

One Man

August 6 – Romans 5:12-21

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Day 218 – 147 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul continued his explanation of the gospel in his letter to the Romans. He demonstrated the impartiality of God and that no one — Jew or Gentile — is without excuse for his sin (2:1-3:8). He condemned everyone as sinful, fallen, imperfect people who cannot please God by their deeds (3:9-20). He explained that salvation is only by the grace of God through faith in Jesus' sinless sacrifice (3:21-4:25). Finally, he listed some of the benefits of our justification by faith (5:1-11).

Next, **Paul clarified the significant roles of Adam and Jesus, by explaining how sin and salvation were credited to many by the actions of one man.** To understand this passage, we must first grasp the principle that both Adam and Jesus were divinely appointed representatives of mankind. As the first human being, Adam represented humanity before God in Eden. His actions would affect his descendants. In the same way, Jesus represented humanity before God on the cross. Likewise, His actions would affect those who believe in Him.

So then, let's consider Adam. What were the consequences of his actions as our agent in the garden? **He was responsible for the introduction of sin to the earth (Gen. 3), and because of his sin, death was a consequence (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19).** As if that weren't bad enough, Adam passed sin and death to his descendants, including us. We are conceived with a sinful nature (Ps. 51:5). We are not sinful because we sin. Rather we sin because we are sinful.

"From Adam to Moses, death reigned on the earth," Paul wrote (v.14), which was evidence that Adam's sin had indeed been inherited by all people. However, when God gave His laws to Moses, people recognized their sin and the fact that they could not live up to God's holy standard. In Paul's words, "Their transgression increased" (v.20). They became more aware of their sinful, rebellious nature.

But, just as Adam's actions affected humanity, so did Christ's actions affect humanity (v.14). However, rather than introduce unrighteousness and condemnation, **Jesus (the Second Adam) achieved righteousness and reconciliation through His life, death, and resurrection (v.18, 19).** By faith in His substitutionary sacrifice, sinners can be justified in the eyes of God, absolved of all transgressions. "Where sin increased (through Adam and the Law), grace abounded all the more" through Jesus (v.20). Also, while Adam's sin wrought death for all, Jesus defeated death and now offers eternal life to all who believe in Him (v.18).

Daily Reflection

It is important to note here that though Adam's sin cursed all men with sin and death, Jesus did not cure all men of sin and death. In other words, salvation is not universal, as Jesus did not save everyone. Thus, when Paul wrote, "The free gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounds to the many" (v.15), he was not implying that all people will be saved. Likewise, when Paul wrote, "Through one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men" (v.18), he was not promoting universalism.

There exists today the common misconception that all roads lead to heaven and that all people will be saved. It is said, "A merciful and loving God would never send people to hell." While it is true that God is loving and merciful, it is false that He would never send people to hell. Jesus said Himself that God would judge all nations and separate the sheep (saved) from the goats (unsaved) and condemn "those accursed" to their deserved punishment (Matt. 25:41, 46).

We must be careful, when reading passages like *Romans 5:12-21*, that we interpret its meaning in light of the rest of Scripture. God has made it very clear that there is only one way to be saved, which is by faith in Jesus Christ (*Acts 4:12; Jn. 3:16, 18, 36; 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5*).

Enslaved

August 7 – Romans 6:1-23

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Today in Your Reading

For five chapters now, Paul has explained the gospel in his letter to the Romans. In summary, though the laws of God have condemned everyone in their sin (3:23) and all deserve death in hell, because of the Lord's love for humanity, He sent His Son Jesus to pay the penalty for sin (5:8). Those who believe in Christ's substitutionary death by faith are given forgiveness of sin and eternal life (6:23).

However, one might argue that because Christ has paid the penalty for our sin that we (His followers) are now free to sin more (v.1, 14). Thus, Paul responded to that argument. He started by saying, "May it never be" (v.2). The summary of his rebuttal is in the next question, "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (v.2). What exactly did he mean?

To explain his statement, Paul used the illustration of baptism (v.3-5). Baptism, of course, is a public profession of one's faith in Christ, but it is also an external expression of what has taken place internally. Our old sinful self has died and been buried with Christ, and we are raised with Him, in His resurrection, to "walk in newness of life" (v.5). Therefore, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, we are "new creatures; the old things passed away, and new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Next, Paul used a second illustration, that of sin as a tyrannical slave master (Rom. 6:6-22). **As descendants of Adam, we are all born into slavery to sin** (5:12). But when we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we are justified in God's eyes (5:9, 19), and "our old body of sin is crucified and done away with, so that **we are no longer slaves to sin**" (6:6, 7).

On the cross, Jesus not only paid the penalty of sin (death), but He also defeated the power of sin, meaning that **sin is no longer master over us** (v.12, 14, 16, 20, 22). **By the power of His Spirit in us, we can resist temptation and break**

the chains of sin in our lives. We no longer have to "obey its lusts" (v.12). We are free in Christ.

Now that we have been freed from slavery to sin, our loyalty belongs to Christ. We are His, and "we present our bodies to Him as instruments of righteousness" (v.13). **We are now servants of Christ** (v.16-19), and our aim is sanctification, to be more like Him. "Now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God," Paul wrote, "we derive our benefit, resulting in sanctification and eternal life" (v.22).

Daily Reflection

Some might ask, "Have we simply exchanged slave masters? Have we gone from obeying one to obeying another? If so, where is the freedom in that?" Asking that question reveals one's misunderstanding of his new life in Christ.

Take a minute to read *Matthew 11:28-30*. Describe what life is like as a servant of Christ.

Paul ended his argument with this reminder, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" (6:23). As slaves to sin, our end is condemnation and death. But as servants of Christ, we find life.

Are you still enslaved to sin, or have you been freed from its chains and lusts? Are you "enslaved to God" (v.22)? How can you tell?

The Purpose of the Law

August 8 – Romans 7:1-13

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Day 220 – 145 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul has spent a good portion of his letter to the Romans explaining the gospel (1:15-6:23). After describing believers' freedom from sin and the law of God (3:31; 6:14, 15), Paul was concerned that his readers, especially the Jews, might begin to think negatively about God's law. Thus, **Paul set out to define the law's purpose in the lives of Christ-followers (7:1-13).**

First, Paul used the illustration of marriage to describe our relationship to the law (v.1-6). "The law has jurisdiction (authority) over a person as long as he lives," Paul wrote (v.1). Regarding marriage, one is bound by law to his spouse until death. However, after the death of a spouse, the other is free to remarry.

Paul's point was that the law of God has authority over us until death occurs. But when Jesus died on the cross in our place, He set us free from the law, so that we could be "married" or bound to Him in a new relationship (v.4-6). Thus, we are no longer plagued by the penalty of breaking God's law. "We serve in newness of Spirit and not in oldness of the letter" (of the law), Paul wrote (v.6).

But, once again, Paul's words seem to give the law a negative connotation. So, he addressed this question. "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin" (or evil)? May it never be" (v.7).

Paul explained that God's laws are not evil but perfect (v.12). It is our hearts that are rotten. **Thus, how was God to show us our wickedness? By sending us His law.** His law reflects His holy nature, the standard of perfection. Compared to His righteousness, we fall short (3:23). Paul wrote, "I would not have known sin except through the Law" (7:7). In other words, if there were no rules (or laws), we would never know what is wrong. A toddler believes he can do no wrong until a parent says, "That's a no-no." Then, he has a decision to make. He now knows what is right and wrong. What will he do?

Daily Reflection

Paul wrote, "I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died" (v.9). Simply put, ignorance is bliss. If we never knew what was wrong, then we would believe that we could do no wrong. **But when we are informed of the law, we immediately understand that our actions are not always right. We are flawed.**

When Paul became aware of God's laws, he saw them as a means to salvation, that by obeying them he could justify himself. However, he was deceived, and though "the law, which was to result in life, proved to result in death" (v.10). Rather than give life, the law killed him (v.11).

So then, is the law or our sin evil? Read *Romans 7:13*. How did Paul answer this question?

At what point in your life did you realize that you were a sinner? What prompted you to recognize your need for a Savior?

If God's laws caused you to recognize your sin and need for a Savior, then they are good, not evil. Had He never sent His laws, you would forever be dead in your sin. It was His laws that convicted you of sin and led you to repent and believe in Jesus for salvation. **Praise God, then, for His laws. They are holy, righteous, and good (v.12), and they have led you to Christ.**

The Law and the Flesh

August 9 – Romans 7:14-25

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Day 221 – 144 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We have come to a controversial passage for which there are multiple interpretations. No doubt, you have heard the view that Paul is describing the conflict between his new nature in Christ and his old nature in sin. But, in the context, that interpretation is confusing. Why?

Remember, Paul is expounding on the purpose of God's law, that He gave the law to reveal His holy standard and to help us recognize our sinfulness before Him (v.1-13). Paul does not describe his salvation experience until the end of his struggle, when He wrote, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v.24, 25). Thus, it seems that the struggle Paul is describing happened in his life before salvation, not after salvation.

So then, in this passage, **Paul is describing his (and anyone else's) struggle with trying to follow God's law and please Him through sheer will power. It's impossible.** Let's consider his argument.

First, Paul described the law as "spiritual" (meaning of God) and his sin as "of the flesh," meaning inherited through Adam in his human nature (v.14). Paul then described his pre-saved self as "sold into the bondage of sin" (v.14), a flashback to being enslaved by sin in *Romans 6*.

Second, **Paul portrayed the struggle between wanting to follow God's law and being unable to do so because of his sinful flesh.** "I am not practicing what I would like to do (the law), but I am doing the very thing I hate" (sin, v.15). He wants to follow the law of God, but he can't. His failure only proves that the law is true and good and that he is rotten (v.16). He even admitted that, before Christ, "nothing good dwelled in him" (v.17, 18; also 3:10, 23). "This evil is present in me," he said, "so I joyfully concur (agree with) the law of God in me" (7:19-23).

As much as Paul wanted to be a good law-abiding Jew and please God as best he could, it was an impossible task. He saw "a different law in the members of his body (sin), waging war against the law of his mind" (v.23). He even felt like "a prisoner of the law of sin" (v.23). God's good laws only condemned him in his sin, and the wage of his sin was death (6:23).

When we understand Paul's argument, we grasp why he wrote, "Who will set me free from this body of death?" (v.24). He answered the question in the next verse, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v.25), whom he said set him "free from the law of sin and death" (8:2).

Daily Reflection

The struggle is real. No matter how hard we try to do the right thing to please God (before salvation), because of our sin nature (flesh), it is impossible. **Nothing we do in our sinful flesh can please our holy God. Works don't work.**

Have you ever tried to please God in your flesh? Perhaps, it was before you surrendered to Christ, or maybe it was after salvation. Explain.

Take a minute to look ahead at *Romans 8:2, 3*. Only Christ can untangle your knot and set you free from both the power of sin and the penalty of the law. Because of Him, the law of God has been fulfilled, and you have been released from trying to live up to His perfect expectations. Have you recognized your wretchedness and inability to please God in your own strength? **Praise God, you don't have to fulfill the law. Someone has already done it for you!**

The Spirit of Life

August 10 – Romans 8:1-13

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Today in Your Reading

Paul reached the climax of his explanation of the gospel in his letter to the Romans. After having established the depressing fact that humanity is ruined because of Adam, born into and enslaved to sin, unable to keep the laws of God, and therefore condemned to death, he turned the corner and presented hope. "Wretched man that I am," he wrote. "Who will set me free from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (7:24, 25). Next, Paul shared the glorious victory that we have in Christ, as well as the benefits of His indwelling Spirit.

The main character in this chapter is the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned more than a dozen times. He is called "the Spirit of life" (v.2), "the Spirit of Christ" (v.9), "the Spirit of God" (v.9, 14), and "the Spirit of Him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead" (v.11). At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit indwells believers and enables them with many advantages (v.2-30). Let's consider a few of them.

First, in one of the most important *therefore* statements in all the Bible, Paul proclaimed that, because of "the law of the Spirit of life," we have been freed from "the law of sin and death," and therefore **we no longer stand condemned before God** (v.1, 2). All the depressing news that Paul shared before this statement no longer applies to us. We've been released from the penalty of sin (death). Though we could not fulfill the Law of God in our flesh, Christ fulfilled the Law for us (v.3), and rather than our being condemned for sin, sin is now condemned.

Second, not only have we been released from the penalty of sin (death), but **we've also been released from the power of sin**. No longer do we "walk (or live) according to the flesh, but now we walk according to the Spirit" (v.4). Because we have the Holy Spirit within us, we do not have to give in to temptation. We can overcome temptation with His righteousness (v.5-10).

Third, though we still live in our "mortal bodies," as Paul wrote, because the Spirit "who raised Christ Jesus from the dead" is in us, **He too will give our temporal bodies life after death** (v.11). That struggle between life and death begins now, while we are still here. "By the Spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the flesh" (v.13).

Daily Reflection

The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has resurrected your past, present, and future. Regarding your past, none of your sins or shortcomings will be held against you. You have been absolved of all charges and freed to walk in newness of life.

Regarding your present, though your desire is to live a life that glorifies Christ, you still stumble and do things that you know displease Him. But "there is now no condemnation" left for you (v.1). You are forgiven. Drop your sin, your shame, your guilt, and your fear, for He carried all of that to the cross. You are now free to live in His grace with no worry of judgment.

Regarding your future, though you will die, you will live. Your body (flesh) will fail, and you will cease to be no more on this earth. However, because the Spirit of Life lives in you, you will live again in heaven with Christ forever.

The Spirit of Life has resurrected your past, present, and future. For which one of these truths are you most thankful? Explain why.

Children, Sons, Heirs

August 11 – Romans 8:14-25

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Day 223 – 142 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul continued sharing the benefits of having the Holy Spirit indwell us (v.1-13). So far, the Spirit of Life freed us from the law of sin and death and released us from all condemnation (v.1-4). The Spirit of Christ also freed us from the power of sin, so that “we no longer walk according to the flesh, but we walk in the Spirit” (v.5-9). Third, the Spirit of “Him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead” will also raise us to new life after our “mortal bodies” cease to exist (v.10, 11).

The next advantage of having the Spirit within us is that **He confirms and assures us that we are part of the heavenly family, as sons of God** (v.14-17). Calling us “sons of God” is not a knock against women. In truth, Paul was elevating us all. In the Jewish culture, sons were the heirs of their fathers’ inheritance, so that they could care for their families. What Paul said is that **both guys and gals, who are believers in Christ, are now heirs of all that God wishes to give us** (Gal. 3:26-4:7). Jesus, the Son of God, became a Son of Man so that we who are sons of men might become sons (and heirs) of God. What a wonderful exchange!

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote, “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Christ Jesus to Himself...” (Eph. 1:5). **As sons of God, we are then “fellow heirs” of Jesus, to whom was appointed all things** (Heb. 1:2). Christ will share His divine inheritance with us. Though we suffer for His sake on earth, we will revel in the glorious inheritance to come in heaven (Rom. 8:17). “For I consider the sufferings of this present time,” Paul wrote, “as not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (v.18).

Even creation can’t wait to see what will happen next. Before the fall, creation was perfect, as God intended. But with Adam’s sin came a curse on creation (Gen. 3:17). It groans or longs for the day when it will be set free from its

imperfections (v.19-22). In that day, creation will rejoice watching Christ’s followers “enjoy the freedom of glory as children of God” (v.21).

Daily Reflection

If you are a follower of Christ, then you are a child of God, really a son; and if a son, then you are an heir, a fellow heir with Jesus. How exciting is that? **You have a great inheritance waiting for you!**

Read the following verses. How is your inheritance described?

1 Peter 1:4

Matthew 6:19, 20

Ephesians 1:13, 14

2 Corinthians 4:17

Revelation 21:4

“If we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance **we wait eagerly for it**” (v.25).

More Than Conquerors

August 12 – Romans 8:26-39

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Day 224 – 141 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Paul completed his explanation of the gospel to the Romans with one of the greatest passages in the New Testament. But before he recapped the big picture (v.31-39), he finished describing benefits of having the indwelling Holy Spirit (v.1-25). The last benefit that he mentioned in this passage related to prayer. The Holy Spirit “helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should” (v.26). Often our prayers are shallow, inconsistent, self-centered, and unenlightened, but the Spirit prays “according to the will of God” (v.27).

Why would He pray for the will of God on our behalf? The will of God is always for our benefit. “For we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (v.28). While what we experience or endure may not seem good to us, God sees the bigger picture and knows the benefit it will be to us in the long run. He uses all circumstances for His purpose in our lives. What is His purpose? His purpose is for us “to be conformed to the image of His Son,” who is the “firstborn among many brethren” (v.29). The word *firstborn* here means a prototype or pattern after which the Lord is duplicating in the lives of His followers.

Next, Paul summarized the process of the gospel with what has come to be known as “the golden chain” of salvation. “Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined, and those whom He predestined, He also called. Those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified” (v.29, 30).

To foreknow does not simply refer to having knowledge of the future, but rather it refers to setting His love on or extending grace to us from the beginning. To predestine means to mark out, appoint, or determine beforehand one’s future end. To be called means to extend an invitation to the gospel, an invitation that will be successful (as we are chosen or elected), as

we respond in faith to become a follower of Christ. To be justified is to be forgiven of all charges or offenses because of Christ’s work on the cross. To be glorified means that God’s work that He has begun in us will be completed. He will replace our sinful, mortal bodies with a glorious body like His Son, sinless and eternal; and we will receive our inheritance as saints. None of this, of course, is our own doing. From beginning to end, salvation is a work of God.

Daily Reflection

After completing his explanation of the gospel, Paul culminated in a magnificent ending, which included a question and answer. “**What shall we say then? If God is for us, then who can be against us?**” (v.31).

In other words, if our salvation is completely a work of God, then **what can anyone do to stop it? Nothing**. If He has given His only Son to die for us, then **what else is there left to do? Nothing** (v.32). If the Judge has declared us justified (without sin), then **who can condemn us? No one** (v.33, 34). If He has done all this for us to be with Him, then **what shall separate us from the love of God? Nothing** (v.35-39). Not even death can sting or stop us (v.36).

“In all these things, we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (v.37). The Greek word for *conquer* here means to over-conquer, to conquer more than necessary. Simply put, **salvation is a work of God, not man; and He has done more than enough to redeem us forever!**

The letter to the *Romans* has been called Paul’s masterpiece. It is the greatest explanation of the gospel in the New Testament, and Chapter 8 is the crowning jewel. How can we read this passage and ever doubt God’s love for us? How can we read this passage and doubt our salvation? **Because of His efforts, we are more than conquerors!** All our enemies have been defeated, and we are forever secure in His hands. Let us rejoice in what He has done!