of God as a jumping-off point, a starting point to want to commit sin, to want to break it. And so we see even the law can't regulate or curb.

Paul's not criticizing the law, the law is good for what it's good for, revealing the righteous standard of God, the holy standard of God. But in verse 3 when he says, "*what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh*" he's talking about this idea of freeing you from the law of sin and death. It was weak, it was powerless, it couldn't do it. And so we saw that play out in Romans 7.

So, what the law could not do, God did. Where the law failed, God inserted Himself to be your hero, to deliver you in a sense that you could never deliver yourself. God never intended for you to be holy or to be made holy by keeping the law. God took it upon Himself to provide everything you need to live and walk a righteous, holy, and godly life in this present age, it's just not by you straining and struggling to keep the law. That's not God's solution.

So, God did something, He took matters into His own hands. The text tells us that "*He sent His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh,*" and I love the way that Paul words this, because notice he doesn't say that God sent His son *in* sinful flesh. He's very careful the way he words this so that he's not contradicting who Jesus Christ *is*, either His humanity or His deity. He keeps everything intact by referencing this as the likeness of sinful flesh, in other words, in the similitude or resemblance.

What does he mean by this? Simply this: that if Jesus Christ was in this room today during His earthly ministry, if we could teleport back, you would not be able to tell that Jesus had some kind of different body. It's not like the old pictures, and I know what they're trying to do in the old Bibles, they kind of put that halo around Him but it wouldn't be like that. He'd be sitting next to you and you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between Jesus Christ and the other person sitting next to you. I mean, the same flesh, same skin, in terms of an external appearance.

But one of the unique things about Jesus's human body versus yours and my human body, is we have sin indwelling our bodies, He didn't. That's a unique thing. But looking from the external appearance, He had the same human bodies that we did. He got hungry, He got thirsty, He wasn't



leaping tall buildings in a single bound while He was on earth. He wasn't some Marvel superhero that was lifting horse buggies off of people, right? No, He was living a normal life. He got tired, He fell asleep in a boat, He got thirsty and sat down at the well in Samaria. He was fully human in the likeness of sinful flesh.

But remember that the body itself is neutral, it's amoral. In other words, the sin nature wants to animate your body, but so does the Spirit of God. God wants to use your bodies. I've seen people do this a lot, and they're like, "Once I get out of this flesh, this stinking, rotten, sinful flesh..." there's nothing wrong with your body. Well, there might be things, your back may ache, and your legs may hurt, there may be some things wrong there, but I'm talking about there's nothing sinful about these human bodies. The sinfulness is an indwelling source of sin that then animates these human bodies.

But guess what? The Spirit of God wants to animate the same human bodies, and if He didn't, why does God instruct us to present our bodies as living sacrifices? He wants to utilize these bodies, these hands, these feet, these eyes, these lips, this tongue. Every aspect of our body, God wants to utilize to be His hands and feet in this world.

And so when he talks about sending Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh, He had a real human body, and he's saying, "Why are we making such a big deal about this?" Because over the years, this has been an issue that has been fought by the church fathers to really fight against error teaching who the person of Jesus Christ is. This is so important to understand that Paul is being very careful here.

And not only that, but we see as we go to verse 3 that God sent "*His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,*" - notice that next phrase - "*on account of sin.*" He sent Him on account of sin, and we're gonna look at this in more detail here, but this particular verse is not only talking about the penalty of sins. In fact, when we think of Jesus's first incarnation, we *rightly* focus on the fact that Jesus came to die for our sins and to rise again to pay the penalty for our sins so that you wouldn't have to pay the penalty for those sins. We *rightly* focus on that. But this verse, I believe, is talking about more. This is like one of those infomercials, "But wait, there's more!"

This is the great thing about God's good news, there's so much more than what we even realize. It's great if we can grasp that first truth, that's where the new birth starts, understanding that Jesus died for your sins and rose again so that you don't have to pay the penalty for those. Jesus paid it all.

But I believe this verse is saying something much more. God sent Jesus to also deal with the source of those sins, the very source that's indwelling you, sin in general. And I think this is exactly what God had in mind all the way back in Genesis 3:15 when He promised to send that promised Deliverer the day after Adam and Eve fell. That promise to send this promised Deliverer that would take care of the sin problem, not just the acts of sin and their penalty, but the very source of sin, to deliver us from that. And so that's what we're talking about here. This is the full picture of our salvation if you will.

And so on account of sin, God sent Jesus not only to die for our sins, but He also sent Jesus to die *to* sin, this root. And so on the same cross work of Jesus Christ, He dealt with the fruit, and He dealt with the root, He took care of the entire sin problem. And how did He do that? Well, the text tells us that God condemned *the* sin - and that article is there, *the* sin, talking about source, *the* sin in the flesh - He condemned sin the source in the flesh. Again, this word "condemn" means that He *pronounced sentence against*, or He *condemned it*.

Now, one of the things we've got to realize as a believer is God has not executed the sentence yet. In fact, anybody that's ever lived a day in the Christian life and has struggled with sin realizes that there's something indwelling you that's constantly tugging you away from walking with the Lord. And so when will God execute this? The sentence has been pronounced, when will He execute it? Well, I'm glad you asked that question. He's gonna execute it on the day of our glorification.

On the day of our glorification, this sentence - you could say the sin nature's in holding - He's awaiting that final day of execution, and that's gonna happen on the day of glorification when we're raptured, when He's going to completely destroy this thing and remove its presence from us. And that is gonna be a "hallelujah chorus" type of day. Because we need to be rid of that thing, because it just tries to wreck you. So, we've got to deal with this thing during our life.

But understand this: this thing has been condemned. This is why when you sin as a believer, you can't be condemned. God knows who the real culprit in your life is. Now you're still responsible for presenting yourself to sin, you're still responsible for yielding yourself to sin. But in the sense of who gets condemned and who's un-condemned, you can't be condemned because you're in Christ. God has condemned sin in the flesh so that you can go un-condemned, even when you screw up.

That's the incredible message of grace. Is that something that we deserve? No, not even on your best day, but it's something that God in His love and in His grace has determined to give to us, and He's giving us right here, if you will, the mechanics behind all of this.

God condemned the sin nature via our death with Christ to sin. Again, this is why we are not condemned, God knew the real culprit and He condemned it. Now, do you think this is good news for the person coming out of Romans 7? I mean, can you imagine just living your Christian life being the failure that you and I are on a consistent basis? Not only not living up to the standard God sets for us, but not even living to the standard that we set for ourselves? And can you imagine the encouragement to know that God knows the real culprit that's causing that in your life? The real source of all of those anti-God, self-focused thoughts that you present yourself to, that God has condemned that source so that you could go un-condemned being in Christ? Isn't that good news to the one who struggles? Isn't that good news to the demand coming out of Romans 7?

Well, I think so. Because he's going to go on to say in verse 4 that there's a purpose for condemning sin in the flesh. See, God doesn't just do things half-heartedly. I mean, He could, God can do anything He wants, but He's got a purpose for it. We pick up that purpose in this word "that" in verse 4. It's what we call in the Greek a "*hina clause*", and so let's read verse 4. "*that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*" And again, this *hina* clause, this word "that" gives us the purpose behind why God condemned sin in the flesh. Why did God go through this judicial pronouncement of condemnation on your sin nature? Why did He do it, why did He condemn sin in the flesh? Well, he's going to give us the purpose here.

Remember too, before we get into this purpose, in chapter 7 the law and the new nature lacked the strength to provide deliverance from sin's power. It lacked a key ingredient, we've said, in the puzzle, it lacked the *Who*. It lacked the empowerment of the Spirit of God. We've used the example of having a brand-new car on the side of the road, everything is shiny, good new paint job, nice tires, nice rims, nice interior, it's got Armor All wiped on the inside, it's shiny, it's good stuff, but it's missing the engine. That's a problem!

And Romans 7, if you want to liken it to that, had all the spit shine of everything on it: looking good, the desires are good, knowing the law, loving the law, having the right standard, wanting to achieve that standard, and yet lacking that internal empowerment to accomplish or execute the plan. And so we need to remember that as we go into this.

Why did God condemn sin? Well, we also saw in chapter 6 that our co-crucifixion with Christ set us free from sin's power and put the sin nature out of business. Remember, Romans 6:6 said this, "*knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin*" - there's our sin nature - "*might be done away with*" - or rendered inoperative or put out of business. Why did God crucify you with Christ?

Why did He identify you with Christ, in His death, burial, and resurrection? To put the sin nature, sin's power in your life, out of business. That's why He did it.

And so when we get back here to Romans 8:3, Romans 8:3 is still referring to this condemnation of sin in the flesh, he's referencing back, I believe, to our co-crucifixion. Why did he do that? There's a very practical reason why he did this. And so why is that? Well, *"that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us."*

You see, God's intent in taking you into death with Christ is that there's a very practical ramification, a very practical result, and that is righteous living. In fact, we see that as we've studied through Romans 6 and 7. God is not just taking you out from under the law so that you could live any lawless old way, that's not God's plan.

In fact, many people will say, "Well now that we're no longer under the law, then you're teaching people they can be lawless." You know, when you teach the grace of God, especially for the Christian life, this is what you're accused of. We're not under the law, and so, "Oh, if you teach people they're not under law, then you're gonna encourage lawlessness. You're gonna encourage lawless, sinful living. People are gonna just go live any way they want to, so you gotta put them under the law so that they'll live holy and righteous."

And I'm here to tell you this: the only way you'll guarantee sinful living is to put somebody under the law. That's the only way you'll guarantee it. And yet the mindset of the normal Christian is if you take them out from under the law, then they're just going to go live sinfully. No, because there's a much higher principle at work, and that is the grace of God, which empowers you to live holy, righteously, and justly in this present age. That's what Titus 2:11-13 says. It's the grace of God that teaches us to deny ungodliness, not the law of God. The law of God teaches us that, but it does not empower us to keep it.

And so when we look at verses like Romans 6:14 which says, *"for sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."* We need to understand that the opposite of that verse says that if you put yourself under law, you will be under domination by the sin nature, and didn't we see that in Romans chapter 7? Isn't that exactly what we observed in Romans chapter 7? And so why are we still deceived into thinking that if we put somebody under law that that's the safest place for them to grow? No, it's not, it's the most dangerous place! It's gonna almost ensure failure, it's gonna ensure unrighteous living.

And you say, "Oh, well we're not doing the big sins." Who cares about the big sins?! I'm talking about something that's going on internally, and God is the judge of motives and the intents of the heart. And you know what, we can get people to behave externally, but if their internal motivations are off, it's worthless. Absolutely worthless. Now I say worthless in a spiritual sense, I'd love to have the person that does all the right external things as my neighbor, no problem. He wants to mow my lawn? Come on over! I don't care if he's got the right motives or not. You want to cook me a meal? Great! I don't care if you're doing it for the wrong motives or not, I'll take the meal, right?

I'm talking about spiritual acceptability before the Lord. I'm talking about what God views as acceptable. And I'm telling you, it's not putting a coat and a tie and a hat on, or as I was talking to somebody else, it's not even about wearing flip-flops to church, and some people think *that's* more spiritual. It's not about any of that stuff, it's about what's going on in your heart, what's going on in your thinking.

In fact, when we get into verse 5 today, we're gonna see that thinking is really the battle. How do you think? What's your mind set on? I'm not talking about intellect, I don't care if you know who the seven Herods of the Bible are, or where every book of the Bible was written. Who cares? I mean,

are we really living our Christian life to win a Bible trivia game? That's what it's all about, winning Bible trivia? That's not what it's about! It isn't about intellect; it's where are you occupied on a daily basis? Who are you occupied with? And we'll kind of talk about that a little bit more as we go.

Again, and I've said this already, but the only guarantee of lawlessness is if the believer tries to achieve righteousness via the law. Romans 7 showed us a man dominated by sin, and even though he wanted to do the right things, he was still dominated by sin. Notice too that the righteous requirements of the law, God's holiness - when we talk about righteous requirements of the law, we're talking about His holiness, we're talking about His righteousness, we're talking about His character - might be fulfilled in us, but notice in your text, it's not fulfilled *by* us.

Let's read it again, I want you to see that in your Bibles, because we want to build off of that. He says, "*that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us*". The law has certain righteous requirements. The law demands and requires that a person live a righteous life of loving God. In fact, how did Jesus summarize the law in His earthly ministry? Love God, love others, right?

So, we're to love God perfectly, we're to love one's neighbor perfectly, and the question becomes, "How can I fulfill what the law requires? How can I keep the law?" In fact, for many of us we think that the Christian life is about, "How do I keep the law?" And we're not talking about dietary laws, we all know that, right? We're not still bringing lambs somewhere to sacrifice. So, when you hear the law, I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about a legal principle, that if I do these things then I get blessed, and if I don't do these things, I get cursed. That's the legal principle that we're talking about.

And so many of us think we can just live that out, but notice, how do we keep the law? Or how can we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in our lives? Well, we're gonna see from this text, you don't do it. In fact, we're gonna see this word "fulfilled" means *to make full, to fill a vessel or a hollow place*. It's in the passive voice, which means *you* don't fulfill the law. How can you fulfill the righteous requirements of the law if you're not doing it? I'm glad you asked because that's what the text is gonna tell us today. It's not *you* fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law, it's somebody else acting on *you* and doing it in and through you. Hmm, I wonder who that could be? We've been looking at that Person, it's the indwelling Spirit of God, He is going to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law within you.

Now do you see why we don't need to be under the law? The very author of the law of God, the Spirit of God, is the One who wants to lead you by the hand daily, moment by moment in your Christian life. Do you see why I don't have to focus on the law? I've got the very person who put the law together wanting to lead me in my Christian life. That's why we're out from under the law, and that's why it's safe. Because now if we trust the Spirit of God not to lead us into danger, then we can just walk by faith and enjoyment of the person of Jesus Christ, as the Spirit of God begins to produce His life in and through us.

Did anyone ever play the old game where - they used to do these at youth gatherings when I was growing up, they probably still do it somewhere - they blindfold you and then they give you a partner? And the goal is you have to move around an obstacle course usually involving large objects that you can bang your head against if you're not careful, and your partner would either hold you by the hand or they could guide you but they couldn't touch you. They'd say, "Okay, go left, go right, stop."

And then you would get that one friend who wasn't trying to win the game, he was just trying to lead you to bump into as much as possible, because he was getting a kick out of watching you slam into trees and in chairs, and flip into a pool. I remember one guy one time led his friend right into a swimming pool!

But here's the point: it reminds me of that game because do we think the Spirit of God is gonna be like, "Oh yeah, take one more step into that swimming pool." No, He's not gonna lead you

inappropriately. This is why when we say we're not under law, we're not saying that we're promoting lawlessness, we're promoting a relational dependence upon the Spirit of God to actually produce righteousness. And not only righteousness, practical righteousness, but righteousness on par with God's standards. See, it's the only way it can happen. This is why God did what He did in verse 3 by condemning sin in the flesh, and the purpose in verse 4 is *"that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*

And so let's keep going as we look at this, because the Spirit of God wants to do the heavy lifting, if you will, in your life. He's the one producing righteous living through the believer. And as we saw before, this was the power source that was missing in Romans 7. Remember, the Holy Spirit's not mentioned in Romans chapter 7, he's mentioned in Romans chapter 8 after Paul realizes that it's a *Who* not a *what* that's delivering him. And what we see in Romans 7 is I, I, I, me, my, my. And what does Galatians 2 tell us? The Christian life is not *I*, but Christ. Romans 7 is I, I, I. See, it's all about me. The solution has to be in me, I have to try a little bit harder, I've got to get up a little bit earlier, I've got to have the right disciplines, I, I, I. And the Christian life is not *I*, but Christ. Not *I*, but the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus who sets me free from the law of sin and death, Romans 8:2.

And so notice it doesn't say that we're now equipped to fulfill the law. Just notice the careful language that Paul uses here. But again, its requirements are fulfilled in us. It's not as if God just gave you the power to overcome sin. Like in a cup, you know, "Here you go, just drink that, you'll have the power to overcome sin." It's not that. You don't overcome sin because of something God gave you, you overcome sin because God is the Great Overcomer of sin, and He indwells you.

See, the subtlety there? It's the Spirit of God who wants to fulfill that, and to do that, and to accomplish that in your life. It's not something God gave you and then said, "Hey, come see Me on the other side." It's a relational, dependent aspect that we're talking about here where the Spirit of God wants to fulfill and go on fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law in your life. And so again, we see it comes back to this relationship, this relational fellowship with the Lord.

Now I want to point out something here because I think it's important. Notice the word "might be" in verse 4, he says, *"that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."* And this "might be" really represents what's known as the subjunctive mood in the Greek, and all that means is it's not a guaranteed fact. That's the indicative mood where he's saying something's going to happen, it's a guaranteed thing. He says, "might be", he uses the mood of probability. In other words, it's very probable. You could say it this way: everything is in place for this to happen, but it's not guaranteed.

Now why is it not guaranteed? Why is the righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled in us, why is that not a guaranteed thing? Is that because the Holy Spirit takes a nap once in a while and you're just left on your own? Does He only come out when it's warm outside? Why is it a "might be" thing, why is it not a guaranteed thing? Well, everything is in place for your success, but here's why it's not a guaranteed thing: you have to respond by faith. That's your part. Your part is simply depending upon the work that God has accomplished in your co-crucifixion with Christ, the fact that He's indwelt you with His Spirit, and the fact that He wants you to walk in continual dependence upon Him, that's your part.

So, if you can guarantee me that you're gonna walk by faith 24/7, then I can guarantee you that the righteous requirement of the law will be fulfilled in you 24/7, because that's what the verse teaches. Everything's in place, the variable, as always in the Christian life, is you and me. Are we gonna walk in dependence upon what God has done? Are we going to trust in His solution? See, that's the variable in the equation.

This word “walk” means *to tread or to walk about*, it implies kind of a general walking around. And I always picture the tiger at the zoo, just walking around, pacing around its enclosure, this idea that there's this consistent walking in dependence. In fact, there are times you go to the zoo, and you don't even see the tiger leave the external barrier. I know he has to; he has to go somewhere else once in a while, but there are times of the day he just walks back and forth around the enclosure. You guys have seen what I'm talking about, or at least seen it on TV. That's kind of the idea is that we're walking, we're treading about, we're depending on the Lord, we're carving a path.

I remember growing up I had these two dogs, and they would run out of the back door to go to the bathroom in the same spot every time, so much so that after a course of a couple months, there was a clearly defined path, and they would never even veer from that path. They would just curve around just to go to the bathroom, they would never go to another part of the yard to start, they would always follow that path. And that's what we're trying to establish, is a consistency of walking by faith, this consistent walk that he's talking about here.

But again, the believer can decide - as we see from this verse - to walk according to the flesh, or he or she can decide to walk according to the Spirit, and we'll get further into this in verse 5. While we're doing this, then God will fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in us. So how do we get the righteous requirements of the law fulfilled in us? Is it by trying to keep the righteous requirements of the law? No, it's by depending upon the Spirit of God. It's enjoying Jesus Christ. And you say, “That's too simple, there's got to be more to it than that.” You know, that's exactly what Martha thought in the life of Jesus, “There's gotta be more than this.”

And Martha's working and she's slaving, and she's serving, and she's doing all this stuff, and she's even getting bent out of shape! “There's ol' Mary over there, she's just sitting down, what a lazy sister! She's just sitting there doing nothing.” And Jesus is like, “Martha, whoa, wait. Time out! No, she's taken the better spot. She's occupied with Me.”

And it's not that God doesn't want us to serve, it's not that God wants us laying in our hammock at home, expecting somebody else to fill up our sweet tea. That's not what it is at all. But it's understanding the empowerment and where it comes from, versus just going out scatterbrained and scatter-bodied, just trying to do something, to achieve something you were never designed to achieve on your own.

And so it's about walking in step, walking in dependence upon the Spirit of God. And as you do that, and as you just free yourself up to focus and occupy yourself with Jesus Christ instead of occupying your day with whether or not you're pleasing to the Lord, and occupying your thoughts with whether or not you're doing enough, and whether or not you stop doing bad things enough, and whether or not you're acceptable to the Lord, you take God at face-value, at His word, and you begin to enjoy Jesus Christ. You begin to enjoy who you are in the Lord; you begin to enjoy everything that you possess in the Lord.

Stop focusing on yourself! There's only discouragement and frustration. Some of you focus on yourself and you actually enjoy what you see, and you need to be slapped the other direction. There's nothing in you to enjoy, it's all enjoyable in Jesus Christ, and that's where our occupation needs to be.

And so in verse 5, we're gonna get this idea. In fact, this thought's gonna carry us through verse 8 in many ways, and it's this idea of setting your mind. Notice in verse 5 the word that we start with, “for”. And I pointed that out last week, I think it's like 17 times in this chapter, Paul is just building a systematic argument, he's further explaining or expanding on what he just talked about.

And so when we see this word “for” here, what is he expanding on? Well, he's expanding on this idea of walking according to the Spirit. How do you walk according to the Spirit? When you hear

Christians say that sometimes... have you ever heard a Christian say a very common cliché, and instead of being encouraged, you just want to punch them in the nose? I mean, seriously, when you hear something and it just sounds cliché and you're just like, "This isn't helping me right now. I need something practical, don't tell me that right now. I need something practical."

Let me tell you, this is one of those areas where it's like make this point and yell louder, because I don't really know how to convince you - and I need convincing too - I don't know how to convince us more than this. This is the most practical thing we can teach. You need to walk in dependence upon the Spirit of God. We need to walk by faith, that's our only chance to grow spiritually. Are we convinced of that? That's where we've got to start, I mean, we've got to be convinced of that truth. And so he's gonna give us some very practical things here as we kind of look at this.

It reminds me of an old Yogi Berra quote. Anyone familiar with Yogi Berra? He's a fun guy, go check him out on the internet sometime! But he said about baseball, "*Baseball is 90% mental, and the other half is physical.*" Now, I don't think he was a math major, but he was really hitting that on the head, and as a guy who's played baseball, he's right: 90% is mental and the other half is physical. That's a true statement! But you know, I think you can apply that same quote to Christianity. 90% is mental. What are you occupying your mind on today?

Paul says something in Philippians, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" How many in this room, if you just looked at your last week, just the last week, you could actually say, "For me to live is Christ?" Were you occupied with Jesus Christ this week? Were you occupied with a car that's broken down, or getting ready to break down? Were you occupied with a trial at work? Were you occupied with a trial in life? Were you occupied with either an inadequacy that you discovered, or was exposed in your life? What were you occupied with this week? Some of you might have been occupied with a sports team. Some of you might have been occupied with chocolates, and mistletoe, and you know, whatever comes with all that Christmas stuff. What were you occupied with this week? What did you set your mind on this week? For you to live is... what? What would you insert there?

And so he's going to give us some ideas, something practical here, because in verse 5 it says, "*For*" - again, further explaining this concept of walking according to the Spirit - "*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*" First of all, before we break into this verse, notice that he starts to insert the words "according to". That's very important to notice, because you as a believer in Jesus Christ could never be described as being in the flesh, ever again. Your position is in Christ, that's an unchanging position. You are in Christ; you'll never be in the flesh again. But you know as a believer in Christ, you can walk according to the flesh? You can also walk according to the Spirit. That's the practical description of how your daily walk is.

Now I want you to notice where this walk begins. It begins a few layers deeper in the mind. This is why curbing your external behavior is not where it's at in the Christian life. How many stories have you heard of a family who raises their kids a certain way, puts constraints on them, they behave while they're at home, and the second they hit that door, the second that second foot is outside of that door frame, they just go fancy free and footloose, and they're engaged in all sorts of things in the world. And we say, "What happened to them? They were such well-behaved kids." It's never about the externals only. As a parent, we've got to capture their hearts, right? That's what we're after here, we're not just about externals.

But do you know why sin is manifesting itself in your life? Really simply put, why is it still manifesting itself in your Christian life? Verse 5 tells us you're setting your mind on the things of the flesh. You're mentally occupied with the things of the flesh, that's what's going on. You're not

recognizing that those aren't helpful thoughts, those aren't helpful ideas, you're just plowing right ahead, I'm just plowing right ahead, setting my mind on the things of the flesh. In fact, this is really the believer, you and me, presenting our mind, one of our members, to the sin nature. And do you know that one's walk always begins with one's thinking? This is why Yogi Berra was onto something as it relates to baseball, but also as it relates to the Christian life.

Ephesians 4:17, I want you to notice again this idea that what you think is what is going to be executed in your life. How you occupy your thinking is going to pay results one way or the other in your life. In Ephesians 4:17, Paul says, *"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their minds."*

So where does this walk start? It starts in the futility of your mind. In fact, the very reason that he encourages them not to walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk implies what? That they're capable of walking like the rest of the Gentiles walk. There's a capability there, otherwise he wouldn't tell him not to do that. And where does it begin? Well, it begins in the futility of their mind. Let's see where that ends.

Verse 18, *"having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;"* it doesn't sound too bad so far, but look at verse 19: *"who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."* And yes, the word "all" is there in the text, *"all uncleanness and greediness"*. So, you see what it's saying, that if we're not checking the way that we think - it's like the tub drain in your bathtub - it's this downward spiral of sin.

I used to have guys I played baseball with, and we would be in another town, and they'd be looking at another girl when they had a girlfriend back home. And I'd say, "Dude, what are you doing? You've got a girlfriend back home." And they'd say, "Oh, I'm just window-shopping. I wouldn't do anything." And before the end of the season, that guy was doing exactly what he said he wouldn't do, and he was being unfaithful to a girlfriend back home. And it all started there in the mind, and you just see the progression.

And you know, here's how it starts in our world: maybe we even come to a church function. Maybe somebody says something to us that we're like, "Hmm, what did they mean by that? Was that a compliment, or was that one of those backhanded compliments? Were they really trying to rib me?"

And we start there in our thinking, and then it starts to go, "Well you know, I never really liked that person anyways. And you know, their clothes didn't even match last night. And they had lipstick on their cheek. And now that I think about it, her husband's kind of a crusty crustacean himself. And now that I think about it, I don't even know why they go to our church. I mean, they just don't fit in with anybody." And before long, you already had the conversation that you're gonna have with them that's never gonna happen. Telling them off, "And then I would say this, and then they would reply this, and I would say that."

You see, this is how it starts in the mind, it starts right there. And what's crazy about that is you're running that conversation in your mind as you're driving down the road, then that's when the bozo on 85 cuts you off, and that's when the four-letter filth word comes out. Maybe you don't let four-letter filth words out, good for you! But maybe you think them. And that's when that happens.

See, it started in the mind. You've set your mind on the things of the flesh, you've just allowed yourself to soak, and soak, and soak, and what we're gonna see is that as you do that, that's the very definition of walking according to the flesh. Now, sin's got you. And although you started for *this* ride, it's like going to an amusement park and you say, "Man, that roller coaster up there goes upside down, I'm not gonna ride on that thing, but I'll go over to this kiddie ride." And what you don't realize is the second you give sin the ticket, they just switched rides on you, and next thing you know you're going



up. Loop-de-loops, something you never chose something you would never want, and sin just takes over and dominates, and that's what we see here.

Now let's get back to verse 5. Let's read it again because I've kind of been talking too much. *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."* This phrase, "set their minds" is a present-tense continual verb, meaning *to have a mindset*. It involves your will, it involves your affection, it involves your conscience. It means that you are actively choosing to think about something, or to be occupied with something, you're actively engaged in that process. To set one's mind on the things of the flesh means to constantly entertain or to constantly occupy your mind with it, and to concentrate on it. Again, we're not just talking about intellect, we're talking about your focus.

See, this is why you know just studying the Bible doesn't make you spiritual. That can be an intellectual exercise. You can know all of the seven Herod's of the Bible, but it's not going to impact your spiritual life with the Savior. What we're talking about is something more than intellect, it's your focus. We're talking about your occupation. It's *great* that you get up and read your Bible an hour every day. Great! Good! What do you do with the other 23 hours of your day? Where's your focus?

I'm not talking about intellect, I'm not talking about getting through your Bible reading, "Alright, good! Three more chapters, I'm on pace to get this Bible read in an entire year!" And I'm just using those examples, I'm not slamming Bible reading. I'm just saying, where's your focus? That's the point of this, that's what this word means here when we talk about setting our minds on the things of the flesh. What are you occupied with?

Are you occupied with what the world is occupied with? Let's talk about what the world's occupied with, let's see if we can summarize it in a couple of quick points: how do you look? How smart are you? How educated are you? And how much money are you making? Did we summarize it pretty well? Three points, that's what the world is occupied with. And guess what? So many times, that's exactly the type of things that we implant in our kids' minds, we implant in our church, and we cycle through. Because we say, "Well, as long as your kid grows up, and he's going to college, and he's got a great job, and he's got a nice house, and he's producing beautiful grandbabies, then he's a success." I mean, haven't we heard that in church circles? Don't we think the same way?

We spend thousands of dollars on how we look. Now, I'm all about being healthy. Sometimes you can't tell by looking at me, I'm a healthy eater too - not like healthy-healthy food, but healthy like I like it - so I'm all about health too. I'm all about taking care of these bodies so that we can get the most life and use out of them. But you know, I'm past the age where I need a six-pack. A six-pack is of no value in what I do. I've got a wife that loves me whether I've got a 6 pack, a 12 pack, an 18 pack, or a case, a 24 pack. And I'm blessed that way, right? So, my six-pack days are over, I'm not about getting a six-pack, I'm not about buying into what the world says is beauty, right?

What about going and making lots of money? In many ways, don't we push our kids that way? "Get this education, get this job, make lots of money, then you'll be happy, and you'll be successful." And we all know that's a sham! No amount of money, no amount of things, no house mortgage, no fancy car, no beautiful spouse, and beautiful kids will fix the problems of the world. And yet, that's how we set our minds. Do we realize as we walk around in life how much the world impacts the way we think? And Paul's saying this in verse 5: if you're failing in sin, if you're living according to the flesh, it's because you are setting your mind, you are occupied with the things of the flesh. That's why it's happening, and we'll look more closely at this in the next section.



# CHAPTER 44

## The Proper Mindset Part 2

### Romans 8:5-9

Let's continue in Romans chapter 8. One of the things that we're right in the middle of in Romans chapter 8 is Paul really going through and systematically building a case for sanctification by the means of God's grace. That's probably a really good summary. And remember, sanctification by God's grace means that God has done something for you that you could not do for yourself, that you did not deserve. That's the definition of God's grace when we talk about it in justification. You couldn't obtain a righteousness equal to God's to get you into heaven, nor did you have the ability to pay the death penalty so as to avoid hell.

And so God said, "I'm gonna give you something that you don't deserve, I'm gonna provide you with the gift, and I'm gonna do that by sending my son Jesus to come to the earth, live a perfect life, die the death that you deserve, and rise again. I accepted His sacrifice on your behalf." And if you put your faith in Jesus and what He did for you, God says He becomes your righteousness and His death counts in your place. That's all done by God's grace.

Sanctification is no different. In fact, we're learning that as we work through Romans 6 and 7, that God is not looking to the Christian to live the Christian life in their own strength. He is looking for the Christian to realize the same thing that we realized before we got saved, and that is the concept of, "I can't. I can't do it."

In fact, you see a man in Romans chapter 7 - as Paul has just walked us through the failure in his life - a man who has a new nature, who loves the law of God, and can't execute it. Wants to do it, crying out, begging for assistance, if you will, strapping down, working hard or trying harder, and can't pull it off until he gets to the end of Romans chapter 7, and he finally realizes that sanctification - he's saved from the power of sin in his daily life, the same way he's saved from the penalty of sin - it's a *Who*, it's somebody outside of me, I need somebody else.

He was missing a key ingredient, and we said that the ingredient that he was missing in his sanctification was the Spirit of God, who's not even mentioned in Romans chapter 7. But you know who is mentioned in Chapter 7 quite a bit? I, I, I. It's like Paul had the camera out and was taking a selfie, right? It's all about him, and he was trying hard in all sincerity, he was trying to break free of the domination of sin, and yet he couldn't find the strength or power within himself. That's because God didn't design us to find the strength and power in ourselves, He wants us looking away from ourselves. And so we start to see that develop in Chapter 8.

We see that we are no longer condemned by God's grace because we're in Christ. We see in verse 2 that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can make me free from the law of sin and death. We see in verse 3 that God condemned the very source that leads us to live this hypocritical life, this indwelling sin that each believer has, God's condemned that so that you won't be condemned. And then in verse 4 we see He did that for a reason: He wanted *"the righteous requirements of the law to be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

See, the righteous requirements of the law will not be fulfilled in your life by you trying to keep the law. That's going to end in abject failure, that's Romans 7. Remember, "fulfilled" is in the passive voice, God wants to fulfill this in and through you by means of the power of the Spirit of God. The spirit of God producing the righteous requirements that the law wants to produce in your life, but the

Spirit of God doing it in and through you. How? As you crank it out and try harder? No, verse 4 says you walk according to the Spirit, it says you walk by faith.

And so as we get into verse 5, we see this word “for” at the beginning of verse 5. And remember, anytime you see that word in the English Bible, it is expanding or further explaining something that he just covered in the verse before. And so as we read verse 5, when he says “for” he's expanding or explaining this idea of walking according to the flesh or walking according to the Spirit. And so he says this in verse 5, *“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”*

What we're going to see is this “for” is gonna further explain or expand on verse 4 in terms of what it looks like to walk according to the Spirit. What does it look like to walk according to the flesh? And remember, we made this point last week, but I don't think we can make it too much, this word “according to”, notice he shifts his terminology. In verse 8 he's going to shift back to the word “in”.

So, we're contrasting “according to” with “in”, and why is that important? Because as a believer in Jesus Christ, you need to know that you will *never, ever*, could *never* be categorized as being “in Adam” ever again. You've been removed from Adam, you are now in Christ, and that's an unchangeable position.

And so as a believer walks or lives, they can never be described as being *in* the flesh, or being *in* Adam, or being *in* sin, but they can be described as walking *according to*. Living from that same source, but they're not positionally *in* Adam. And so we make that point as we go forward.

But we want to notice again - I mentioned this last week as we started verse 5 - but notice where the walk begins. We always think the walk begins in the walk. We always think the walk begins in the external things that we can see, and yet here it's like the layers of an onion. Notice where the walk actually starts according to verse 5: it starts in our minds. It starts on what we're setting our minds on.

And I quoted Yogi Berra last week, but it's good to bring up a New York Yankee anytime I get a chance to (that was my favorite team growing up). But Yogi Berra said this about baseball: *“Baseball's 90% mental and the other half is physical.”* And we said he probably wasn't a math major, and we could recognize it by the quote, but he's got some insightful things to say. And that's true about baseball, but you know I think it's also true of the Christian life, that the Christian life is 90% mental, and the other half is physical.

And the emphasis there is, “What are you thinking about?” If we went back this week and we took your life, and we took your thoughts, and we projected it on the big screen, many of us would run and hide, and that would be pretty embarrassing. Probably for yours truly as well. But if we did that, we put that up there, what could we honestly say that you were occupied with this week?

And see, that's the point of verse 5, because what you occupy your thinking with is going to result in the way that you move your feet, and move your hands, and the result of the way you walk. And so when we look at the believer who's occupying themselves with their flesh, what they're doing is simply this: it goes back to Romans 6, to whom are you presenting yourself? Are you presenting yourself by faith to God, or are you presenting yourself by faith to the sin nature? That's the question. Who are you presenting to?

See, your mind is one of your members. As we go back to Romans 6:16, we're going to see that this *is* a big deal. I shared last week that some people say, “Oh, what's the big deal? I'm just thinking about it, it's not like I'm gonna do it. I'm just swirling it in my mind a little bit, it's not like I'm actually gonna act on this. It's not a big deal.” Well, look at why it's a big deal, go back to Romans 6:16. It says this, *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”*

You see, this is the first step typically, mentally, when we present our minds and we occupy our thoughts and our minds with the things of the flesh, sin's got you now. And you may have signed up for this, but sin's gonna take you over to do this. You may have thought, "Oh, I just signed up for this little aspect of walking according to the flesh." No, no. Once your toe is dipped in that water, the anaconda's got you, so to speak. You may have signed up (as I said in the last section) for a kiddie ride, and you may find yourself on the loop-de-loop that goes upside down 80 miles an hour like 14 times. You may be puking by the end of it when sin gets its grip into you. And that's what we're talking about here because this is very important, and Paul's gonna go on and describe why it's so important as to what you occupy yourself with.

When we say, "Set your minds" this is a present-tense, continual verb meaning *to have a mindset*. It involves your will, that means that you're choosing to remain focused and thinking on whatever it is that you're thinking about. It means to involve your affection, it means to involve your conscience, and that's why I said last week we're not talking about intellect here, we're talking about focus.

And I've tried to be clear that I'm not criticizing Bible reading, so hopefully you've gotten that message, but my question is this: so what if you read your Bible one hour in the morning? I want to know what you are doing with the other 23 hours. What are you occupied with? Are you just reading it, checking it off your list, and "Oh man, I've got my days free, now I can think about whatever I want to."?

See, Paul would disagree with that mindset. That's a religious, carnal mindset to say, "Oh, I just have to do *this* and then I've got the rest of the day free. I've kind of chalked up my brownie points, I don't really need the Lord the rest of the day." And we would never verbally say that, but if we played out again the thinking in our mind, what were we occupied with last week?

What *were* you occupied with when you weren't reading your daily Bible reading? What were you occupied with? That's just between you and the Lord, I don't need to know, you don't have to tell me. But that's what we're talking about here, we're not talking about intellectually checking off an hour on your day. We're talking about moment by moment, who are you focused on?

To set one's mind on the things of the flesh means this: constantly entertaining, constantly occupying your mind with those things. The idea would be to concentrate on them. And here's what's so deceptive about it: it doesn't always manifest itself in licentious sins. That's what's so deceptive, because many of us, if we're just staying away from the Dirty Dozen, we are successful in our Christian life, right? If we're just staying away from the bad seven or the Dirty Dozen or the big, bad, ugly, nasty sins, then we are doing great in the Christian life.

"As long as I don't get drunk anymore, man, I am really doing well!" And that's how we view the Christian life. And we settle for second-best in that way, and yet we occupy ourselves with the things of the flesh all the time, but we do it in culturally acceptable ways.

And I mentioned in the last section that this is not a spiritual manner of living, and I hope I didn't hurt anybody's feelings, but you know the three things that we culturally accept in terms of carnal thinking comes in the area of beauty, brains, and bucks, right?

And what do I mean by beauty? Well, we're occupied with a diet. Now again, I'm all about health, don't get me wrong. I'm not criticizing any of these things in and of themselves, but I'm saying don't be occupied with it. Do you understand the difference between what I'm saying? Is that what your life's about, your diet? Is it about you working out? Is it about plastic surgery? Is it about any kind of physical appearance thing?

"I've got to go buy this dress because it makes me look good for this event." And you're so occupied with external beauty. "Oh, if I only looked like him. If I only lost ten pounds." If only I ... and

we don't finish that sentence, but you know what the end of that sentence is? "If I only had *this*, then I would be happy, then I would be content, then I could actually focus on the Lord." And you know, everyone in here knows that that is a bunch of garbage, that is a bunch of hogwash! You can ask the most beautiful person; you can ask Time magazine's "person of the year" if that's the secret to life.

That's not the secret to life, Jesus Christ is the secret to life. Occupation with Jesus Christ is the secret to life! And you can be ugly, you could be beaten with an ugly stick and be that ugly, or you can be beautiful in the world's eyes. If you have Jesus Christ, you've got everything, you need nothing else. So, we get distracted with beauty, we focus on that, we occupy ourselves with that.

We occupy ourselves with money. We think if we just have *this* job, or we just get *this* promotion, if I can just take my career to this next level, then I'm gonna be happy. And you know what, everyone in this room knows that's a bunch of hogwash too. Yet it doesn't keep us from being occupied with it mentally. It doesn't keep us from looking at that bank account saying, "Man, if I could just get my savings account up another hundred dollars, another two hundred dollars, another thousand dollars, then I'll be stable and content."

We occupy ourselves with entertainment. We occupy ourselves with our kids going to good schools, and getting good grades, and meeting a pretty spouse, and having pretty grandbabies, and making lots of money, and having a nice house, and having a nice car. Those are the things of the flesh, folks. That's to be carnally minded.

Do I want my kids and my wife to live out on the street? Clearly not, I'm just saying there's a difference between living life and having those things than being *occupied* with those things. That's what we're talking about here. And if you want to know if you've been occupied with those things, just look back in the last few weeks and tell me what you've been thinking about. What's been occupying your mind? What's been occupying your free time to think?

In contrast, to set one's mind on the things of the Spirit means to entertain or occupy your mind with those things. Now, that would be great to know what are spiritual things to be occupied with, wouldn't it? Wouldn't that be neat if the Bible told us that? Well in the case of the Spirit of God, you know who He wants to occupy you with? This is hands down, no question this is biblical: He wants to occupy you with Jesus Christ. He wants you to find in every situation in your life that Jesus Christ is enough, that Jesus Christ is sufficient. What are you going through today? Is it a financial burden? I mean, insert the blank, Jesus Christ is enough. Jesus Christ is sufficient.

And if we're not exalting Jesus Christ in our thinking, then rest assured, if you're trusting in every other thing besides Jesus Christ, you're walking according to the flesh. And it won't be long if it hasn't already happened that you're gonna see manifestations of that fleshly nature controlling and dominating your life. You're gonna see it in the way of external sins, you're gonna see it in the way of internal attitudes, you're gonna see it in a way where you're trying to deceive somebody or hide something from somebody, or try to be phony with somebody, those are all actions that come from the sin nature and that source. And so the question becomes, who are you occupied with? The Spirit of God wants to occupy you with Jesus Christ.

What's interesting as it relates to sanctification, what's the end goal of sanctification? We want to look like Jesus Christ, right? We want to be more Christ-like, that's the goal. Well 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that as we enjoy the Lord Jesus, we're transformed into His image. Who does the work, by the way? Well, 2 Corinthians 3:18, "*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding*" - that's a look word, that's an occupation word, that's "I'm enamored with something, I'm not taking my eyes off of this person" - *as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.*"

In fact, he even uses a human illustration. Ever looked in the mirror and just checked out what you're looking at? "Where's that hair going?" Actually, that's when you get older. You get hairs growing in lots of places. But it's this idea of being enamored with it, you're studying it, you're occupied with it. But when you do that with the glory of the Lord, you're being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

What did Romans 8:4 say? That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us by the Spirit of God. See, He's working to accomplish that in our lives. What's your role? Well, it's just what it was in Romans 6: it's a consistent message that not only are you saved from the penalty of sin by faith, but you're saved from the power of sin by faith. It's as you walk by faith in the Word of God that the Spirit of God begins to transform you into the image of Christ, which is what we want. It's just not accomplished by cranking out, trying to keep the law.

And so we move on to verse 6. He goes on to explain, notice again at verse 6, he has the word "for", and he says, "*For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*" And again this "for" is gonna further explain or expand, and now he's gonna give us the results of our mental occupation. So, he's trying to convince you "Don't walk according to the flesh, don't set your mind on the things of the flesh." And now he's gonna tell you there's a reason why. There are results when you and I choose to be occupied with the things of the flesh. In fact, they're very real and practical consequences.

We always say, "Give me something practical." And usually when people say that they want a list of things to do. I'm gonna give you the most practical thing that you can do in the Christian life. Here it is, and you're not gonna like it especially if you're a list person: enjoy Jesus Christ. Can you go through life on a daily basis just enamored, soaked up, focused, caught up, enraptured - whatever other word we can use with Jesus Christ - with who He is and what He's done for you?

If we can just live like that, we can handle just about anything that life throws our way. Because we've got the Lord of the universe - the King of kings, one day He'll be declared - the Lord of lords, the King of kings, and we've got access to Him and what He's done for us. He didn't hold anything back for you, for your salvation not only from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin. Isn't He someone we can focus on? Isn't He someone that we can be occupied with? And just as we're going through our day and having a difficulty, if Jesus Christ comes to your thinking, doesn't it just make you want to smile? Wow, what an *awesome* Savior. What else could He do for me that He hasn't already done? This is an incredible Man.

In fact, if you had a child and your child was in danger, and some man risked his life for your child, and risked his own life and saved your child from inherent harm and death, when you thought about that person going forward, wouldn't a smile come to your face? Wouldn't you be appreciative of that man? Well, Jesus is ten times more for you than anything like that anecdotal story.

And so we want to be occupied with Christ. And one of the reasons we want to be occupied with Him as verse 6 says is because, "*to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*" And so we see that this carnal-mindedness equals death. This is why it's so important *not* to get focused on the things of the flesh, this is why it's a big deal. Because it's just like anything else we've been looking at in Romans: when you sin, death is a result, period. That's true for the unbeliever, that's true for the believer. Now the distinction between the unbeliever and the believer we've made many times, is the believer is no longer subject to the second death, they're saved from that second death, but in terms of experience in this life, they experience the death-like existence.

So, what does this look like practically? And it's important to know it, and we'll work through this as we go through this list here as well, but death means *separation*. When you see the word "death"

in the Bible, just think “separation”, and the question should come, “Okay, I see death, separation from what?” and then we allow the context to dictate what the separation is from.

And so when he talks about carnal-mindedness equalling death, what's he talking about here? Well, what is carnal-mindedness? It's self-focus, self-occupation, self-pleasure, self-benefit, it's all about me. So even though Paul wanted to keep the law in Romans chapter 7, even though he had the right desires, he was carnally minded in Chapter 7. Why was he carnally minded? Because he was trying to obtain sanctification in his own strength. He had set his mind on the things of the flesh, he was trying to do what only God could do, and that's to deliver him from sin's power.

So, what does it look like? Well, for the unbeliever, notice again, the unbeliever is *in* the flesh, *in* Adam, *in* sin. The believer doesn't walk according to the flesh, he or she is *in* the flesh, that's their only mode of operation. And so in terms of death, they're gonna experience broken relationships, they're gonna experience natural consequences for their sins, nothing they can do can please God, even their best good works. That's why Isaiah 64:6 says that even their righteousness will be like filthy rags, that's the state of the unbeliever, and they'll eventually experience the second death.

And so to be carnally minded as an unbeliever means all of these things. But what does it mean for a believer? Notice the believer cannot be *in* the flesh, but the believer can walk *according* to the flesh. And so what does it look like, or how does it manifest itself in the life of a believer? Well, one way we see it is similar: broken relationships. If you are a Christian and all you have in your wake - a lot of boaters out here, you know what I'm talking about when I say “wake”? The water you churn up after you go by - is broken relationship, after broken relationship, after broken relationship, we can explain it right here: it's carnally minded.

Now, it may not be you, necessarily every time, it may be the other party that's carnally minded that's causing that break in relationship. But at the same time, as I used to tell my kids that I taught in math, if you're involved in every scenario that goes wrong in this classroom, *you* are the common denominator. I mean, I don't know what to say. If it's involving you every time, you've probably got a part in this. And so look at your life. Do you have a series of broken relationships? It might indicate that you're carnally minded. This death-like existence in terms of relationship might be manifesting itself in your life.

What about this, are you overcome with anxiety or bitterness or envy? Do you have a hard time rooting for somebody else to succeed? And when I talk about anxiety, don't get me wrong, I'm not a medical doctor, but I know that there's probably a level of some of this that's medically related, and so I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the rest of us who just want to control things, who just want to grip tight the wheel of control in our life, and we're just trying to prevent any negative circumstance from coming into our lives, or our kids' lives, or our family's lives.

And so we think we can accomplish that by just gripping tighter, maintaining control, and God is gracious and faithful to show you, “You know what? You're not God, you're not in control.” And yet you get anxious about it, anxious as if you could control things. And I've even had people come to me and say, “I'm so anxious, I know I can't control things, but I'm still gonna try. I know God's in control, but I can't let go of the steering wheel of life, so to speak.” And so that's one of the ways that this carnal mindedness is gonna manifest itself.

Another way is we're gonna be overrun by self-focused thinking. And when I say “self-focused”, many think of it in a positive way, like, “Oh man, he just thinks he's the greatest thing since sliced bread.” I'm talking about the other extreme too, people that think too poorly of themselves. The people that are always beating themselves up. You know, this is still an occupation with yourself, this is still a



focus on yourself, and you know what this is a death or a separation from? It separates from God's true estimation of your value in Christ.

In the grand scheme of things, you could say this to somebody who's thinking too highly of themselves, or too lowly of themselves, "Who cares what you think of yourself?" That's a harsh, really direct way to say that, but I say it in as kind and gracious of a way as I can, because it only matters what God thinks of you. It only matters how God values you.

And you only need to read a couple of verses in the Bible to see how highly God views the position that He's placed you in in Jesus Christ. You're accepted in the beloved. You've been made accepted in the beloved, you have an inheritance. God is going to adopt you, He has provided an inheritance that's uncorrupted, undefiled, you are loved with unconditional love. That's all true of you because you're in Christ, start thinking about that. Start occupying your mind with those kinds of things.

How else does it manifest itself in the believer? Well, it manifests itself in lack of fruit bearing or acceptable good works. This one's kind of hard to measure accurately, because we view good works normally in terms of external behavior, things that we do, rarely do we check the internal motivations of the *why* we're doing it. So that's a little bit harder.

But in terms of those who walk carnally minded, there is gonna be some surprise at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ, because all the good works are gonna get thrown up there and they're all going to be evaluated, and some are gonna be burnt away, and I think that's going to be a surprise for some. "What do you mean that's burnt away? I witnessed to somebody! How in the world could that be unacceptable?" Well, you did it with impure motives. Maybe you did it to be seen by other Christians so they might think you were spiritual. And so you may have led somebody to Christ, and that's a great thing, but you won't get credit for it at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ, you won't receive that reward.

But overall, in terms of the outcome, death, because it's a noun, what it does is it's describing a type of life. If you're gonna live as a Christian walking according to the flesh, carnally minded, focused, and occupied with the things of the flesh, you're gonna live a life that's useless. It's gonna be a life devoid of true meaning, it's gonna be a life devoid of purpose, it's going to be a life that's out of fellowship with the Lord.

And you might ask yourself, "Why am I restless in my Christian life? Probably the indication is you're carnally minded. You're approaching life's problems - maybe it's an issue with sin - trying to take care of it in your own way, in your own time. See, God took care of it, God made provision for you when He took you into the death of Jesus with Him, buried you with Him, and raised you again with Him to newness of life. God took care of sin's power, that's not left for you to take care of, it's you taking your stance by faith in what God's already done to free you practically from sin's power in your daily life.

Why are you agitated? Why are you irritated? Why do you feel isolated? The more Facebook friends, and Instagram friends, and Snapchat friends you get doesn't reduce this feeling of isolation, or aloneness, or a lack of connection, does it? I mean, we know that don't we? Who cares if you've got 500 Facebook friends? That doesn't minister to you at night when you're in bed and maybe crying or tearing up about how the day went.

And so why is this happening? Well, I would venture to say that you're experiencing death as a mindset, as a type of life, separation from God's purposes for the believer, which is fruitfulness, which is enjoyment. We're going to see that because spiritually minded - verse 6 goes on to say - equals life and peace.

So, what does this look like practically? Well for the unbeliever, it's an impossibility. The unbeliever cannot be spiritual at any moment of their life as an unbeliever, it's just impossible, they're

not indwelt by the Spirit of God. We see this in 1 Corinthians 2:11 and 14, they're not even wired for sound, it's not even a possibility for them to live a spiritual life. Now can unbelievers live a religious life? Yeah, buddy. In fact, they can live pretty impressive religious lives. You don't believe me, go look at the Pharisees. Go look at the history of the Pharisees, they can live a very impressive religious life. Ever had anybody knock on your door with a nametag, a tie, and a white shirt? Some of those people can live very impressive religious lives, but don't confuse it, that's not spiritual. That's the contrast that we're making here.

So, what about the believer who walks according to the spirit? How might this look? How might it manifest itself? And remember, when we talk about walking according to the Spirit, we're talking about having your mind occupied with Jesus Christ. What's everything in common about what we've been looking at walking according to the flesh: Beauty, bronze, brains, but the occupation is always me. Even in Romans 7, this occupation for spiritual growth is always about *my* spiritual growth. *I* want to grow spiritually, *I* want to be more fruitful, *I* want to be more effective, me, me, me. That's not even the right occupation to grow spiritually, and yet many times that's how we view our Christian life, it's all about me.

And here we're going to see that when we walk according to the Spirit, when we're spiritually minded, we're gonna be occupied with Jesus Christ. And here's what's cool-crazy about this, is when you're occupied with Jesus Christ, guess what He does? The moment you're occupied with Him, He begins to turn your focus outward. The key to the horizontal service and good works, the key to the horizontal is always the vertical relationship first, it's always an occupation with the Savior first, *then* horizontal ministry can happen. If you don't believe me, try to just do horizontal ministry in your own strength, and guess what? People are gonna tick you off, they're gonna frustrate you, and you're gonna be done with them. And everyone's smiling because we know this is true. We need divine resources to minister to other people. We need fellowship with God to be effective.

You see it in your marriage. To be the husband I need to be to Carrie, my fellowship with God has got to be right. I can buy all the flowers in the world, I can do all the dishes in the world - and I'm not claiming I do those things, but I *could* do those things - and if I'm doing them in my own strength, I'm gonna wear out, I'm gonna peter out, I'm not gonna be able to continue on.

But if my walk with the Lord is right, and I'm in line with the way He thinks, you know what? Jesus Christ wants to love my wife through me. The question is, am I gonna get out of the way and let Him do it, am I gonna walk by faith? Because my wife needs that. She needs me to love her like Jesus Christ. My kids need me to love and to lead them the way Jesus Christ would lead them. They need that, they struggle in life just like their dad does, they need those things.

And you know what, in every one of your relationships, that's why you're not off the hook. That's why it's dangerous for you to walk according to the flesh, you are damaging those around you because mentally, you're occupied with the things you know better than to be occupied with. And here we have this perfect, presented Savior, and the Bible's just saying, "Man, just enjoy Jesus. Just enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ." And may He be exalted in your thinking.

So how does it manifest itself in the believer's life? Well, I think it's gonna manifest itself in true abundant and fulfilled living. This is not "countdown to the alarm clock" type living, which many of us live that way. We just can't wait to get to our beds at night, and then we just hope the alarm clock just breaks in the middle of the night, so we don't have to get up. Some of us think that way, but it doesn't have to be that way. There can be abundant living. There's fruit bearing, there's acceptable good works and service to the Lord and to others, there's an eternal focus and occupation with the Lord. When the

trials of this life come, thus you can experience peace. That's what he says in verse 6, *"to be spiritually minded is life and peace."*

Many of us wait to enjoy the Lord until the moment a trial hits. We're out of fellowship with the Lord, He's not even part of our thinking, then a trial hits and then we get on our knees immediately. It's like they say, "There's no atheists in foxholes." Once a problem hits, we're all the most spiritual people in the world. We actually hit our knees, we start praying, we start thinking about the Lord, we start begging Him to get us out of this situation.

The thing is, if you're spiritually minded, you've already preempted that trial. You're already in fellowship with the Lord and so when the trial hits, you don't react to the circumstances, you just respond to the Lord. That's the difference between a spiritually minded person and a carnally minded person. Carnally minded people react to the circumstances, and typically the reaction is, "Let me get them out of here. Let me remove them, let me just get these out of the way, I want to get out of these circumstances as quickly as possible. What's the quickest way to do that? These circumstances are hard, they're tough, they're pushing, I just want out." And that's the mindset of a carnally minded believer. "Just get me out of these circumstances, Lord."

In fact, I love praying for practical needs. Again, this is not a slam on that. I love the fact that we have a group that prays corporately on Wednesday nights, I appreciate that. But when you typically look at a prayer list - and think of your own prayer list for your life - what do we typically pray for? "Lord, get the circumstances out of the way. Get the bad circumstances out of here and give me some good circumstances." And I'm just saying, it's okay to pray for practical needs, but again, if that's what we're occupied with, we're occupied with carnally minded things. We don't have a divine perspective on those, and so as we're spiritually minded, we're occupied with the Lord, we're better equipped to have a divine perspective on life's trials versus a carnal reaction to them.

So, the other thing you would see is a daily manifestation of the life of Christ within us. Being produced by the Spirit of God - not by you cranking it out - and being produced as you, by faith, present yourself to Him. And then finally, fellowship with the Lord and experience of true purpose and meaning in this world.

Now, verse 7. Why does Paul say that to be carnally minded is death? Let's look at verse 7. He answers it with a "because", so there's a question there. Why is this true? Why is to be carnally minded death, why is to be spiritually minded life and peace? He says this in verse 7, *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."*

So again, why is this such a big deal? Well simply put, this type of thinking is at odds with God Almighty. I mean, which believer wakes up and says, "I want to fight against God today.?" Are you crazy?! None of us do that - I hope. "I want to get up and just fight against God. I want to be on the other side of a tug-of-war battle, I think I can get Him today, I think I wore Him out yesterday, I think I can get Him across that line today." Of course not!

You know, it's interesting because this word "enmity" means *hostility or hatred*. And we don't think of being carnally minded that way, it's like, "What are you talking about? I'm just thinking about making more money. I'm just thinking about filling my 401k. What are you talking about? That's why I'm working 80 hours a week. Yeah, that's why I can't serve at the church, and that's why I can't do this, but yeah, I'm filling my 401k. What's wrong with that?" And we think, "What's the big deal?"

And you know, the sin nature, the flesh, has deceived us into thinking this is no big deal. That when you live carnally minded, when you act out in such a way in your thinking that you *know* is anti-biblical, you *know* the Bible is teaching against what you're doing and what you're thinking, and yet you

justify it and go on, do you know that you're taking the side of the tug-of-war against God? You're at direct odds with Him, in direct hostility against Him.

We find out a couple more things in this verse. It's interesting because there's two additional things about the carnal mind in this verse, in addition to the fact that it's enmity with God. We see that first phrase, *"it is not subject to the law of God"* it means it's completely rebellious. When you're walking after the flesh, and according to the flesh, and occupied with the things of the flesh, you're not even subject to God. You're refusing to place yourself under God in an orderly fashion, that's what the Greek word means. In fact, it was a military term used to describe troops falling into range. And not only that, but the way it's used here in this verse, it's a *continual* position of rebellion, you're *continually* rebelling against God, you're *continually* not putting yourself under or subjecting yourself to the Lord.

But not only are we unwilling, the next phrase that we have in verse 7 tells us that we're unable. *"Nor indeed can be"* is a Greek word *"dunamai"*, it just means *ability, by virtue of one's own ability and resources*. And the idea is not only are you *unwilling* when you walk carnally-minded, but you're unable. And that's why many of us, when we're walking carnally-minded, many times we stay in that state for a period of time. There's a period of time associated with it, it's not like we pop in and out.

And we'll talk more about the solution, but basically when you recognize that you're living and walking carnally minded, what's the solution to that? Well, you need to be restored to fellowship with the Lord. That's the very first thing you need to be thinking of, and 1 John 1:9 provides the method for that, it's as you confess your sins. You agree with God that what you've been doing is sinful, that you've been occupied with things outside of Jesus Christ, and you want to be restored to fellowship. And you know what, you don't have to convince God that much. Because you know what it says in that verse? The second you do that, God's faithful. Your God is faithful. "Well, what if I do it 50 times?" Your God is faithful. "What if I do it 700 times?" Your God is faithful. If you confess your sins, God is faithful to restore you to fellowship. And so that would be the solution.

And now Paul is in verse 8 and we see this change in terminology. He says, *"So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."* And notice that switch back to "in" now. Who's in the flesh biblically? Well, it's the unbeliever. So, he's making a conclusion as it relates to the unbeliever. Again, notice that switch in terminology from "in" to "according to" here, he's talking about unbelievers. Their position in the flesh or in Adam puts them in a continual situation where they're unable to please the Lord.

Again, we've referenced Isaiah 64:6, this is true of every unbeliever, this is why no unbeliever can go to heaven based on their good works. They're in a position that can't please the Lord, they can't get out of that position on their own no matter what they try to do to appease or please God. It's much bigger than, "Okay, I better stop drinking and better start going to church." That has nothing to do with their position in the flesh or in Adam.

And so we see this is just kind of a real quick conclusion that Paul makes, but there's also an implication here for believers, which is: don't live according to the sin nature. Don't live from the same source that the unbelievers live from. When we live according to this same source, the sin nature, our lives at that moment will also be unable to please the Lord. That's why if you are doing things in your own strength, you're walking according to the flesh, and yet you're still doing religious good works, it's gonna be unacceptable at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ. It has nothing to do with just external good works.

So many of us want to go around living our Christian life saying, "Well I prayed today, I read my Bible today, I shared the gospel with someone today... whoo, it's 11 o'clock, I'm gonna take the rest of the day off. I think I've got this day covered." And we're thinking externally. Our mindset is carnal, we're thinking like that's all it's about, it's just doing a couple of things, checking it off our lists.

You're not working for the guy down at the lumberyard where you move enough lumber around and you're gonna get paid no matter what and you had a good day. We're talking about the God of the universe who cares about your heart, who cares about your mind, who cares about your thinking. What are you occupied with, not what did you do today?

Now, if you're occupied with the Lord, He's probably gonna keep you busy. That's what we see played out in the pages of scripture, Paul laboring to the point of exhaustion, 'yet not me but the Spirit of God in me' putting him in opportunities and putting him in situations where he can serve God. But see, the vertical has got to be in place for the horizontal to work the right way. So by implication, if you're living from this source, you're going to be unable to please the Lord. His implied argument for the believer then is, "Don't live according to the flesh. Don't present yourself to sin or you're gonna be in a constant state of displeasing the Lord."

Verse 9 he says, "*But you are not in the flesh*" - you see this use again of the "in". He's speaking to believers at Rome - "*but in the Spirit*," - which I think is synonymous with being in Christ here, I think that's what he's describing - "*if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*" So, in contrast to the unbeliever - which he just mentioned in verse 8 - who is in the flesh presently, continually, it's a present tense verb, the believer is not in the flesh presently and continually. Why is the believer not in the flesh? Because we're in Christ. You can't be in both places, you're either in one or you're in the other, and so we are in the Spirit. Again, synonymous with being in Christ.

Now what is the one condition that Paul puts on this positional truth? Do you have the Spirit of God or not? In verse 9 at first glance, it looks like we should really be questioning that in our life. Do we have the Spirit of God or not? But as we look at a little bit of the language behind this he says, "if indeed". He uses what's called a first-class condition in the Greek, it means "if... and He *does*." "If the Spirit of God dwells in you, and He does", he's using it in terms of an argument.

Sometimes you'll hear people say you can translate this "if" to "since", and this is one of those cases. *Since* the Spirit of God dwells in you. That's why he can say you're not in the flesh, you're in the Spirit. *Since* the Spirit of God dwells in you. And so he's going to kind of build off of that, because this word "dwell" means *to reside, to cohabit or to abide*. The Spirit of God is making your body as a believer His temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16, and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 talk about the Spirit of God making the believer's body His temple.

We see that the indwelling Spirit happens at the moment of one's salvation. We find that in John 7:37-39 and Ephesians 1:13-14. In fact, the Ephesians verse talks about after believing, you're sealed with the Spirit of God, and then the passage in John reflects this as well. And so this is not designed to question whether or not they're saved, he's making an argument to stop living from the source of the flesh, and to start living from the source of the Spirit who indwells you, who's inside of you, who was the key ingredient that Paul was missing back in Romans chapter 7 when he was trying to crank out the Christian life in his own strength and he couldn't do it. That was the ingredient he was missing.

And then in verse 9 he says, "*Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*" And so not much explanation needed on the verse, basically if you don't have the Spirit of God, you're not saved, you're not a believer. He's making that point. Unbelievers need one message. We realize that don't we? Unbelievers need one message. It's not to stop drinking, it's not to stop smoking, it's not to start wearing dresses, it's not to start wearing ties, it's not to start coming to church. What's the message that an unbeliever needs? The gospel.

Besides that, who cares if they start wearing ties? They can go to hell just as quickly sober as they can drunk if they've never put their faith in Jesus Christ. That's the message unbelievers need to

hear. That's what's just insane when I hear about churches who want to be churches where the unbeliever wants to come to church, and then they never share the gospel, they just tell them how to live the Christian life, and they're not even Christians! How do you live the Christian life without Jesus Christ? How do you live the Christian life without the Spirit of God? Answer: you don't. You *can't*, it's impossible.

And so when Paul says they're not His, he also uses a first-class condition, that some don't have the Spirit of God and let's assume that they don't, then they don't belong to the Lord. And carefully notice Paul's choice of words, he says the word "have" not "walk". Again, he's not implying that if a believer walks according to the flesh, as bad as that is, he's not implying that they're not saved. He's implying that if you don't have the Spirit of God, you've never been saved, you're an unbeliever, then you don't belong to the Lord, and you don't possess the Spirit of God. Again, this is not speaking of a believer who possesses the Spirit of God, but who walks contrary to His leading.

In the next section we're going to continue looking at the *why*. The *why* of why the Holy Spirit's the key ingredient in your sanctification, and the *why* of why we should not go on presenting ourselves to sin the source.

# CHAPTER 45

## You Don't Owe the Flesh Anything

### Romans 8:10-15

We're in Romans 8:10 today, and you see the title of the message is, "*You Don't Owe the Flesh Anything*." So, we're gonna look at this concept, and the way this passage is gonna lay out today is we're gonna jump into Romans 8:10-11, verse 12 is kind of the linchpin of this passage that we're going to look at, because you see the word "therefore". And so "therefore" is gonna build off of what's there in verses 9-11, and then it's also gonna spring us forward, further explaining why you don't owe the flesh anything.

Let's read verse 9 to kind of ramp up to get to verse 10. He says in Romans 8:9, "*But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*" We looked at this last week, and Paul is going to begin to use a lot of what we call first-class conditions in the Greek. And that means, "if this is true, and let's assume that it is." You can use the word "since". And so he does that in verse 9. He's not questioning whether or not the people that he's writing to are saved, he's reminding them through an argumentation device, this first-class condition, that they've got the Spirit of God dwelling in them, and that they're in the Spirit. And we're gonna see in verse 10 not only are we in the Spirit, but Christ is in us.

Verse 10, "*And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*" And so we see in verse 10 that not only are you in the Spirit or in Christ, but also Christ is in you. And we call that a reciprocal union. Anybody remember fractions in math, or have you all put that out of your head by now? Remember reciprocals, the opposite, the reciprocal to 1/2 is 2 over 1. I know, that's enough math lessons for today, but you know what I'm saying. This reciprocal union, you're in Christ and Christ is in you, and there's this unity, this union that God provides by placing you in Christ and placing the indwelling Spirit of God in you.

And again, Paul uses a first-class condition: if Christ is in you, and he *is* in the believer. He's making a statement of fact. And if this is true, two things are true of you, we find what these things are in verse 10. Well, the first thing he says is, "*the body is dead because of*" - or *through*, that's actually the greek preposition "*dia*" there - "*through sin.*"

What does he mean by that? Well really simply put, this is why everybody dies. This is why everybody is on the winding downside of health. This is why we've got sickness; this is why we've got decay, this is why we've got disease. This is all explained because sin is in the world, right? And that's not news to us, we saw that back in Romans chapter 5, we know that everybody's part of that one statistic that 10 out of 10 people die. We know that everybody is on a bodily decay schedule of some sort, and it's not really a pleasant thing to talk about, but it's still true.

And so he says, "*the body is dead because of sin.*" And so what's interesting is this is the process that the believer goes through just like an unbeliever, but what's on the other side of it for the believer? Life, and that's what we're gonna find in this verse. Not only life, but as we get into verse 18 and going forward, we're gonna see that part of our inheritance as a believer is a glorified body. And the choir said "hallelujah!" right? I mean, these aches and pains, and these illnesses and diseases, and these hurts that we all experience, even emotionally, will one day be completely removed from us and we'll have these new bodies, and that's something that we have to look forward to.

I think in light of the argument that he's making regarding sanctification, here's the thing: if this is true of these bodies, and they're gonna be dying, and there's no reason to cater to the lusts of the flesh which is fulfilled through our human bodies, then why do we as believers yield ourselves to sin? Why do we carry out sin's desires of pleasure through these bodies? And we know there's no lasting pleasure in physical things.

In fact, there's going to be a lot of disappointed kids tomorrow morning around 10:00 a.m. You know why? Because all the presents under the tree are gonna be opened. That means they have to wait an entire year for that build up, that excitement that Christmas brings. We all remember that day. Christmas was like you were up at 4:30 in the morning trying to get your parents out of bed so that you could open gifts, and by 10:00 a.m. you felt like crying. Because everything was gone and there was nothing else, and you dove behind the tree and looked for more and looked out in the garage and just hoped that there was something more coming.

And in that sense, we do that in our physical lives. We think that certain amounts of pleasure, bodily pleasure, are going to meet our needs. And so we chase life, we chase money, we chase cars, we chase careers, we chase any kind of physical pleasure that we can get. And those of you who have experienced this, you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you're gonna go to a really nice restaurant one night, so you skip lunch so you can just really cut loose that night. And then you get home and you're like, "Oh, I shouldn't have cut loose. I'm feeling it now."

These physical pleasures don't last, and I think he's making a case here because we're right in the middle of his concept of sanctification: "Why are you presenting yourself to sin? Don't go on presenting yourself to sin, don't be carnally minded, that results in death." And yet that's the very thing many times that we make our primary pursuit in life is physical pleasure, whether that's a house, whether that's a car, whether that's a 401k, whatever you want to put into the sentence there, these are all physical pleasure pursuits.

But in contrast in verse 9, if Christ is in you, not only is the body dead because of sin, verse 10 tells us that "*the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*" And we've got this huge adversative, this contrast "but". The body's dead, but you've got something much better inside of you, and it's the Spirit of God, its life. And as we keep working through Romans chapter 8, we're gonna see this more and more clearly, and I hope that by the time you get out of Romans chapter 8 that you can believe and be convinced that once you're saved, you're always saved. The moment you put your faith in Christ it's a done deal, you are saved. That's what Paul wants to convince you of here in Romans chapter 8, and I think we'll see that.

But why is the Spirit's presence a guarantee of eternal life? Well, we already saw in the first four and a half chapters of Romans that the moment you put your faith in Christ, you're justified. Which if you recall that word means *to declare righteous*. God took His judicial gavel and banged it down the moment you transferred your trust to Jesus Christ and His finished work for you, and He declared you righteous.

But there's something even more, and we've looked at that, that God not only just declared you righteous, but He actually changed your position in life. He placed you *in* Christ, and because you're *in* Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that He is our righteousness. That's different than just offering righteousness to somebody. See, it's much more connected, we talked about that reciprocal union. Because you're in Christ and Christ is righteous, *you're* righteous. Do you see how guaranteed that is? Do you have any doubt in your mind that one day God the Father is gonna look at God the Son and say, "Wow, the sheen is coming off of You now. You're not as perfect as You once were, You're not looking as good as You once did, You're not behaving as well as You once did, You're not pleasing to Me anymore." Could that ever happen in the mind of God the Father? No, He's eternally satisfied with



His son and the work that He performed for you. And so because you're in Christ, your righteousness is an unchanging righteousness, and this is one of the things that he's talking about.

And so the key to life - not only eternal, future life, but also living abundant life *now* - is this indwelling righteous life of Jesus Christ, which is produced by the Spirit of God. And remember, we're in this great sanctification section of Romans, and so he's going to get very practical here as we move on into verse 11. What he's going to say is similar to what we have in the passage in Ephesians, but in verse 11 he says, "*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*"

So that's a mouthful there, let's try to break it down a little bit. If the Spirit dwells in you - first-class condition - and He *does*. He's not trying to create any doubt here, he's actually making an argument from the original language to show them that these things are true, and he wants their minds occupied with this. And that's why in verse 12 when he says, "therefore", he's referring back because he wants to change our thinking, he wants to lift our eyes up to these glorious truths of what we have now that we're in Christ.

And then he says the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is dwelling in you. Now, I'm gonna let this sink in. There's a song that came out recently really singing about this, that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is dwelling in you. And think about this: this is the Spirit of God who provided life in the body of Jesus Christ when there was no life, when He was laying lifeless in the tomb, He brought Him back to life. And guess what? This very same Spirit who did it to Jesus will give you life in your mortal bodies, that's what this passage says. The very same Spirit who's already done it can do it again. See, that's the confidence that he wants to breed here.

And in fact, when we look at this word "give", it's interesting, this is one of those passages you gotta wrestle with a little bit because the word "give" is future tense. So, you're thinking, "Okay, in the *future* He's gonna give us life, in the *future* He's gonna raise us from the dead." And guess what? That *is* true. In fact, it's in the indicative mood in the Greek which means it's a mood of fact, it's a promise guaranteed, you can bank on it. God's making a promise that He will raise you via His Spirit if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, guaranteed, mood of fact.

But I don't know if you noticed this or not but notice he doesn't say our *immortal* bodies. In fact, what does he say? Let's go back to the passage. "*He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies,*" and so although that's true in glorification, that's going to happen, I think he's speaking about something practical, right now as it relates to our sanctification. And guess what? The Spirit of God doesn't just *give* life, the Spirit of God *is* life. See the distinction there? Because if you've got the Spirit of God dwelling in you, and He's life, guess what you've got residing in you? You've got life *right now*. You don't have to wait for the beyond, this future time when you'll have a glorified body, you can begin enjoying life right now.

And that's why he's gonna say, "Therefore, you don't owe the flesh nothin'." And he says it a little bit more proper than that, but that's why you don't owe the flesh anything, you've got life inside of you right now that you can enjoy at this moment. And I think he's talking about abundant life, Christ-honoring living, it's available to you right now. I think so many times we get in these bad habits as Christians, and we just get used to presenting ourselves to sin, and used to presenting ourselves to the flesh, and we just think we can never snap out of it, and we can't change the way we are, and we can't stop sinning. Maybe I can control it in this area, but I could never stop it in this area, I'm too weak, I don't have the strength. And Paul wants you to know you've got life available right now. You don't have to live that way anymore; you don't have to be a debtor to the sin nature every time he shows up.

Has anyone ever been in debt? It reminds me of those old mobster movies. The sin nature is kind of like Vinny, coming around the corner, looking to collect on that debt. And it's like every time you turn down a dark alley, Vinny's there to take your money and pound your head in, and that's exactly what the sin nature does. He wants to make you a debtor, and Paul's message is, "You don't owe him anything anymore." You don't owe Vinny - or the sin nature - anything anymore.

We've got life, that's the message. In fact, when you think about the Christian life - we talk about this a lot - the Christian life is not about spiritual disciplines, it's not about what you do and don't do, it's not about your external actions. All of those come into play, but when we talk about foundationally what the Christian life is, it's Jesus Christ living in and through you. That's the Christian life. That's the only thing that can be categorized as Christian, is the life of Christ living and working in and through you.

So how does God give this life to our mortal bodies? Well, let's go back to the verse, because he tells us clearly. Verse 11, "*He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies,*" - how? - "*through His Spirit who dwells in you.*" And this is why Paul could not live the life in Romans 7. Remember, he was missing that key ingredient, he was missing the person of the Spirit of God empowering him. He had all the right desires; he had all the right intentions. Have you ever in your life had the exact right intentions to do something you know you should do, and then for some reason you couldn't follow through with it? Has that ever happened to you? That's exactly what Paul was doing in Roman 7. And so as we see here this Spirit who dwells in us is the One who's going to enliven us to be able to carry out and execute the desires of our new nature.

Paul recognizes that the believer has life to live out, that this life is present in us because the Spirit of God indwells and desires to produce life through us. That's why he can say this. And this is why he can say not only is He going to give you glorification life, not only is He going to give you a glorified body - we're gonna see that later in Romans 8 - but he's gonna say, "Right now, because the Spirit of God is dwelling in you, you've got life in your mortal bodies. So, take advantage of it!" I mean, who wants to live a miserable life? Who wants to cry in their eggs every morning? Who wants to cry in their milk every evening? Who wants that? Are you kidding me? If we've got that available, why don't we take advantage of that? That's kind of the message here.

So, he's gonna say, "therefore". Verse 12, "*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors*" - "Oh, I thought you said we weren't in debt?" Well let's see, let's keep reading - "*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors - not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.*" Now I've made this point a couple times, it's an important phrase to notice, "*live according to the flesh.*" And the reason he says that there is because the believer could never be categorized as being in the flesh, ever again. Because the believer is in Who? The believer is in Christ, that's an unchanging position. And so when we're talking about living according to the flesh, we're talking about the believer having a choice: he or she has two sources from which to live life. They can live from the source of the Spirit of God, or they can live from the source of the flesh, or the sin nature, or indwelling sin as we've kind of used those as synonymous terms as we've been studying through Romans 6 and 7.

And so he's talking about living from that source. Therefore, based on what we just read in verse 11, based on the fact that the Spirit of God is indwelling you, that you've got life, that the Spirit of God wants to produce life in your mortal bodies, you're not a debtor to the flesh anymore. You don't owe the flesh anything. And this word "debtor" is a continual and present state of being. It means *to owe somebody something*, it means *someone who's morally bound to the performance of any duty*.

And isn't that exactly how sin shows up in your life? Just demanding that you drop everything to fulfill its lusts and desires. Just demanding, "At this moment, drop what you're doing and start

thinking about *me*, start thinking about what I want you to think about.” He doesn't come in like a gentleman, “Excuse me, do you have a minute for me?” No, he comes right in, demanding, in your ear, in your thinking, constantly berating you, coming after you to knock you out of fellowship with the Lord.

I was talking to somebody about a week ago and we were talking about these passages in Romans, and she told me, “You know, I was driving in my car and I was listening to Christian radio, and you know what? I was just really enjoying fellowship with the Lord. Sometimes you drive in the car and the music's on and it's just background noise, you don't hear it. But this time I was listening to the words, I was just really enjoying the Lord. And then about the third or fourth song in, when I realized I was enjoying the Lord, the vilest thought popped into my mind. How does that happen?” And I said, “That's your sin nature.”

And you know what, the sin nature doesn't want you in fellowship with the Lord, so he'll throw anything in there but Jesus Christ. I don't care if it's religion, I don't care if it's good works. If you're enjoying Jesus Christ in some way, the sin nature is gonna try to distract you. Anything but Jesus Christ. Anything. You mean giving money to the March of Dimes, helping the Salvation Army, scooping food at a soup kitchen? All of these good things in and of themselves? Yes, any of those things.

We always think the sin nature is trying to get you to do something vile. I mean, forget about that, he's much more deceptive in the area of religion. And so that's why when we talk about growing spiritually and walking with the Lord, we're talking about walking according to the Spirit, setting our mind on the things that the Spirit of God has got His mind set on. And let me tell you what the Spirit of God has His mind set on: singular focus, His name is Jesus Christ. That's what He's all about.

So, if you're going through life, and Jesus isn't even a part of your thinking, you're walking according to the flesh. That's a great way to tell. Is Jesus Christ who you're occupied with? Are you occupied with Him? I'm not talking about giving Him a cursory nod in the morning or at mealtime, I'm talking about occupation. I'm talking about what you're focused on. Is Jesus enough for you, or do you need something else?

But you know what, we are debtors but not to the flesh. Do you know that as a believer - and we've looked at this in detail in Romans 6 - your relationship to *the* sin, the sin nature, sin's power has been forever and completely altered? You've been severed from it, there's not this direct connection anymore. You don't owe the sin nature anything, you don't owe it *one thing*.

Our indebtedness used to be to the flesh, you used to have to pay up every time Vinny walked around the corner. You had to do it, you were forced to, you were in debt, you owed allegiance to the sin. But now our indebtedness is to the Spirit of God, and that's what's implied in the passage, we don't owe the flesh anything.

Why would you and I go on presenting or living according to the sin nature? And he's gonna give some reasons why you shouldn't anymore. But one of the reasons we've been looking at, it just feels like we talk about it a lot, but you understand when you present yourself to sin, when you present yourself to the sin nature, when you walk according to the flesh, guaranteed result: death. And so we sit there and say, “Who wants to be crying in their Cheerios every morning?” And no one says, “Oh yeah, me! Bring that life on, I want it!” Nobody says it, but through our choices and our decision not to occupy our minds with the things of the Spirit of God, Jesus Christ, or God's provision for sin's power, we occupy our mind with the things of the flesh, and then we wake up and cry in our Cheerios. We say, “I hate this life, I want something much more than that.” Well, God wants something much more for you too. And it all starts here, in the truth of the word of God, and it begins to change your thinking.

God wants to change what you think about. You may have 60 years in this life, and you've never thought this way before, but today you need to start thinking this way, because you know it doesn't work the other way. Some of you are in your teens, and if you can catch this now, I'm telling you, you can save your life a lifetime of misery if you can catch this truth right now. This is serious business. This isn't a game, this isn't just, "Hey, let's just come to church and sit down." This will affect your life and the quality of how you live it. This is *that* important, and that's what Paul is getting at here.

In fact, this reminds me of one of my favorite verses. Has anyone ever asked you what your favorite Bible verse is? The older I get, that's a harder and harder question to answer. I don't know if you've found that, but one of my favorite Bible verses lately is in 2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 and 15. It's talking about source, it's talking about focus, it's talking about occupation, it's talking about changing the way you think about everything you do.

Verse 14, *"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died."* Now notice verse 15, this is exactly what we've been studying in Romans 6 and 7. *"And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."* Your life is not your own, that's the concept.

So, it's not wake up and tell Jesus what you're gonna do today, "Yeah Jesus, it's my schedule, this is my agenda, and this is what I'm gonna do. Come bless this." Come bless this *mess* is what goes on with our lives most of the time. No, it's waking up and saying, "Lord, I'm dead to sin, I'm alive to You, and I'm gonna present my members to You today. What do You want to accomplish today, Jesus? What do you want to do through my life? I just want to walk with You. I just want to enjoy You." And if that has to happen and I'm working in a factory, or I'm working in the corporate office, or I'm driving a beat-up Pinto, or I'm driving a Lamborghini, none of that matters. Are you enjoying Jesus Christ? That's the deal. Is it about your plan, "Bless my plan, Lord", or is it about the Lord's plan? And I just kind of want to get in line with that, I want to get in step with where He's going.

So why are we not debtors to the flesh? What you're going to notice here in the next three verses starting in verse 13, is three "fors". Look at verse 13, the first word is "for". Verse 14, the first word is "for". Verse 15, the first word is "for". So, he's gonna further explain, he's gonna give us examples of why you're not a debtor to the flesh, why you don't owe the flesh anything. And so we start in verse 13. He says this, *"For if you live according to the flesh you will die;"* - I mean, tell it like it is Paul! He tells you exactly, if you live according to the flesh, you'll die - *"but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."*

And so this first argument he gives in this verse is *"if you live according to the flesh"* - and again, he uses a first-class condition: let's assume that you do, for argument's sake - let me tell you the guaranteed outcome of that: you're not going to dodge the Roundhouse on this one, the uppercuts gonna find you (I'm using some boxing terminology), you're gonna get whacked upside the head if you live according to flesh. This is guaranteed, you'll die. Paul is saying that if you presently and habitually live your life presented to the flesh, you'll die. You'll die, you'll experience death.

Now the great news for the believer is you'll never experience the second death. You'll never experience that because Jesus has died for you in your place, so that you would never have to face that penalty. You won't have to face the second death, but you'll face the natural consequences of sin in this life, which is described as death. Remember, death by definition is just a generic definition, it means *separation*.

Anybody ever sinned and been separated from a relationship, destroyed a relationship through sin? Have any children ever done something and felt distant from your parents because of the choices that you made? That's a death-like existence, that's what we're talking about, these types of things.

And so how does this happen, how do you live according to the flesh? Well, we've talked about it a lot. You begin to entertain the thoughts from the flesh, and not only that, but you begin to position your body, your members, to carry out its lustful, selfish desires. We talked about this in Romans 6, you basically put yourself in a position nearby, ready to be utilized for the flesh's destructive purposes. We used this image when we were in Romans 6, this idea of presenting, and all it means is that you put yourself near the source of sin to execute its desires.

Now how does this practically look? Well let's use alcoholism as an example. Let's say that somebody's an alcoholic, and their mode of acting in the past has been to leave work and drive home, pass a gas station that's not inhabited - so people don't see them - and buying a 24-pack and going home with it under the cloak of darkness, nobody sees it, and they get drunk, and they engage in this alcoholism. And let's say they realize that alcohol is destroying their life, and so they no longer want to present themselves to sin, and they want to start walking with the Lord. And let's say they get on track, and they start enjoying that for two weeks, and one of the things they do is they just decide, "Well, I'm too weak. If I go by that gas station, my car's gonna naturally turn in there, so I'm gonna just find a different route home."

And let's say that they're doing really well, and then one day right before this gentleman leaves from work, the boss says, "Man, our numbers are down. You're not doing as well as you were." And he has this difficult ending to his day. And so as he's going out to the car, the sin nature plops something in his mind and says, "Why don't you go home the old way? That might comfort you a little bit." And so he begins to entertain that, and instead of making a right out of his work - which would have been the new way home that avoided that gas station - he now takes a left, and he goes right back by that gas station, and guess what he's doing? He's presenting himself to sin. He's putting himself in a position where now he can execute the desires of the sin nature.

Now, use your own scenario. I've never struggled with alcohol. That doesn't make me better than somebody that has struggled with alcohol, my flesh doesn't manifest itself that way, but I can insert a lot of personal stories. I won't do it up here because you don't want to see my dirty laundry. You've got your own scenarios, and you know exactly what I'm talking about, because the flesh is personalized to you, indwelling you, knowing how to deceive you, knowing how to work in your thinking.

And so the point is this: don't present yourself to the sin nature, don't put yourself in a nearby situation to execute its desires. Because you know what? This is the truth of the word of God: death is an automatic result every time you live according to the flesh. And you say, "Well, wait a minute. I mean, I wouldn't admit this, but sometimes I sin, and I get away with it." No, you don't. I don't care what you think. I don't care if your spouse doesn't know about it, your parents never found out about it, you can go on and on down the list of accountability structures in your life. "Well, my boss will never find out that I did this."

Every time you walk according to the flesh, death is the result. And it builds up, and it builds up, and you may not see the result, but here's the point: this is why you don't owe the sin nature anything. It will destroy you. And you think you're getting away with something today, and you're gonna find out the chickens - using an old southern term - will come home to roost, won't they? And those of you who have ever lived long enough to see this to be true, you know exactly what I'm talking about. It's true in experience, but it's not just true because it's true in experience, it's true because the Word of God says it's true. This is the automatic outcome.

So those who are waking up again crying in their Cheerios, so to speak, living a miserable Christian life, look no further than to the way you're thinking, and to whom you're presenting yourself to by faith. That's the solution to your issue. And as Yoda would say, "End well this will not." And ne'er

a truer statement has been spoken. But it's not going to end well for the believer that lives according to the flesh.

And so he says this, his second argument in verse 13, "*For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit*" - so if you live according to the Spirit - "*you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*" So, he brings this in, again, it's another first-class condition: *if* you put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit - let's assume for argument's sake that you do - then you'll live. Do you see the contrast? You can die and experience a death-like existence in your life, or you can actually live, live abundantly. And again, how do you think that vote would go if we asked that question and what you wanted? I mean, clearly, we want to live abundantly, clearly, we want to enjoy the Lord, clearly, we want to enjoy and utilize all the resources He's got at our disposal.

Now notice this because this is a very key observation, I think, in this passage. The solution to putting to death the deeds of the body, and again this is assuming evil deeds, is by means of the Spirit. Did you notice that from the passage? Look back at verse 13, because I want you to see that yourself. "*If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,*". See, this isn't a 10-step program. This isn't you self-scheming, self-devising a way to conquer sin, because we've already seen the futility of that. You need the Spirit of God to actually execute this death penalty, you're holding (if you will) the sin nature at bay, so that you can walk by means of the Spirit. You can't do it yourself.

We get so ingrained that if we just crank a little bit harder, we just tighten the straps a little bit tighter, that we can do it this time, we can accomplish it this time, until we fail again. And again. And again. And we just keep cranking, and cranking, and cranking down, and all the while God is trying to draw our attention to say, "This isn't your battle, this is Mine." This victory over sin's power in your life is not your battle, it's not about you cranking tighter, gripping stronger, it's about you learning how - by means of the Spirit of God - to begin to put to death the deeds of the body.

And so how does this look? I might say it this way: how do you utilize your MVP? Well, you don't keep your MVP sitting on the bench. That's a sure way to lose. So, who's your most valuable person? Well, in the area of sanctification, it's the Spirit of God. And so how do we engage Him? How do we allow Him to begin to put to death the deeds of our body? We've already talked about this, this is review, and if you don't like review... man, I feel sorry for you. Because you don't learn something the first time you hear it. I'm sorry, you just don't. We need to be reminded and encouraged to always go back to these truths.

So how do you engage the Spirit of God? Well, you need to start counting on God's provision for victory over the flesh, the sin. Romans 6 says you died with Christ to sin, you've been resurrected with Him to newness of life. And Romans 6:11 wants you, by faith, to start resting and counting upon that truth. Just like you counted on Jesus who died for your sins and rose again to get you to heaven, God wants you to count now on your co-crucifixion with Christ to *live* the Christian life, that's a faith word.

Second faith word: you need to *present* your members, your body, to God as weapons of righteousness. And then when you employ both of these active faith words, when you're trusting in God and His working in you, the Spirit of God will be the means to deliver you or as Paul says, "*put to death the deeds of the body.*" But again, notice it's His job, not yours. That job has already been filled. It's not your job description, it's His job description. So, you are walking by faith, and when you do this, the text tells us that abundant life is the automatic result when you live by means of the Spirit of God.

Let me just say this, we need to pay attention to our vocabulary. And I'll tell you why: because a lot of times your vocabulary will expose you as to what you truly believe. Because if you're describing your Christian life as, "Well, I'm just struggling along. I'm just really struggling against the flesh, I'm just

trying to beat down the flesh in my life.”, what that reveals is that you're trusting in yourself to deliver you from sin's power.

Now, you would never verbally stand up in a Bible study and say, “I don't need Jesus Christ, I'm trusting in myself to beat this thing.” No. The way you would verbalize your theology is, “I need Jesus, I can't do it myself.” But when you begin to talk and, in your thinking, you expose that you actually don't believe that. You're struggling, you're duking it out with the flesh, you're gonna beat up the flesh, you're gonna put down the flesh.

And I remember this old commentator, William Newell, and this quote has just stuck with me for years. But he said, “To be disappointed with yourself is to have trusted in yourself.” Man, talk about a dagger to the heart. How many of us are just so disgusted with ourselves sometimes when we fail, and fail, and fail? And all the time you should see that when you are disappointed with yourself, it's because you are trusting in yourself. And see, God's got a much better solution: He's called the Spirit of God, who wants to produce the life of Christ in and through you. Stop trusting yourself, man, that well is dry! There's nothing there that you can accomplish that the Spirit of God can't do ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times better than you can.

We get into this second “for” and it's a really interesting concept. I know why Paul introduces it here, but he says in verse 14, “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*” And you know to continue to show that we're no longer debtors to the flesh, Paul is now gonna state that we're sons of God. And you say, “Well yeah, no big deal. I already know that.” But he uses some vocabulary here that adds some light into what he's saying here, it's really profound. The word “sons of God” uses the Greek word “*huios*” and what it means is *a true son, a mature or responsible son*. What's really interesting about this word is it's the same root word which is translated “adoption” in our Bibles, and so we're gonna look at that real quick.

As we'll see, being a “*huios*” or this son indicates a permanent place in the family with an inheritance, and that's really what the meaning of adoption is in this culture. And I have to give you a little bit of background, because we've all heard the phrase that “I've been adopted into the family of God”, we've probably heard that or been exposed to that thinking. I would disagree with that sentiment, because I would say that we're born into the family of God, but then we're adopted as sons.

And where do I get that from? Well, one of the main sources is Galatians 4, if you want to write it down. We don't have time to go there and look at it, but Galatians 4:1-7 talks about this Greco-Roman concept of adoption. And here's the difference: when we think of adoption, typically what we think of is somebody from overseas in an underprivileged situation, we're gonna go get them and bring them into our family. Now, they don't have our DNA in them, they don't have our genetics in them, but we bring them into our family, we adopt them into our family.

Now, it's really hard when that's the cultural concept of adoption because we want to try to read that back into the Bible. The Roman concept of adoption was you adopted *your own* child, so let that sink in. Your blood child, your genetically related, biological child. And the way that it worked in the Roman society was adoption was a way of confirming an heir with his inheritance. And it was up to the father when he wanted to do that. Before that, his son was treated just like a slave, just like another servant in the house, that's what Galatians 4 tells us.

But the day that he decided to adopt his own son, he gave him the privileges of being an heir to the family wealth. And you know what the father would typically do? What most fathers would do: they'd watch their sons a little bit and they'd say, “Wow, this guy's got some promise! He's faithful, he does what he says, he listens to what I tell him to do. This guy over here though, man, he's going to embarrass me if he doesn't start cleaning this up, picking this up. I mean, this guy's not getting it, but

this son is.” And so he would watch his kids, and you see there was a performance aspect to this, there was a probation period, if you will.

When you were born into a Roman family, you weren't guaranteed to be adopted, you had to perform or behave a certain way to gain recognition of your father to one day say, “You know what, this guy's gonna be an heir.” And then he would go through an adoption ceremony, they would get to change togas - a true toga party, right? - and he would give him a certain toga that now represented, everybody in the community knew, that this young man was an heir.

And here's the great thing about your God: you're a son of God the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ. No probationary period, no behavior observation period. In fact, Ephesians 1:5 says He's predestined us not to justification, but to adoption. He's said that every person who puts their faith in My Son, that He died for their sins and rose again, they will be adopted, they will be an heir guaranteed, take it to the bank. This is why you don't owe the flesh anything. You're rich. You're not just a wealthy child of God, you're a wealthy son of God, which means you've been *given* the inheritance. You have, it's yours. So why would you go back to the flesh? Why would you keep paying the flesh? Why would you keep being a debtor to the flesh when you've got all of these things? And this is Paul's point.

In fact, he begins to tell us that we're led by the Spirit of God. I think an important observation here if you go back to verse 14 is to notice he's not putting a condition on this, he's saying, “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.*” He's not saying, “For as many as are *following* the Spirit of God are sons of God.” He's not putting a condition on your inheritance. He's saying that the Spirit of God, every moment of every day wants to lead you by the hand, that's what he's saying. Because you're a son of God, you have an inheritance, the Spirit of God is working continually and consistently. In fact, this word “led” is a present tense verb meaning *ongoing and continual action*, and because it's in the passive voice, it indicates the Spirit is doing this, the Spirit is continually leading you.

Have you ever seen a two-year-old whose parent tries to grab their hand when they're crossing the street, and the two-year-old won't take the hand? And what does the parent typically do? “Ok, go kill yourself then. I'll meet you on the other side.” Of course not! What does the parent do? “Give me your hand. Give me your hand.” You know, you've even seen those backpacks now where they're leashed up, they're tied down. Mom and dad's got the leash on them.

This is what the Spirit of God is doing in your life, that image should be overwhelming. And you and I are like the two-year-old, we don't take His hand. Can you imagine a two-year-old, “I think to get to the restaurant, let's go this way.” Do you ever listen to car directions from your kids, ones who aren't old enough to know what's going on? That's hysterical! “Turn left here.” “There's no road there!” “Blow through it! Go for it!” That's exactly what we do as two-year-olds, right? “God, I've got this all figured out. You can take the day off. I'll get across that road okay.” Boom, 18-wheeler coming at you. Life, sin, just coming at you. And so we see that the Spirit of God is constantly leading. We're not to lead ourselves, and we're especially not to present ourselves to sin to allow it to lead us.

Imagine if a dangerous criminal showed up here and he said, “Hey, I'll take your kid to the bathroom.” “Yeah, go ahead! Just go to the bathroom with this crazy lunatic.” Would we do that? And yet we do that all the time with sin! We grab the hand, so to speak, by presenting ourselves to sin and allow him to lead and dominate our life.

Let's move on to verse 15. “*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”*” And so notice this contrast in spirits. Again, he's giving us another reason, this “for”, why we're not debtors to the flesh. You're not a debtor to the flesh, you don't owe the flesh anything. Why? Because we've received the Spirit of adoption. That's an aorist tense



verb in the Greek, it's a done deal, you've got the Spirit of God. Paul is just emphasizing the point we saw in verses 9-11.

But notice what you *did not* receive, and notice he uses the word "again". "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear.*" So, what is he talking about here? Well, notice this word "again" meaning that this was something that the believer already had at a point in time. See, you know what the spirit of bondage is, you don't have to have a lot of convincing to understand what that is. We just have to point out what it is, and you'll say, "Oh yeah, I know what that means. I know how that feels."

The spirit of bondage to fear was the believer's pre-salvation state when you were enslaved to sin. Your eternal destiny was unknown, your relationship, your standing with God was unknown, you lived in constant fear. For those of you that got saved later in life, you know exactly what your pre-salvation life felt like in this way. And so that's what he's talking about here. For the believer, we can also remember times where we've been in complete domination by the sin nature, completely governed by sin's power.

And one of the things that I think that he's really trying to bring home is why go back to this miserable way of living? Why would you go back to it? Why would you keep paying the piper when you know what this results in? And so the Spirit of adoption is a great contrast, right? That's supposed to represent rest and enjoyment. I like that. I'm a big fan of hammocks, but I don't get to use them too much.

So, in contrast to the spirit of bondage to fear, you receive something different, you *did* receive this Spirit of adoption. And so what is this? What's the exact opposite of bondage and fear? It's freedom, it's life, it's certainty, it's restfulness, it's this true abundance. If you want to view it this way, the wealth of your Father is at full disposal for you to utilize, you've got everything that you need. That's the spirit of adoption.

You're not living your life in fear, you're actually living your life in enjoyment of the Father, not worried like, "If I make a mistake, is He gonna take this from me? If I don't do this right, is He gonna remove this inheritance?" No, you've got it! You have received the Spirit of adoption, you're in, there's no probationary period. You don't have to perform a certain way to be accepted by God, you don't have to do something a certain way or with a certain consistency, you're not on a probationary period. This Spirit is just this Spirit of rest, and enjoyment, and acceptance.

And you know, there are people here today - not just this room or any room this size, it could be even smaller and it's gonna be true - that need to stop viewing themselves according to their own thinking, and they need to start viewing themselves according to God's mind. See, God views you as an adopted son. In fact, if you want to talk about a box full of goodies, and prizes, and riches, and wealth, God didn't just let you pick one out of the box. He took you and He sat you down and He dumped the whole box on your head. You've got it all, and you need to start thinking of yourself in those terms, because that's how God views you. We need to align our thinking with the Lord.

Now one of the things that He did for us - and it's a blessing, because we're gonna see how this plays out as we go further in Romans chapter 8 - but to prove this to you, to prove that you have the Spirit of adoption, he has put His Spirit inside of you to continually cry out from within "Abba, Father". Galatians 4:6 tells us that the source of that cry is the Spirit of God in you. And so you imagine as you're living life, the Spirit of God is constantly saying, "Abba, Father. Abba, Father" trying to draw your attention upward to the One who loves you unconditionally, the One who died for you, the One who rose again, the One who lives inside of you, just drawing your focus upward, and you've got that continual message in your mind and in your thinking.

“Cry out” is a present-tense, continual action done by the Spirit of God indwelling us. And again, what is He crying out over and over? “Abba” literally means *father my father*, it's the equivalent of “daddy”, that intimate terminology that he uses there.

In the next section we'll just continue to look at this idea of being an heir, and having an inheritance, and being adopted. But I hope even just in the passage that we looked at today that you are convinced that you don't owe the flesh anything. You've got so much more that you don't have to keep going to that dry well.

# CHAPTER 46

## Moaning and Groaning Part 1

### Romans 8:16-22

Last time we left off in verse 15, which is kind of a bummer I had to leave off there, because we're really keeping in this train of thought that as believers, we don't owe the flesh anything. We picked that up from verse 12, that we're not debtors to the flesh, we don't have to go on presenting ourselves to the flesh, that automatic domination of the sin nature in your life has been broken through your identification with Christ in His death, His burial, and resurrection.

And so there's nothing that we owe to the flesh. We're not debtors to the flesh, and as we said, it's not like Vinny's going to appear around the corner in a dark alley and take something from us. We don't owe the flesh anything, and part of the reason we don't owe the flesh anything as we began to look at the last time, was because we're heirs. And Paul uses these terms "adopted" and "sons", and if we're not careful enough, we're just gonna blow right past that and we're just gonna say, "Oh, sons. That just means part of the family." And we're gonna say, "Oh, adoption. That means that we weren't part of the family, we were adopted into the family." If you recall, that wasn't the Greco-Roman concept of adoption. There's something significant in this passage that Paul is trying to communicate and we'll kind of continue looking at that as we jump into verse 16.

What we're going to see as we move into the glorification section of this book - once we hit verse 18 we're moving out of sanctification and on to glorification - is that we've got three entities that are moaning and groaning. Moaning and groaning for the believer's glorification, and so that's what we're gonna look at this morning is really that first entity, if you will, that's said to be moaning and groaning, looking forward to, waiting for the believer, you, to be glorified, to be completely delivered from the presence of sin on that day.

And so let's jump into verse 16, and to just kind of pick up our flow of thought, I'm gonna read from verse 14. He says this, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."*" - And then verse 16 - "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*"

And so we see that we've got a star witness, if you will, somebody that's testifying, and in this case it's the Spirit of God indwelling the believer, who is ongoing, continually testifying or witnessing with our own human spirit. This is an ongoing ministry, I believe, of assurance. Because what is He trying to convince our spirit of? That we're children of God. Look back in verse 15: "*we did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear,*" and do you know that many Christians around the world who are truly saved don't have the assurance of their salvation? They think that there's something they can do, or something they don't do where they can lose their salvation. They're not a hundred percent sure they're saved. And so they live on a daily basis in fear of possibly committing some sin that would condemn them to hell, or to commit some sin so habitually that proves out that they were never saved, and many people live in fear.

And you know, the Spirit of God is indwelling you today, He has an ongoing ministry, He is bearing witness with you, those of you who have put your faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work alone, the Spirit of God wants to convince you of a certainty that you are part of God's family. This is an ongoing, present ministry that He's engaged in.

The Spirit of God testifies with our spirit. You'll notice the verb tense there, we *are* right now, presently children of God. Not one day we hope to be, not one day, "I hope I can get to heaven if I don't commit the unpardonable sin." People say that to me all the time, "Yeah but if you commit the unpardonable sin, you're gonna go to hell." And I say, "Well what is the unpardonable sin?" And they say, "I don't know, but you don't want to do it." Imagine living in fear like that, that you're gonna do something that would condemn you to hell.

Here's the good news about the gospel, this is what I love about our God: Jesus Christ died for all of your sins. All of them. Can we say all? That means all of them. In fact, how many sins did you commit when Jesus had died? You hadn't committed any, and that means all the sins that you'll ever commit were in the future when Jesus paid the penalty for them 2,000 years ago. This is why God can unequivocally say in the past tense you have been saved; you have eternal life. Eternal life by definition lasts forever. And so if you have something that lasts forever, you can never lose it. And see, Paul is telling us the Spirit of God is indwelling us, He's testifying with our spirit, there's this internal ministry to convince us that we are the children of God.

I liked how one commentator <sup>1</sup>put it, he said, "The Holy Spirit provides a consciousness of being born of God." The Spirit of God wants you to enjoy the fact that you are a child, not by works, but by grace. Of course you don't deserve it, that's the very definition of grace. Of course you didn't earn it, that's the very definition of a gift. And so the Spirit of God is trying to convince you of that.

But I want you to notice something. It's very subtle, again, if we don't take the time to really point this out, we may just jump right over it, but I want you to notice that Paul switches terminology here. He was just talking about in verse 14 being a son of God, it's the Greek word "*huios*", and now in verse 16 he switches to "*teknon*", children. You notice that switch, you can even see it in English, he goes from sons to children. Why is that significant? Well, the word "*teknon*" means *to bring forth, to bear children, a child, descendants, or an offspring*. And what it speaks of is biological birth.

So, I've got five kids over here that I could say they're my "*teknon*". I guess Carrie could say that they were born out of her, but I contributed a part, so they were born of me too. But they're my "*teknon*", they're my biological children, whereas sons, the emphasis there is on inheritance. And so we'll talk a little bit more about the distinction.

But remember, children, this "*teknon*" are identified by our family relationship through birth, whereas sons or "*huios*" stresses our legal standing through adoption. When we get to verse 17, we're gonna bring this out a little bit more, but just hold on, he's making a subtle distinction here, it's very important to the understanding of the text.

So, the question becomes at verse 16, how does the Spirit bear witness? How does the Spirit of God bear witness with our spirit that we're born again or that we're born into the family of God? Notice I'm not saying we're *adopted into* the family of God, I think that's incorrect, we talked about that a couple weeks ago. We're born into the family of God. 2 Peter tells us that we have access to the divine nature, that means we've got - so to speak - spiritual DNA running through our blood. That's who we are, we're part of the family of God, we were born into the family of God just like you were born into your family.

And so how does the Spirit bear witness, how does He have this ongoing ministry? Well, I think first of all He does so through the ministry, the instruction of the Word of God. This is why if you as a believer are not placing yourself under the instruction of the Word of God in a teaching situation, you're

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<sup>1</sup> Source unknown

not listening to teaching, you're not going to benefit from this ministry, there's not much to work with there.

But when you read the Word of God, and you hear somebody teach the Word of God, and you study the Word of God, the Spirit of God is gonna take that truth and minister it to your soul. And He's gonna say, "See? You are secure. See what he just said? "All" means *all*, "eternal" means *eternal*. See that?" And the Spirit of God is elbowing you internally to convince you, and to comfort you, and to give you that security so that you don't have this spirit of fear, but you've got this confident spirit.

In fact, we see in John 1:12 that we become children of God when we receive Jesus Christ. And the verse goes on to tell us: how do you receive Christ? By believing in His name. That word "faith" again, right? 160 times in the New Testament alone is the only thing you need to do to be saved, the only thing you need to do to be born into the family.

Also, 2 Timothy 1:12, very familiar passage. We used to sing the song in the church that I grew up in, I don't even know if it's in the hymn books, but it goes, "I know whom I have believed, and I'm persuaded that He is able". Isn't that an interesting wording seeing how passionate Paul is about the person and work of Jesus Christ? It wasn't "I know the formula that I prayed", it wasn't "I know the day I walked the aisle", it wasn't "The day I raised my hand and asked Jesus to come into my heart". No, I know *Whom*. Remember what he said in Romans 7? "*Who will deliver me from this body of death?*"

See, Paul's life was wrapped up in a Person, not in a religion. You're not knowing your church attendance, you're not knowing your good works, you're not confident in how many candles you've lit. You know that there's a Man named Jesus Christ, He's the Savior of the world, He died for your sins, He rose again, God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf so that you don't have to face the death penalty, and He credits His righteousness to you. In fact, He *is* our righteousness, so it never goes away. That's why you know, that's why you can be assured, because you're looking outside of yourself.

As I've said a million times, I can't even remember to take out the trash on a weekly basis, let alone remember all the things that would be required of me to be righteous in God's standing. But you know what? There was One who did everything right, there was One who did everything perfect, there was One who sacrificed Himself and willingly took my death upon Himself, and His name is Jesus Christ. And do you know whom you've trusted in? Do you know the full accomplishment of what He did for you on the cross? See, the Spirit of God is nudging you, you can trust Him, you've got security, it's all okay. You've not been given the spirit of fear, but the Spirit of adoption as sons.

How else does the Spirit testify or bear witness with our spirit? Well, I think He does so through His indwelling ministry. Again, He's constantly drawing our attention upward, look back in verse 15. "*the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out "Abba, Father."*" This continual drawing of your attention upward, "daddy", intimacy, not this faraway God that doesn't hear you, but this ministry of the Spirit that wants to convince you that you have access to the God of the universe.

Some of you remember from the history books, but President John F. Kennedy, there's a picture of him sitting at his desk, he's in a meeting with somebody, and there's a picture on the underside of his desk, and little John F. Kennedy Jr. is sitting down there playing with his toys. And they used to tell stories about how JFK would lock the door to the Oval Office, he'd have a meeting with somebody, a very important dignitary, and the Secret Service men that were outside of the door were told, "If Junior comes up, let him in." He had access. Why did he have access? Because that's his daddy. And you know, daddy could be sitting across from the head of state, and he would reach into his drawer and pull-out little Junior's toys and put him right underneath him.

Isn't that a beautiful picture of access? The Spirit of God is continually elbowing you, "Look, that's your Daddy up there. You don't have to run away from Him, you don't have to feel like He's

distant from you.” I mean, do we make mistakes? Obviously, we do. But you know, the confidence that we can have is that Jesus has paid at all, your access has been paid for, your standing is secure, and the Spirit of God is convincing you of this on an ongoing, present basis. So, we see that's another way that He testifies with our Spirit.

And then I think just as an observation, the fact that there's a battle within you between the sin nature and the Holy Spirit is a witness that you are one of His children. Otherwise, there wouldn't be much of a battle. But there's a battle going on, raging inside of you, and you can relate to the comments that Paul makes in Romans chapter 7, “The things that I want to do, I can't do. And the things I don't want to do, those are the very things that I do.” And you sense and can feel that battle.

Now Paul concludes this section here, it's really interesting, we've got to go slow, because in verse 17 he says, “*and if children, then heirs.*” Now let me just stop there. That phrase is *loaded* with meaning. We cannot jump by this phrase and say, “Oh yeah, children, heirs, sure, that all goes together.” No, it doesn't. This was an astounding comment in Paul's day. This was not ho-hum, yeah, I already know this. This was an astounding comment, we'll talk about that in a second.

Not only heirs, but “*heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*” So according to Paul, the only qualification needed to be an heir with Christ is to be one of God's children. Did you pick that up? That's subtle, but that means this: the moment you put your faith in Christ, you're an heir.

Now, do you understand how different this is from Paul's culture that he was writing to? Remember the concept of adoption - and I'm kind of getting a little ahead of myself, that's okay, I can't wait to give this out again - you didn't adopt *somebody else's* biological child into your family. Greco-Roman adoption was when you adopted a biological child in your family, that was the concept of adoption. And so it was done over a period of time, it was done when the child got old enough, and the father would watch his son and say, “Ooh, this guy's not making good decisions and he's gonna wreck the family. But this son over here... Wow. He's impressive, he's mature, he's taking this seriously.”

And then at a point in time he would determine, “I'm going to go through the adoption ceremony with *this* son, and I'm gonna confer upon him the full inheritance, he's gonna become my heir.” Galatians 4 tells us that before that happened, he's just like a slave in the house. Not only that, but he's also got a slave over him running him to school and ordering his affairs in the day. And in a moment in time, immediately after the adoption ceremony, he's the boss. This son is now the heir. But see, it was almost like a probation period. The dad's watching his kids, he's got eight kids and, “I'm gonna pick that one right there, that's gonna be the one I adopt and make an heir.”

And here's the beautiful thing about this: God doesn't have you on a probation period. God has not said, “Let me watch how you live the Christian life for the first twenty years and *then* I'll make you an heir.” He's saying the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are an heir. The moment you become a child of God, you're an heir. This is why when we look at Ephesians 1:5 he says, “*having predestined us to adoption as sons,*” - there's our Greek word “*huiois*” - “*by Jesus Christ to Himself.*” This is why God has predetermined not to justify you, that's not a justification passage at all, that's a glorification passage. He's determined that anyone who puts their faith in Christ will be adopted, will be an heir, and this is what Paul is trying to convince us of here.

In fact, if you're born into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, you are a joint heir with the Son of God's love, period. That's true of you whether you realize it or not. You are a joint heir, this is one of the things the Spirit of God is wanting to convince you of, wanting to bear witness with your spirit about.

Remember, an heir is just a person who benefits from an inheritance. And one of the things that you realize about an inheritance is that it's an unmerited distribution of wealth or possessions. Now those of you who have inherited anything know exactly what I'm talking about. Maybe you lost a parent. We're all looking for that rich uncle, right? That rich uncle that leaves us millions of dollars. But the point is you did nothing to earn that inheritance.

You know, one of these days both my mother and father are gonna pass away, and I'm looking forward to that wealth pot that they're gonna leave me. No, just kidding. I say that as a joke because my dad's here. But the only thing I contributed to that wealth pot growing up was making it smaller, because I ate them out of house and home! I needed shoes, I needed clothes, I needed lots of thingies - you know, as you need when you're growing up, you need lots of thingies - I didn't take the best care of the cars that they got me. I drained that little wealth pot. I didn't contribute to it, so if there *is* anything left for me, I guarantee it's unmerited. I didn't deserve it, he did all the work, he earned it, it's his money.

And so when we see this idea of inheritance, this is something that's unmerited. Of course you don't deserve it! By definition, that's the word, you don't deserve it as an heir. And typically, an inheritance is something that an heir receives or has distributed to them when the successor dies. Again, in Roman culture, naturally birthed sons, "*teknon*" were not always heirs, sometimes they were if they were officially adopted as sons.

And so you see what Paul's doing, he's subtly saying, "Guys, you don't have to present yourself to the flesh, you don't owe the flesh anything. You're an heir, you've got it all, you're not on probation. You're in such an incredible position! You couldn't be in a better position even if God wanted to put you in a better position, He's already put you in the top spot!" This is what he's trying to convince us and his readers of. Again, this is not the case in God's family. We see because of Christ's performance we don't have to perform to inherit. We get the inheritance because we're joint heirs with Christ.

And then we come to this next phrase, it's a little confusing depending on how you read it in verse 17, because he says this, "*and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*" - then he throws in this "if" word - "*if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*" Now one of the things that we have to understand, anytime you look at the Bible and you see the word "if", you may not know what they are, but understand that the Greek has four conditional clauses and it's all borne out right there in the language, it's really easy to see and to show. But the first-class condition, which is used a lot, especially in this chapter (I feel like I've mentioned this a ton here in chapter 8), but he says, "if indeed we suffer with Him, and for argument's sake, let's assume we will suffer with Him." It's a way to frame an argument, to assume the reality of something. By the way, have you ever suffered as a believer? So, he's using this as a literary device to say, "if you suffer - and you will, or you are" it's a reality that he's assuming.

And so what does he mean by that? He's not saying, "You'll be an heir *if* and *only if* you suffer with Christ." That's not what he's saying. In fact, it's a way to promote assurance here. And so what he's trying to do is convince us of the certainty of our inheritance. Let's look and see how he does that. First, we want to notice all these connection words used here. Just in verse 17, to describe our union with Christ, we're joint heirs, we suffer with Him, we're glorified together. All of these Greek words use the prefix "*sun*" which just means *with*. It really speaks of our unity and our union with Jesus Christ.

And what he's going to do is use these words and he's going to use this conditional statement to convince us of the fact that just as real as your suffering is, it's gonna be just as real as your inheritance and your glorification. So, if you've ever felt suffering and it's felt real, and it's felt heavy, here's his promise: you will one day have an inheritance that's just as real. You will one day be glorified in just as real a way as you're feeling suffering. Now isn't that encouraging? He's promoting certainty here, he's

not trying to promote, “Oh, I don't know.... well, some of y'all might not be here.” The whole passage he's been telling us, “You're heirs, you've received the adoption.” So our inheritance, our future glorification is just as guaranteed as the suffering that we experience with Him on this earth, and he wants us to understand that.

So, when we suffer with Christ, again, this is a divine perspective. When you're going through suffering, let's be honest, the first thought is generally, “Lord, get me out of this. Lord, why'd you give this to me? I don't want it, just get me out of here, take these circumstances, improve these circumstances.” But we ought to understand that when we suffer with Christ, hopefully it draws our focus upward, and reminds us and encourages us to know that these sufferings that we're going through that are very real - we don't need anyone to convince us that suffering is real, we know it is through experience - just remember, your future glorification, your future inheritance is just as real. He wants to convince us of that.

Now, he's gonna continue this thought as we move to verse 18, he's going to transition into glorification in verse 18. And just as a quick review of the book of Romans so far, 1:1-17 introductory comments, and then we looked at 1:18-3:20. Remember the Highway to Hell illustration? There are three lanes on that broad road to hell, so we had the Immoral Sinner, the Moral Sinner, and the Religious Sinner, and then the conclusion was, “All have sinned. Nobody is good enough or righteous enough to go to heaven.”

And so how does God provide a righteousness equal to His to get to heaven? Well, that's when we enter into Romans chapter 3 toward the end, and we begin to look at this *one* salvation with three separate time elements to it, we call it *three tenses of salvation*. The first one, the past tense, is *justification*, we covered that from Romans 3:21, which says: “*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed,*” and it's through faith in Jesus Christ. And so we see that all the way to the end of chapter 4, the first 11 verses in chapter 5 we looked at the benefits of justification, and then the latter part of chapter 5 we looked at the identification of the believer.

And you say, “Well why was that there?” Well, that was the means and the process that God went through to provide for your second phase of your salvation, and to secure your final phase of salvation. And when we say second phase of salvation, we're talking about *sanctification*. Where justification dealt with salvation from the penalty of sin, sanctification deals with salvation from the *power* of sin in our daily life, and we've been looking at that up through Romans 8:17.

So, we're about to cross over into glorification starting in 8:18 through the end of this chapter. And so we'll see the emphasis going really toward these concepts of hope, and future, and what's *going to happen*, and we begin to see that broken down in verse 18. So, let's read verse 18, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” And you see he kind of continues that suffering theme from verse 17, he kind of starts to bring that over, and he wants you to know that he's considered something. This is that accounting term that we see a lot in Romans, “*logizomai*”, we see it a lot in Romans 4, it comes out quite a bit. But the idea is to write something down, to count on something, like when you deposit a check into your account and you write it down, so you know it's there, you're trusting in it, you're counting on something.

And so Paul is considering something, and what is he considering? Well, when he compares our present sufferings to our future glory he says they're not comparable. This is the truth for the eye of faith, because many of us say, “Oh, that's a bunch of garbage. Suffering stinks, suffering hurts.” Some of you are saying, “John, you don't know how difficult it is some days just to get out of bed, just to go to sleep because I'm so anxious.” And all I can tell you is that the word of God's got great hope for you, it doesn't compare. The greatness of our glorification far outweighs any suffering that we're going



through. And I know that is a hard word especially for those of us going through suffering right now, but be encouraged, the Word of God says there's something much weightier waiting for you.

This word “worthy” means *weigh, estimate, value*. It's used to refer to a set of scales where the weights are completely equal on each side. And so in essence, our future glorification is going to outweigh our present suffering. And you'll notice that in this section a lot of times, Paul's going to fast forward us to the future with truth that's going to happen in hopes that it will impact the way that we presently live.

If you and I can get to a point where we begin to focus and understand that our present sufferings are not worthy, they're not weighted the same as our future glory, do you think we could have a more divine perspective on life, trials, and suffering? It would naturally follow. Not only that, but it would also detach us in many ways from this life and make us anxious to get there a little bit quicker, right? We've actually got something to look forward to. It's not dreading, just trying to get through the day.

I remember Carrie and I used to joke - mainly *I* used to joke, and she would listen - when the kids were little it's like a bunker mentality. It felt like all day long with the little kids we were just dodging bullets, and finally they all crashed at eight o'clock, and I crashed at 8:15. I mean, it was like.... just survival. And you know, sometimes life feels that way, doesn't it? Just bullets flying around your head, ducking like you're in a foxhole. And so understand that the Word of God says there's something much weightier waiting for you out there in the future. Take heart, be encouraged, that's going to be true of you, believer.

And then he makes an interesting statement, we'll kind of unpackage this a little bit more in the next couple of verses but notice in verse 18 he says that glory is about to be revealed in us. Do you see that? *In* us. But that's something to just kind of mark in your thinking there because we're going to see what that means. But understand that this is talking about our glorified bodies. And please understand this: you as a believer, you are present tense in Christ. And you say, “Yeah, what's so deep about that? I already know that.”

You *are*, right now, a child of God. You *are*, right now, righteous before the God of the universe. And you know one day, when this body is shed, that's going to be revealed. We're gonna see you for who you are. Not because you merited it, not because you earned it, not because you fasted 18 times a month. It's because of who Jesus Christ is and the position that He puts you in, and one day we're gonna see it. And I'm gonna be blown away! I'm gonna look in the mirror and say, “That can't be me! You know, I'm a scumbag. I'm a sinner. I know what goes on in my thinking. How in the world is that me?” But you know what? That's who you are as a believer. You're righteous, you're an accepted son, inheriting son of God in that sense. And so this is a big deal.

In fact, it's such a big deal that you know that the creation that we see out there is actually looking forward to that day too? That's what we're about to read in verse 19. This is incredible! Anybody ever seen a picture of Hawaii? It's like, “That's paradise. Wow! Beautiful.” Right? Or maybe you're not into beaches, maybe you're into the Swiss Alps, and you're like, “Oh man, I could take a train ride through there, it's just this beautiful creation.” And it's great to observe creation, but do you know that creation is looking forward to your day? Did you know creation is in bondage right now because of the fall? And do you know that one day it's gonna be released from bondage? Guess what day? The day that you're revealed as a child of God. It's looking forward to that day! That's what we see in verse 19.

Look at verse 19, “*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*” Here's what's crazy: our future glorification is such a big deal. Let's not minimize this, let's soak in this for a second because this is exciting. This is such a big deal that the entire creation is looking

forward to it. And you know what the implication is? Why aren't *we* this excited? Why aren't we craning our necks to see?

We're gonna see that these words mean craning our necks, waiting eagerly, on the edge of your seat kind of thing. It says that creation has an earnest expectation, it's a compound word in the Greek with this Greek preposition "*apo*" attached to intensify the word. The word itself means *to be attentive or looking forward to*, but when you throw that preposition on the front it just intensifies that word greatly. And so the visual it provides is someone whose neck is stretched out, whose head is thrust forward. You might say they're leaning forward in their seat; they're engaged. This is how creation is being personified, looking forward to the day that *you'll* be glorified. That's what creation is looking forward to.

It reminds me of a couple years ago when we pulled out our old wedding video. Anybody done that in a while? That's really fun and at the same time, kind of embarrassing to watch. And I remember watching it a couple years ago, and it really takes you back to that day, a lot of the emotions came flooding in. And I remember watching the wedding video and the camera guy was on me, and my best man was my brother, and then my groomsmen, and so I'm sitting there and I'm just waiting for Carrie to come into the church.

I had heard about her wedding dress, I had heard people talking, I heard her friend's say, "You're gonna love her wedding dress, it's great!" And I loved her, so I mean, I would have loved anything she was in. So, you know I'm sitting here, and it was really funny to me - and kind of embarrassing, too - but I'm up here at the front and they're getting ready to play the song, and I'm craning my neck to see like I was the only guy in the room. I didn't care if everybody saw me, I was craning my neck. What was I craning my neck for? The big reveal: my beautiful bride in her beautiful wedding dress. And I still remember that feeling, in fact, I remember getting choked up at the altar being like, "Man, I gotta get my act together before she gets down here, because I'm gonna be tearing up." But I just remember seeing that video and I was like, you know, if I could have gotten on someone's shoulder, I probably would have gotten on someone's shoulder. That's the image we have with creation: craning its neck, looking forward, leaning forward in anticipation to that day when you will be revealed as a son of God. The Son of the Living God, the creation is eagerly expecting that.

And then we see that not only that, but the creation is waiting expectantly. Not only are they looking forward to something, they're also eagerly waiting. Again, Paul uses a compound word to create emphasis, and the visual provided is not only looking forward to something, but waiting for the confirmation of that thing, expecting. You know we might say, "I'm on pins and needles here, waiting."

So, this dog I have on the screen is a great illustration: this dog is just sitting by the door waiting. Have you ever had a dog that's that loyal, it just sits and waits for you while you're gone, waiting for the day, the moment that you come back through the door? This is how creation is personified. Isn't that something? I mean, go out and just observe creation, "Wow, this is beautiful!" And that creation's looking forward to your day, *your day* when you're revealed as who you are in Jesus Christ. And that's just something to get excited about, and if they're excited, why shouldn't we be excited? Why shouldn't that be an occupation of our focus? And I think that's really the point here that Paul is bringing out.

So, what is creation craning its neck to see or earnestly expecting? We've said it a couple times, the revealing of the sons of God, the believer's glorification. Again, we see that in verse 19. What's interesting about the reveal, this world "revealing" just underscores the idea of removing a veil or covering. Now, if you're gonna be revealed as a son of God, you know what that means? That means it's already there. You are a son of God; you just need the covers pulled off. And at the point that you get your glorified body, the covers are going to be pulled off.

Does anyone remember the story where Jesus takes three of His disciples up onto the mount, theologically or in your Bibles, it'll be called "The Transfiguration", and that's very similar to what happened. The cover was removed for a time, and they got to see Jesus for who He really was. And that's why when John gets to the book of Revelation and he sees Jesus Christ, it's a frightening figure. We're not talking about the man that grew up in Galilee anymore, we're talking about the God of the universe, and His glory blazing through so bright and overwhelming that John falls down and worships Him.

And you know one day, a cover is going to be removed from you, and who you are in Jesus Christ is going to be revealed, and creation is looking forward to that day. It's gonna be a blessed time, because we will have our glorified bodies and it will finally match our inner man. The desires that you have to do right, this distraction to do wrong, the sin nature will be completely removed on that day. That's that final stage of our one salvation.

It reminds me of my family's last trip to San Antonio. Cody and I braved it out in the sub-zero temperatures, I mean it was freezing cold - it might have been in the 20s actually for a southern guy. But it was cold, and we braved out on New Year's Eve, and my father-in-law bought some fireworks and we went out and lit those fireworks. And I remember there was one firework and we weren't gonna buy it because it didn't have the shiny wrapper around it, it just had this brown paper wrapping on it, maybe a little bit of a shiny wrapper and I thought, "Yeah, it'll still work." And so we throw that thing in the little tube and it goes up, and sure enough, when it gets into the air, it explodes in beautiful colors. But you should have seen the wrapping on that thing! It's like a brown paper bag, it looked awful. And yet when it got up into the air, you saw this thing of beauty.

This is going to be similar when we get our glorified bodies. We have this brown paper bag of a body that we're wearing that creaks and aches and gets sick, but there's something inside of you, right? What does Paul say in Corinthians? "*We have this treasure in earthen vessels.*" You've got something inside of you that's going to be revealed at your glorification, and you know what, creation is looking forward to that day, the revealing of the sons of God.

And in terms of time frame - we don't have time to look at all these passages, so I'll probably just fly through this real quick - but the believer is going to receive their glorified body at the rapture, we see that in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. I believe their revealing will be at the second coming of Christ to establish His Millennial Kingdom, we see that in Revelation 19. This is when creation will be delivered partly from its bondage (Isaiah 30:23-24, 35:1-2,7) because we see there's still going to be death in the Millennial Kingdom and then finally delivered fully when the New Heaven and New Earth are brought in, Revelation 21 and 22. And so that just kind of provides a time frame.

Now we've said creation is looking forward to this, we've said creation is craning its neck, we said that the creation wants to see the revealing of the sons of God, but why? There's a very practical reason, and verse 20 kind of begins to give us that reason. "*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;*" It says that creation was subjected to futility. When did this happen? Well, as we trace our Bible history, it happened at the fall in Genesis chapter 3.

The word "subjected" is our Greek word, "*bupotasso*", and those of you that are familiar with that word know that that's the same word used of wives submitting to their husbands, or even Christ submitting Himself to the Father. It simply means *to place under in an orderly fashion*. And so when we go back to the verse, we say that the creation was placed under futility, futility meaning *vanity, worthlessness, or emptiness*. This is why I cannot get a flower to grow or stay alive in my house. I am just not gifted that way; I need to hire someone full time to do those kinds of things for me if I ever want to do that. But this is why it doesn't just happen naturally, right? Death, decay, breaking down.

I wish I could fix my car this way: my car breaks, I just take it in the driveway, I just go buy a bunch of metal and gears and just throw it on the ground next to it, then come back the next day and it's fixed, right? It doesn't work that way. In fact, if I leave it there too long it's gonna rust, it's gonna decay, it's not going to be drivable at some point. It doesn't get better, it gets worse, right? We know that to be true.

And so contrary to what many world religions teach, and many false religions teach, there's nothing to worship in this creation. The sun, the moon, the stars, you hear people say, "Mother Earth". We're not worshipping the creation; we're worshipping the Creator. And in fact, if we want to get really technical, the creation is dependent to be released from its futility when *we're* revealed as the sons of God. So creation is looking forward to our day, we're not worshipping *it* in its glory. And we can appreciate creation because God created it and made it, and I would encourage you to do that, but in terms of this idea of worship of the stars or of the moon, it's just been so twisted in that sense.

Now we know from Genesis that creation was originally placed under mankind, but at the fall, sin brought death into the world and corrupted God's original and perfect creation. Again, this was not something that creation chose for itself, it was thrust upon it unwillingly, and we see that through the phrases used "not willingly" and also "was subjected". And how was it subjected? Man's choice. Man's choice to rebel against God, man's choice to sin subjected creation.

But here's the thing: there was also an actor in placing creation under futility, and the verse tells us who it is. Let's look at it again, verse 20. "*but because of Him who subjected it in hope;*" and so who placed creation under futility? God did. And so I think that begs the question, "Well, why'd He do that?" What was His purpose? Why did He subject or place creation under futility in this way? What was He trying to accomplish?

Well, I think one of the things that he's doing here is creation, just like the sons of God, has a future hope, has a day, has an ultimate purpose for it. And so He's shown us that creation is tied inextricably to the glorification of the believer. And it also shows that although creation is very important to the Lord, mankind is truly the apple of God's eye. Mankind is the occupation of God's thoughts.

Now, why does He think about us? There's lots of hymns written about that, why does He condescend to even consider us? You know, I don't have an answer to that question. It's one of the glorious things about our God that He even cares about us, that we're like little ants in that sense, so why does He even interact? But He does. He's gone through great pains to care for us, to provide for us.

And you know, the other thing that He's done is He's showing us, I believe, how committed He is to the believer's glorification, because He's now based creation's recovery or restoration on the glorification of the believer. Again, to give you and I confidence and certainty that it's going to happen. It's a done deal, it's going to happen. In fact, notice that next phrase in the next verse, verse 21. He says, "*because*" and so this gives us the reason that I just shared, "*because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*"

We'll move quickly through this last section here, but notice that they're delivered *from* something, they're delivered *into* something else. This word "will be delivered" means *to make free, to liberate from a certain power*. It's in the indicative mood, so it gives a future guarantee or promise. In other words, creation *will* be delivered, it's going to happen. There's going to be a day where creation is delivered from the bondage of corruption that it's in. This deliverance from and to, we see it's going to be liberated from the bondage of corruption. I think that's just a synonym for futility in verse 20.

And what does that look like? Well, the bondage of corruption is something that we've already talked about, it's just the death, the decay, the corruption at all levels of society. People's bodies decay,

they die, property goes into shambles if you don't take care of it, different assets, animals, the same thing happens. So, we see this all throughout creation. But God is saying through Paul here that creation is going to be delivered from that bondage of corruption *into* something else, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Again, creation's liberty, as we see, is directly tied to the future liberty or glorification of the believer.

And then we finalize the passage today with verse 22. And he says in verse 22, "*For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*" And so we know a couple of things, and Paul personifies creations longing for the believers glorification using the illustration of the pain of childbirth. And boy, do I feel unworthy to talk about what that feels like. I've only watched it from afar, from a couple feet away.

But, you know, those of you who have been in a birthing room, those of you who have given birth before, you're gonna have a really good concept of the principle that Paul's communicating here, and that is: present suffering and pain, future joy. "If I can just get through this, just give me an epidural, or just squeeze my hand tighter. If I can just get through this.... put a wallet in my mouth, let me bite through it, I mean, *something* to get me through this, I know on the other side of this pain we're gonna hear that sound." That sound that could keep you up at night, but you like to hear it in the hospital room, don't you?

And so you hear that sound and you know that there's the joy I was looking for. I can deal with this pain because I know what's coming out on the other side of this pain. And so he uses that as this illustration, he says that "*the whole creation groans with birth pangs*" it just means *to groan or sigh*, and it's just a continual experience of creation. And again, any woman in this room that's given birth understands what that means, what a groaning, a sighing, and looking forward to means.

And then the second thing we see is that the whole creation labors with birth pangs. Just meaning *to be in pain, or to travail together*. And so this too is also a continual and present experience of creation. And so you see as you walk outside today, as you look at a tree, you can look at that tree differently for the first time and say, "You are looking forward to the day that I'm gonna be glorified." The next time you see a waterfall you can say, "Yeah, you're beautiful, but you're looking forward to my day." And see, that's the confidence that we have because of the salvation that God has provided.

And so next, we're gonna look at two more entities who are groaning and moaning for our future glorification, and then we're also going to look at a present ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.



# CHAPTER 47

## Moaning and Groaning Part 2

### Romans 8:23-27

Let's go to Romans chapter 8. We've titled this section "Moaning and Groaning Part 2", and the reason we did that was because in the last section we looked at something in this passage, and there's a couple of things I want to bring us up to speed on. Number one is what Paul just shared with us last week, that children are automatically heirs in God's family. Why is that significant? Because in the culture of the day, just being born into the family did not guarantee that you were gonna receive an inheritance.

Greco-Roman culture had this whole process of adoption, and it was as a dad watched his sons and he determined which one was faithful, there was kind of a probationary period. But the adoption was not to adopt somebody else's biological child into your family, the adoption in this day was to adopt a biological child, and what that adoption signified was an inheritance. And so there was a time frame, a probationary period, and Paul said, "In God's family, there's no probationary period. The moment you are born into the family of God, you are an inheritor, you're an heir, and that's based on your union with Jesus Christ."

And so we saw in the last section that part of our inheritance is *glorification*. And we've talked about this a number of times, but when we talk about the word "salvation", there's one salvation that God provides in the Bible, but it comes in three different aspects, and the one that we're most familiar with is salvation or deliverance from hell.

And the thing that sends people to hell is not as complex as you might think. The thing that sends people to hell is because the Bible says that the penalty for sin is death. That means that nobody has ever lived a life perfect and not broken one of God's laws, or made a mistake, or willfully sinned, and the penalty for that is death. He also says that you have to have a righteousness equal to His to get to heaven.

And so in the gospel, the fact that Jesus came and lived a perfect life, that Jesus went to the cross and died for your sins, there's the death penalty paid on your behalf as a substitute for you. And then the Bible also says that if you put your faith in Jesus alone, you believe that what He did was acceptable to God, that He died for your sins personally and paid the penalty that you deserve, the Bible says you have eternal life. The Bible says your sins are forgiven.

And on the righteousness issue, the Bible says that God has united you with Jesus Christ, that His righteousness is now the same righteousness that you own. Wow! That's really good news! But that's only one aspect of our salvation. The other aspects are called *sanctification* and *glorification*. And we've been looking at sanctification in Romans chapter 6, 7, and the beginning part of 8, and it's not salvation from hell, not salvation from sin's penalty, but it's salvation from sin's power in your daily life. God has provided the means for you to experience salvation from sin's power in your daily life.

And then finally, that future tense aspect of our one salvation, *glorification*, where God will actually save you or deliver you from the very presence of sin. And we await that day when the Bible says it will receive our glorified bodies. And that's the section of Romans that we're in, really looking at this glorification section.

And so last week we looked at the first entity that's moaning and groaning. What is this entity moaning and groaning about? Well, it's looking forward to the day that the sons of God, those of you

who have put your faith in Jesus Christ, will be glorified. The day that you will receive your new glorified body, the day that you will be delivered from the very presence of sin.

That one entity was creation. Creation: the trees, the waterfalls, the mountains, everything you see on this earth that God created all the way back in Genesis 1 and 2. Creation's been subjected to futility, to vanity, and creation itself is looking forward to the day that you will be revealed as a Son of God. See, creation is looking forward to *your* day. And so many times in our culture we get it backwards and we begin to worship creation, and creation's actually looking forward to the day that you will be revealed for who you are in Jesus Christ.

So that was the first entity, we see that in verse 22 as we kind of ramp up into our study. But verse 22 says this: *"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."* But we see another entity groaning in verse 23, it says this, *"Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."* And this verse is kind of loaded, so we're gonna work our way through phrase by phrase.

But this "not only that" is referring to this concept that not only is creation moaning and groaning with birth pangs, but you are, as a believer. You, within your body, are looking forward to, eagerly expecting this day of your glorification. He says this, *"even we ourselves groan within ourselves"*. This word means *to groan or to sigh*, it's what happens when one is squeezed or pressed by circumstances.

In fact, we've been looking in this passage about how Paul always puts our glorification right in the front of our minds eye. Why? Because we're dealing with present, awful circumstances called trials and sufferings, and he wants us focused on that day, occupied with our future glorification, that final phase of our salvation, because it can actually impact how we live here as we deal with trials.

You know, God's answer to trials many times is not to remove the trials, but to actually walk through them with you. That's not a popular message, right? We want to hear a message that God's a genie in a bottle, and anytime you go through something bad, you just rub Him a certain way and boom, they're gone. These issues are gone, these trials are gone, these irritants are gone, the way that I feel in the morning when I wake up is gone.

We look forward to that day! That is going to happen one day in our glorification, that's why we're looking forward to it, that's why we're eagerly anticipating that day. Because in heaven there's no tears, there's no sorrows, there's no sickness, there's no trials, it's just enjoyment with the Lord in a place off Easy Street called heaven. There's actually enjoying the presence of our Lord!

You know, what's interesting about this groaning here is it's very similar to creations groaning, it's a continual and ongoing groaning. And I do have to point this out, because otherwise we might excuse a lot of things, but notice it's *not* an external groaning. We're not trying to give you a justification to complain as you walk through this life and be a grumbler, and a complainer, and just make it all about yourself. But notice this groaning according to the text in verse 23, that we groan where? Within ourselves. This is an internal groaning.

I remember an older gentleman complaining to his wife about the way aging was treating his body, and he was groaning and moaning about having to go up the stairs, and go over here, and get this, and go out here, and do these chores in the yard. And his wife said, "Man, you sure are complaining about a lot." And he told her, "I'm just trying to be biblical. Romans 8:23!" And that's not what we're talking about here. We're not talking about complaining, we're not talking about moaning and groaning, but this definitely is reflected in our bodies, the creaks and the pains and the issues that we feel in these mortal bodies. But we're talking about an internal groaning, something that happens within ourselves.

Now, notice this, because he uses this next phrase, *"we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit"* and I think it's a good question to ask, "Who's the *we* here? Who's he talking about?" Let's kind of get this



clarified. It's those of us who have the firstfruits of the Spirit. In other words, if you remember back in the beginning part of Romans 8, he says if you're a child of God, you have His spirit, we own the Spirit of God, He indwells us, if you will. Each believer has the indwelling Spirit of God. And so he's talking about the believer, and he talks in terms of firstfruits, and you know that's not a real familiar concept to those of us that don't live in an agricultural society.

And so what the firstfruits were, is a farmer - especially an Israelite - would plant their harvest, and they would reap that harvest, then they would present the very first fruit - so the first produce that came out of the ground - they would present that to the Lord as an offering. Now, those of you who have ever planted a garden, you know how difficult that is, right? Because you're out there watering this garden, tending it, you get no benefit from it until that one day you walk out there and you're like, "Ah, my first ripe tomato of the season." And what's the first thing you want to do? You want to take that off and you want to go make something with it, right? Throw it in a salad, make some spaghetti sauce, something. You want to use it right away.

And see, the Israelites would take that first produce they would get, and instead of using that which they had labored for, they would actually give it away to the Lord. And the mindset behind that was it acknowledged that all of the harvest was His anyway, and it expressed faith that the rest of the harvest was still gonna follow. It was an act of faith to say, "Here you go, Lord. I know you're so good to me, you're gonna bring more, there's more to come." And see, in this whole area of glorification, he talks about the Spirit as being the firstfruits, this indwelling Spirit guaranteeing what? There's more to come, and that's called *glorification*, that's called *a redeemed body* as we'll see here as we study further.

And so God's gift of the Holy Spirit is His pledge that He will complete the process of salvation. If you have any doubt God's gonna complete what He started, just look at the firstfruits that He's given you: the indwelling Spirit of God, and that's the guarantee and to encourage you that you will one day be glorified. Again, the firstfruits always guarantee more to come. The Spirit of God is referred to as "the earnest deposit of our inheritance" in Ephesians 1:14, you can write that down as a cross-reference. Also write down 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, it covers very similar ground as what we're covering here, and it also talks about the Spirit of God being that earnest deposit of more to come. More to come in this case is our glorification. God is, again, trying to convince us and allow us to rest in the fact that He's going to complete this great salvation that He initiated.

And so we see here this adoption, let's go back and read verse 23. Because again, we're picking off big chunks here, but he says, "*Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves*" - Why? Well, we're "*eagerly waiting for the adoption*" which is identified here as "*the redemption of our body*". And so we see part of our inheritance, part of what we gain in being adopted as a son of God the moment we put our faith in Christ is we're gonna have a new body. Now, as we live longer on this earth, that "Hallelujah!" about a new body gets a little bit louder, right?

You know, I remember the days of being 18 and not having to stretch to play basketball. Stretch? Why would I waste 15 minutes? I could be shooting, I could be running, I could be doing things! It wasn't until I hit about 25 that I started to realize, "Wow, stretching is gonna elongate my basketball career." In fact, I remember one time I didn't stretch well enough and pulled a hamstring that put me out, and hamstrings tend to get pulled the older you get, don't they?

And so we see that one day, the excitement is this adoption that we were predestined to according to Ephesians 1. Not predestined to salvation, predestined to *glorification*. That's what God's talking about when we talk about adoption. But that day is going to include the redemption of our bodies, and that's something that we eagerly wait for. In fact, this eager word here is an intensive, it's eager looking, it's the same way that Paul described creation. Creation was described in two ways: craning

its neck, looking forward to the day that you would be glorified or be revealed as a son of God, but also this eager anticipation, this eager waiting, looking forward to.

Kind of like the last section when I used the picture of that really loyal dog just looking out the window, waiting for the owners to come home, this eager looking forward to, this expected looking. And so we are to be doing that as a believer in Jesus Christ. And so the same thing that creation's groaning for and eagerly looking forward to is the same thing that we're groaning and looking forward to, which is our glorification.

Now one of the things that we're gonna see is in this adoption, and we actually shed our mortal bodies. We're gonna shed our mortal bodies for the exchange of immortal bodies, and this truth is brought out in a couple of different passages, but 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 is a great passage that brings out this concept. But what's interesting is he keeps with this adoption imagery even here as we're talking about getting this new body. And you'll see that he goes back in verse 24, this eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body, and it provides beautiful imagery of the adoption ceremony of Roman families where a young man would actually shed his youthful toga and he would put on his adult toga.

Now apparently - I mean, I've never been to a toga party, I've just seen them on TV or read about them, and they don't sound like really great places, especially on college campuses - but apparently in this day the toga was an article of clothing that they would wear, and people in this day could tell if a young man was wearing a childhood toga or if he was wearing an adoption toga. They were different, and they could tell the difference.

There were two different types of togas, and one toga would be taken off and taken away, that was the childhood toga, and it was called a toga praetexta (I don't expect you to remember this, I had to write it down myself). But they were given a toga virilis, they were given an adulthood toga that represented they were adopted as sons. So, you see that imagery in our unredeemed body being removed or taken from us, and our redeemed body, our glorified body, being given to us as adopted sons, that's part of our inheritance. And so Paul is using some of this imagery here, I believe.

Verse 24, and again, he uses this word "for" to further explain something. Verse 24 says this, *"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?"* And so this "for" just further explains verse 23 and this eagerly waiting aspect of our future glorification. In other words, why can we eagerly wait? Why can we actually eagerly look forward to the day of our glorification? Well, he makes it pretty simple in verse 24, *"For we were saved in this hope."* We were saved. This word here is in the Greek, it's in an aorist tense, it reflects a point in time event, and I believe it speaks of both our justification and our future glorification.

And in the next section as we get into verses 29 and 30, we're going to see that our glorification is just as much of a done deal as our justification, in God's estimation. Because what did Paul say in verse 17? If you're a child, then you're an heir. If a child, full inheritance, adoption, glorification. So those two things go together, and I believe he's speaking of both here, both our justification and glorification. Now why is this important? It's important because it's promised to us the moment that we believe.

Some of you know that I'm working on a degree right now, and I'm writing a big paper, and that paper is almost done - to the praise and the glory of His grace! - but it's on gospel clarity. And I have a friend who's a pastor who offered to proofread it for me, and to go through it, and it really created some nice conversations between him and I. But I'm only sharing that story because one night he had a men's Bible study, and he decided to bring up the topic of my paper, which was gospel clarity, which basically states you can be a hundred percent sure that you're going to heaven. And he shared that with a men's

Bible study that night, and to his shock and amazement, over 80 percent of the group there that evening said that if you think you're a hundred percent sure that you're going to heaven, you are arrogant and proud, and you should not think that way. Now immediately, that exposes the way that they were thinking.

And there may be somebody here today that says, "Wait a minute, you can't know a hundred percent sure." And it just exposes the way you're thinking, because if you think that you have anything to do with your salvation (your behavior, your performance, your good works, your consistency), then I agree with you, you have *no* chance. You shouldn't even be 80% sure, because that would be arrogant.

And I can tell you as I stand here today that I'm a hundred percent sure that I'm going to heaven, and it has *nothing* to do with me. In fact, it's less arrogant than somebody who thinks they're working to go to heaven who's only 80% sure. Because I'm trusting in the work of another, I'm trusting in the work that somebody else did for me. And you know what, if His work proves not to be good enough, well I didn't have a chance anyway. And I realize that! So Jesus Christ is not my crutch, He's my stretcher, right? I'm not just leaning on Him a little bit, kind of resting a little bit of weight on myself, I'm totally passed out on the stretcher of Jesus Christ, and if He's not good enough, I don't have a chance anyways.

And so what we see here is this hope, this confident expectation. Hope is defined biblically as confident, future expectation. It's not how we use it like, "I hope so, I wish so." Many people say, "Are you going to heaven?" "I hope so. I'm going to church, I'm reading my Bible, I kind of hope so. I'm doing good, I'm not doing these things anymore." That's not biblical hope. Biblical hope is confident expectation. Why can we be confident in our future glorification? Because of Jesus. Because of who Jesus is and what He did: He died for our sins, He rose again, He satisfied the righteous demands of God. And so we can actually look forward in confident expectation.

Now when we look at hope, we've got to understand that by definition, hope that is seen can't be hope. By definition, if it's something future that we confidently expect, if it's something that we see, it's not hope, it's reality. Does that make sense? Just as a definition thing, if we see something, it can't be considered hope. Now, we could look at our daily lives and see spiritual growth, but that's reality, that wouldn't be considered hope. Hope is looking forward to the day that our bodies are glorified, that we're completely delivered from the presence of sin. That's what we're talking about, that's hope.

But what in this passage is Paul contrasting for us? We've got to keep this in mind, otherwise these verses kind of get confusing like, "What's he saying here? What's he trying to get to? What's he contrasting?" He's contrasting our future hope with our present sufferings, right? And he started that way back when. He says in verse 18, "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be*" - future tense - "*revealed in us.*" That's what he's contrasting here.

And so he asks this question as he's coming out of this verse, "*Why does one still hope for what he sees?*" And remember, Paul's weaving in and out of future glorification and our present suffering, and I think "Why do you hope for what you see?" is a reference to present circumstances. Why is your hope in getting out of present bad circumstances? Why is your hope in being delivered from present suffering in this life, when one day you'll be completely delivered from sin's presence? Why is your focus, why is your hope, right now in this present world, to get rid of everything?

And so I think this is a reminder that our true hope lies only in our glorification, our future glorification, not in the betterment of our present circumstances. Now I think he's going to go on in verse 26 and say, "Now you've got help in your present circumstances, and let me tell you the resource you've got for that, but your hope is not based on your life cleaning up and getting easy."

If I wrote my perfect life, if God gave me the pen and he said, "John, I'm gonna give you veto power on any trial, suffering, or hardship in your life. And I'm gonna present it to you, and you can veto

it if you don't want it.” Do you know how many things I would sign off on? Zero. I would veto everything! I wouldn't even want to stub my toe coming out of the shower because that hurts. I wouldn't even want to lose a fingernail, because that hurts. I wouldn't want to be stuck at the post office with my car not starting, because that's a pain, I want to be somewhere. I want my car to work every time I shift it into gear. And every time I take my car to the mechanic, I want him to say, “Oh, it was nothing, you just owe me two bucks.” I don't want him dropping me with a \$1,200 bill, I would never sign off on that! I would veto that every time.

And yet, many times that's how we try and desire to live our Christian life. Our hope, if you will, is in the betterment of our present circumstances. And Paul is saying, “No no no, guys. Get your focus off of that, you've got something much better in the future. God never promised to deliver you from all of your present circumstances, but He does provide help in present circumstances. Let's keep studying as we go.

Verse 25, “*But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.*” You see, if our occupation or focus is on our glorification, do you know that we're better equipped to deal with life's pressures, and trials, and sufferings? What does Paul say in Colossians 3? He says, “*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above.*” There's this heavenly focus, there's this spiritual focus, and guess what happens when we begin to think heavenly, and to be spiritual in our focus, and we begin to view life through a divine perspective? We actually have the ability to deal with all the junk - and can I say “crap”? - that life throws at us. Life throws stink bombs at us constantly, and yet the answer is not in hoping for an easier life, but to get our minds past all of that stuff, and to occupy ourselves with God's future plan for us. And in that instance when we become divinely focused, we're better able to deal with life's circumstances.

In fact, he's gonna use a word here, we read it in verse 25, it's called “perseverance”, and we'll look at that a little bit more closely. But the things we do not see presently are our future glorification and redeemed and glorified bodies. We just don't see that. No one walks around with a halo aglow. I mean, even if you're pregnant, I know there's a glow, but it's not what we're talking about here, right? And I know Prince Charming always has a glow until the lights come on and you get to see him a little bit more, but we're not talking about that.

And so in contrast to hoping that our present sufferings would go away - that's typically our hope, is that our present sufferings will go away - Paul's encouraging our hope to remain in our future glorification. And he's saying if we do that, we will have to persevere. That's the word used here, it means *to bear up under* with the circumstances of this life, kind of on the way, if you will, to the fulfillment of our hope. And so we have this Greek word that's used for perseverance, it's the Greek word “*hupomone*”, and it just means *to bear up under*. Our theology does not typically include this word. We don't naturally think of “bear up under”, we think of “get out from under” that's typically the word that we think of in the way that we want to deal with difficult circumstances or trials.

So, what this word refers to is really that quality of character, which does not allow someone to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. And are we going to face trials in this life? Yeah, rest assured, we're gonna face trials. But with a future focus and a divine focus, we're better able to now bear up under these things that are naturally going to come our way, and that's what God is doing with trials.

And so this eager looking forward to is not a morbid looking forward to our death. And I've heard a lot of people say, “Yeah, I'm looking forward to glorification, I just can't wait to die and get out of this.” It's not a morbid focus on our death, it's an excited looking forward to what's coming. It's not what you're gonna shed, it's what you're gonna gain. And so many times our focus on glorification or focus on that day that we're with the Lord is shedding something. Paul's focus here is there's this eager

expectation of what's going to be, something that you or I can't even put into perspective how wonderful it's gonna be to have a glorified body, to be in the presence of the Lord, to be completely delivered from sin's presence. Those are the things that we're looking forward to, that we're eagerly expecting.

And so one of the things that helps us in this life deal with present sufferings, is hope. Where's your focus? What are you occupied with? Back in Romans 8:5 it talked about what you set your mind on. Are you setting your mind on the things of the flesh or are you setting your mind on the things of the Spirit? The Spirit of God wants to draw your focus past this present experience on to future glorification, because that will impact the way that you're able to deal with and hold up under life's trials.

But guess what? We have additional aid. In verse 26 you see that word "likewise". And so, *"Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* We see this word "likewise" meaning *the same or like manner*. So, what's he talking about? Same or like manner as what? I believe hope, as we just discussed, helps us in our weaknesses and suffering. But guess what? So does the indwelling Spirit of God. See, you've got a resource as a believer in the indwelling Spirit of God to help you through life's trials, and weaknesses, and infirmities.

We're about to get some insight into what the Spirit of God does for us, but before we do, let's look at this word "help". Because it means - and I love this - *to come together and assist or support someone with helper aid*. And guess what? It represents ongoing and continual action. In other words, this is something the Spirit of God is always doing in your life, what we're about to read about. This should provide you great comfort. Because has anyone ever gone through something and said, "Where are you, God? Don't you care about me, God? Why would you allow this to happen, God?" The Word of God says He knows what you're going through. The Spirit of God indwelling you has an ongoing and continual ministry to help you in your weaknesses. Have you ever felt weak? If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you've got the indwelling Spirit of God there, and one of His primary purposes in this present age is to assist you, is to provide the help that you need, and we're going to see how He does this.

But I just want you to understand that the Spirit of God is not sleeping when something bad happens to you. He's not taking the day off when something goes wrong in your life, or you're irritated about something. How many times are we impatient, looking for that answer because we've got to have this answer before we can go on to steps two, three, and four? It's not that the Spirit of God is sitting there going, "Yeah, let's just watch how he or she just has to wait for that answer, to see how much they struggle." That's not what's going on at all. In fact, the Word of God says something much different: the Spirit of God is very interested and engaged in what's going on in your life and is continually helping you in this manner. And so we'll look at what manner that is.

The Spirit supports us and assists us especially, we see, as it relates to our weaknesses, our frailties, our feebleness, the way that we handle trials. In context, it does seem to be especially true in the area of life's trials and sufferings that the Spirit of God is there to help and assist, especially during these times where we feel weak. And go back to verse 26, because he says, *"Likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses."* Notice that word there again, "for". Why does the Spirit of God help us in our weakness, how does the Spirit of God help us in our weakness? Well, that "for" is going to be the transition to how, and why, and what He's all about here in terms of helping us in our weaknesses.

The first thing we realize is this, it's really simple, it says in the text that we don't even know how we should pray during these times. And I want you to notice something: it's not necessarily that we *don't* pray. That might be true of some of us, maybe we don't pray, we just go into gear and try to figure out all the solutions to our problems. And we just trust in our intellect, we trust in our ability to solve problems, we trust in experiences, we trust in what we've done before. And so some of us may not pray.

But in this case, it's not that we don't pray necessarily, but it's that we don't pray in accordance with the will of God as it relates to trials. We already said this, but most - and I'm giving us a lot of credit on the word "most", it's probably *all*, but let's just say most - of our prayers concerning trials are simple: get them out of here God and get them out of here quickly. That's our prayer.

And you know, we're like a one-string banjo. Just get them out of here God. And we've got one note, we've got one chord, we play it often, and hard, and consistently. That's our prayer (typically) when we're going through trials. Now some of you have probably grown spiritually over the years, and maybe you've got a couple strings on your banjo. And that's good, that's progress. But for most of us, we've got a one string banjo as it relates to our prayers, as it comes to trials and suffering. And it's "Get them out of here. Get them out of here quickly, what's taking You so long?" That's our prayer request when it comes to trials.

Now here's the thing we've got to understand, this is why the text clearly says, "*we do not know.*" Not *if* you don't know, or *when* you don't know, implying that sometimes you do know the right way. He doesn't assume that at all, he assumes that we *don't know* how to pray. And not only that, but the verb tense also that he uses here is a perfect tense, which means that he assumes you don't know how to pray and you remain in the state of not knowing how to pray as it relates to trials.

And then he uses this phrase, "*as we ought*". That's convicting because what's he now saying? We don't know how to pray, but we should. Based on what? How should we know how to pray? Well, have you ever heard teaching from the Word of God on trials and suffering? Have you ever heard that God uses those things for your benefit to grow you spiritually, so that you relate to Him on a more consistent, dependent basis in your daily life? And yet what's the one string that we pray when trials and suffering come? Get them out of here. And God may be using them for your good. He *is* oftentimes using these things for your good. In fact, what's verse 28 gonna tell us when we get there? God works all things together for good.

And so you see where all this fits in. And we see that the Spirit's ministry here is that He's gonna take care of this. We don't know what to pray, but the Spirit of God *does know* what to pray. Aren't you encouraged that the Spirit of God is like the great defensive back, He's intercepting all those prayer requests and then floating up the right ones up to God the Father for you? Interceding, internally, exactly what you need as a child of God. Exactly according to the will of God as we'll find in verse 27.

So, this is how the Spirit helps. He makes intercession for us - the text tells us - with groanings. Who's the third entity groaning? Well, we saw creation was groaning, we saw that we were groaning, and now we see that the Spirit of God is groaning within us. And you know what? This is how the Spirit helps. This is how the Spirit comes alongside us during trials. He prays for us according to the will of God. He knows exactly what God wants to accomplish in each and every trial, negative circumstance, and suffering that you're going through in life. The Spirit of God indwelling you knows exactly what they're trying to get out of it in your life. The Spirit of God knows exactly how God wants to use the trials, and He's offering these intercessory prayers on our behalf.

You're probably going through trials right now. If you're breathing, you're probably going through trials or some kind of suffering right now. Do you know without a shadow of a doubt if God wants to deliver you out of that, or to deliver you through that - in other words, walk through it with you? Do you know the answer to that question? Are you a hundred percent sure that you know the answer to that question? Well, if we're being honest with ourselves, no. We *don't know* that. But guess who does? The Spirit of God knows.

And you can rest assured today that you may be confused with what's going on in your life, you may not understand why you're having to go through the pain that you're going through, but there is a

Person that's indwelling you that does know, and that's praying for your good, praying for God's will in your life, He wants to use it for maximum benefit in your life. Can we rest in that truth, or do we need the trial removed to actually relax? Hopefully. We've got to lift our minds upward and we can begin to rest in this truth, and not so much need trials removed in order to go on in our relationship with the Lord.

We notice a couple of things here as we look at this a little bit further, but we see that the Spirit is going to make intercession continually because we do not know what we should pray for. It reminds me, somebody just kind of mentioned this as an illustration, but it was really a good illustration. Imagine being a parent and you've got a child that has a speech problem, speech impediments, and it's really difficult for them to talk and to communicate concepts. And just imagine as that youngster struggles, the feeling of the parent as they use their own voice to formulate what the child's trying to say. They don't like to watch that child struggle, but the child just can't get their words out, and so the parent, many times, jumps in to help them communicate on their behalf so they won't struggle.

And so this to me provides a great picture of how the Holy Spirit takes our prayers, readjusts them, and then verbalizes them to the Father on our behalf, bringing them in line with the Father's ultimate goal for us. But we want to notice that this is a continual ministry of the Holy Spirit. Again, He's not taking a day off, He's not resting, He's not absent, He's doing this right now as you sit here in this building. He's doing that in you if you're a believer in Jesus Christ.

The other thing we want to notice is that the text says He makes intercession for us, He does not make intercession *through* us. Now, we might say, "What are you making a big deal about that for?" Well, the big deal is this is not an externally verbalized prayer. In fact, he goes on to say that the spirit groans and He groans with us in creation, but His groanings are - according to this passage - not uttered. In other words, you don't hear it, it's not something that's coming out of you, it's something that He's doing in you and for you, but it's not audible, so it's not expressed in words or sounds.

Now why do I bring this up? Well, because many people will use this verse to teach that this is the giving of a private prayer language or the ability to speak in tongues when you're praying in your closet at home. And I'm just pointing out, just from simple observation, that this can't be what this is teaching, because He's praying for us, and He's doing it in groanings which cannot be uttered. He's not doing it through us with groanings that are uttered in some spiritual ecstatic speech. And so be careful of that, that's a misnomer that's floating around in Christian circles that there's some kind of spiritual level you can attain where you begin to pray in tongues personally. And all I'm saying is this verse doesn't teach that. I don't believe it teaches it anywhere, but we're in Romans, so we're dealing with this verse. This verse clearly doesn't teach that. This is something that the Spirit of God is doing in you, for you, not *through* you.

And so ultimately, it's an encouragement. It's designed to be an encouragement to you, that through the trials and sufferings of this life, the indwelling Spirit of God is praying for you according to the will of God. There are so many times in our lives that we pray for things that are not best for us. If you have lived any amount of time on this earth and remember some of the prayer requests that you've uttered, or in your thinking, and now you look back and you say, "Wow, I'm glad God didn't answer that prayer."

There's an old country song by a guy named Garth Brooks and he said, "Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers." And the whole storyline of that is he wanted to marry this one girl, and he was desperate for her, and she broke up with him and his life was over. But then God.... you know the story, right? It always ends well. Well, sometimes in country songs it ends well, sometimes you lose your dog and your truck and all that stuff. But this one ended well, the woman of his dreams then was

inserted into his life, and he said, “Oh Lord, thank you for not answering my prayer to marry this girl, when you had this other girl in mind for me.”

And we've got scriptural examples, we see one in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 where God did not answer a prayer for somebody going through trials, and that was the Apostle Paul. 2 Corinthians 12:7 he says this, “*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*” Again, what is our typical prayer in trials? Depart from me, take it away! Paul was normal just like us. But in verse 9 the Lord says to him, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” And then notice Paul's response, “*Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*”

You see, there was a benefit to not getting his answered prayer. But you know, the Spirit of God was indwelling Paul, and at the same time Paul was praying, “Depart from me, take it away from me”, the Spirit of God was saying, “No, use it to make him weak so he'll depend upon You. Use it to make him weak so that he will actually accomplish great things for Your name, because he can't do it in his own strength anymore. He's gonna have to rely upon You. Don't listen to Paul, God. Listen to my prayers, I'm in line with Your will.” And this is what the Spirit of God was doing in the meantime in Paul's life.

We've got another story, not a scriptural example, but just to kind of give you another illustration of how this works. Some of you have heard of Augustine, he was known as a church father and a prolific writer and theologian. But what many people don't know about his background is that he was a very wicked young man, a very evil womanizer, into all sorts of things that you could get into at that age. He was all over the place, a total disgrace to his family, and yet his mother was a believer. And so his mother is at home praying for him, she's obviously got a heavy burden for her son because he's just off doing things that she knows is gonna destroy his life, and so she's praying for him.

And she learns from her son Augustine that he's planning on moving to Italy, and in the mom's thinking at that time, Italy was the *worst* place for someone who was into sin, that was gonna really explode it, he was gonna do something he couldn't get out of, he was gonna get into worse and deeper sin. And you know what her prayer was? “God, don't let my son go to Italy. Just.... don't let him go. That's gonna be the worst thing for him. If he goes to Italy, he'll never have a chance to get saved, he'll never come back, he's just gonna get further and further and deeper into sin.”

And you know what? God did not answer her prayer. And Augustine went to Italy, and guess what God had in place in Italy for Augustine? He had somebody there that shared the gospel with him, and he got saved in Italy. And you see, God didn't answer her prayer, but He gave her her heart's true request. What was her true request? “Lord, save my son.” And if God were to have that conversation with her and ask, “Well, how do you want Me to save him?” She would say, “*Any means possible.* I don't care, just save him. I want him saved.” And you know what that involved? A trip to Italy. A trip to a known place with lots of carnal vices and options available, and yet God did not answer her prayer, but gave her the desires of her heart. And so you see where this can be an encouragement during trials and suffering, that the Spirit of God knows how to pray.

And as we learn in verse 27, the Spirit of God and God the Father are on the exact same page as it relates to trials in your life. Verse 27 says, “*Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*” See, the Spirit of God is never gonna lead you outside of the will of God, nor is He ever gonna pray for something that's outside of the will of God. That's an encouragement, because how many times in our lives do we pray for things outside of the will of God? I mean, it starts young, right? “Lord, I want a Lamborghini when I grow up.



I want four million dollars in the bank.” And all these things that we pray outside of the will of God, and we think that's where true happiness and success is.

But we're gonna see from this verse that God the Father and God the Spirit are in complete unity as to what God wants to accomplish in the believer's life via trials and suffering. And I like the way that Paul pictures Him, I don't know if you noticed that in verse 27, but God is pictured as searching our hearts. You know, that's kind of an anthropomorphism, because God knows what's going on in our hearts, right? But He's pictured here as searching our hearts.

Now, that's an interesting way to say that, and why do we think he said it this way? Well, I think the picture is that He's searching what the mind of the Spirit of God is, indwelling this believer, at this particular time, for this particular saint, looking into that situation and bringing themselves into unity. And I think it's an anthropomorphism because obviously I think the Spirit of God and God the Father are in complete unity. It's not like He's got to have a meeting with the Spirit, “Oh yeah, what do you think about this one?” “Okay, yeah. I can see what you're saying, but what about this?” It's not that. That's not what we're talking about. It's an anthropomorphism but it's showing the great intensity and the great interest that God the Father has in your spiritual development through trials and suffering. And it also shows how connected He and the Spirit of God are in every situation involving you. And so when the Spirit of God prays, groans with this groaning that cannot be uttered and intercedes for you, it is always and continually according to God's will for your life, and that should be a great encouragement for you.

So, in the next section, based on God's great care for us - as we've looked at today - and based on the resources provided to us via His Holy Spirit, He's going to give us a proper perspective on the happenings of life. And for many of you, Romans 8:28 is one of your favorite verses in the Bible, and for many of you, it may have been a verse that's irritated you at times when people have quoted it to you when you're going through trials. So, we'll take a biblical look at that and hopefully it's a great encouragement to you.



# CHAPTER 48

## “All Things Work Together for Good”, Predestination and Glorification

### Romans 8:28-30

Let's continue our study in Romans chapter 8. We're getting into a great section today, Romans 8:28. You hear that reference all the time and we read that verse a lot. I will admit as I get started that really my goal today is that of a waiter. The waiter's job in a restaurant is to simply get the food from the kitchen to the table without spilling it. That's how I view my job today. I mean, this verse is just so rich with truth that my only hope is I don't fumble it too much, and I get some food on your plate by the end of the message today. And so that's the goal, it's just a rich truth.

But just to kind of get us ramped up to where we're at, what we've been looking at since about verse 18, is this third tense of our one great salvation, which is called *glorification*, when we're gonna be delivered from the very presence of sin. That's going to involve a glorified body, that's gonna involve being in the presence of Jesus Christ where God completes this salvation that He started the moment you put your faith in His Son. And so what we've been looking at in this section of Romans is what kind of help God has provided us while we remain on this earth, and as we go through trials and suffering.

And so we realize that one of the helps that He provides us is a focus, what are you occupied with? You've got this future confident expectation, the Bible calls that “hope”. It's not, “Well, I hope I'll get to heaven.” Or “I hope I'll be glorified.” No, biblical hope is a confident expectation, it's a future looking forward, and we're confidently expecting that one day we're gonna be completely delivered from the presence of sin. That is a glorious day, it's something that we ought to be looking forward to.

In fact, we saw in Romans 8 that the creation is looking forward to that day. Even the waterfalls, even the mountains, everything in creation is looking forward to the day that you'll be glorified. And so we have this hope, this confident anticipation, and that hope and that confidence toward the future should impact the way that we respond to life's trials and sufferings, it should help us get through the sufferings of the present time.

The other thing that we see is that the greatest tool that God has provided is an indwelling Spirit called the Holy Spirit. A person of the Trinity, God Himself indwelling you, interceding for you, praying for you. Even when you don't know how to pray, the Spirit of God says, “I've got this. I'm taking care of this for you. I know how to pray for you.” And not only does the Spirit of God pray for you, but He prays according to the will of God, that's what we saw in verse 27.

And that brings us to verse 28, which commentator R.A. Torrey (I think, rightfully) called “A soft pillow for a tired heart.” I mean, it's a great summary of verse 28. And so as we get into verse 28, let's read it. He says, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*” We see this word “and”, and any time we're studying the Bible, we want to keep track of these types of words, because they keep us going in the flow of what's been said, and they provide context. And so this “and” is simply building on this previous truth that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and helps us when we're weak in our understanding of life's trials and sufferings in our life. That's what we just came out of, that's verses 26-27. And so he says “and” and he goes on to build on this. He's going to say that we know something.

He's gonna say that we know that all things work together for good. And the way that he verbalizes this in the Greek is he says, "This is something that we know, and we continue to know." It's an ongoing knowledge that we've gained at a point in time. And I find this progression interesting, because verse 26 he says, "we don't know what we should pray." Verse 27 says, "but God knows what to pray", and then in verse 28, "we can know what's going on" as it relates to life trials and sufferings.

Obviously, the Spirit of God is the One who's gonna have to make this real and true in our lives. Because if you're anything like me - and I would assume that you are - when something goes wrong in your life, immediately you say, "Why, God? Why me? Why now? Get it out of my life." That's the typical response to trials. We don't like trials. We don't just sit there and say, "Yeah, bring it on! This is great, bring more, pile it on! This isn't enough. I'm just getting so much pleasure out of being hurt and going through trials and sufferings, and being irritated, and being emotionally disturbed." We don't actually do that, but this is something that we can know, that all of these things work together for good.

We're going to see that this is a divine perspective on life's trials and sufferings. Now, it raises a question: all things? Like... really, *all* things? Are you serious? He can't possibly mean all things, right? John, tell me something in the Greek that means that he doesn't mean all things. I'm sorry, it's not there. When he says all things, he's talking about *all things*. Now, notice specifically that he doesn't say that "all things are good". Look at the text again, he says that he *works* all things together for good, but he doesn't say that all things *are good*.

So, I'm not standing before you today and trying to convince you that sin is good, that the consequences of sin are good, that tragedy is good. I think we all know the causes of tragedy: Satan, sinful choices of people, the consequences of living in a sinful world, those are the "all things" that he's talking about here. But you might verbalize it this way: God is the great lemonade maker. You've heard that saying, right? Life's gonna throw you lemons, so make lemonade. And God's the great lemonade maker. He could take lemons, He can even take tomatoes, and He can even take rotten oranges and grind all that together, put it in the process, and He can work it together for your good, and that's what this verse is talking about.

Again, when we talk about "all things", we're talking about good, bad, neutral, success, failure.... whatever you want to throw into that mix that they work together or cooperate, help, aid, or contribute to an end goal. And so what we're gonna see is that God has got an end goal, and he's going through this section here in Romans to convince you that His end goal for you is good, it's called "glorification". And when we get into verse 29 and 30, he's also going to try to convince us that it is a sure thing for you if you've ever put your faith in Jesus Christ. Glorification is yours because God's gonna do it.

In fact, what we're gonna look at is that in God's mind, even though it hasn't happened in time, He's gonna say it's already a completed event. Because that's how God does things, right? Does God not know the beginning from the end? Could He not call things which are not as though they were? We looked at that earlier in Romans.

And so we're gonna see how He puts this together. But just to investigate this claim that all things God is working together for good, I want to use an illustration, and you'll follow this illustration. The story was told of a young boy who was told by his mom that she was gonna make a cake for the family. And so she was getting all the ingredients out on the counter and she realized, "Oh, I don't have enough milk in the fridge, so I'm gonna go down to the second refrigerator and get some more milk. You wait here, and then we'll start making the cake."

And the boy said, "Man, this is cake, I'm gonna start trying all these ingredients!" And so he cracks an egg open, he dips his finger in the egg and says, "This is disgusting!" He takes a little bit of the flour, he throws that in and he's like, "This is gross!" He takes a little bit of the sugar, he's like,

“That's pretty good, let me get another one of those!” And he throws the sugar in. Then he goes to the vanilla extract, and he says, “It smells good, but that's really gross, too!”

And he began to taste each one of these ingredients all by themselves, and by the time of the taste test he said, “Mom, I don't think I want any of that cake, that's gonna be awful.” But you know as well as I do that when you take those individual ingredients and you mix them together, out comes something beautiful. And I think that's a great illustration of this verse.

One commentator, William Newell, put it this way. He said that this “all things” *“involves that billion billion control of God's providence, of the most infinitesimal things, to bring them about for “good” to God's Saints. When we reflect on the innumerable “things” about us ”* - Now, think about this, just how in control God is for Him to be able to say all things He's working together for good - *“-forces seen and unseen of the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds; of man at enmity with God; of Satan, and his principalities and power, in deadly array; in the uncertainty and even treachery of those near and dear to us, and even of professed Christians, and of our own selves, which we cannot trust for a moment; upon our unredeemed bodies; upon our general complete helplessness - then to have God say, “All things are working together for your good,”... this reveals to us a Divine providence that is absolutely limitless!”*

We see that God, according to this word “working all things together for our good”, He's got an end goal in mind. The great thing about His end goal is it's singular in intention: it's goodness. It's goodness for you. And so many times, something happens in our life, and we say, “God, why did you do that to me? You're trying to hurt me; you're trying to take this away from me. Lord, you're not letting me get to where I'm trying to go. Lord, you're always in the way.”

I remember a conversation I had with a friend of mine I had met in college, and he was an unbeliever. And I told him that I had gotten out of baseball, and one of the reasons I had retired from baseball is because I wanted to pursue further theological education. And his response was, “Man, God screws up everything!” And you know, I laugh because it really caught me off guard, but in a practical way, have you ever done that through your thinking? Have you ever done that in the way that you've responded to a trial? “Well, I had this going, but there's God again, screwing it up. I guess He's got some lesson to teach me. You know, what's up God? What's your problem? Why are you doing this to me?” And we may not even verbalize that word, but our attitude says exactly those things.

And I want you to know whether or not we can understand all the individual ingredients that come to our life, the Bible says that God's end goal for you is goodness. Why did He allow this? I don't know. I'm at a loss. I can't even explain why God allows everything in my life, but I can rest in the fact as I go back to Romans 8:28 (and this is why it's there in the Bible) that He wants goodness for me and you. He's working toward this end goal of goodness.

So, this means that God's will (this is very important) and the Spirit's intercession and the believer's “true” desire is all the same. Don't you want goodness for your life? You know, in Psalm 23 he talks about the Great Shepherd of the sheep, and he says, *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”* He was convinced of the truth; the great psalmist David was convinced of this truth. Do you know that *that's* your ultimate desire too, *goodness*, God's best for you?

And so you say, “Where does the conflict come in?” Well, I think as Philip Yancey said, and I'll just quote them because it's a great quote, “We must not confuse God with life.” And so many times, that's what we do. Something happens to us, and we lay the blame at God's feet. And there's a lot of other things going on in this world. We've got enemies after us, we've got our own self in the way, we've got the sinful choices of people around us, we've got consequences from our own sin. We've got all these things swirling around, and sometimes I think we confuse the negative aspects of life - death,

trials, and suffering - with God. And see, God can take all of those things and mix it together and cause them to come together for good.

You know, I believe the conflict arises for the believer when God doesn't get us to His end goal the way *we think* He should get us to the end goal. That's really when the conflict arises. We have a lack of understanding of all of these minute things coming into our lives, "How could *this* be allowed in our life to contribute to goodness, my ultimate goodness?" And we have a problem with that, that's where the issue comes in, that's where the resistance comes in.

In fact, verse 26 told us point-blank that *we don't know how to pray*. It doesn't say "if" or "at that moment we don't know how to pray, then the Spirit will pray for us", it just says "you don't know how to pray." We don't know how to pray as it comes to life's trials and sufferings. Because like I said last week, who would sit there when they're going through a painful trial, painful suffering, who would literally pray, "Lord, keep it coming, okay? Just keep bringing it. Don't let me out of this thing, I just love it, I'm just enjoying this!?" No! All of us have the typical prayers, "Get it out of here, get it out of here quickly. By any means necessary, just get it to go." Right?

And since we don't know how to pray, how do we think that we understand how to interpret the "all things" of life? We just flat out don't, many times. I have another illustration, and I think you may see yourself in this story. I can definitely relate to it. This one is of a man in China who raised horses for a living. When one of his prized stallions ran away, his friends gathered at his home to mourn his great loss. After they expressed their concern, the man raised this question: how do I know whether what happened is good or bad?

A couple of days later, the runaway horse returned with several strays following close behind. The same acquaintances again came to his house, this time to celebrate his good fortune. But he asked the question, "But how do I know whether it's good or bad?" That very afternoon, the horse kicked the owner's son and broke the young man's leg.

Once more, the crowd assembled, now to express their sorrow over the incident, but he asked again, "How do I know if this is good or bad?" A few days later, war broke out. The man's son was exempted from military service because of his broken leg. Again, the friends gathered, and you could take that story on and on and on.

But you see the illustration: many times, we don't know how to interpret the "all things" of life. We get one data point, one trial, one suffering, and we begin to try to interpret how that's going to work together for good. And many times, we don't know, but we jump to conclusions, and from a human perspective, we certainly don't know how to interpret the "all things" of life. But Romans 8:28 is not a human perspective verse, this is a divine perspective verse.

And so even if you're unsure of how to put together what's going on in life, rest assured in one thing: in hope. And that's in Romans 8:28. God recorded a message for you, and that message is simply this: the "all things" of life are working together for your good. That's what He's about, that's what He's going to do. And His end goal as we're going to see, that final end goal is going to be our glorification, when He completely fulfills that goodness to us, we're gonna see that when we see Jesus and we have our new glorified bodies.

Now one of the things we want to look at too, and I've already kind of given away my understanding of this verse, but let's look at it a little bit closer. Who is this promise made to? That's what we want to look at, we just want to verify that it's made to believers. And so verse 28 says, "*And we know that all things work together for good*" - and then it uses these two phrases: "*to those who love God,*" and "*to those who are called according to His purpose.*" So, we've got, "*to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*" That's who this promise is made to. So, who are these people? Well, before we

start really investigating, we want to see that contextually, these two phrases refer to the same group, we're not talking about two separate groups. But the ones who love God, the ones who are the called according to His purpose, that's the same group of people that he's talking about here.

And so do we get any contextual clues as to who these people are? Well, what have we been talking about in Romans chapter 8? We've been talking about believers, we've been talking about those in whom the Spirit of God dwells, those in whom the Spirit of God aids, those in whom the Spirit of God intercedes for. And so I believe we're talking about believers, that this is a promise only for believers. This is a promise for children of God, heirs of God, as we've been looking at in Romans chapter 8.

In fact, we know from 1 John 4:19 that believers are described as “those who love God”. Now, do we love God perfectly, every day of our life? If you say “yes”, I'd like to meet you and rub shoulders with you a little bit, and hopefully it'll rub off on me. But no, we don't love God perfectly, but we do love God. 1 John 4:19 says that “*We love God*” - why? “*because He first loved us.*” And so “to those who love God” is the description of believers.

And then if you will, you can turn with me to 1 Corinthians 1, where we see that there's three classes of people in the world (if you want to call it that). There's unsaved Jews, there's unsaved Gentiles, and then there's saved Jews and Gentiles which form one group. And you're gonna see in this section in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 that he's gonna identify saved Jews and Gentiles as “the called”, which is the description that we have in Romans 8:28. 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 says this, “*but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called,*” - there's our phrase - “*both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*”

And so, as we look at who this promise is for, I believe this promise is for believers. In fact, if we stay right in the context of Romans 8, verse 29 is going to refer to this purpose of God as being conformed to the image of Christ. This is a glorification concept, and so this clearly speaks of believers. This is not talking about an unbeliever being conformed to the image of Christ.

So, all of this fits together. And rather than this being a certain special class of faithful Christians, some may teach that, but I believe that this is referencing all believers. So, this promise - if you're a believer in Jesus Christ - is for you today. God is working all things together for your good as an end goal. And I think it's such an important truth, the Bible devotes nine chapters to illustrate this truth in the book of Genesis.

Remember the guy named Joseph? Isn't he an illustration of the “all things” in life working together for his ultimate good? You've got a young man who's sold into slavery by his own brothers, who then kind of begins to rise up in the realm of a slave and becomes the right-hand man of one of the most powerful men in Egypt. He then is falsely accused of chasing his wife and trying to seduce her to have an affair.

So, then he gets thrown into prison, we see that he's stuck there, he interprets a couple of dreams for a couple of people, and then he asks them, “Hey, remember me. Try to get me out of here.” But they forget about him for two years, and then finally he gets the opportunity to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and then he's made the second-in-command. And you think, “Wow, that's a story from rags to riches.” God was doing something much more behind the scenes. He was protecting His nation, because now He's got a man in place who can distribute grain to whom he will.

And Joseph personally takes his family - even though they had sold him up the river and tried to convince their dad that he was dead - shows them kindness and brings them into his care, and he was in a position to do so. See, God was working all those things together for good, and you know what?

Joseph understood it too, because he tells his brother, “What you meant for evil, God meant for good.” And it just illustrates this truth personally and very distinctly.

Now we move into Romans 8:29-30, “*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*” And as I've said before and just try to bring up from time to time, when we see that word “for” in the scriptures, understand he's further explaining something, he's trying to give us some additional information about what he just said.

Remember he said in verse 28 “we know that all things work together for good”? Now he's gonna give us the reason why we know. In fact, he's gonna answer this question, “How can we know that God works all things together for good? How do we know that?” He's gonna go in and explain, and he's going to use these five words that form kind of an unbreakable link that we're gonna see here in this section.

Those five words are “foreknowledge”, “predestination”, “calling”, “justification”, and “glorification”. He's going to show that those are five links in an unbreakable chain. And what we want to note is that it's in the aorist tense in Greek, which just means a point in time completed action. So, when we look at all these words, just remember that God is saying these are all things that are done, they're completed, they're finished. Even glorification, which is in the future? Yes! It's a completed thing. God can speak of your glorification as a done deal because He is making a promise, He's going to accomplish it in your life, and so that's what we're looking at as we dive in.

And just remember, the whole purpose for Paul going into this list is to show that God has always, always, *always* determined to guarantee your full salvation. See, there's no part of salvation that's dependent upon you, your faithfulness, your ongoing faith, your ongoing faithfulness, or good works in your life, this is a done deal the moment you put your faith in Christ. And you say, “Well that's not fair, that sounds like a free gift.” It is a free gift! And it's not the kind of free gift that companies give you: buy one get one free. How many of you have caught on to that nonsense? When you buy one, you're actually paying for the second one or at least part of it, you're paying for the cost. They're not giving you anything for free!

In fact, as my friend Rob says, “Just go into one of those places and say, “I don't want to buy anything, but I would like the free thing that you're giving away.”” That isn't gonna work, is it? Buy one apple, get another one free. I'll just take the free one, I don't want to buy that first one. That's not gonna work, because it's not free.

But you know what? Salvation is free. Salvation is a gift of God. You don't have to do anything to earn it, you don't have to do anything to maintain your ability to hold on to it. If you put your faith in Jesus Christ who died for your sins and rose again, your penalty has been paid. There's no penalty left to be paid, and God accepts you on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ. And so remember, Paul is going through this list not to cast doubt on your salvation, but to convince you that God has always determined He's going to give you a full salvation, He's gonna do it to the bitter end, so to speak.

So, we look at this first link, “foreknowledge”. And notice it starts with the word “whom” in verse 29, “For whom He foreknew”, he's talking about the believers that he just came out of verse 28 talking about. We're gonna slow down a little bit on some of these words because this is one of those words in Christianity that gets, as they say, “impregnated” with a lot of extra meaning. And I would say some people impregnate this word with like triplets, and really try to drive home some extra meaning.

When we look at the word “foreknew” it's a Greek compound word from “*proginosko*” it's made up of two words. “pro” is just a preposition meaning *before*, ginosko is a word meaning *to know*. And so



when you put it together it means *to perceive, to recognize beforehand, or to know previously*. Now to say that God foreknows something should not be a shock to any one of us, because God's all-knowing, the Bible teaches. So of course, He's going to know beforehand things that happen. He knew who was going to be saved, that's what this is saying. It simply states that God, who's all knowing, knew believers before they were saved. He knew beforehand the ones that would be saved.

Now this has nothing to do with selecting people to be saved. That's what a Calvinistic theology would teach, is that He elects some or chooses some, and that He chooses others - or doesn't choose them, they would actually say - to go to hell. What we're gonna see here is that foreknowledge doesn't mean He *caused* or *determined* what happened, but simply that He knew what was going to happen, that's what foreknowledge means. Foreknowledge doesn't mean that He made it happen.

There are things that I have foreknowledge of. I'm not saying I'm a prophet or anything, but I will tell you this: when I see my five-year-old load up a paper plate full of chips - like the whole bag - and it's piled high, and I then see him take that plate and start to the living room, you know what I know is going to happen before it happens? He's gonna spill that plate, isn't he? And I'm not even God and I've got a little foreknowledge on that. But you know what else it doesn't mean? Because I knew it, I'm not waiting at the couch, I'm not tripping him on his way. I didn't cause him to spill his chips, five-year-old-ness causes him to spill his chips, five-year-old-ness causes him to load his entire plate up to a point where nobody could carry that plate to the living room without spilling it.

And so when we talk about foreknowledge, try not to allow someone to take you to that next step, which, you don't *have* to take that next step. *Foreknowledge* simply means that God knew something beforehand, can we just agree to the definition of the word? And then when we go to the second word, “predestined”, we'll talk about “foreordination”, what did God determine to do beforehand? We'll get there, but I also want you to notice the word “also” in verse 29. It says, “*whom He foreknew, He also predestined.*” So right there he's telling you that foreknowledge is not the same as predestination, it's a separate step, it's a separate link that he's talking about there.

And so as we look at this idea of foreknowledge what we're gonna see is this: all the way back then - remember, we're going through this end goal, that God has got this end goal of glorification - God predetermined (He already decided) what His end goal would be for those whom He knew. Now is that simple to understand?

We're gonna look at God's new race of humanity here in a second, because when we're talking about being conformed to the image of Christ, He's creating a new race of humanity, those who are going to be resurrected from the dead into glorified bodies. And guess who the first born of that race was? Jesus Christ. None other than Jesus Christ. And God is creating a race of humanity, it's gonna be just like Jesus in that sense: a glorified body, raised from the dead, eternal life, etc., etc., that's gonna be happening. But God just determined that when somebody was gonna put their faith in this coming Deliverer, He was gonna save them to the uttermost. That's what we're looking at today.

And so we move into that second word “predestined”, which just gives a lot of people the shakes when they hear it. Because what they think this word means is that God selected some to go to heaven and He selected others to go to hell. That's the truth of what that doctrine teaches. A lot of them try to soften it to say, “Well no, He selected some, but then just because He didn't select others, He didn't really destine them to hell.” How could you say that? It'd be like me going to an orphanage and saying, “Whoever wants to come home with me to America, I'm gonna take you. Whosoever will, whosoever believes me can come with me.”

And then I go into a back room with the lady that runs the place and I say, “Okay, I'm gonna take him, I'm gonna take her, I want to take him, and I'm gonna take her.” That's not a whosoever will,

that's a lie! If I were to come in and say, "Whosoever one of you orphans want to come home with me, you can come.", but then I went into a back room and picked four of them, I just lied to that whole group.

You've got to put the Scriptures together. When the Bible says, "whosoever will believe has eternal life", that means *anybody*, that means it's available to all. And so when we get to the word "predestination" don't just cower and go, "Oh man, that election thing is right." It's not right! In fact, let's look at it a little bit more closely.

This word "predestined", again, a compound word in the Greek "*proorizo*", the word "*pro*" means *before*, the word "*horizo*" means *to determine*. And so the word itself means *to determine or to decree beforehand*, literally *to mark out beforehand the limits or boundaries*. And when it's used of a person, it usually speaks of their future destiny, determining what their future destiny would be.

And so from the context, let's look at verse 29, what did God determine or decree beforehand? What did He determine was gonna happen? Well, according to verse 29, He predestined those whom He foreknew to be conformed to the image of His son. And here's an interesting thing about this word, this is not speaking of our justification, this is speaking of our glorification. We're going to see this elaborated on in verse 30. When you talk about being conformed to the image of His Son, that is a glorification term. This is not God picking some people to go to heaven and picking other people to go to hell or predetermining that only these people will go to heaven and predetermining that these people will go to hell. That has nothing to do with this verse! And yet the second you see "predestined", we hang our heads, we go, "Oh man, I guess it's true." This is not even what this is teaching!

In fact, I would encourage you on your own to use a Strong's Concordance, look up this word "*proorizo*", go look where it's used elsewhere in the Bible, and you're gonna find this word is *never* used of justification, never used of how someone avoids hell and goes to heaven, it's never used that way. It's always used of glorification. And that's why when we go to Ephesians 1:5 and it says that we've been predestined to adoption as sons - that too is a glorification term as we've looked at in Romans 8 - it's talking about an inheritance.

So, this idea that God is offering salvation to all but then only selecting a few, it's nonsense, it's not biblical, and yet it's gained a lot of steam in our day. And I would encourage you - and I typically don't name names from the pulpit, because it's not an effort to think that we're better than somebody or not - to be aware of some people who are very popular that teach these things, namely John MacArthur, John Piper, R.C. Sproul and others, but those are probably the three biggest names that teach this doctrine.

And you can find their books, and you can find their sermons online, and you can listen to a lot of things. And in many points, they're biblical in what they teach, but this is the underlying thought that they have, that the word "all" doesn't mean *all*. That when it says that God sent His son to die for the sins of the world, that the word "world" doesn't mean *world*, it only means a select few. They actually believe that God could go into an orphanage and say, "Whosoever will..." and then go into a back room and just select who He wants to bring with Him. See, that's not biblical, friends. In fact, I believe that's an assault on the character of God.

Let's go on with our study here. So, God knowing believers from eternity past, what did He predetermine? He predetermined that each one of them would be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This word "conformed" is another compound word in the Greek (Paul's really going after it here), "*summorphos*", it means *to be shaped together with or morphed together with Christ into His image*. In fact, the first preposition there, it's actually "sun", it means *with*, it describes a unity. We're going to be conformed *with* Christ *to* His image, there's a unification.

When we talked about identification back in Romans 5, remember we said some people that teach Romans 1-8, they'll skip 5:12-21, because they're like, “Where does this identification thing fit?” It fits, it's the basis for a lot of what God is promising, and the mechanics behind how God is accomplishing things. So, you and I as believers, God has predetermined to conform you to Christ's image, that is going to happen. God's gonna get the deal done, God is going to accomplish those things.

So, He started the process now, but He's also predetermined that He's gonna finish the process. There are no half-completed projects in God's garage, right? Like many of us. We get the project started, we don't complete it, we have the wrong tool, we never get it. God's not that way, He's going to complete what He starts.

Now why did God decide to do this? For what purpose? Go back to the passage because you're gonna see this word “that”. *“He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that”* - that gives us our purpose clause. What was He trying to do? - *“that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* And so to put that together, what we're saying is that God from eternity past foreknew believers, He predetermined that each believer would be conformed to the image of His Son. And why did He do that? What was the purpose? He wanted to start a new race of humanity beginning with His Son as the head, that's what He's doing here. Jesus Christ would be the first born in terms of position, time, prestige, and preeminence.

In this new race of resurrected and glorified believers, we read a little bit about it in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 and he writes this, *“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”* - firstfruits meaning there's more to come. By definition, that's what “firstfruits” means - *“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.”*

And so you see the believer is part of a new race. This is why God has predetermined to conform us to the image of His Son as He is establishing a new race of humanity, those who are resurrected from the dead and those who have glorified bodies. So, these believers whom God foreknew would be a part of this new family. These are, again, the many brethren referred to here in this passage.

And so not only do we see that we were foreknown and that we are predestined to glorification or being conformed to the image of Christ, but we also see that God *called* us. And the Greek word “called” is *“kaleo”*, it means *to call someone in order that he may come or go somewhere*. Nothing really significant, we can read that word and kind of know what it means in English. But what we see from the scriptures is that God has called believers in many ways. Let's just look at a few, this is not an exhaustive list and for sake of time, we're gonna move pretty quickly through here.

Did you know that God has called believers into fellowship with Him? He didn't just save you and put you in a back room and say, “Yeah, I'll come get you when it's time to go.” He saved you and He brought you into fellowship with Him. It's like if you extend hospitality and you have somebody stay in your house, and then you say, “There's that back room back there, and when you're hungry, we'll bring you some food there. And when you want coffee, we'll bring you some coffee. And when you need to go to the bathroom, we'll come and show you where the bathroom is. But you just go ahead and stay over there.”

I mean, that's hospitality, at least you're putting a roof over their head and feeding them and taking care of their needs. There's something different between that and having somebody into your house and saying, “Hey, come out here, we're gonna have some coffee. Come sit with us, hang out with us, come enjoy dinner at the table with us.” There's just a relational aspect of intimacy there. And so when we talk about God calling believers into fellowship with Him, that's what we're talking about.

We see that God has called believers by the gospel. Obviously, we weren't always believers, nobody's born a Christian, nobody's always believed in God. Those statements right there should expose that you've never put your faith in Jesus Christ alone if you think that you're a Christian. You're not a Christian because you were born in a Christian family, just like you're not a doctor if you go stand in the hospital for eight hours. Or you're not a doctor because you were born in a hospital, right? So, the point is this: you're not a Christian just because you were born in a Christian family. At some point, somebody shared the gospel with you, and you put your faith in Christ.

God's also called us out of darkness and into marvelous light, according to 1 Peter. He's called us to liberty according to Galatians 5. God called believers to have peace, His peace ruling in our hearts, not just showing up from time to time, but actually ruling in our hearts. That would be helpful during trials. He's called us not to uncleanness, but to holiness. And He's also called us to suffer. And again, not an exhaustive list, but this is why in verse 28 when Paul refers to believers that he uses that synonym "the called ones". Remember that back in verse 28, he said, "*Those who are the called according to His purpose.*"

And the best way I can describe that is (of course, we don't do this anymore because our society has changed so much) remember those of you that grew up in a time in America where you could actually leave your house as a young person, go down the street, play with your friends, and then mom or dad, whoever had either the loudest whistle or the loudest voice would come out and say, "Dinnertime! Suppertime! Hey, time to come home!" Something like that, they would make a call to the neighborhood.

Now, the way that worked - at least when I grew up, I still lived in those times - was when I heard my dad's voice, I went home. I responded to his call. But I also heard my friend's dads and moms calling them, and I didn't go to their house. I didn't respond to them, nor did the entire neighborhood ever respond to my dad's voice and come to our place and eat supper, my brother and I did. And so in that sense, we were the called.

Now, the call was made to everybody, but because we responded and we went home to eat, we could have been "the called". So, I believe that's exactly what's happening here, because does God only call believers? Well, no. Very clearly from the Scriptures, God makes the call to salvation to everyone. But does everyone respond to that call? No. We clearly see that too.

In fact, do you know what the one sin that can send you to hell is? It's not homosexuality. It's not voting Democrat in the next election. That just skews the issue because sin is sin in God's eyes. He's a holy God who cannot look upon sin, there's a penalty for all sin, a penalty has to be paid. The one sin that can send you to hell is unbelief. You reject Jesus Christ, you never put your faith in Jesus Christ, that can send you to hell.

Because guess what? Then you are responsible for paying the penalty for your sins. And God doesn't want you to have to do that. He's gone through great lengths so that you would never have to pay that penalty, but if you reject Jesus as the only way to get to heaven, you'll pay that penalty on your own. And it's in a place that's called eternal death, it's referred to as the "lake of fire" in the Bible. But you don't have to go there, that's the good news of the gospel. But that is the only thing that can send somebody to hell.

And so we see that God calls to the unbeliever through the gospel, and that He makes this opportunity available to all. Then we go on to this fourth link, this idea of justified. Verse 30, "*Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified;*" We looked a lot at this word when we were studying the first four and a half chapters of Romans, this is really what that whole section is about is justification.

And so how does God declare a person righteous? How does the God of the universe slam his gavel down and say, “You have the righteousness equal to Mine to enter into heaven and your sins are paid for.”? How does that process take place? Well, we just talked about it a little bit and the first four and a half chapters went into detail but let me just read a couple of verses and I think it becomes clear.

Romans 3:21-22: after describing that the entire world is guilty before God he says, *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”* You see, righteousness isn't gained by keeping the law, improving your serve, so to speak, getting better, doing better, stop doing bad things, come to church, pray more, do all of these good works, that is not how you get to heaven. There's a righteousness apart from doing.

In fact, as Romans 4:5 goes on to say, *“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies”* - there's our word - *“the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”* God is in the business of justifying and declaring righteous ungodly people. The people that think they have it all together, that don't need God's declaration of righteousness, they're out there trying to do it on their own, and many of them think they're succeeding. That's what's sad about this, because Romans 4:5 says, “If you want to go to heaven, don't try to get there on your own, stop working and start trusting. Trust in the work that somebody else accomplished on your behalf.”

It's not that you're being lazy, it's that you realize *you can't do enough* to gain God's favor. You cannot do enough to merit heaven. In fact, nobody would merit heaven based on their own ability to do good things and to stop doing bad things. That's why we give up and we trust in the One who died for us and rose again, because He did everything for you that needed to be done. Jesus Christ worked. Jesus Christ accomplished a great work. Not only did He die for your sins, but He did it in such a way that God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf, and He raised Him from the dead to prove it to you and me.

And so we talk about justification before God, we see in Romans 5:1, *“Therefore, having been justified by faith.”* If you want to be declared righteous in God's sight, you have to put your faith in His Son and what He did for you, that's it. It's not about going to church more, it's not about getting religion, you can drink all the grape juice in the world that you want to drink, you could eat the rest of the crackers and the plates that are left over up here, that's not gonna get you one ounce closer to heaven. We are trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

And then we finally see this fifth link, glorification. In verse 30, *“and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”* And this is the purpose of his great chain link of events that Paul is going through: he wants to tell you that the goodness that God works out in your life is going to complete itself at this stage. God is going to accomplish glorification in your life. This word is one of those words that you define by using the word, so it doesn't really help you too much. But you go on to say, “What does this word mean?” It means to glorify. But the word came to mean *to recognize, to honor, to praise, to invest with dignity* - I like that phrase about this - *by putting someone into an honorable position.*

Now those of you that know yourselves well, do you deserve to be put into an honorable position when you get to heaven? Do you deserve that? There might be some people struggling and saying, “Well, yeah. I kind of do. I really cleaned my act up.” No, biblically you don't. I don't. If we're being honest with ourselves, none of us deserve this place. In fact, we'd always be able to think of somebody else that's probably more deserving than us.

But do you know that God - in this situation - doesn't care what you think about yourself? He only cares what He's predetermined He's going to do. He is going to put you in an honorable position,

because He has your goodness in mind. That's the kind of God that we serve, that's the kind of salvation that He's provided. You don't merit it at the beginning, you're not going to merit it at the end.

And is it any wonder that we're going to be in heaven for eternity, singing the praises of our great Savior, and never get bored of that? Because I think we're gonna realize, even more than we do right now, how unworthy and undeserving we are, how we should not be there. And we're gonna have this temptation every day for eternity to pinch ourselves and say, "Am I really here? Doesn't this all-knowing God know what I think? Doesn't this all-knowing God know where I failed? Doesn't this all-knowing God know how hypocritical I've been in my life? How in the world am I here?" And then there's gonna be Jesus walking across the street and I'm gonna say, "Oh yeah, it's because of that Man right there and what He did for me." And see, that's gonna be an incredible day. And you don't deserve this honorable position, but you know what? God has determined to put you there, so live with that for eternity.

So, to wrap up this chain link of completed actions, according to His good pleasure, we see that each believer will be glorified. In fact, although it's yet future, God speaks of it as something that's already done. God completes what He starts, we see that in Philippians 1:6.

And so going back to what led Paul to write these grand truths, you can have hope, you can have confident expectation as a believer because you know that God has already accomplished your entire salvation. See, that's one aspect that can help you in the trials and sufferings of this present life, knowing these things gives us a heavenly perspective on these trials and sufferings.

So, I pray today that that would just be a special encouragement to you. And I think it's one of those truths that we've just got to wrap our minds around at some level, and we've got to stop viewing life and eternity through our own perspective, according to our own thinking. Typically, when you come out with your own thinking and ideas when it comes to the Bible, you're wrong. So just assume that that's probably the case and that God maybe has something much greater for you to think about and a much greater way to view what's happening in and around you, and this is just one of those sections where we get to rejoice in that.

# CHAPTER 49

## Since God Is for Us... Part 1

### Romans 8:31-33

Join with me in Romans chapter 8, we'll continue our verse-by-verse study there. I want to ask you a question, and it's maybe a little too deep of a question to start the section, but I'm gonna ask it anyway to kind of set the tone. And the question is: have you ever considered that God is for you? Have you ever just embraced this truth? That's what we're gonna look at today, that the God of the universe is *for you*. Have you ever thought about that?

I remember a friend of mine, we were praying one time and he ended the prayer by saying, "And God, thank You that You're for us." And it just hit me in a very emotional way, I can get emotional sometimes, but it just hit me for the first time, "My God is for me." I just wondered if you'd ever considered that before.

In fact, when you think about just that phraseology in general, what would that look like in a human relationship? Let me try to put some flesh on it. This would be the person - as you're growing up - that would be running down the sideline as you're running for a touchdown in peewee football. This is the person that's for you. This would be the person who picks you up at school after a big test that you've been stressing out about all week, and says, "How'd the test go? Let's go out for ice cream." That would be the person that would be for you. This would be the person that would have your photo on their refrigerator, your birthday marked on their calendar. This is the person that would be for you, this is the person that is always there no matter what's going on, that always has the right words to say and always does the right actions on your behalf. This is the person even when life is not going well, you break your leg, and they're the one that sits in the ambulance with you on the way to the hospital. That would be what a person would look like if they said they were for you.

And so we're gonna look at the truth of the Word of God that tells us that our God is for us, and we're gonna get a chance to look at that truth as we look in these next few verses. We're gonna start in Romans 8:31, and what you're gonna see in verses 31-35 is Paul is gonna rattle off a series of seven questions. And he's going to ask some questions that are rhetorical, that the answer is assumed in the way that he asked the questions, and some questions he's gonna ask a question and he's gonna give you the answer to build your confidence in everything that God has done up to this point in time.

And all of these questions seem to give implications to the statement, "God is for you". And if God is for you, then *this* is true. And if God is for you, then *that* is true. And if God is for you, then *this* is true. So, we're gonna look at four implications over the next two sections of the truths that are true of you *because* God is for you. And they're designed to give the believer security, they're designed to give the believer utmost confidence that they're saved. Paul goes through great lengths to do this.

And so the very first thing that he's going to say in verse 31 is: "*What then shall we say to these things?*" In essence, he leaves us absolutely speechless. Everything that we've looked at up to this point in time in Romans, as we look back on these things, they leave us absolutely speechless. What can we say to these things? I've got nothing to say. And that's why he begins to ask questions, to show the implications of this truth. And so verse 31, "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*" And again, this question just implies we're speechless. Reflecting on everything that we've

studied in the first 8 chapters, there is nothing to say that God has not already addressed or taken care of, He's left nothing out.

And I think even more specifically to the context, we just came out of Romans 8:28-30 where we look at those five unbreakable chain links designed to give you confidence that God has got your utmost good in mind, that He's got your security in mind, and that He's taken great measures to ensure, convince you, and persuade you that He's got it covered. He's got your eternal destiny covered because He's determined to do a couple of things, and He performed it on your behalf. And so what shall we say to these things? How about *amen*? How about *hallelujah*? That might be something we could say. But other than that, we're completely speechless.

And here's what we've got to understand and be confident in: I'm telling you, and I'm sitting here today with good conscience to say that the Word of God tells you and I that we can be a hundred percent sure that we're going to heaven when we die. And it has nothing to do with you, this is not an arrogant thing. I'm not boasting because I'm a pastor that I'm going to heaven because I'm a pastor, I'm not boasting because I go to Liberia and teach pastors, I'm not boasting because I sit in my study and study the Word of God. There's no boasting in that. Your boasting shouldn't be in the good things that you do.

But you know Who we *can* boast in? The same one that God the Father boasts in, His Son, Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life, He paid the penalty for your sins, He died on the cross, and then God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf, and He rose again. And you know what? If Jesus Christ isn't good enough, I don't have a chance. My boast is in Him, my hope is in Him, God says it's enough, and I believe what God's Word says, and that's why I know I'm going to heaven. If anything depended on me or you, we'd be in big trouble. But I'm 100% confident in Jesus Christ and what He accomplished.

And so I want to encourage you if you're not fully persuaded of that this morning, Romans chapter 8, especially at the end, is for you. May you be convinced, may you be encouraged, may it provide you freedom and peace to know that every mistake you make doesn't put you in danger of going to hell. Those sins have been paid for, and God has accepted the payment for those sins.

See, God is committed to finishing what He started. God's not asking for *your* commitment to finish, He's telling you He's committed to finishing what He started. Now does God want us to finish strong as believers, as His children? Of course He does! He wants us in fellowship with Him. He doesn't want us just walking around, walking according to the flesh, destroying our physical lives, destroying every relationship that we're involved in. He wants us in fellowship, but that is not the basis by which we gain security for heaven.

We see this phrase, this next question. It's actually phrased as a question, but it's a rhetorical question, it's assuming an answer, if you will. *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* And you know what the implied answer is? No one can be against us. And in fact, the implied answer is, "If someone is against you, who cares? Who cares if they're against you if God's for you?" Do you think I'm gonna worry about a little pipsqueak when I've got the varsity all-star on my side? I'm not gonna worry about some little pipsqueak that's against me, namely Satan, the flesh, the world. I don't worry about that because I've got the All-Star on my side. There's nothing to worry about. If God is for us, who can be against us?

In fact, it's given as a conditional statement, but it's one of those first-class conditions in the Greek, it's assuming the reality to be true. If God is for us, and He is. You can rest assured that God is for you. And you say, "Well wait a minute, you don't really know me. How can you make that statement? You don't know what I think about, you don't know what I struggle with, you don't know where I fail,



you don't know where I fail *continually*. It's not that I just fail, but I fail in this area *all the time*. So you don't even know that, you can't tell me God is for me.”

I can tell you God is for you. That's what the Word of God says. And He's for you based on His grace, He's for you based on His character. Notice who I'm not mentioning: it has nothing to do with your performance. God is for you; we've got to be convinced of that from the Word of God. And when it says that He's for us, it's really giving the sense of being over us as it relates to our protection, as it relates to our care, as it relates to favor and benefit.

Paul actually wrote the Word of God, Romans 8:28, and he actually believes what's in that verse, and he communicated it for a reason, saying that God's working all things together for our good. Ultimately that good is gonna result in your glorification. And see, God is for you in that way. He's not gonna let any of those things slip through the cracks, He's not gonna say, “Well, I forgot about him. Sorry, I made a mistake. I got everybody else, but I messed up on this guy.” No, He's for you, He's attentive, He's caring in that way.

In fact, let me just read this quote adapted from a commentator, William Newell. And this is one of those things I read as an encouragement to you, because what he says just hits it on the button. He says, “*Our weak hearts, prone to legality and unbelief,*” And let's just unpackage that really quickly. Legality thinks that in some way, you have to do something to maintain God's favor in your life. “Yeah, God is for me if I walk in fellowship with Him, but if I don't, then He's against me, He's gonna come get me.”

How many of us think that? Like we wake up one morning and maybe we didn't get into our Bible that morning, or maybe we haven't gotten into our Bible for a few days, and all of a sudden, the thoughts creep up and say, “Man, I better get my Bible or God's getting ready to nail me.” Don't we think that? Am I the only one? Isn't that something that creeps into our thinking sometimes? That if we don't perform a certain way, then God is going to take His “for us cup” and move it to the other side of the table and just start blasting us, because He's no longer for us because we're not performing. See, that's not what the Word of God teaches us, so that's legality.

Unbelief really fits into the category that you are gonna trust how *you* feel about the situation over and above how God has told you *He* feels about the situation. Regardless of if you feel worthy or not, let me just let you in on a hint: you're never worthy, not even on your best day. Don't kid yourself to think that there's some sort of worthiness that you have to obtain to gain God's favor, you don't have it, you'll never possess it. There, that matter is settled. Now you can just take God at His Word that He's gonna give you that on the basis of His grace. You don't deserve it, that's the whole definition of grace.

So, William Newell goes on to say, “*Our weak hearts, prone to legality and unbelief, with great difficulty receive these mighty words: God is for us. Place the emphasis here where God places it - on this great word “for”. God is **for** His children. They have failed, but He is **for** them. They are ignorant, but He is **for** them. They have not yet brought forth much fruit, but He is **for** them. If our hearts once surrendered to this stupendous fact that there are those whom God will eternally be **for**, that there is an unchanging attitude of God, in which He eternally commits Himself to His children - without conditions, without requirements; whose lives do not at all affect the fact that God is for them - then we shall be ready to magnify the God of **all grace!**”*

And that is what we're looking at today. As we think about what this means, it means that on the basis of God's work, saving you - the believer - to the uttermost, completely, fully through glorification, you can never be brought into a place where you will fall out of the care and protection of God. Never! That's what this means. And you know what? Not even you yourself could accomplish it either, and I want you to think about that.

The God of the universe is for you, the maker of the mountains that you see on postcards, that One, He's for you. The One who laid the floor at the bottom of the oceans, filled them with water, filled

them with living creatures that scientists are still discovering because we can't even get as deep as the ocean floor in some areas, because it'll crush us. You know, the same One that scattered hundreds of billions of stars over hundreds of billions of galaxies is for you. That same One who did all of that is *for* you. That is a truth we need to soak in and rest in.

But as I said earlier, even though the believer has enemies who are against us, they're pipsqueaks in the face of our God. In essence they don't even show up on the radar screen. You've seen those movies, you know the storyline, either it's a battle, or an athletic contest, or it's a business deal, and one team or one army is just getting slaughtered. They're just getting beat at their own game, and somebody comes into the room and says, "Don't worry about it guys, we've got a secret weapon." You know that storyline, right? See, we don't have a secret weapon, He's actually a not-so-secret weapon, we just need to start depending on Him. He can handle anything that's coming against us, and if God is for us - and He is - who could be against us? That's the question that Paul wants to get across in our thinking.

And so the next four verses we're going to look at four implications of this fact that God is for us. Let's jump into verse 32: "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" And so the first implication here is that God didn't spare Jesus Christ, He gave Him up for us all. He's gonna use this argument that God is definitely *for* us. Why, what's the argument from? Well, it's evidenced by what God gave. It's clear by everything that God gave that He's *for* us.

And then he goes on to say that "He didn't spare His own Son". The word "spare" literally means *to spare* - that doesn't help us too much - *or to treat with tenderness*. He didn't treat Him with tenderness, He didn't spare Him from being exposed to something, and obviously we know what that is.

But I find it interesting because in the Old Testament, God *did* spare somebody's son, didn't He? Remember the story of Abraham? In fact, Isaac was destined to die. Abraham had a flint knife, getting ready to come down right into his son and take out the promised seed, the promised child, the miraculous birth of Isaac. He was coming down and what did God do? Well, He spared Isaac, and He provided a substitute ram. And that ram died in Isaac's place.

And so as we see what God does with Jesus, He doesn't spare His own Son. He spared Abraham's son, but He didn't spare His own Son. Why? Because that sacrificial ram that died in the place of Isaac pictured what God's Son would do for each one of us, dying in our place. And so God gave Jesus what He did not deserve, which was the penalty for your sin and the penalty for my sin, and He paid for what He did not deserve to die for so that God could give you something that you don't deserve. Jesus took your penalty. God didn't spare His own Son, He gave Him up to die in your place, to die *your* death, to pay the penalty for *your* sins, and God didn't hold back.

And that's why when you get into something like Isaiah 53 and it says, "it pleased the Father to crush Him" that sounds sadomasochistic! What kind of God do we serve? I'm gonna tell you what kind of God we serve: a loving God who devised a way so that you don't have to pay the penalty for your sins. And it pleased Him to crush His Son in your place so that you wouldn't have to be crushed.

See, God's salvation plan had to include His only begotten Son. This is why He didn't spare Him. He paid the penalty for the sins that each one of us deserved, and we've got to understand that this exhibits the love of God. This exhibits the fact that God is *for* you because He didn't hold back in what you needed. You needed something so desperate that He went to desperate measures to accomplish what you needed that could not be accomplished in any other way. Jesus Christ bore your sins on the cross and then He raised Him from the dead, signifying that His substitutionary sacrifice was acceptable in His sight for you.

We also see that God delivered Jesus. It says, "*He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.*" And the word literally means that He gave Him over. *He turned Him in* would be a way that we would verbalize it. God turned Jesus in, He caused His capture, if you will. Now we know from the Gospels that there was a divine element there, and there was a human element, and that human element involved Romans, Jews, and also Judas Iscariot was part of that plan. But God turned Jesus in to be slaughtered for you and for me, to be crucified in our place.

And here's the point: in Jesus, God poured out all the wrath due to us because of our sin, Jesus bore that wrath in our place. In fact, what does the text say? Who was He delivered for? What's the word in your Bible? It's just some people, right? But delivered Him up for some people. He delivered Him up for *good* people. He delivered Him up for *religious* people. He delivered Him up for *all*. And there's no sleight of hand there even in the Greek. "All" means *all*. That means He didn't just die for the elect as some would teach, He died for *all*. He was delivered up for *all*. He paid the penalty for *all*. That's what the Word of God teaches.

And so based on this, now that we see God's given His Son, He's not gonna hold back in giving you things that you need. Doesn't that make sense? It just makes sense in every area of life - we'll kind of go through some examples here - based on knowing the sheer magnitude of what God did. And that's why Paul brings this up, he wants you and I to understand the magnitude of what God gave. We live in a Christian society, we hear about Jesus dying all the time, we hear about Jesus dying for sin, but do you know that Jesus died for *your* sin personally? Is that meaningful to you?

Because when you understand the sheer magnitude of that, you get this question and it's like, "Duh! Yeah, how shall He *not* freely give us all things? He sent His Son to pay for my sins, and then if I still sin, then I'm gonna go to hell or I'm gonna lose my salvation? What are you talking about? He sent His Son to pay the penalty for *all* the sins." All of your sins were paid for, so why would He not complete the salvation process? That's what Paul's talking about here. Why would He not complete it through glorification? He's already given everything! That's the point of this question. If He went through all that pain and trouble of not sparing His own Son for us to provide a full salvation, how would He ever become inattentive to our security or our destiny? And the answer is He *would not*. He's going to be very attentive to those situations.

It reminds me of a comical story: There was a poor European family who had saved for years to buy tickets and sail to America. Once at sea, the father began to carefully ration the cheese and bread that they had brought for the journey. You know, we fly on airplanes now, we get all you can drink beverages, peanuts, pretzels, and all sorts of things like that. They're rationing cheese and bread for a long journey.

And so after three days his youngest son complained to his father, "I hate cheese sandwiches. If I don't eat anything else before we get to America, I'm going to die." Doesn't that sound like a young kid? Over-dramatic, over-selling the trial that he's going through with cheese sandwiches. So finally, the father says, "You know what? I'm gonna just give my son my last nickel." You'd be surprised what a nickel could buy in that day. He could go down to the galley and get an ice cream cone. He said, "I'm gonna give him my last nickel, let him go get an ice cream cone and try to help him enjoy this journey a little bit."

Well, the boy doesn't return for a long time and the father begins to get worried. Finally, he sees the son with a wide smile skipping back over to him and he says, "Where were you?" The son says, "Well, I was in the galley eating three ice cream cones and a steak dinner." And the father said, "All that for a nickel?" And the boy said, "Oh no, the food is free, it comes with the ticket." You know, they had paid this great ticket amount and didn't even realize that the food came with it. They didn't even realize

that it was all you can eat, and here they are in their quarters, and you can just picture the father breaking off small pieces of bread and cheese for everybody, trying to make it last, when there's a T-bone down in the galley waiting for him to just dive into, ice cream cones galore to dive into.

Like if a father, out of his own money, built a basketball court at his house for his son - built it, air-conditioned, perfect floors, MBA rims, whatever, throw all your superlatives in there - and then refused to buy his son a basketball. He just built the basketball court and now he's not gonna spend one more dollar on a ten-dollar basketball. That would be the ridiculousness of what we're talking about here.

It'd be like if somebody paid the money to build a swimming pool, and then wouldn't fill it with water because of how much the water would cost. I mean, that's the ridiculousness of it. If God didn't "*spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?*" You see, the point that Paul is making? This should be so logically convincing that we say, "Yeah, that would be ridiculous! See, my God *is for me*, as evidenced by this."

We also want to notice this, and it's just a subtle observation, but you notice that he says, "how shall He not *with Him* freely give us all things?" See, it's our identity in Christ, it's our position in Christ that guarantees that God will remain *for you* throughout your life. It secures our present blessings, it secures our future hope, our future confident expectation.

Here's why you can be confident that if you've put your faith in Jesus Christ, you're going to heaven: your eternal destiny is directly tied to His. So if you think that God could ever find fault with Jesus Christ, then I can understand why you might worry about your eternal destiny, because you're tied to Him.

But if you think what we think, and you think what the Bible teaches, that there's no fault with Jesus, that He's perfect, that He's coming again, that one day He will reign as a king, from David's throne on earth, and that He will be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords throughout eternity that we'll be singing about, if you believe that, relax! Your destiny has been settled. You're tied to Him; you're connected with Him.

That's why our identification is so important to understand. The second you take your focus off of that, the second you start worrying about your life as it relates to you getting to heaven, and you take your focus off of the finished work of Christ, you will have no assurance, you will have no security or worse yet, you'll be over confident in yourself, trusting in yourself, and that's probably even more disastrous. The Bible is simple: just put your hope in Christ. Rest in your destiny as you are united and identified with Him.

Let's look at a second implication in verse 33: "*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*" And so the question is: who can even bring a charge against you? This is another implication that we want to look at, this fact that no one can bring a charge against us. And I want you to think about that. Wouldn't it be nice to know that in God's courtroom, nobody could produce a piece of evidence that would change God's mind about you? Nobody's got a smoking gun.

Anytime we get into the realm of politics, are you so cynical (like me) that you're just waiting for that skeleton to come out of the closet? Aren't we trained to think, "This guy is too good to be true. Where's that skeleton hiding? Who's gonna find that smoking gun?" And all I'm saying is the Bible says no one's gonna be able to show up and produce something that will make God say, "I didn't know about that one. Yeah, you go to the back of the line. You just get out of here. It can't happen." That's Paul's point here.

"*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?*" This word "charge" means *to call to account, to accuse or to arraign*. And when we talk about God's elect, we're talking about a believer in Jesus Christ. We're

talking about somebody who is chosen *in* Christ, not somebody who's chosen out of Adam, you'll never find that concept in the scriptures. And that's really what reformed and Calvinistic theology teaches, is that God reached in and chose people out of Adam to put them in Christ, not a biblical concept. He chose us in Christ, it means He chose to put us in Christ when we believed. And so we're the elect because we're in Christ, it's just a synonym for a believer.

And so who shall bring a charge against God's elect, or who shall bring a charge against the believer? And the implication to this question? No one. No one can accuse, no one can bring a charge against us. This would be the equivalent in our day of the Supreme Court making a final ruling on the case. There's no higher court to appeal to, there's nowhere else to go. Once the Supreme Court decides on something, it's done, it's been settled.

Now as we've said before, obviously people can and do bring charges against us. People often accuse us of a lot of things, some fair, some unfair. We get human accusations, and in fact, you might have had someone you might not even know about that said, "That person says they're a Christian. What a hypocrite! Have you ever seen the way they" .... fill in the blank. You might be aware of someone saying that about you at some point, or you might not even be aware that somebody said that around you or behind your back.

Satan himself is described in Revelation 12 as the great accuser of the brethren, accusing us day and night. We saw an example of that in the book of Job, so we know Satan's accusing you. It's not to say that somebody's not accusing you, here's the good news: the Judge isn't gonna take it on His docket. The Judge isn't going to hear the case. The Judge will refuse to acknowledge these accusations against you, that's what we're talking about here. Nobody can bring an accusation against you. Why is that the case? That verdict has already been rendered.

See, that's the beautiful nature of justification, that's what we've been studying in Romans 1-5. God has already justified you, that's what the text says. God has already rendered his verdict, and you know what His verdict on you is? If you'll put your faith in Jesus and what He's done for you, you're righteous. Done deal, gavel's been hit, no smoking gun, no additional evidence can be presented, you're righteous. That's God's determination of the case. In fact, this case is against you, it's been forever closed, the Judge has already rendered His verdict, He slammed His gavel, He's removed His judge's cloak, He's left His seat from behind the bench.

Do you know why nobody can present evidence against you? Do you know why there's no smoking gun out there, ready to condemn you to hell? Because when Jesus died 2,000 years ago, how many of your sins were still in the future? All of them, right? There's nothing that God didn't know about when He made these promises. And when Jesus paid for all of your sins, did He just pay for your sins up until 30, and then from 30 to 80 or however long that we have life, do we have to take care of those on our own? Or did He pay for all of them like the scriptures say?

You mean if you live till 99, even the sins that you commit at 99, He paid for all of them? That sounds pretty awesome, that sounds too good to be true. You know what? It is too good to be true! That's called grace. You don't deserve it, you aren't righteous by character, you do many unrighteous things, I do many unrighteous things, but because Jesus has paid the penalty for those sins, God can say, "Those penalties have been paid, no case can be brought against you. Why? Because *I'm* the one who declared you righteous."

Churches don't declare you righteous, pastors don't declare you righteous, really good people don't declare you righteous, your neighbor doesn't declare you righteous. The God of the universe declares you righteous the moment you put your faith in Christ. God's position, by the way, is no longer

behind the judge's bench, He's now next to you, He's now with you, and via the Holy Spirit, He is now in you. And see, God indeed is *for* you, believer. We need to be convinced and encouraged by this fact.

And just like we have a principle in our legal system, there's no such thing as double jeopardy, you cannot be tried for a crime that you've already been acquitted of. You have been acquitted, not because you were innocent, but because an innocent One paid the penalty that you deserved, that's why God can acquit you. And there's no double jeopardy, there's no piece of evidence or smoking gun waiting to condemn you because God Himself has declared you righteous if you put your faith in Christ.

# CHAPTER 50

## Since God Is for Us... Part 2

### Romans 8:34-39

Join with me in Romans chapter 8. In the last section what we started to look at were four implications of that phrase “God is *for* you” as a believer. The first one we saw was found in verse 32, and basically if He gave Jesus, if He gave everything in His Son, how shall He not with Jesus give you all things? In other words, how shall He not complete the salvation that He started? That was one implication we looked at.

The second implication was this: if God is for you, who can bring a charge against you? In other words, who can produce a smoking gun against you on Judgment Day that God is not already aware of? In fact, what's the answer to that question in verse 33? *“It's God who justifies.”* God's the one who declares you righteous, not you, not the evidence against you. The evidence against you would only condemn you. But God's aware of that evidence, and He took care of the solution for you that you could not take care of yourself.

So now we're gonna look at the third implication which is found in verse 34, and that is this concept that there's no condemnation. *“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”*

And so what we find from this verse is that another implication of God being for us is simply this: no one can condemn you. Now we read that before, it sounds familiar, right? It should. Romans 8:1, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* And so we see this question again, and why is that the case? When we talk about condemnation, what it means more specifically is that *no one can ever pronounce a sentence against you or condemn you as guilty.* That's what the word condemnation means.

So, who's able to condemn you? We learned last week that in the judge's chambers, no one can even present a case against you, let alone get it taken on his docket, or come up with a guilty verdict. And he's saying here that nobody can condemn you, and he's going to give us two reasons for that in this verse. I want to separate those two reasons into categories and say it's because of something Jesus has already done, and the second reason is because of what Jesus is presently doing. So, you've got a past-tense aspect to what Jesus has already accomplished as to why you won't be condemned, and there's also a present-tense aspect of what He's continuing to do on your behalf to ensure that you will *never* be condemned in the present.

And so let's look at those two things. Reason number one: what we see that Jesus already has done was accomplished in the gospel. And we're gonna see in this verse that the nature of what Jesus did, the fact that He died for us, that He died for your sins and then He rose again, that is a solid reason as to why you can never be condemned. We're gonna see that God was satisfied with the gospel, that God's justice was satisfied with the gospel. This is Paul's answer to the reason why you won't be condemned.

In fact, when you talk to believers about this topic and you say, “Are you a hundred percent sure you're going to heaven? Is there anything you can do to ever be condemned?” You know what typically believers go to? Their lifestyle, their ability to do good works, their ability not to deny Christ, their ability to continue and persevere. Paul doesn't even go there, guys. That's not solid ground, that's shaky ground. In fact, if you told me, “I know, I *guarantee* I will not deny Christ.” You know, that reminds

me of a scripture. In fact, I'll give you a hint as to what it is: cock-a-doodle-doo. Somebody else said he would never deny Christ and he did it the very next day! He didn't even last 24 hours!

How do you know what you're gonna do in 20 years faced with the given circumstance? Your condemnation, your lack of ability to be condemned has nothing to do with you and everything to do with Jesus Christ. And we ought to be saying, "Glory, hallelujah!" to that, because quite frankly, if anything that you did was part of the equation as to whether or not you'd be condemned, you'd be condemned. Case closed, equation over, you're done. But praise God, the gospel satisfies God's justice.

When we see that Jesus died for us, I want you to notice this substitutionary aspect, these words that we see. He took *our* condemnation. He paid *our* penalty. He did so in place of the guilty one. That's you, that's me, that's us. Jesus for you. Jesus condemned so that you won't be condemned. And we learned back in the beginning of Romans 8, back in verse 3 as well, what did God condemn in you? He condemned sin in the flesh. And so the very thing that leads you, that's the source of sin in your Christian life, God's already condemned that source as well. So, Jesus was condemned for your sins and God condemned the very source of sin in you. What's left to be condemned? Condemnation is not even in the same sentence as a believer in Jesus Christ, and that's what we're looking at here.

That condemnatory penalty has already been paid, and quite frankly, if the penalty has been paid, what is left? If He paid it all, what possibly could be left for you to pay for? If He paid for all your sins, what sin could remain that He didn't pay for that you would have to pay for in some way? And it's very clear when you understand that substitutionary death, there's nothing left for you to pay.

And that's why the message of the gospel is: Jesus died for your sins, He rose again, will you put your faith in Him and Him alone? The Bible says if you do that you have eternal life. That's why He can guarantee that that life would be eternal as well. But Christ didn't stay dead, we see that He also rose from the dead, He paid the penalty of death, and He conquered death, and God accepted His sacrifice on your behalf and on my behalf.

And so this is the answer to why you can't be condemned. Don't ever get to a situation where you say, "Well, I'm not condemned because I've really been faithful going to church. I won't be condemned because I'm a pastor, I've got theological training. I won't be condemned because I'm trying really hard, I'm reading my Bible, I'm doing these things, I'm helping this person, I'm helping that person, I go here, I give to this mission, I go to this country." Garbage! None of those are acceptable answers.

In fact, if you give those answers, if that's the first thing out of your mouth, I guarantee there is a day - either today or there's a day in the future - that you won't have assurance of whether or not you're saved because you are looking at the wrong thing. You have taken your eyes off of what God has got His eyes fixed upon on your behalf, and that's the death and resurrection of His Son. That is the answer to no condemnation for the believer.

This gives us confidence, again, that God will seek no other penalty for our sin. This is why God can be *for* you. He is *for you* because Jesus paid that penalty, Jesus was condemned in your place. I like some things that Charles Spurgeon says, and I don't like other things, but I like one of the things he said here:

*"If any confront you with other confidences, still keep to this almighty plea, "Christ has died." If one says, "I was christened and confirmed," answer him by saying, "Christ has died." Should another say, "I was baptized as an adult," let your confidence remain the same: "Christ has died." When another says, "I am a sound, orthodox Presbyterian," - or Bible Church, or Baptists, or Methodists, or whatever. I probably left out a million of them - "stick to this solid ground, "Christ has died." And if still another says, "I'm a red-hot Methodist," answer him in the same way:*



*"Christ has died." Whatever may be the confidences of others, and whatever may be your own, put them all away, and keep to this one declaration, "It is Christ that died."*

And so where's your confidence today? I hope that as you sit here today, you are more confident in Jesus Christ and what He accomplished for you than you ever have been in your life, because that's where true freedom is. And Jesus says it's the truth that sets you free. Wouldn't it be nice to live a Christian life where you're not motivated by fear of going to hell, but you're actually motivated by love for the One who died for you and rose again? That that becomes your driving motivation in life, not that if you perform or didn't perform a certain way that you might slip off into the banks of hell when you die. And so we've got that assurance here.

And not only do we have a past-tense assurance, but the second reason that Paul gives in verse 34 as to why we can't be condemned is something that Jesus is presently doing. In fact, we see in this verse that Jesus is presently in an honored position, He's at the right hand of the Father, and He's interceding for us. Let's read verse 34 again: *"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."*

Christ - and this verse really emphasizes this - He's presently at the right hand of God. That means He's in this position continually, presently, right now as we're sitting here. And there's no chance that He could ever fall out of favor. That's a highly honored, highly favored position, and that's where He's seated right now. Do you know that if Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father, nobody, *no one* can get into His ear to bring a charge against you?

Can you imagine trying to complain to a guy about his child, and his wife is sitting right next to him, and you've got to go through the wife? That's one thing you learn often, is you can mess with papa bear, but don't you ever mess with a mama bear about her kids. But can you imagine somebody complaining about somebody's children with the wife sitting right by? That's not gonna fly over too well. And you know, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. There's nobody that can even bring a charge, there's nobody that can condemn.

We find out later in 1 John that when you sin, you've got an advocate with the Father. And it's not like the public defender system where you're trying to get your lawyer on the phone, and you can't reach the guy because he's got 400 other cases and you're just a number on his docket. Your advocate is seated right next to the judge, and He's the one who's pleading on your behalf, if you will, as we look in this verse that He's interceding for you.

He makes intercession for us, He's doing this presently and continually without fail, that's the emphasis here in this verse. So, we learned earlier that the Spirit of God is interceding for us, we saw it in verse 26. And now we understand that the Son of God is also interceding for us from His favored position. And it's interesting to note that, because when you think about security, and when you think about God being *for* you, can you see how God has insulated you and has resourced you in such a way that you can know for sure that you're going to heaven, that you can know for sure that He's going to complete His salvation process? Here we've got God for us, we've got the Spirit of God indwelling us permanently, interceding for us, and you've got the Son of God seated at the right hand of the Father also interceding for you. See what great lengths that God has gone through to convince you, to persuade you that He's for you? These are incredible things!

In fact, if you were going through a difficult time, and let's say that you were at home, and let's say that the dining room was next to the kitchen. And you walked into the kitchen, and you heard an audible voice in the next room. And you looked over, and it was Jesus Christ in your dining room, and what was He doing? He was praying for you. How would that make you feel? Would that encourage

you? Would that comfort you to know audibly that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is right there praying for you?

Well, take that truth by faith. That's exactly what's happening! That's exactly what's happening when you're going through trials, when you're going through suffering, when you're trying to make sense of what this life is all about, and when you're dealing with those things, Jesus Christ is presently and continually interceding for you. He's praying for you by name. Isn't that comforting? I hope it is.

And so we move on to the fourth implication in verse 35, where he says this: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" Another implication of God being for us is that no one can separate us from His love. We're gonna see that Paul uses "the love of Christ" and "the love of God in Christ" synonymously in this passage as we get down to verse 39.

But you're gonna see that nothing can separate us. No one or nothing can separate us from God's love. This word "separate" means *to put apart, to sever*. It's a future tense indicative verb. You say, "Well that sounds like Greek to me.", and it is, but there's some significance to this. Because what it means is that it's guaranteed not to happen in the future.

See, it's not only that nothing can separate you from God's love *now*, but this verse is also emphasizing nothing can separate you from His love in the *future*. That means whatever you do, whatever you say, whatever you think, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, nothing in the future can separate you from God's love. Is God *for* you, or is He not? This is clearly communicating that He's for you. Another way you might say this: nothing can drive a wedge in between you and God. Nothing can separate you from His love.

And so as we put this all together, you've got a past tense, you've got a present tense, you've got a future tense. Not only were we declared righteous by God in the past when we put our faith in Christ, - He calls that *justification* when He declares us righteous - but we're safe right now because the Spirit of God is interceding for us, and Jesus is interceding for us, and now we're guaranteed never to be separated from God's love in the future. Do you see how God has covered every aspect of this salvation thing? You see how nothing is going to catch Him off-guard? Nothing that you do 20 years from now or 30 years from now is gonna catch Him off-guard. The question that remains is: have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? If that's an affirmative answer, if you have trusted in the work of Jesus Christ to die for your sins and rise again, you're saved. These things are true of you past-tense, presently, and also in the future. Nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

"Yeah, but what about...?" And Paul's going to go through this list, and why this list? Well, you know when you look at this list, these are the types of things that destroy human relationships. These are the types of things that can cause separation. These are the types of things that drive wedges in between people. And Paul's going to go through this list and say, "Not even these things. No exceptions, nothing can separate you from God's love."

And so what about tribulation? This word means *to crush, to press, to compress or squeeze*. It refers to any trial or trouble, and the implied answer is: no, not even tribulation can separate you from the love of God. No trial, no amount of suffering can separate you from God's love. Nor does it indicate that God has *stopped* loving you. Many times, that's a message we need to hear.

And look at the words. I mean, who likes to get crushed? We need to take you somewhere if you enjoy being crushed, they've got places for you. They're padded and they put you in a nice jumpsuit where you can't hurt yourself. That's the type of people that enjoy getting crushed. Nobody enjoys getting crushed! The second trials hit, depending on the severity of those, we must be convinced with the truth of the Word of God, that when we are getting crushed, when we're going through trials, that

God has not withdrawn His love from us. We need to be convinced from the truth here that we will face tribulation, but it won't be because God has stopped loving us.

What about distress? This word is a compound word in the Greek, it means *great distress*. And where Paul is making a distinguishing feature here between this word and the word he uses for tribulation, is tribulation kind of refers to these external pressures, this distress refers to the internal response. The internal distress that arises from within this anguish, this discomfort, anxiety, irritation, frustration, this internal turmoil. And when you have that, does that mean that God has withdrawn His love from you? Is that something that can separate you from God's love? No, not even that.

What about persecution? And again, this is self-explanatory. We don't face that much in our American culture, but you know that's something that our brothers and sisters in Christ face around the world. And can you imagine getting hounded and chased down for your faith, and wondering if this is happening, does God really love me? Has something come in between God's love for me and myself? And Paul's saying, "Not even that."

Do you think Paul was ever persecuted for his faith? Have you ever read the book of Acts? He clearly was. We're studying the book of Galatians in youth right now, and if you trace that, his first missionary journey in Acts 13 and 14, the dude gets stoned, and not like Jimmy Buffett. He gets stoned with real stones! He was left for dead. And if that would have happened to many of us, we would have been like, "Pack it up, man! I'm going home. I can make tents for a living; I don't need this." No, Paul gets up and says, "Hey, let's go to the next town. Let's keep on truckin. Let's keep on preaching the gospel. And so Paul understands the truths that he's communicating here.

What about famine? What about being in want of food, suffering hunger? Surely that means that God doesn't love you if you're suffering hunger, if you're starving, if you don't even know that you're gonna have three meals a day. Many pastors that we train in Liberia don't know if they're gonna have three meals a day. That's part of life to them, this hunger. And so when we do feed them at the workshop, it's like, "Hey, bring on the second helping, because I don't know when my next meal might be." And some of their meals are simply rice in a pot. And yet even famine, even hunger doesn't mean that God has removed His love from us.

What about nakedness? What about being destitute of clothing? What about lacking a coat when it's cold outside? What about being exposed to the elements because you have no lodging? No, even that doesn't mean that God has withdrawn His love from us. What about peril, which just means to be in danger? In fact, we're gonna look at a passage in 2 Corinthians 11 where Paul uses this word eight times in one verse, describing his life of being in peril. So no, even this doesn't mean that God has withdrawn His love.

What if the ultimate happens and you're killed for the name of Jesus Christ? Does that mean that God has withdrawn His love from you? No, even that doesn't mean that. And so many would conclude if any or all of these happen, it's a clear indicator that God doesn't love us, and it's a clear indicator that He's removed His hand from us, that He no longer cares about us, and that would be a wrong conclusion.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and let's read this passage as Paul describes his life. I think part of the struggle we face as believers is we attempt to interpret life via our own wisdom. We tend to try to interpret life, and circumstances, and trials from a very human, horizontal plane. And we know better than that, but the next trial that hits, we cycle back, and we do it again.

That's our approach to life, and this is how we begin to interpret life, that when things are going wrong, I must have done something wrong - which is a possibility, by the way. It could be consequences for a sinful choice or action that you've made. But many times, that's the only thing we think of. If things

are going wrong, God must be displeased with me, He must be removing His hand from me, and that's the natural way to think, and we misinterpret life.

But look at what Paul was going through in 2 Corinthians 11 as he describes this for the Corinthian believers. Verse 23, "*Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.*" Not exactly a sales pitch to join the missionary ranks there! Verse 24, "*From the Jews five times I received 40 stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I've been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*"

You know, if anyone had the right to view life circumstances and say, "Man, God's not with me. God's not for me, God's removed His hand, He's separated, He's withdrawn His love from me.", that's a pretty good laundry list to bring and to prove, to lay down that evidence and say, "Yeah God's not in this, He's out of this, He's removed His hand from me." And yet that was the Apostle Paul. That was the mindset that He had toward ministry.

In fact, we need to know something: negative circumstances, trials, and suffering in life do not, I repeat, *do not* indicate that God does not love you as a believer. In fact, none of these things can separate you from God's love, that's what we're looking at here in this passage. And do you know that the very presence of these things often times, and the fact that we can overcome them - which we're about to see that we're not only overcomers, but that Greek word could be hyper-overcomer, or super-overcomers is how you might translate that - actually reveals how deep the Father's love is for us. The fact that there's an answer, there's a solution, there's an overcoming possibility for you actually speaks to the fact that He loves you deeply. None of these things are separating you from His love.

In fact, Paul goes on to say in verse 36 as he's kind of pulling off of this thought that we are gonna go through some of these trials in life, "*As it is written: 'For your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'*" You know, that's not a comforting verse to believers. To say that you are a sheep for the slaughter *all day long*? We're gonna face these things? Paul says, "I die daily", he talks about, "I'm always delivered over to death" in 2 Corinthians 4. This is the experience of the believer, trials, suffering, and you can go through the list: persecution, peril, and famine. Maybe not at all times in your life, but that's the experience of the believer.

And so Paul references a verse from the Old Testament and says, "Hey, this isn't new. This isn't just true of the church; this was true of Israel as well. In Psalm 44:22 - which is where he gets the quote from - he's describing Israel's enemy being allowed to slaughter some of God's people for purposes only known to God. Why would God allow that to happen? Why would He allow us to face these things?"

Well, I know the answer to that question in one aspect: it's not because He stopped loving you. That's what this verse is teaching us. He still loves you and you haven't been separated from His love. In fact, the way Paul words this, he quotes it from Psalm 44, but he puts it in the present tense, meaning that you and I are constantly in this face of danger. Going through trials, going through suffering, possibly even going through tragedy. And it seems to be a good description of what happens to us in our life, what we would consider many times as unnecessary trouble, unnecessary difficulties in our life. We would view them that way because we would say, "What are we learning out of this? This is just causing pain. I'm not getting anything out of this. Why would God allow it?" And I think what we're gonna see is that God has got a purpose for us.

So, it's a given that difficulties are going to happen in our lives. 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us that those who want to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. That's going to be a given. But it does not indicate that God has stopped loving us. In fact, here's what's ironic, verse 37 he goes on and says, "*Yet in all these things*" - what things? He just gave us a list of those things - "*we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*"

And so we see Paul says *all*. That means that everything that you go through in life, throw it all in the same basket. You can be a conqueror; you can be an overcomer in these things in a very practical way. In fact, everything is in place for that to happen for you. And how does He do it? Well, we're more than conquerors *through* Him, notice that that's key. "*Through Him who loved us.*"

I mentioned it earlier, but this word "more than conquerors", it translates one compound word in the Greek. It's comprised of the preposition "*hyper*", which means *over, above, beyond, or more*, and "*nikao*" which is where we get our word "Nike" - that's where Nike got it from - meaning *to conquer or overcome*. Put together the verb intensifies, it's not just overcoming, but it's overwhelmingly conquer or utterly defeat. You might say *hyper*. You're a hyper conqueror, you're a super-duper conqueror, you know it's just whatever superlative you want to put into it.

"*Yet in all these things,*" and it kind of reminds me of a race where you don't just finish the race, but you beat everybody by a landslide. That conquering feeling, this isn't just you barely won. This is, "Hey, I'm like Usain Bolt, I let up for the last 10 meters because I've got everybody crushed." That's the image that's produced by this word hyper-conqueror. And you know what? He puts it in a present tense way. In other words, this is true of you *presently*, this is true of you *continuously* as a manner of life, no matter what "these things" are.

Now, "these things" are very specific to each person in this room today, we don't all share the "these things", they're very specific. And there are some things that you're going through today that you didn't go through twenty years ago, a struggle, a trial, suffering. There are things that you're going through today that you didn't go through two months ago. And there are things that you're not going through today that you will be going through three months from now, three weeks from now, three days from now, right?

And it doesn't matter, we can throw all of "these things" into a bucket and say, "Yet, but in all of these things, we are presently more than conquerors. We're hyper-conquerors, we're super-duper-conquerors." And do you know this is your birthright as a child of God? This is who you are! You are a Christian, you are a child of God, this is your birthright and privilege. You are a conqueror. Now, you may not feel like a conqueror, but we need to leave the realm of feelings and begin to trust and walk by faith in what the Word of God teaches you, that you might be encouraged by the truth of how God views you, and how God has established and resourced you accordingly. See, this can be your experience. It's true of you, but it can also be your experience if you simply walk by faith, and simply take God at His word.

Now we moved quickly from verse 36 through verse 37, but did anyone else recognize the irony there? In verse 36 we're sheep led to the slaughter, and in verse 37 we're conquerors. That's not exactly the same image. You've got one who is getting slaughtered, and yet even amongst the trials and suffering of life, you can still be a hyper-conqueror. You see, only God can do something like that. Only God can take a sheep who's being led to the slaughter, who's facing difficulties on a daily basis, and make them a hyper-conqueror on a consistent basis.

Now this means a couple of things: nothing that happens in our life can defeat us, and nothing can knock us out of the tight grip of God's love for us in Christ. It doesn't matter what it is, nothing can separate you from God's love. Additionally, it means that nothing happens in our life because God

has stopped loving us. We know that in a laboratory setting, don't we? We all "amen" that on Sunday morning, we "amen" that in our Bible study time, but do you rest in this truth when you're going through trials and suffering? Are you clinging to this when you need it most, or is it just a laboratory, sterile truth doctrine that you can grab on to and say, "Yeah, I've already studied that, I know it." I'm asking you, are you occupied with this truth on a daily basis when you need it most? Are you convinced that nothing can separate you from God's love?

And notice that it's through Him and here's another little subtlety, let's go back to verse 37 and read it again. "*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*" And this word "loved", a couple things about it. It's the Greek word, "*agapao*" - you're familiar with "*agape*", that's the noun form - and it indicates something very special and unique.

God's love for you is unconditional, that's the word Paul uses here. And not only did he use it unconditionally, but he put it in the *aorist tense*. That means it is established, it is done, this is God's standing view of you. He loves you. Period. That's what it means.

And this is a settled state of love, and it's based on and established by the unchanging character of God. And it's also based on His determination to treat you and view you by means of His grace. This is why he can confidently say that nothing will separate you from the love of Christ. And you know, Paul is persuaded of this, and he wants us to be persuaded, too.

Verses 38-39 he says, "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" So we've got a lot of contrast, and I'm going to hit the contrast last. I want to look at the two verbs in this passage, and first we're gonna look at verse 38, "*I am persuaded*", and then we're gonna jump down to verse 39 which says, "*shall be able to separate us*". We're gonna look at those two, and then we'll come back and look at these contrasts.

Paul says that he's persuaded and what he's saying is he's absolutely convinced. And the way that he phrases this is in the perfect tense in the Greek, which just means he was persuaded or convinced at a point in time, and he remains persuaded presently, it's a continuing results kind of thing. So he remains persuaded of this truth that he learned at a point in time that he's about to share. And why can he be so confident? Why can he be so absolutely convinced?

Well God's love is based upon His grace. And if you have an understanding of grace, this makes total sense, because grace means that God gives you something that you don't deserve. It's unmerited, it's undeserved, that means you can't do anything to earn it. And that's why he can be so confident that God's love, unchanging love, agape, unconditional love, will never change towards you, and that you will never be separated from this love. Why? Because you didn't earn it in the first place. You'll never earn it today, and you'll never earn it in the future. That's grace by definition. That's why he can be so confident that nothing will disrupt this free gift of eternal life that is found in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And then he goes on and says, "*shall be able*". This is an interesting word, it simply means *to be able, to have inherent power by virtue of its nature*. Here's the other observation - again, these are little subtle observations, but they're so key to encouraging you and convincing you, and hopefully persuading you that your eternal destiny has been settled - it's future tense, too. And that means nothing or no one in the future will ever have the inherent power to separate us from God's love.

It's not that they won't do it, it's not that nothing *won't* be able to, it's that they don't even have the ability to do this, to separate you from God's love. They don't even have the inherent ability, no one or nothing has the inherent ability, even. There's no possibility of this ever happening in the future. That's the emphasis of this word, it's so strong there as we see that in the future tense. It's one thing to

say that something can't happen now, right? But it's an entirely different thing to say it'll never be possible to happen in the future. That's totally different.

In fact, I meet people all the time that say, "Oh yeah, I know for sure I'm going to heaven." And you know why they're so confident? Because things are going well for them right now, and things are going smoothly for them right now, and they're a hundred percent sure. You throw a trial in their life the next day and they respond poorly to that trial, they might not be so confident. This takes confidence out of the realm of your day-to-day activity in life, and it puts it on the strong shoulders of the God of the universe who's making these statements and says nothing can separate you from His love. This is indeed something to feel very secure about.

And one of the things I think we need to be persuaded of is God does not love like we love. Is that true? God doesn't love like you love. And you can say that you love well, but your love, my love, typically comes with strings attached. Even in the purest relationship that I have in life - which I would consider to be with my wife - when you boil it down, there are strings attached to that love. I'm looking for Carrie to do something for me in order for me to reciprocate my love. Now I wouldn't admit that, because it makes me sound like an awful husband, but in a sense, I am. My love has strings attached. I wish it didn't, I wish I had perfect love, but when I walk by means of the Spirit, I can actually love the way God would love my wife. See, there's the key.

Speaking of marriage, a great example is the wedding vows. I used to go to a wedding, and I would listen to the vows that these young people would make, and I would say, "How wonderful!" And now I think, "What a liar! They don't even know what they're getting into, they don't know what life is gonna bring, and I can't believe they're making those promises. They're not able to keep them!"

And the point is this: this is the way that we love. God doesn't love this way! God is a lover without strings attached. He's an unconditional lover, and I think for many of us that's really hard to understand. So, I think Paul does his best job of trying to set up some contrasting illustrations. He sets up this series of five contrasts to illustrate how comprehensively and exhaustively that he's convinced that nothing or no one can separate us from God's love.

And so we look at that first one in verse 38, he says, "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life,*" - and you go on - "*can separate us from the love of God.*" So, death or life, this can't separate you from God's love. And what that's saying is nothing that happens during your earthly life can separate you from God's love. But you know what? Nothing that happens *after* your earthly life - death - can separate you from God's love.

That's an interesting comment because what is death biblically by definition? Separation. But the one separation you will never experience as a child of God is separation from God. That's called the second death, that's what people experience who go to hell, who will then be cast into the lake of fire at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. You won't experience that as a child of God. So, death can't separate you from God's love, life can't separate you from God's love, nothing you do in life can separate you from God's love.

Second, he says, "*nor angels nor principalities nor powers,*", and this shows us that nothing in the unseen realm can separate you from God's love. That means angels, that means demons, that means Satan. I love how Satan's just thrown in there with the rest of them here, he doesn't even have his own separate category. He's a fallen angel, he's not as equally evil as God is good, he's totally on a different caliber, he's a created being. He can't do anything to thwart God's plan for you. He can't do anything to drive a wedge in between God's love for you. He tries. We get that in Revelation 12, that he's an accuser of the brethren day and night, relentlessly doing that. And trust me, I'm sure I give him plenty of things

to accuse me about, and you probably do, too. But even Satan can't drive a wedge in between God's love for you.

Third, *“nor things present nor things to come,”* and let's just flesh that out. Nothing that's done today and nothing that's done tomorrow can impact God's love for you. Nothing we do or will do takes God by surprise causing Him to change His mind regarding His love for us. God is not loving with strings attached. “Oh man, he did that! I wasn't expecting that, I think I'm gonna have to withdraw My love.” No, that's how *we* love, that's not how God loves. That's how we love: you didn't perform the way that I wanted you to, so I'm gonna withdraw my love and affection from you. God doesn't love that way.

And for some who didn't have a good family growing up, or had maybe parents who are very manipulative, that may be hard to understand, because so many times you translate what your parents did onto the God of the Bible. And I would just encourage you if that's the case, you've got to make a clean break there, because your parents are not like the God of the Bible. God's love is so much more deep and wide, and unfathomable in its richness, and it's also unconditional. And so nothing you can do today, nothing you can do tomorrow, nothing present, nor things to come, as the text says.

Fourth, *“nor height nor depth,”*. Again, spatially there's nowhere we can go to escape God's love. Psalm 139 talks about “where can we flee from Your presence?”, it's that concept that you can't escape God's love. I've heard missionaries say, “Yeah, well I should have gone there, and because I didn't go there, God withdrew His love for me.” No, He loves you in Madagascar the same as He loves you in Newnan, Georgia. Spatially you cannot outrun God's love, and so there's nothing that can remove His love from you there.

And then fifth and finally, *“nor any other created thing,”* and you know who this includes? You. Because are you a created thing? And does it say, “any other created thing”? That would put you in that category. And some will say, “Well, I totally agree with everything written, except you yourself could separate yourself from God's love.” This is what people will say, and they'll say you can separate yourself from God's love by rejecting Him, you could separate yourself from God's love by turning your back on Him, you could separate yourself from God's love by cursing Him or renouncing Him.

And it's an interesting thought, it comes up a lot where people think that God's love has somehow got this string attached, that if you reject Him or turn from Him, He'll turn from you. And see, even this verse right here disallows for that to be true, *“nor any other created thing”*. In fact, some will say you can't lose your salvation, but you can give it back. You've probably heard people say that.

The point is this: like when we come to salvation, we're talking about two things, two unchanging things that are true of you if you've put your faith in Jesus Christ. And one of the unchanging things that's true of you is that all the penalty for your sins, every single sin you have committed or ever will commit, Jesus paid the full penalty for you. That's true of you. And guess what? If He paid the full penalty, what penalty could be left for you to pay? Either He paid it all, or He paid everything except fill in your blank of what you have to do. He paid it all.

And the other thing that is unchanging, is the moment you put your faith in Christ, God credits you with His righteousness. In fact, He doesn't just credit you, give it to you, *you* are placed in Jesus Christ, He becomes your righteousness. If God has declared you righteous, how can He change His mind? That's the judge's gavel that just slammed down that you are righteous. Not because of you, not because you won't reject Him someday.

In fact, when you get down to the nitty-gritty, every time you sin, you're turning your back on Jesus Christ. Every time you present yourself to the sin nature, you're rejecting Jesus Christ, you're spitting on Him on the cross and what He did for you every single time you do that. You don't have to verbalize it, you're *doing it*. Every time you sin, every time I sin, we're doing that. So, it's not about that,



Jesus paid the penalty for that. Jesus died for scoffers, Jesus died for mockers, Jesus died for those who spit on Him. He said from the cross, "Forgive them, Father, for they don't know what they do."

This verse should be comforting because it also includes you. And you know, if we're honest with ourselves, the biggest screwup generally in every room is us. This verse is clear though: any other created thing. That includes you, and that includes me. And the encouraging thing is if you put your faith in Christ, even you can't screw it up.

Again, there is nothing you can do, think, or say that would ever separate you from God's love. Once you're saved, you're forever united with Christ, you'll forever be identified with Him. You are tied to Jesus Christ. You're connected to Him. You didn't have any part in that, you were born again when you put your faith in Christ and God placed you in Christ, that's what 1 Corinthians 1:30 tells us. God was the one who determined where you would be, God is the one who determined that you would be connected with Him.

Finally, what is the reason that Paul gives for such assurance? Why is he so confident? We see it in verse 39, let's read it again. *"nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God"* Why? because it's *"in Christ Jesus our Lord."* And here's the thing we've got to be convinced of: God the Father could never stop loving Jesus Christ. And do you understand that His love for us is just as secure as His love for His son? Just enjoy that truth, that's where your acceptance is based.

And so as we close out Romans chapter 8, notice we started the chapter with no condemnation and we finish the chapter with no separation, and may you be encouraged by that today.