

ROMANS

Live Free

ROMANS 8:15

November 12, 2016

Today

Over the previous 4 chapters, Paul has been building his case that before a holy and righteous God we are all guilty of rebellion and that there is forgiveness and reconciliation and righteousness provided through Jesus' death.

As he continues, Paul assumes that his readers have accepted his arguments for justification by faith.

Have we accepted his arguments? Until we accept, in our own lives, the truth of what sin is and what it does (to us personally), we will never fully embrace what Jesus did for us on the cross or accept the life he is offering. That is why Paul starts his letter as he does. Because the reality of personal sin and rebellion needs to be exposed before the cure can be revealed.

Now Paul begins to spell out the implications of this new relationship. To accept God's free gift also means accepting a new lordship over your life. In other words, you cannot accept Jesus as your Savior and remain the same.

The first consequence of justification by faith is **peace** with God because of his grace. Our relationship with God is changed from rebels to sons – fully forgiven. This reality should produce in the believer a real sense peace and security. Because our past and present have been secured, we can look to the future with hope. This hope is so powerful that it enables the believer to rejoice even in the midst of trial and pain. The believer has a new perspective. We begin to see that the trials that come our way can be used to mature us in our Christian walk. When we come to a place where we have nothing else but God, we realize He is all we need:

The will of God will never take you,
Where the grace of God cannot keep you,
Where the arms of God cannot support you,
Where the riches of God cannot supply your needs,
Where the power of God cannot endow you.

The will of God will never take you,
Where the spirit of God cannot work through you,
Where the wisdom of God cannot teach you,
Where the army of God cannot protect you,
Where the hands of God cannot mold you.

The will of God will never take you,
Where the love of God cannot enfold you,
Where the mercies of God cannot sustain you,
Where the peace of God cannot calm your fears,
Where the authority of God cannot overrule for you.

The will of God will never take you,
Where the comfort of God cannot dry your tears,
Where the Word of God cannot feed you,
Where the miracles of God cannot be done for you,
Where the omnipresence of God cannot find you.

- **Romans 5:6-10** - You see, at just the right time, when we were still **powerless**, Christ died for the **ungodly**. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still **sinners**, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were **God's enemies**, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

We, you and me, are the ones who intentionally ran from God. We rebelled against him. And YET, despite our CHOSEN condition and while we were not seeking to be reconciled, God sent Jesus to bring us back.

Do you know how amazing that is? God did not wait for us to become "good enough" before He chose to save us. He came after us while we were still in rebellion against Him.

These verses, more than any others in scripture point to the reality of a changed relationship with God – that of reconciliation - because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This change in relationship is received by the Christian through faith.

Now Paul goes into a long discourse that can be confusing, but basically what he is doing is comparing and contrasting our situation through Adam and our new situation through Jesus. It goes like this:

Adam chose self-reliance and rebellion against God and as a result the human family inherited the sin gene. Sinning is in our DNA. We do it naturally. In fact, left to ourselves we'd do it until we died. That is the condition we find ourselves in – drowning in inherited and cultivate sin. As a result, divine judgment came through that one act of rebellion. We DESERVE judgment!!!

BUT judgment is not the only thing humanity got – they also got grace (Genesis 3:8-20).

- **Ellen White (AG 10.2):** By disobeying the commands of God, man fell under the condemnation of His law. This fall called for the grace of God to appear in behalf of sinners. We should never have learned the meaning of this word "grace" had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do His service, and are obedient to all His commands; but He does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it; for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow this grace upon every one who hungers for it. To every one He presents terms of mercy, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift.

Jesus chose obedience and dependence - this grace, which was given in Eden, results in justification (being declared “not Guilty”) for anyone who believes.

- **Romans 5:17** For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Paul is not saying that everyone will be saved. Let us be clear about that. What he is saying is that through **one man** we are all guilty and through **one man** we are provisionally declared innocent but only receive actual acquittal through **faith** in Jesus.

- **John 3:16** For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever **believes** in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Okay, so now Paul argues that we have been declared not guilty through Jesus and if we have accepted that truth through faith, then we should no longer live as slaves to sin and death.

- **Romans 6:11-12** In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

A few verses later Paul acknowledges that he battles against himself -

- **Romans 7:18-23** I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

But he insists that we do not have to live as slaves to sin. For sin shall not be the master over you.

Now humans, we like to live in ditches. We often go from one extreme to another and rarely navigate the middle well.

- In one ditch lives the belief that even though we have been made free through Jesus we continue to live as though we are still slaves to sin. We view law keeping as something we must conquer at all cost and yet we never quite get there. We continue to sin and we just can't help it. - Legalists
- In the other ditch lives the belief that we are free to do whatever we want. We are no longer slaves to sin and death, we are saved by grace and therefore law no longer applies. – Grace, grace, grace movement

So, Paul is quick to address this other ditch (grace, grace, grace). Freedom from the power and the penalty of sin does not mean that we are free to do whatever we want.

The truth is: We are either slaves to satan or we are slaves to Jesus. We are really not free to live the way we want because we are either controlled by our passions – our inherited and cultivated sin, or we are controlled by the Spirit of Christ living in us. Either way you are not your own.

As Paul puts it, when you were a slave to sin you were free from the control of righteousness, but it didn't benefit you, because it only leads to death. Now that you have been set free and are now a slave to God the benefits lead to holiness and eternal life. For the wages sin pays is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus.

Ellen White is very clear that if the law could have been changed then Jesus would not have had to die. His death is evidence that the law of God is unchangeable (see DA 763)

So where does the law fit into this new found life? As I have said before the law does not go away it changes locations.

- **Ellen White {DA 762.2}:** The law requires righteousness, --a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus, they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus, the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26.

Notice the last few words..... Thus, the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled **IN** the believer in Christ.

What Paul wants us to internalize is that when we accept Christ's righteousness, we automatically become law keepers as we are transformed into His perfect character. We don't have to stay up nights wondering how we can better keep the law. We don't have to live in discouragement because we just can't quite measure up. We can live in peace with God through the perfect life of Jesus. That is precious, precious news!!!

This brings us to our scripture for today and really full circle because we end where we began:

- **Romans 8:15** For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Despite our new identity in Jesus, we still have to live in a war zone. Paul says the earth itself groans under the strain of sin. We still experience pain and suffering – life is still messy.

- **Romans 8:28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Our peace comes, not because nothing bad ever happens to us, but because we believe that God can and does take all pain, all injustice, all suffering and uses it for our good. For the building of our character, for the purifying of lives.

- **Malachi 3:3** He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.

The Refiners Touch

There was a group of women in a Bible study on the book of Malachi. As they were studying chapter three they came across verse three which says, "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." This verse puzzled the women and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God.

One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study. That week the woman called up a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest in silver beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that, in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest so as to burn away all the impurities.



The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot - then she thought again about the verse, that He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. For if the silver was left even a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's the easy part -- when I see my image reflected in it."

If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has His eye on you and will keep His hand on you and watch over you until He sees His image in you.

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Paul confirms this reality with the following statement:

- **Romans 8:31-39** What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Take Away

We should be filled with awe and wonder and gratitude right now:

- While we were running head long in the other the direction, God sent Jesus to save us.
- Because of Jesus' obedience we have access to His righteousness.
- We no longer have to be controlled by sin.
- The law we have failed to keep becomes an internal reality and as we walk with Jesus, we become more and more like Him.
- Our peace is found in the midst of the storm.
- Nothing can separate from Jesus and through Him we are more than conquerors.

It just doesn't get any better than that!!!!