



ROMANS

DAILY DEVOTIONAL - WEEK 3

MONDAY

How did a good law bring spiritual death?

Paul kept finding new analogies to help picture how God brought salvation in Jesus. Here he used the image of a marriage, which ends when one partner dies. In verse 4, “died with respect to the Law” paralleled 6:11’s “dead to sin.” Paul sees sin and the Law as partners, though sin is the main culprit (Romans 7:11-12). Paul, a rigorous, self-righteous Pharisee before he met Jesus, said it was the Law that led him to realize that he was nothing more than an outwardly respectable sinner.

The 10th commandment dealt with inner thoughts and wishes, not with outward actions. Turns out God cares not just about what we do, but about anything we seriously wish we could do. Have you ever found your admiration of someone else’s nice things turning into an almost fixated wish that you could have something (or someone) they have? In what ways has God helped you learn to avoid that kind of extreme, harmful wanting?

A mirror can show you things about yourself you couldn’t otherwise see, but you can’t wash your face with a mirror. Jesus’ brother James compared God’s law to a mirror (cf. James 1:23-24). Paul said the 10th commandment showed him that, proud as he was of his outward Pharisaic morality (cf. Philippians 3:4-7), he needed a Saviour just as much as any other sinner. When have you had moments of insight into inner changes you needed (or need) God to empower you to make?

read

Romans 7:1-13

pray

Lord Jesus, thank you that your Holy Spirit worked, not just in the heart of a great man like Paul, but in my heart and mind, too. I thank you for challenging me to keep growing. Amen.

TUESDAY

Who will deliver me?

Thank God—Jesus Christ our Lord!

Paul told the Romans honestly about the painful reality that the line between good and evil cut through his own heart. But it wasn't just about him, but about us: He uses 'I' and 'me' in order to speak for the situation of all those under the power of sin. Gritting his teeth and resolving to do better didn't change the situation. Only as he put his trust in Jesus was God's powerful grace able to free him, day by day, from evil's control in his life.

When Paul said that evil came from "sin that lives in me" (verse 17), he wasn't trying to duck responsibility for his actions. It was a vivid way to describe a nearly universal human experience: the sense of an inner war, of two principles of action battling for control. When have you decided determinedly to change a hurtful pattern, and yet been strongly and repeatedly drawn back to it?

Paul wasn't the only person to realize inner struggles. The Roman philosopher Seneca, for example, wrote of "our helplessness in necessary things." But Paul's reflection did not end in despair. "Who will deliver me from this dead corpse? Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (verses 24-25) When has Christ's power acted in your life, not wiping out the struggle, but enabling you to come out on the side of right more often?

read

Romans 7:14-25

pray

O Jesus, sometimes, like Paul, "when I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me." Thank you that your Holy Spirit's presence and power guides me to recognize and choose your way more and more. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

“If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life”

Do you know? When Paul dictated this letter, he did not pause after Romans 7:25 and say, “Chapter 8.” The chapter divisions commonly used today were developed by Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury. Langton put the modern chapter divisions into place in around A.D. 1227. Romans 8:1 was not a new subject, but the direct result of Jesus' salvation laid out at the end of what we call “chapter 7.” “No condemnation”—what could be better news? Paul laid out the contrast between a life oriented toward self (Greek “life in the flesh”) and a life oriented toward God by the Spirit. When Paul uses the word ‘flesh’...he does not intend us simply to think of the ‘physical’ world.... ‘flesh’ refers to people or things who share the corruptibility and mortality of the world...the rebellion of the world ‘Spirit’, by contrast, usually refers to God’s own spirit, the holy spirit. Only the Spirit “leads to life and peace.”

In Romans 8:3, Paul wrote that God sent “his own Son to deal with sin.” Moralistic religion often deepens guilt by saying it’s your job to “deal with sin” on your own. How have you sensed a shift, over time, from basing your life on self-interest to basing it on the principles God’s Spirit teaches you and guides you in living? Where is your life’s “growing edge” right now—in what areas is that shift (not without struggles) taking place?

If the Spirit “will give life to your human bodies,” why do Christians keep dying? Scholar William Barclay wrote, “Sin came into this world and with sin came death, the consequence of sin. Inevitably, therefore, all men die; but.... Paul’s basic thought is that the Christian is indissolubly one with Christ. Christ died and rose again; and the man who is one with Christ is one with death’s conqueror and shares in that victory.” How does trusting in the Spirit deepen your trust that “the worst thing is never the last thing”?

read

Romans 8:1-11

pray

Lord Jesus, I choose the quality of life you died to give me. I want to follow you—yet sometimes I still lose my way. Keep teaching me how to ground my whole life in the Spirit. Amen.

THURSDAY

We are God's adopted children, "saved in hope"

Paul had used images from criminal law, from accounting, from sacrifice, even from slavery. Now he turned to the family realm to picture the essence of the community God's grace is creating. God has adopted us, he said. As God's adopted sons and daughters, we are heirs along with Christ. Even in "present suffering," we live in hope. Paul understood that the essential quality of hope is that it is oriented to something in the future that one expects but does not yet possess (Rom 8:24–25).

When Paul wrote, "We were saved in hope," he didn't glibly mean "Get it together." Paul is not stating a...superficial optimism that everything tends to everybody's good in the end. No, if the 'good' which is God's objective is our completed salvation, then its beneficiaries are his people who are described as those who love him. How can you base your hope, not in vague optimism, but in the faithfulness of the Saviour who's always loved you and who you've learned to love?

In verse 15, Paul contrasted "a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear" with God's loving adoption of us as sons and daughters. What factors have shaped your view of God as either a person you serve out of fear, or as a loving father who wants what is best for you? If your life experience left negative overtones around the word "father," what other images and relationships help you fully trust that God loves you?

read

Romans 8:12-25

pray

God, I'm filled with awe that you really want me as a member of your family, as one of your beloved "kids." Help me to live in love and gratitude as a loyal family member. Amen.

FRIDAY

God—always at work for the ultimate good

Did you know? Some Christians have thought verses 29-30 meant God “pre-assigns” who is saved and who is lost. But that doesn’t fit the big message of Romans and of the gospel. Scholar Michael Gorman said, “Paul isn’t making a general statement about predestination... this text affirms that the ultimate purpose of God’s call is for believers to become like Christ.” Scholar Craig Keener drew on Paul’s Hebrew training to say, “The majority of Jewish thinkers affirmed both that God was sovereign and that humans had responsibility to choose rightly.” The apostle Paul had many hard times (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:22-28). Yet there’s no sign he ever asked, “Why did God make that mob attack me?” We never see him sigh, “Everything happens for a reason. I guess Nero’s cruelty is just God’s will.” He had a deep faith that even when bad things leave us pained, puzzled and without words, the Holy Spirit pleads our case in prayer and guides us to lives “consistent with God’s will.” God, he trusted, can use every experience we have for a divine purpose.

The apostle wrote that even when we find ourselves at a loss, “the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans.” The ministry of the Spirit is to help believers pray, and even to pray for them...Jesus also prays for believers (Romans 8:34). If there are questions or pains that leave you speechless, ask the Spirit to help you trustingly lay them before God today.

Verse 28 did not say, as people sometimes think, that “all things” are good. That would be moral nonsense. There is a big difference between ‘God allowed this bad thing to happen’ and ‘In the midst of this bad thing God is at work for good’.... In life and in death, we belong to a loving God. What are you facing right now that is painful, frustrating or scary? Can you look back and see times when God has brought good out of other hard times?

read

Romans 8:26-32

pray

Come, Holy Spirit! Fill my heart with the same spirited hope you gave the apostle Paul. In this world’s darkness, open my eyes to the gleams of light that have always guided God’s children. Amen.

SATURDAY

Separate us from God's love? No one and nothing!

In today's reading, Paul summed up the first eight chapters of Romans. He didn't see God's love as abstract or theoretical. He faced all of his life's challenges with the profound personal certainty that "nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord." He sent the Romans quite a list of life challenges he (and they) faced: "trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword." But these were not complaints. He wrote the list to say, "In all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us" (verse 37). Why? Because God is for us, and **nothing**—absolutely nothing—can separate us from God's love. No matter what life throws at us, we, too, can march with Paul and a long line of believers in God's eternal victory parade.

Paul asked a powerful question: "Who will separate us from Christ's love?" He phrased it so that the only possible answer was, "No one and nothing!" For "sweeping victory," Paul used a single Greek word—a compound word he apparently created. The word was *hupernikaō*. "*Huper*" was a superlative, from which we get the English word "hyper." And the "*nik*" in the middle of the word came from the Greek word for "victory," a familiar word to us— "*nikē*"! Would you say your life so far has pretty much worked out as you'd hoped, or have you had to overcome big hurdles and pain? What conditions or events are most likely to leave you feeling separated from God's love? How can you anchor your spiritual life in the "hyper victory" that God's love, hope and peace offer you, even when times get tough? How can that confidence shape your daily life for the better?

read

Romans 8:33-39

pray

All powerful God, whatever comes my way, hold me close in the shelter of your love. Thank you that, through you, I can win a sweeping victory in "all these things." Amen.