

THE LETTER

R O M
A N S

60 DAY DEVOTIONAL

VERSES ARE EITHER IN THE NIV OR ESV
TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

C ~~X~~ **M**

DAY 1

ROMANS 1:1-4

Someone once said, “we were not created as human doing, rather we were created as human beings.” We have a natural tendency is “to do” in order “to be,” to work and try to earn approval, to feel the pressure to pretend in order to be accepted, and when hard times come to worry about what we may have done wrong, rather than just recognizing that sometimes bad things happen. At the beginning of Romans, Paul explains that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with us earning a state of being, earning the salvation offered to us on the Cross, rather the Gospel is about us receiving what Christ has done for us. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus died on the Cross offering us forgiveness, freedom and abundant life. The beauty of the Gospel and the Cross is that our doings cannot possibly achieve what was done.

God is more concerned about our relationship with him, rather than what we can do for him. We were created for relationship with God. The Cross frees us from striving for that relationship and allows us to be in relationship with him. You are loved by God, and given the permission to cease striving for relationship with him and simply be in relationship with him.

HOW does the Gospel affect your life?

DAY 2

ROMANS 1:5-15

For Christ's love compels us... - **2 CORINTHIANS 5:14**

There is an age old question that has been circulating church pews for years, "if someone had cancer, and you knew the cure to cancer, what would stop you from telling that person about the cure?" The people who ask this question, go on to relate knowing Jesus and the life he offers to knowing the cure for cancer and the life that comes with that knowledge. As Christians who live with the understanding of the Gospel and the freedom that is found in the Cross, we tell others about the love of Christ and live for Jesus not for the sake of being "good enough" to receive what he offers, but because we have already received what he offers. The love of Christ compels us to action and to share his love with others.

Paul goes so far as to emphasize to the Roman believers that because of the Gospel they hadn't just received something good for their life, they had received a completely new life. For the Romans sharing Christ love with others wasn't something they had to work up courage to do... for these believers, their faith had consumed them and their faith showed others the heartbeat behind the Gospel, that Christ died for all not just for some.

ARE you allowing yourself to be compelled by the Gospel?

DAY 3

ROMANS 1:16-17

Let's take a look at the word "righteousness". My first thought while reading this was "well since the righteous live by faith, I must be righteous in order to truly live by faith? How does one become righteous? Volunteering more? Tithing more? I don't even know where to start!". If you're thinking the same thing, here's the perfect answer: NO. While all of those things are wonderful and serve the kingdom of God, they do not make you more righteous. Look at it this way: "righteousness" is blamelessness before God. In other words, "righteousness" is a gift that cannot be returned, lost, broken, or destroyed.

"The righteous will live by faith". OK, so we know we are righteous because it is an unreturnable gift from God, but what does this mean that we will "live by faith"? To put into simpler terms: those who believe and trust in God will also live through God's goodness. Faith requires a response from us and those who take God's gracious offer will receive the Holy Spirit and be made right before God. Now, here's the even cooler part: being made right before God involves a transformation of us turning into the image of Christ!

HAVE you accepted your righteousness (blamelessness) before God?

DAY 4

ROMANS 1:18-32

You can choose to argue with me, but there is no fast food chicken as good as Chick-Fil-A. It is hard to go to any other fast food chicken location (Cane's), without comparing it to what is best. You can go to other places, you can order the best item on their menu, you could even enjoy your meal... it doesn't change how great Chick-Fil-A is. Chick-Fil-A knows it's good, it may not like you going to other restaurants but it won't put up a fight to keep you around. When you're the best you don't have to prove you're the best... you just are. Chick-Fil-A won't deny you access to coming back, but when you go to another restaurant, Chick-Fil-A can't give you the world class service or food that they're known for.

The same goes with our relationship with Jesus. Jesus knows nothing could compare to a relationship with him. Even the best that this world has to offer doesn't stand a chance against him. Jesus knows that what is best for you is him, and he wants that for you, and although he may be jealous for you, he doesn't have to consistently prove his greatness (he did it on the Cross). If you stray, Jesus will always welcome you home, but if you're chasing something else, it's hard for Jesus to give you what only he can. If you know what's best, why chase anything less than?

ARE you settling for something less than the best?

DAY 5

ROMANS 2:1-3

Let me tell you a story about a man named Judge. Judge was chosen to serve in the King's kingdom as a member of the royal court. Overcome with the idea that he was better than everyone else, Judge became self-seeking, and self-righteous. All day long he would call out the wrongdoings of the people in the King's land and report back to the King. Thinking the King would be pleased with his reports, Judge strolled his way into the throne room. However, the King would only respond to Judge's reports with "and what did you do today?" Judge thought that being a member of the royal court would grant his authority and immunity from the King's judgement. But Judge soon learned that he too couldn't escape from the King's fair authority.

We see a similar message in Romans 2; a verse that reminds us of our place in the royal court. What Paul is saying in this passage is this idea that we are in no place to judge—because we aren't God. "God's judgement is based on what is true" (Romans 2:2), and since we know this we are put in our place with Who has the authority to judge. God's judgement is based on truth, while ours is based on our biased opinions. God is the one with the righteous judgement, not us because our sense of judgement is skewed by humanly perspectives.

HAVE YOU been quick to judge? If needed **ASK** for forgiveness.

DAY 6

ROMANS 2:4-11

I wasn't good at kickball growing up. To this day, I get the shivers thinking about elementary school kickball. I loved P.E. but I hated the days when our coach would announce that it was "kickball day." The coach would pick two students to serve as captains, and then the unnecessary, stressful, judgmental selection process would begin. The captains would pick the most athletic or their best friends first (it was great when my friends were selected to be captains because I could be picked first) and work through the selection process until only two students were left, and if you know anything about kickball... you didn't want to be one of those two people.

Sometimes in life we may think we deserve to be last picked. We may think we don't measure up, that we aren't good enough to be picked but here's the cool truth about God, he's already picked you for his team. Where you may not think you're good enough, God sees you as the perfect person for his team. You may feel like you deserve to carry "bad" but God wants to free you up for good. You are on God's team... you have the victory. If you follow Christ, you are on his team, don't be afraid to live as such.

ASK God to help you see that you are worthy to be on his team.

DAY 7

ROMANS 2:12-16

I have a friend, who does not know and follow Jesus, yet at times I'm challenged by the way she lives her life as she reflects Him without even knowing him. She is loving, grace-giving, honest and encouraging. Although she may not know Jesus, her actions reflect his, it's like these things just come naturally to her. I look at what Paul writes in this passage and looking at my friend's life, it makes things a little clearer for me. The Message translates, verses 14-15, "When outsiders who have never heard of God's law follow it more or less by instinct, they confirm its truth by their obedience. They show that God's law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation." There's such hope in this, that the law is not something to necessarily, weigh us down with rules to follow but to help us better live out what we as human beings were designed to do. The law isn't something made to be difficult, but it's also not meant to be ignored. The law is a gift, meant not to just be recognized but to be lived out with an understanding of it.

HOW can understanding the Law help you live better?

DAY 8

ROMANS 2:17-29

If some Average Joe, walked around saying, “I’m an elite athlete”, would you instantly believe them? Probably not. What if that same person wore athletic t-shirts, Nike Pros, and had a 26.2 sticker on their car? Maybe. Now, what if they said they were an athlete and lived like one—with a clean diet, daily workouts, a disciplined lifestyle, and medals from professional events. Of course you would believe them! Same goes with how we, Christians live our lives. We can have a Bible verse in our Instagram profile, post meaningful reflections as social media captions, grab coffee with friends and have Bibles at our tables, and even represent Jesus and the Church through the clothes we wear or items we own, which all are great; however the fruit of our faith is not just to show off but to live out. Our faith is the classic “if you talk the talk, you better walk the walk” message.

Paul gets at the issue that many people say they are Christians, but don’t act on it. The purpose Jesus puts on our lives, calls for the necessity of walking like Him. We walk—it’s an action. Talking can be done by anyone, but the true followers who will impact the world walk.

ASK God to show you how you can better walk out your faith.

DAY 9

ROMANS 3:1-8

We are a broken and imperfect, scraped up, and deceitful. How is it possible for God - full of wisdom, power, and perfection - to love us in our entirety? When Paul is speaking to the Christians in Rome, he paints a seemingly dark, blunt picture:

We, because of sin will always fall short of God's perfection. We all stand guilty before Christ.

But here's the Good News: Thankfully, God is faithful despite our wandering hearts. Christ's faithfulness is not subject to the magnitude of our faith. Even when we are faithless, God remains faithful. He is 100% faithful, 100% of the time. In order to fully accept the free gift God offers us, we have to accept this truth. When Jesus died on the cross and took the sin, shame, and fate of all mankind on His shoulders, He built a bridge between us and God allowing us to be in relationship with Him. It is our free choice whether or not we walk into the relationship. Will we continue in our old habits, or will we call on the strength of the Lord to help us remain faithful to the One who defines faithfulness?

CAN YOU think of a time in your life when you have been unfaithful but God has showed you His undying faithfulness?

DAY 10

ROMANS 3: 9-20

God wants you to have a healthy love of who He has made you to be. No matter how hard we try to obey the law, we will always fall short. Aren't you thankful that our salvation does not come through us perfectly following the law? Instead, it serves as a reminder of our dire need for God's grace and mercy. The Bible says: "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law, rather through the law we become conscious of our sin."

Do you know that the awareness of our sin is actually a positive thing? It has a positive outcome when we allow it to push us towards the truth that we are desperate for His forgiveness. This is a healthy fear of God. How freeing is this? We cannot earn our salvation! Do not allow the enemy to deceive you into being so overwhelmed by your sinfulness that you feel hopeless and helpless. He would love to make you feel condemned and full of shame. Instead, turn from your sin, run to your Maker, and receive the Good News of God's grace and mercy. See how Jesus honors your willing heart and walk in your identity of freedom to be who the Father has made you to be.

HOW does recognizing God's forgiveness, shape your identity?

DAY 11

ROMANS 3:21-26

We receive righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Our identity is fully impacted because of what Christ did at Calvary -taking all of humanity's sin, shame, and darkness upon His shoulders - God sees us as free, justified, and righteous. How radical is the Good News?!

But why did Christ have to die in the first place? Because each of our sins, no matter how big or small they appear, separate us from being in communion with God -Who defines holiness and perfection. We all compare our sins against the next person's. Comparing ourselves with others can either make us feel better about ourselves, or worse. But no matter how great or small the size of the sin may seem, it only takes one sin to keep us away from our perfect God.

Thankfully, the Father sent His Only Son as a sacrifice of atonement for all mankind's sin; to bridge the gap between us sinful humans and to invite us into eternal communion with our Creator. By accepting this free gift of salvation, we can be righteous through faith in Jesus Christ!

HOW about you? **HAVE** you received righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ? Or **ARE YOU** caught up trying to earn your salvation through works?

DAY 12

ROMANS 3:21-26

God has justified us by faith. That's it! He made us right and we did absolutely NOTHING to deserve being saved. Christ died a brutal, to say the very least, death for a people who were unworthy - that's each one of us - and yet we still let pride grow a garden full of weeds and prickly thorns in our hearts. Funny, isn't it? Jesus Christ was the humblest human to walk the earth, yet we - who literally do nothing on our own strength - allow ourselves to get a big head when someone compliments us on our style, our words, or our prayers.

We are commanded to boast solely in the Cross of Christ and yet so many of us are quick to boast about ourselves, and while many of us think that pride makes us look good, it hinders us it keeps us from seeing the good around us and from boasting in the Cross of Christ. Pride hurts. Pride is a stealth, deadly bomb that is waiting to explode. Instead of running from it, look at it in its face, give it to God, and thank Him for the freedom from pride and the freedom to boast in the Cross.

WHAT are you boasting in right now? **WHAT** are some steps you can take to cut out pride in your life? Remember, this is a lesson we will be learning for the extent of our lives!

DAY 13

ROMANS 4:1-15

There is nothing- no good work, no amount of sacrifice, or self-denial, that can justify us before Christ. Being justified by God is to be deemed righteous in the sight of God. Just like Abraham, we can be heirs through righteousness by faith alone! How cool is that?! But in all the excitement that we can receive this same favor, do not forget that it comes through faith alone - not by anything else!

Author Bianca Olthoff, writes, "Faith is being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what He has promised! Faith is facing the facts about whatever we are dealing with AND believing that God is bigger than reality." Let's not complicate it - faith is simply believing God is who He says He is! Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

God is a good Father. He desires his kids to trust him, and depend on him and the provisions he provides to them.

So, **DO YOU** truly believe God is Who He says He is? **WILL** you choose to walk by faith in order that you may be justified before Christ?

DAY 14

ROMANS 4:16-25

According to the Bible, there are three things we should do when God gives a promise. Like Abraham, we need to 1) look to Christ 2) obey His commands and 3) wait for Him to carry out what He has promised.

Did you know that one of the best things you can do is wait on the Lord? Why? There is no doubt waiting on the Lord is trying, confusing, and sometimes painful. But when we wait in a posture of utter humility and dependence on God, not questioning how good of a Father He is, there is where you will see soul transformation. God will not make His children wait in a trial, dry season, or period of silence one second longer than is beneficial. He is doing something radically beautiful in the midst of our wait: He is molding our character to be more like Christ. When we are tempted to question the goodness of the Lord – perhaps when we feel too weary to go on or when we feel our faith is lacking – God is on the move. The Lord we serve does not go back on His word. He is faithful to keep his promise. If you are currently walking through a season of waiting, lean into the Father, hold onto His Word, and wait in expectation as He fulfills His promise.

ARE you treating God's promises to you as opinions or are you treating His promises as facts?

DAY 15

ROMANS 5:1

Imagine, a courtroom and God himself is the sitting judge. God looks down at the cases in front of him, and recognizes that appearing in his court that day is every person on planet Earth who he is having to declare guilty or innocent. He looks at the evidence for each case, and it is clear that every person is guilty. God as judge takes a quick second to think over what to do, and compelled in love for all those that had just been found guilty, he thinks of his son. His son, being perfectly God just like him, was the answer he was looking for. God, the judge, the father chooses to have his son take the punishment that the whole world deserved. With his Son taking the punishment, he looks at every guilty person and declares them innocent. In the eyes of the Father, justice has been served. After finding everyone innocent, the judge stands up... looks at the crowd of recently declared innocent people and says, "come over tonight for dinner, you are now a part of my family."

This doesn't make sense, guilty should not be made innocent, let alone those appearing in front of a judge shouldn't be welcomed over to his house for dinner, but this is exactly what happens when we are justified. Our faith in Christ, and what he did on the Cross allows us to walk free from guilt and allows us peace with God.

THANK GOD for your freedom.

DAY 16

ROMANS 5:2-5

“Grace isn’t about having a second chance; grace is having so many chances that you could use them through all eternity and never come up empty. Grace is when you finally stop keeping score and when you realize that God never was, that his game is a different one entirely.” - **SHAUNA NIEQUIST**

We have a standing in grace as those who love Jesus and have found salvation in the Gospel. We begin our journeys with Christ recognizing this grace but as we continue to pursue holiness and righteous obedience, our focus pursuit sometimes leads us to forgetting grace because we feel we need to earn. We don’t just begin in grace we stand in grace. Grace leads to rejoicing, no matter what comes our way in life through grace we can still rejoice. It’s hard to remember grace in the middle of suffering and yet, through suffering we see deep grace. Suffering grows us, it allows us to be made better, suffering grows our character. Someone once said, that “grace is an even better gift than forgiveness because it allows us to forgive and not forget, in order that we could be better than what we were before.” As we grow we better anticipate the opportunity to experience God’s full goodness. Grace is a gift.

HOW have you seen grace on display in your life?

DAY 17

ROMANS 5:6-11

I was one of those brave souls who chose to stay awake during their wisdom teeth operation. After the operation I felt great, I went home and instead of laying down like I was supposed to I maintained normal-ish activities and after a few hours of “doing me” I passed out, full collapse, and landed on my head. I woke up on a stretcher in an ambulance, spent a few hours in the ER and was kept in the ICU for observation that night to make sure nothing happened to my brain as a result of the fall. Over the course of the next month or so, I never felt weaker. In the process of recovery, I couldn’t do much, but I had so many people helping me and taking care of me. I had nothing to offer them and yet they were caring for me.

At our weakest, Christ took care of us, although we had nothing to give, Christ loved us. What a beautiful thing to know that even at our lowest, Christ loved us and gave to us and because of him, we have friendship with him! Through our friendship with Christ we have so many open doors, that we get the chance to walk through, but it’s not because what we’ve done... but what he did for us.

WHAT doors does friendship with God open?

DAY 18

ROMANS 5:12-14

Pastor Louie Giglio is quoted saying, “Jesus didn’t come to make bad people, good. Jesus came to make dead people alive.” Jesus came to bring life, not a stack of self-help books, and while self-help books can be a good thing, self can’t help self, if self is dead.

It’s like this: how can you attempt to even ride a bike, if you don’t have a bike to ride. From the original sin of Adam and Eve, death reigned. While the law was good to “name and claim” sin and to set standards to help avoid sin, because of sin death still reigned. Jesus didn’t come to destroy the law he came to fulfill the law. Even in life, we have rules and standards but instead of just calling out sin, they are in place to help embrace the full life that Jesus brings. Although people may be physically alive, if sin reigns, spiritual death is present. Jesus is life (John 14:6), and came so that we might have life. We receive that life through Jesus, and are given an instruction manual called the Bible, to help us live it to the fullest. Have you received life that only Jesus can give? Are you living life to its fullest potential? Jesus wants you to.

PRAY and **ASK** Jesus to help you embrace the life he gives.

DAY 19

ROMANS 5:15-17

A few months ago, I had the chance to meet a man named Blessing. Blessing, was Ethiopian and one day while leading a team of missionaries telling others about Jesus, Blessing, his wife and the missionary team that was with them were arrested and sent to prison because a bystander did not like what they were saying and reported it to the police as “political activism.” From their first night in prison, and throughout their time the group would go to bed every night singing worship songs. Blessing made friends with the guards and asked if on Sunday’s he was allowed to preach a church service in the prison court yards the guards said no but he was allowed to preach from his cell block. Through church services and their time with other prisoners, 13 people came to know Jesus and the life he offered because of Blessing and the team. As Blessing told me his story, he couldn’t stop smiling. He told us that even in the hardest moments in prison, it was hard to not find joy, he knew God was with him.

Theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, once said, “freedom is a relationship.” Freedom doesn’t come from our circumstances, nor from what this world could offer us. The freedom that Blessing had in prison is the same freedom that we get the chance to receive, and it comes from a relationship with Jesus.

HOW can you live out of the freedom that comes from relationship with Jesus?

DAY 20

ROMANS 5:18-21

“When it’s sin versus grace, grace wins, hands down. All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that’s the end of it. Grace because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life – a life that goes on and on and on, world, without end.” – **ROMANS 5:20-21 (MSG)**

I loved playing softball in high school but when it came time to play one team in particular... I wanted to stay home, fake sick, run away do anything but show up for the game. In my four years of high school, we never won against the team, I could imagine that even to this day, years out of high school that my school still has yet to win. This team was fast, they were strong, they were united, and they had no problem running up the score on us. There was truly no competition.

Sin can’t win! When it comes to the competition of sin versus grace there really is none. Grace is a fast, strong and united team. Nothing you have done or will do could hinder the love and grace of God in your life. Grace abounds. Throughout history and in times to come, we have seen grace win and we will continue to see grace win.

DEFINE grace. **TAKE TIME** to thank God for grace.

DAY 21

ROMANS 6:1-2

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”

We've all done or seen that science experiment- you know, the one where you pour water into a cup followed by oil. What ends up happening? To our surprise, the two liquids do not mix and stay as separate entities. Let's say that in this context, oil is sin and water is righteousness. The oil sits on top of the water, just like how sin can consume our lives. It distracts us from living like Christ. Life is not suitable to have two masters: Jesus and sin. Don't you want your cup overflowing with righteousness, instead of being covered by sin?

Christ has bestowed upon us the gift of freedom from our sins. His grace reveals the true righteousness within us. Of course, we will still sin. But Jesus continually frees us from this bondage because he knows that trying to combine a Christ-like life with a deeply sinful nature does not naturally mix, and instead inhibits you.

ASK God to help you live your life fully and freely for His Kingdom, giving your sinful desires over to Him.

DAY 22

ROMANS 6:3-11

Although it is a fact of life, many people fear death and will fight their hardest to avoid it at all costs. This may be an instinct of mankind, but through Jesus' resurrection, we also have hope in death. It brings a gift that is sometimes hard to see, and often quite contrary to how modern times portray it: eternal life. We cannot handle death on our own, but through Christ we do not fear death, and the first step to this is putting Jesus ahead of ourselves during our time on earth.

Have you ever heard the saying, "a dead man cannot be offended"? Dying to ourselves allows Christ to change our hearts- our selfish desires for money, pleasure, and power or our worldly concerns about being our true, Godly selves start to dissipate, and a bold Christ-like love for ourselves and others starts to shape our lives. Joy comes from living not bounded to sin and death, lost in the waves of life, but from committing your life to Jesus who unconditionally loves you. We are not designed to live striving for temporary happiness that will ebb and flow in and out of our lives.

WHAT does it look like to have hope?

DAY 23

ROMANS 6:12-14

What happens when a dog has two masters calling her? Master A, her owner, calls loudly, while simultaneously Master B calls while holding a treat. The confused dog will not know who to obey. As time passes and the tension grows, she may eventually pick the master with the enticing treat and go to him. Unknown to the dog, her true master had a large dinner waiting for her in her bowl. Sometimes in our lives, we act like this bewildered dog, forgetting who our true master is when we are too easily tempted by another. Worldly masters come in all shapes and sizes: careers, sex, money, time, people- anything or anyone but God. None of these things are bad- we can serve God through our career, sex is great in marriage, our loved ones are beautiful gifts, but the question still stands: what masters us? It is easy to let something good, turn into an idol and lead us away from God.

We are forever servants of God. He has made us and truly knows what is best for our lives, more than any dollar amount or other person could determine.

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” **PSALM 139:23-24**

ASK God to search your heart, and determine who your master really is today.

DAY 24

ROMANS 6:15-23

Our past could be a combination of many kinds of sin, but what matters today is that we are not controlled by our past. Jesus Christ gives us the gift of being renewed in him, which gives us hope for the future and eternal life. As humans, we are not perfect. God knows this and wants us to break free from the chains of our past sins. Giving your past guilt, shame, and mistakes over to God and letting them go could be difficult, but be confident that God will never give up on you. If you feel like you might fall back into temptation, look to verse 21 of this passage, “What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of?”. We need reminders, and when internalizing God’s Word, repetition is our friend.

Living life with Christ could mean that you need to surrender to him what you struggle with each and every day. We cannot imagine what continual surrender will bring, but we know it is worth it.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” **1 CORINTHIANS 2:9**

TAKE TIME to thank God in prayer today for the eternal life He has given you through Jesus Christ and His faithfulness to you in all seasons of your life, and for his promises that you’ve yet to see fulfilled.

DAY 25

ROMANS 7:1-6

Paul helps us to understand that God's law is good, but it's our relationship to the law that makes it either a tutor or a torturer. When enslaved to sin, sin uses the law to destroy all your hope of being good enough and the painful reality is that sin is right. However, when you are a child of God, the law shepherds you, reminding you of Jesus who came to die for your sins, fulfilled the law, and kept it perfectly on your behalf so that you could receive the benefits of Jesus being your righteousness. In Christ, you are alive to live a life of joyful imperfect obedience to God. In sin, you are dead to God's mercy and the life of grace he invites you to enjoy.

I don't know where you are with God at this moment, but when you're in Christ, God relates to you with grace and mercy. Yes, you're going to mess it up, and God mourns over your sin. God mourns, because he wants Jesus to be your greatest delight. God's good commands lead and tutor us in how to live a life of joy. Come now and lay aside the heavy burden of sin. Place faith in Jesus as your only hope and as your salvation. Repent of your sin and rest on the bedrock truth of Romans 5:1, that you have peace with God through Christ.

FOCUS on enjoying Jesus' unending love for you today.

DAY 26

ROMANS 7:7-12

In Romans 7:1-6, we spent some time celebrating how Jesus frees us from sin and helps us to see God's law rightly as a tutor. Remember that when enslaved to sin, the law seems torturous to us. Here in Romans 7:7-12, we see the new way in which we get to understand all of God's commands (The Bible uses many words to describe God's law, here are some: precepts, commands, your word, instruction and statutes).

What role does the God's law play in the life of a Jesus' follower? Paul's explanation is simple, God's law helps you to see what is right and what is wrong, and it tutors us on how to live accordingly. Later, in verses 10-11, Paul pulls back the curtain and reveals that when you are enslaved to sin, sin deceives you into thinking that if you kept the law perfectly (which you can't), you'd be righteous - this is what it means when it says, "The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me." How do you learn to embrace God's law as a gracious tutor? I can't explain it, but I can show you...

Go to Psalm 119. It's the longest poem in the Bible, celebrating the beauty of God's word. **TAKE A FEW MINUTES** this morning and read through Psalm 119? **LISTEN** to the Psalmist praise God for his word. **PRAY** that your heart would see God's word this way.

DAY 27

ROMANS 7:13-20

Paul gives us a peak into the daily rhythms of being a Jesus follower. At times the war within us rages wildly, but take heart, you aren't alone in the fight. Reality is, you are made new in Christ, yet you still live in a fleshly body with fleshly desires. Becoming a follower of Jesus (I'm sure as you've realized) doesn't mean all your sinful desires disappear! There is irresolvable tension here. We are not yet what we will be, yet we are always becoming what God created for us to be. God is working in us, teaching us to daily feel and know our deep need of him and to find our deepest joy and delight in him alone.

Lets get practical here, what are we to do when we sin? Here is a simple acronym: CAR

CONFESS your sin to God (Ps. 51) + to someone else (Prov. 28:13).

ASK for grace to change (Ps. 32).

REMEMBER the Gospel (Rom. 5:1-8). Remember who you are (Eph. 1:3-13).

Father, you understand the battle within me. There is nothing I can hide from you. I confess I have sinned against you and that I have sought to find lasting joy in worthless things. I need your grace to change, supply me with your persevering power. Help me to remember that I am yours and help me to rest in your unfailing love.

DAY 28

ROMANS 7:21-25

What do you see when you gaze into your own heart? Paul examines his heart he finds that there is a fight going on inside, between the law of God and the law of his mind that makes him captive to the law of sin. Paul is talking about walking in the Spirit and walking in the Flesh, we see this later in Romans 8. Even as a mature Jesus follower, Paul still experiences the tension between the Holy Spirit living in him and the fact that he is captive to the fleshy body that he lives in.

If you look inwardly and see tension between sinful desires and Godly desires within you, it's a sign that you're doing this whole Christian life thing correctly! Look at Paul, he says about himself, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Who delivers Paul from his own sinful desires? Jesus Christ.

Learn from Paul here. When you have a sinful desire, talk to God, tell him about this desire and that you know that it's wrong, and that you don't want to follow through. **PRAY AND REMIND YOURSELF**, Jesus always provides a way of escape. It won't be easy, because sin is tempting! Sin can never deliver on the promise it makes. Jesus always delivers on the promise he makes. Desire is not sin, but following through on it is.

DAY 29

ROMANS 8:1-8

If someone were to ask me “What is the most foundational truth of your faith?” I would say to them, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Just sit for a moment and read Romans 8:1, 5 times over. Really read it 5 times.

Think about what you’ve read about in the past chapters of Romans, starting in Romans 5, how you have peace with God, Romans 6, true freedom in Christ, Romans 7, how the law of God is good and your tutor and now this – There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. This is amazing news! This is, in fact, the good news of the Gospel! And it gets better, verses 2 and 3 explain that God has set you free from sin, he has paid the debt of your sin, a debt you could not pay so that you can live in true freedom through faith in Jesus.

When you’re tempted to feel condemned by your sin, **READ VERSES 3 AND 4**, rest in these truths, that God declared an end to sin’s control over you by giving Jesus on the cross, Jesus satisfied all the demands of the law and Jesus calls you now to set your mind on him, and this is what you will find – life and peace (verse 7). The truly good life, is not a life filled with things, but a life in which you have peace with God and live in freedom.

DAY 30

ROMANS 8:9-11

I'm sure that many times you have asked yourself, "Can I really change?" When you feel lost amid the fight against sin, the truth that Paul explains here, is what you need to hold on to... verse 11, "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the Dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you." Meditate on this verse for a couple minutes.

This verse is saying that when Jesus is in your life, you have REAL hope that you can change. Through Jesus, you have REAL power to change. The power that resides within you through faith in Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, is the same power that resurrected Jesus from the dead. It is the same power that helped Jesus to remain faithful and sinless, the same power that Jesus relied on as he made his way, through excruciating pain, to the cross.

The Christian life isn't about picking yourself up by your bootstraps, it's about, whether you feel strong or weak, relying on the power that God supplies. Here's the beautiful part, God's power enables you to be fully satisfied and to delight in the greater promises of God. The power that truly vanquishes sin, is the power of a great affection. God is calling you to enjoy something so much better than sin - **HE IS CALLING YOU TO ENJOY JESUS CHRIST.**

DAY 31

ROMANS 8:12-17

Family is a loaded word, it produces in some of us joy, in some of us pain and in others, indifference. Nevertheless, when God saves us from our sin and makes us new, he doesn't save us to a lone-ranger lifestyle, he saves us to a family. Beforehand, we were enemies of God, rebelling against him, yet now, through faith in Christ, he seats us at his table of grace. God even calls those who are his, "his children."

You see, there is a difference in how family members interact with one another, compared to how you would interact with a business partner. This has major ramifications, because be honest for a moment, often you and I treat God as our boss and not as our Dad. Often, we think that the Christian faith is this big contract, "If I stop doing this, then God will give me this."

Paul reminds us here, as children of God, we cry out to God, "Father! Help me! Have mercy on me! Show me grace! Teach me the way I should go!" Mercy is God's compassion and kindness. Grace is God's underserved favor and salvation. Help is what God loves to give to his children, for in it, he instructs you in the way you need to go. **DON'T GO BACK TO SLAVERY OF A CONTRACT, YOU'RE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE, THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE SPIRIT, AND HE CALLS YOU HIS OWN.**

DAY 32

ROMANS 8:18-25

The verse 17 of yesterday's text preps us for what we read today, that part of being in God's family involves suffering. Suffering comes in many forms, its physical, emotional, the result of something we've done or because of something that's been done to us, and sometimes it's for a season or chronic. In every moment of suffering, we learn that one day, all suffering will come to an end. Paul says that the suffering we experience now is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to us, but what does that mean? It means, as the text explains, that the suffering we experience, although real and painful, is used by God to create in us endurance, which creates in us character, which creates in us an unshakeable hope (Romans 5:3-5).

Our bodies and minds yearn to be made new, to not feel the pain or suffering we endure, but friend, take heart - it is not purposeless. Jesus is so concerned with your suffering that he sends his Holy Spirit to comfort you. The hard truth is this, the purpose of the suffering God allows to happen in your life is to make you more like his son, Jesus Christ, and to shape what you yearn and hope for... we are to yearn to be with Christ. **READ PSALM 40 AND PRAY THROUGH PSALM 40:11** - God will never restrain his mercy from you, his steadfast and unfailing love will preserve you.

DAY 33

ROMANS 8:26-30

Some suffering is so intense, it renders us speechless. We don't even feel the strength to open our mouths and speak to God. Beloved, you are not alone. The Spirit, who knows the pain you feel is with you, he knows your very thoughts before you think them, your words before they are spoken, your days before they had yet been lived. Read verse 26 again, He helps us in our weakness... when we don't know what to pray, he prays to God on our behalf. And as if this weren't enough, we find the anchor that holds us fast in every trial, verse 28, "... we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

JUST REST FOR A MOMENT AND CONSIDER THESE WORDS: Every ounce of pain, every tear-filled sleepless night, every heartbreak, every broken marriage, every moment of anxiety, depression, shame, God works ALL things together for good. It doesn't mean the pain goes away, or that the aching goes away, or that the fight against the darkness will be easy, but in ALL of it, Jesus is with you and at the end of time, when you meet your savior face to face, you will be able to say, "You have worked this together for my good. My greatest good, is that I'm with you, Jesus, in glory and perfection." He is with you. He will make this trial do good unto you.

DAY 34

ROMANS 8:31-39

Romans 7 and 8 is intense - and this passage is where everything comes together. Paul reflects on everything he has written so far in Romans, "What shall we say to these things?" Think for a moment, if the Gospel is the power of the God for salvation, in which he takes people who didn't know him, and makes them his own, remedying the greatest problem we have - sin - through his son, Jesus, making peace with God, giving us the Holy Spirit, who teaches us how to live lives of freedom and how to understand the law. And then, declares us not condemned, makes us part of his family, promises to use every ounce of our pain to produce holiness in us and to do good unto us - we can only conclude one thing. In Christ, God is for us and nothing can thwart what God has called us to do! Especially, nothing can separate us from God pouring his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

PRAISE GOD FOR THIS GREAT GOSPEL! This is indeed, the greatest story ever told. Let's bring this home, because not every day feels like a victory march. Some days - most days - is difficult, step-by-step faith in Christ. However, these truths still hold firm. In our worst and best days, Christ is with you, working in you and your circumstances to do good unto you. The greatest good he can give you, is himself and so he gives his son, Jesus Christ.

DAY 35

ROMANS 9:1-9

Paul was a man who exemplified a tremendous amount of love for others and that can be seen in writings like this. Bear in mind that Paul is speaking here about the same Jewish people that he really didn't have the best relationship with. Despite the amount of pain these people had caused him, Paul loved them so much that he says that he wishes he could give up everything he has to take their place. He was willing to give up his good for their sake, a display of love and forgiveness.

Many of us fall short in our efforts to love those around us well even in regards to the simple day in and day out activities. We may get angry or frustrated and lash out towards a coworker, friends or family member, amongst a number of other shortcomings. We can learn a lot about what it looks like to not only forgive others, but to love those who wronged us, by examining what it is that allowed such behavior for Paul. Paul loved the Lord and He simply wanted to mirror the heart of God who forgave and loves us. Imagine how much happier, brighter and better off our world would be if everyone modeled a love that looked like Paul and God's.

HOW can you better grow a heart of forgiveness and love towards others like Paul displayed?

DAY 36

ROMANS 9:10-19

There's a pretty good likelihood that at some point in life, if you haven't already, you will face some challenges, some difficulties, some things that may not necessarily feel great. There's a good chance, you'll get to a point where you are overwhelmed with distress, difficulty and sorrow and it may seem in that moment like there's really no hope, it may feel like God has forgotten you, that he is far away and unconcerned with what is happening to you. In these moments, we have a tendency to want control, to make "better" things happen, but what if in these moments God was working something greater out?

We don't see the big picture, but we can rely on the bigness of our Father. God has the ability to give and take away, he created the heavens and the earth, he calms storms and brings the dead to life, he is the beginning and the end, he is our Savior, and the Lord of Lords... who are we to think that if we were given the ability to control situations and outcomes that we would do a better job than God? In tough moments we don't need control of situations we need to depend on the one who has control.

ASK God to teach you how to trust him, and even in the most difficult moments to remind you that he is in control.

DAY 37

ROMANS 9:20-33

This past summer I got the chance to go to Berlin, Germany. Walking the city, it wasn't hard to notice that scattered throughout the cobblestone streets were gold plates cemented into the ground. After noticing several I asked a friend who lived in the city what these plates were all about, she went on to explain that a local artist wanted to help the city remember, remember those who lost their lives during the Holocaust. The artist had written the names of those who lost their lives, their year of birth and death, and where they died. The artist positioned their stones in front of the homes that they had lived in. The artist wanted the city to remember, and as a visitor to the city it was hard to forget the lives lost. It is good to remember.

I think we struggle to remember significant moments sometimes. We get going in the rush of life, and we forget that we were changed through these moments. It is good to remember, even the hard things, it is good to remember because both good moments and hard moments change us. Remembering moments, also help us to recognize the significance of the moments we are currently in. Remembering how God has moved in our lives, can help us recognize how God is currently moving.

TAKE TIME to remember how God has moved in your life.

DAY 38

ROMANS 10:1-8

Imagine trying to climb a mountain, not one with a nicely carved out path but a solid stone face, with no equipment and no gear. You keep trying to climb, and with every attempt you are met with failure. You stand with your feet firmly on the ground and look up at the mountain, frustrated that you've yet to find a way to climb, when up walks Jesus. He looks at you, then looks at the mountain and starts his climb. He climbs with ease, making your difficulties look like a piece of cake. He comes back down the mountain, and says to you "do you want to know the secret to climbing?" In that moment you have two options: continue trying to climb in your strength or listen to Jesus, someone who knows the secret to climbing. You recognize that your attempts have failed so as Jesus waits for your answer you nod your head. Jesus tells you the secret, and you realize that climbing the mountain successfully wasn't as easy as you thought but when you give Jesus' way a try, it works.

In our own strength we can't achieve righteousness but with Christ's help we can. Righteousness is good. It may not be easy but with Christ its possible.

ASK Jesus today for help in your pursuit of righteousness.

DAY 39

ROMANS 10:9-10

If you want to know if someone does Crossfit, don't worry you won't even have to ask because they'll let you know they Crossfit before you can even get the question out of your mouth. I tried Crossfit once, and after a forty-five-minute class I went home fell on my kitchen floor right near the air-vent doing my best to not pass out. If you are looking at getting healthy, you should Crossfit. If you are looking for a solid community of physical accountability you should Crossfit. People who Crossfit are quick to talk about it, because they believe in it, and they've seen the progress that they began Crossfit looking for, "Crossfitters" are proud to Crossfit, that's why they're so quick to talk about it.

When we are passionate about something, we talk about it. When we believe in something we talk about it because it becomes part of us. As Paul is discussing the concept of salvation he writes that it is one thing to believe but it's another thing to confess what we believe. Belief drives confession. Our salvation through belief produces a change of life: in our words and in our action. Our salvation changes us, it is giving Jesus space to become Lord of our life, it means giving all aspects of our life over to him.

DO YOUR words and actions reflect what you belief about Jesus?

DAY 40

ROMANS 10:11-21

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” - **ACTS 1:8**

How amazing is it that we have a God that loves us so much that He gives all of us the opportunity to be in relationship with Him? How amazing is it that God paid the price for our sins by sending His son to the cross on our behalf? How amazing is our God? Paul tells us that the same Lord is Lord of all, it doesn't matter what you have done or where you live... Whoever calls on His name will be saved. God isn't just for a few but for all. Whether it be the busy streets of New York City or the middle of Africa, God doesn't have geographical favorites. Whether it be close friends, complete strangers, or the crazy family members that make family gatherings “interesting,” God doesn't have social favorites. God's desire is that all may know him, and he uses us to serve others, helping others to experience the Gospel and it's saving power!

HOW can you share the Gospel with others today?

DAY 41

ROMANS 11:1-10

Grace is central in God's action here, and it has nothing to do with deeds prescribed by the law. If it did, grace would not be grace."

- **ROMANS 11:6 (VOICE)**

In Romans 10 Paul makes reference to the Old Testament writings of the Prophet Isaiah concerning Israel, who we know as God's chosen people. Romans 10:21, "But of Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'" Even as God's chosen people, Israel didn't always have their act together. They messed up, and even when they "abandoned God," God never abandoned them. Romans 11:1, "I ask, then has God rejected his people? By no means!"

Even when we are faithless, God remains faithful. When we feel like we are far from God, when we feel like we've messed up, or really that there isn't much hope for us, God sees things differently. While our actions are a result of our faith, our belief and our being, our actions are not the deciding factor for how God views us, no matter how much we've messed up God is still desiring relationship with us, when God thinks of us he doesn't see our mess ups, he sees grace. You're never too far gone for God's love. God's offers us grace daily, are you willing to receive it?

IS there an area in your life you need forgiveness and healing? Take time today to confess and receive the grace that God offers.

DAY 42

ROMANS 11:11-24

“You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.” – **GENESIS 50:20**

Paul kicks off Romans 11, by answering a question, he himself poses. “I ask, then has God rejected his people? By no means.” He continues this answer throughout Romans 11, explaining that even though it may have not seem that God was moving and working in the life of Israel and in the hearts of Gentile believers, when what seemed like “chaos” was happening, that God was moving and working together something greater. Even when nothing seemed to be happening, in mercy, God remained faithful. God was working things out so not just some would know the salvation of the Gospel but that all would know the salvation.

We don't have to know everything, we don't have to understand everything to be able to trust that God is working, in fact it is hard for us as human beings to know what God is up to. How can a finite being understand and infinite God? Hindsight is helpful to see how God has moved in our lives, but clarity in the moment is not always possible. When things seem chaotic, and when it is difficult to see God on the move, trust God, knowing that even though you may not be able to understand “why” something is happening, that God is working and on the move.

REFLECT on the times you've seen God move in your life.

DAY 43

ROMANS 11:25-36

The love of God is hard to describe, it's difficult to put into words. It is something so vast, so extraordinary, so beyond our comprehension, that potentially we could partially describe the love of God but we could never fully put into words what God's love is like. I may not be able to accurately describe it, but what I can tell you is it's good. His love is full of grace and mercy, even when we do nothing to deserve it we still get the chance to receive it. God wants to give us the best, and he knows that he alone can only offer us the best. Only he can open the door to allow us to experience true love.

The Message Translation paraphrases Roman 11:32, "... we all experience what it means to be outside, so that he (God) can personally open the door and welcome us back in." And while now with an understanding of what it means to be "back in" experiencing the love that Christ offers, we also have an understanding as to what it means to be on the outside. How do you relate to those who have yet to experience the love of God? Are your words and actions reflecting the welcoming love of God to those who have yet to experience it?

TAKE TIME to pray for those who have yet to experience God's welcoming love.

DAY 44

ROMANS 12:1-2

The aim of life is to fully worship. When I normally think of worship, I think of a Sunday morning where everyone is worshipping next to each other. This often enough leads me to forget that worship is an act of sacrifice in every sense of our lives. Worship is surrender. This piece of scripture reminds God's children to present ourselves as living sacrifices, to live in a constant state of spiritual worship.

How do I live in a constant state of worship? By taking steps each day to be less like the world and more like Jesus. Worship does not always mean having your hands raised in the air. It is a simple surrender each day, telling Jesus "This life is Yours, not mine. Open my eyes to what you have for me today. I will keep my hands open." Life becomes different when glorifying and worshipping God is in the forefront of your mind. It starts today, with an act of surrender to something that is not fully allowing you to worship.

PRAY AND ASK the Lord to reveal to you what you need to surrender today.

DAY 45

ROMANS 12:3-5

Strengths and Weaknesses –a common question that one may ask you. Whether it is in a job interview, or just a question from your friend. This question speaks volumes to what your heart looks like. Am I living with a sober mind when looking at myself? We are thinking more highly of ourselves than we our supposed too, and that is what Paul is preaching to us through this Scripture. It is easy to say our strengths and it is harder to say our weaknesses. Our strengths and our weaknesses tie together to create redemptive grace stories.

How do I look at myself with sober judgment? By living with ultimate humility. It starts with being honest about your strengths and weaknesses, that is true humility. Once we live in a state of humility, it is easier to be with the community of people standing next to you. Everyone can provide a unique gift to the Kingdom and to each other when realizing our assignment from Jesus. Your strengths and weaknesses are both a gift to you and your community. Today, it starts with being aware of our strengths (what stirs your heart and what you are passionate about) and your weaknesses (what you may need to work on). It all starts today!

JOURNAL your strengths and weaknesses. If you feel like you do not have specific passions, pray for God to show you what brings you the most joy.

DAY 46

ROMANS 12:6-8

The spiritual gifts that have been given to us are gifts from God and they should be used to exalt Him in different ways. Are we using those gifts to the fullest potential? How can we start noticing and exemplifying others spiritual gifts? In reality, we all have something to give to this world, and we all need the voice and guidance of what others have learned. Often enough, we are spending too much time noticing our own gifts and not spending enough time being in communion with those who have different gifts than us. How do we break that chain?

I have walked through a lot of my life only being aware of myself and what I was good at. I've begun to notice that there is greater joy and greater value in recognizing and calling out the gifts of others. It's good to recognize the good in others. We need to spend more time seeing what stirs people's passions. Have you noticed how someone has been serving recently? Are you aware of the gifts of those around you? How are you encouraging others in their gifts today?

Today, find someone who you see serving well. **ENCOURAGE** them and be aware of their strengths.

DAY 47

ROMANS 12:9-13

To love rightly, we can see the evil in someone not like the evil, and still not having to reject the good that is in them. To our brothers and sisters that are surrounding us, we must be aware when they fall, and how we can properly show them real love. Real love seeks relationship, we must be rooted in community and share warm acceptance with those surrounding us. Paul directly tells us to let those around us have the credit, and to lift them up.

One of the things that sets us most apart from this world is how we treat others in certain situations. How can I spend my days consistently rejoicing in hope? When you rejoice in hope, then you can be patient in affliction, and that will lead you towards being constant in prayer. These are rules we should live by, especially when experiencing trials. God has what is best for you in mind, but often enough, we are too fixated on the problem and not the process. Love God, love yourself, and love your neighbor as yourself today. Walk with people who might not be practicing good in the moment, but you can still consistently seek the good in their heart. Be different today.

Instead of rejecting those who have done evil, write down a list of good things about them. **PRAY** for them to continue to become the good that you see.

DAY 48

ROMANS 12:14-18

This is one piece of Scripture that I have to remind myself of everyday, because it is a calling for Christians, that is almost rare in society today. What we have forgotten most is how to respond to persecution while still showing Jesus. Every piece of these verses intertwines with the other. We must do all of these things. To have a renewed strength and mind from Jesus means we should be walking in this exact truth. We can only bless those who persecute us by caring more about their eternity than how they are persecuting us. If we constantly let our temporary feelings and emotions be in the way of our awareness.

Eternity is crucial, it is as crucial for us as it is for those who have persecuted us. Our focus needs to not be so much on the current circumstance, but more on others circumstances around us. We can only mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice when we are focused completely on their situation. These verses are intertwined when selfless character is involved. Having sympathy for others is how you can start today. You will not always agree with what people do, but that should never mean you should stop loving them.

HAVE you isolated yourself from someone who has persecuted you? **HOW** can you show them selfless love today?

DAY 49

ROMANS 12:19-21

Paul has been developing a theme throughout Romans 12, living in relationships with one another: how we respond to others, how we help those in conflict, and how to love those who persecute us. Paul continually is trying to implement the importance of how we respond to people, especially to difficult people. We cannot control what people may say or do to us, but we can control how we respond. Spurgeon said it like this, “We either overcome evil or are overcome by evil.” Some days it seems easier to respond to evil by being evil, that feels natural and our flesh agrees with it. We must pursue understanding, seek forgiveness, and continually be concerned about the eternity of our brothers and sisters.

There are situations and relationships that are truly out of our control. We think we can change things, make things better, and help people “understand” that we know “best,” when in actuality we don’t. Our responsibility is not to control situations, or people, or even judge people for that matter... our responsibility is to love. Through our love, God moves. Love is powerful and has the ability to do more than what we could ever think of or imagine.

REACH OUT to someone who may not be the easiest to love, in love today.

DAY 50

ROMANS 13:1-2

Whether you like it or not, we are subject to our governing authorities and must respect them. No matter what your political preference is, God is the one who grants governing powers their authority. Paul makes it clear that those who resist their government will be judged.

As Christians, we can respectfully disagree with the government without incurring judgment. Rioting against who God has put into place is inexcusable in light of this passage. Imagine when Paul was writing this letter - he was living under Nero! The same Nero who lit Christians on fire and used them as lanterns. It's even believed that Nero was the one who ordered Paul to be beheaded and Peter to be crucified. We are left with no excuse. Christians are to be law abiding citizens - the most upright in their communities, and even if we don't necessarily see eye to eye with our governing authorities we should seek to love them, and we should pray for them. We should lead by example in the matter in which we conduct ourselves.

DO YOU need to change the way you respond to the government's authority?

DAY 51

ROMANS 13:3-7

Benjamin Franklin wrote “in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” Admittedly, no one likes to pay taxes. It’s easy to grumble about it and become bitter. Who wants to see part of their paycheck being taken out by the government? But Paul clearly writes “pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed.” This is an echo of what Jesus commanded in the Gospels.

Paying taxes is a way of respecting our governing authorities. Whether you are in agreement with how the money is spent, it is something that simply must be done. Unfortunately, it’s not uncommon for people to cheat on their taxes. It’s just not biblical. Paying taxes, honors the government. Showing honor is a chance to show both love and respect. Whether that’s true or not, both Paul and Jesus were very clear about our responsibility. There is no exception to the rule.

DO YOU need to change your attitude towards taxes?

DAY 52

ROMANS 13:8-14 // EPHESIANS 4:22-24

In this passage, Paul reiterates what Jesus taught - love your neighbor as yourself. Paul quotes from the Ten Commandments, reminding his readers that these commandments relate to our own relationships with other people. If we love one another, we will not commit these sins, such as adultery, stealing, coveting, or murdering.

It is only by loving others that we can possibly fulfill this law - and that love comes from Jesus. We'll never be sinless and we'll never love perfectly, but we have the ability to continue to grow in love as we grow in Christ. Later in this passage, Paul writes that we should "clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ." In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul reiterates this idea, saying to put off the old self. Envision taking off a filthy garment and replacing it with a clean one.

It's only by the putting on of Christ, by submitting to Him, that we can love in such a way.

Spend some time with God - **ASK** Him to show you how you can grow in loving others.

DAY 53

ROMANS 14:1-12 // 1 CORINTHIANS 10:23

Paul has some stern words for Christians who are tempted to judge weaker Christians. We're told that we'll have to give an account to God - that means we have no right to insert ourselves into someone else's choices.

As Christians, we have freedom in matters, as long as our choices are not sinful ones. Paul uses the example of one believer eating meat and another eating only vegetables. During that time, some Jewish Christians didn't feel comfortable eating meat. If they couldn't identify that the meat was kosher, they stuck to eating vegetables instead. Even though God had declared everything clean, many Jews felt they still had to eat only what was kosher. Other Christians had no problem eating the meat. Neither party was more correct than the other. They simply walked in the freedom they were given.

That doesn't mean that we can go out and do whatever we feel like doing because we have "freedom." There are some things that are sinful and should not be done. This passage should not be used as an excuse to partake in sinful behaviors. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians, all things are lawful, but not everything is beneficial.

TAKE SOME TIME to think about your daily choices - are there some things you can change that may not be beneficial to you or

DAY 54

ROMANS 14:13-23

So many churches have been torn apart by disagreements over secondary issues. It's out of these types of things Paul writes about that has caused so many denominations to form. Rather than fighting & tearing one another down over preferences of conscience, we should, instead, choose to live in such a way that builds each other up. Don't flaunt your lifestyle choices on social media. Don't let something as trivial as what you eat or drink bring distress on another believer. Don't let it destroy your fellowship. Paul instructs believers to keep their choices between themselves and God. Make the choice daily to live at peace with everyone. The

Kingdom of God is meant to be a matter of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The next time you think of judging someone who is making a different choice (but not a sinful one), offer encouragement instead.

IS there anyone in your life whom you need to reconcile with?

DAY 55

ROMANS 15:1-7 // 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

This passage highlights the importance of knowing Scripture. From it, Paul says, we can find endurance and encouragement from God. The passage in 2 Timothy sums up the importance of the Bible. It is the inspired Word of God and is given to us to build us up. If we want to be like Christ, we have to be willing to read His Word and obey His teachings.

We can only truly know the Word as we read it. Sometimes we just don't think we have the time. Between school, work, and a social life, sitting down to read can feel like the last thing you want to do. If you find it challenging to read the Bible, try listening to an audio version. Filling yourself with God's Word every day will encourage you and energize you in ways you never realized.

START A HABIT - try reading the Bible or listening to it for five minutes a day. Then bump it up to ten and see how your life changes.

DAY 56

ROMANS 15:8-13

Paul encourages the Gentiles – the non-Jewish people – to praise God for His mercy. He finishes this passage with a doxology: “may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Paul was always hopeful in Christ. He knew that through Jesus, we can have hope in this hopeless world. And if we allow ourselves to surrender to the Holy Spirit, we can have hope in abundance.

Life gets hard. A lot. There are some days when it's just hard to even think about getting out of bed. But because of God's great mercy on us, we can have hope. We have hope for eternal life beyond this momentary life on earth. When life gets difficult, we need to always maintain an eternal perspective and the hope we have in the Gospel.

WHAT are some things you can do today to remind yourself that God is in control?

DAY 57

ROMANS 15:14-22

As Paul is wrapping up his letter to the Romans, he sums up his intent. He wanted to correct the Roman church on their doctrine. He first acknowledges their goodness and knowledge but makes it clear that his original intent was to make sure they understood the Gospel. We are saved by God's grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul's entire purpose in life was to spread the Gospel. He wanted to share the name of Jesus where it hadn't been shared. He was so full of the Holy Spirit and gratitude, he was compelled to live his life telling others about Jesus.

Wouldn't it be cool to have the kind of boldness Paul did? You can! The same Holy Spirit that gave Paul power to be bold and courageous is the same Holy Spirit living in you and me. The commandment mentioned most often in Scripture is "fear not." Today choose to fear not, and choose to be bold.

MAKE A LIST of friends you can be intentional about sharing the Gospel with. Then, do it!

DAY 58

ROMANS 15:23-33

Paul had all the plans in the world to come to Rome. He was travelling to Spain and was going to stop in Rome to visit the believers there. Unfortunately, he never made it. You can hear his heart to visit them. He longed to see them.

Sometimes life doesn't go as planned. Paul's plans to go to Rome weren't ungodly or sinful. He wanted to go there to encourage the believers and to be encouraged by them. But God had different plans. Paul was a good and faithful servant to the Lord, yet He didn't give Paul everything he prayed for, even when it was clearly a good thing.

I'm sure there have been times in your life when you had good plans and felt certain they would come to fruition. How you react to those plans failing shows your level of trust in God. If a plan doesn't happen, don't give up on trusting God.

CHECK YOUR HEART...are you harboring any resentment resulting from an unfulfilled plan?

DAY 59

ROMANS 16: 1-16

We read through these 16 verses, and in the midst of Paul's writing he mentioned 26 people by name, followed by a short brief statement about who they are, or what they had done. We don't know much about these people, except for what is said in the brief statement that Paul wrote about them, and yet they were all important enough to be included in Paul's letter to the Romans. What would be said about you? The world may never know the exact impact that the 26 people mentioned in Romans 16 made but we can know that their role was important. Who you are and what you do matters not just for your sake but for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Before the mention of each person, Paul includes one brief command for the Romans, "Greet them." He's saying welcome these people. We don't know if these people were known by the Romans or complete strangers, but we know they were commanded to welcome them. We don't have to know people, or know much about people to show them kindness and to "welcome" them. It seems like something simple, "greet them" and yet, why would Paul write that phrase in these 16 verses 18 times? Sometimes the simplest of things can make the biggest difference.

WHAT would be said of you? **DO** you believe in the power of your presence? **HOW** do you welcome others?

DAY 60

ROMANS 16:17-27

As I study Scripture, I see more and more the importance of unity and oneness in the Church. Teams who win championships aren't always composed of the best players but those who have figured out how to work best as a team. Sociologists view unity under the lenses of functionalism. According to functionalism, society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. Unified teams win championships. Societies who work together maintain a sense of balance. Houses who are divided will struggle to stand but those who are unified are forces to be reckoned with. Paul wraps up his letter with a plea to the Romans: love truth, love unity, and as you pursue truth, pursue it as a unified group.

Paul's heart was that believers would know the truth of the Gospel, that the grace of Jesus would be with them and that they would, as the Message paraphrases, "enjoy the best of Jesus." Division focuses our attention on the conflicts that come with this world, Paul's hope was that believers would not have a narrow focus on the conflict in front of them, rather that they would focus in on the Cross, and that they would build a deep understanding of the Gospel.

HOW can you help others pursue truth? **HOW** can you promote unity in the Church?

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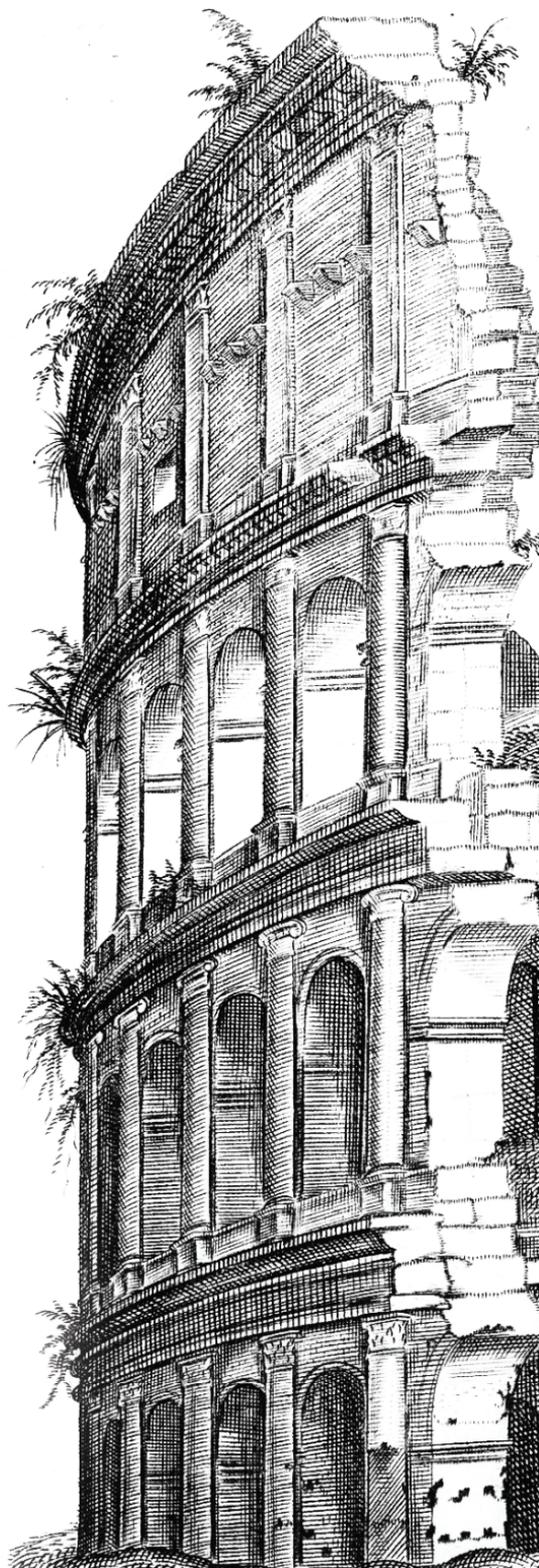
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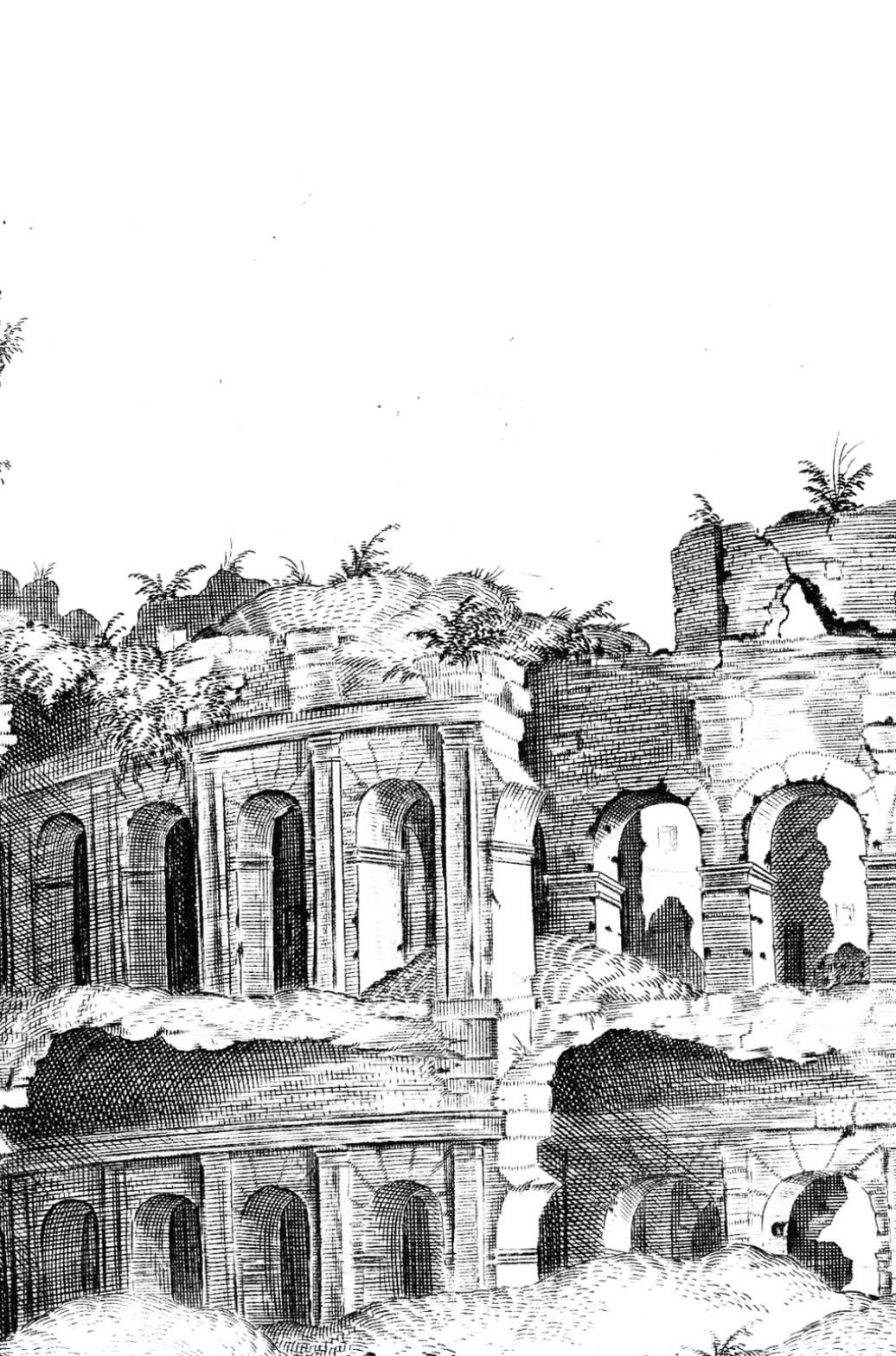
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