

- I. Review of where we have been. View of where we are going.
  - A. In our study on Romans, so far, we have examined all but the last two verses of Romans 5. I choose to attach Romans 5:20-21 to Romans 6 because I believe Paul used them to introduce chapter 6. But before looking at those last two verses of Romans 5, I want to make a quick review of the first 5 chapters. And my purpose for this review is to remind us where we've come from so we can better understand where we're going.
    1. In Romans 1:1-17, Paul introduces himself, his intentions for writing, and the essence of his message – which is succinctly stated in verses 16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."”
    2. In the second half of Romans 1, Paul explains how sin went from a single act of disobedience to the pervasive and destructive evil it is today. And included in his explanation, he tells us how unimaginable sins have become socially accepted behaviors and practices.
    3. From Romans 2:1-3:20, Paul demonstrates that God is perfectly impartial in His judgment on sin and sinners. He explains that all have sinned, and therefore, all are under condemnation. He says that it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law who will be justified. And he explains that religious practices, such as circumcision or baptism, are of value if you obey the Law, but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision or baptism are worthless.
    4. Beginning with Romans 3:21-4:25, Paul tells us that justification has always been and will always be by faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, coupled with faithful obedience to the will and word of God. Paul explains that once we have sinned, we can never do enough righteous deeds to earn justification, because no amount of personal righteousness can pay our sin debt. Only Jesus can, and only Jesus did take our place in paying this debt. Finally, Paul affirms that justification by faith establishes the Law, even though the Law has no power to save us. Therefore, even though the Law cannot save, it remains one of God's declarations of how we are to live.

5. In Romans 5:1-11, Paul explains how justification brings us into a state of being at peace with God, how it reconciles us to God, and how God transforms and sanctifies us through trials and tribulations.
6. And in Romans 5:11-19, Paul tells us that one man's sin spread sin and death to all mankind, and that one man's righteousness spread righteousness and life to all who believe in Jesus and render faithful obedience to God.

B. Prayer

C. Romans 5:20-21 . . . The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, [21] so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. In these two verses, Paul reminds us of the role of the law, the growth of sin, the power of sin to kill, and the power of God's grace – which exceeds the power of sin and is therefore able to restore righteousness in the lives of sinners, and life eternal to those who are eternally dead. And as we know, God chooses to do all fo this through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.
2. Now why does Paul remind us of these truths? Because, if we are to take Romans 6 seriously, we need to know about, believe in, rely on, and use, moment-by-moment and day-by-day, the abundant power of God's grace and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ to overcome sin's power to deceive, to break free from the sin's power to enslave, and to become holy in all our behavior, just as God is holy.

D. With those two verses in mind, I want to remind you that this power is real; I want to remind you that this power always exceeds the power of sin and always enables us to gain victory over sin; I want to remind you that God makes the full force of this power available to you; I want to remind you of the wisdom of relying on this power; and I want to remind you of the outcome of using this power to drive out sin and replace it with godliness. And to do this, I am going to use an OT story that is a classic example of these NT truths.

1. Like our NT salvation, God saved Israel from slavery in Egypt and from the power of Egypt to re-enslave them – by destroying the Egyptian army. And this salvation was, in essence, God's doing.
2. Like our NT sanctification or NT growth in godliness unto Christian maturity, when it came to taking the Promised Land, God's prescribed method for cleansing the Land of evil and making it a holy nation

was for Israel to engage the enemy in face-to-face combat until the evil was driven out or destroyed and godliness was established in its place.

3. However, there were giants in the Promised Land, and great walled cities – like Jericho, and some of the tribes had well-equipped armies. In other words, the task that lay before Israel was extremely difficult. It was physically and mentally demanding, dangerous, and it would require more than a week or a month or a year to complete this task.
  4. But this is where we get one of our best examples of the abundant power of God's grace and the delivering power of Christ's redemptive work for defeating and driving out evil from our own lives and putting Christ-likeness in its place – for just as God promised Israel that He would empower them and go before them and protect them so they could defeat every enemy they had to face, so God promises us the same things for spiritual growth unto Christ-like maturity.
  5. Now if we are going to use this example for us today, then we must ask, "Did God's power work? Did it enable Israel to gain victory over the powerful enemies residing in the Promised Land?" Yes!
    - a. Now if God's power, assistance, and protection enabled Israel to purify the Promised Land, will it enable us to purify our thoughts, desires, fears, attitudes, words, and deeds? Yes!
    - b. Will this task that God has placed before us be an easy task? No! It will be no easier for us than it was for Israel – even though ours is far more an inner mental, emotional, and spiritual battle than an outer physical one.
- E. Now I know we have talked about this before, but I want to remind you what God requires of us as we proceed down the narrow path of transformation and sanctification. And to do this, I will again use Israel as our example.
1. First, Israel had to get personally, thoughtfully, and actively involved in ridding the land of evil and putting godliness in its place. This means that driving out evil and making the land holy unto God would happen to the extent of effort put forth by Israel.
  2. Second, Israel had to trust God implicitly. This is because God's promised power for victory was evident primarily when Israel was preparing for battle or in the heat of battle. Other than that, it is doubtful they saw or felt this manifestation of God's power. They could recall it, but to experience it, they had to prepare, step out in faith, face the enemy, and do the work required to transform the land.

3. Third, Israel had to obey God explicitly. This is because only God's way and God's methods would get the job done. Any way other way than God's way would result in defeat or in becoming friends with the enemy – which would leave evil free to work its will in the land.
4. Fourth, by God's decree, Israel was to take on only one or two enemies at a time. This would keep them from being overwhelmed by the task, and it would help them grow in the ways necessary to hold the land already taken while continuing to take more land.
5. Fifth, when it came to clearing the land, Israel would either be preparing for war or fighting, and they would have to do this until total victory was won and the task completed.
6. Sixth, Israel would have to persevere to the end, and not just to the end of removing evil and replacing it with righteousness, but to the end of their existence in order to prevent evil from coming back in and taking back over.
7. And finally, at the beginning of this process, Israel could not see the end from the beginning. They did not know the fullness or extent of the outcome of obeying God by working this process and persevering to the end. But God's plan, if followed, would progressively transform them – personally and as a nation – into a community that would be godly enough and mature enough to possess the whole land and safeguard its purity for years to come. (Note: Deuteronomy 31:1-8; Exodus 23:29-33)

F. Like Israel, we do not see the end from the beginning, and it is hard to envision what the end will look like when we are starting God's prescribed method of putting sin out of our lives and replacing it with godliness. However, wherever we are along that path of sanctification, it can be helpful and encouraging to be reminded of what we are becoming, even if we do not fully comprehend what the words are conveying. Therefore, I want to share some of the ways God's prescribed method of clearing your life of evil and putting godliness in its place produces rich spiritual growth and blessings for you and for the body of Christ.

1. Over time, your faith and confidence will grow strong.
  - a. And when I say your faith grows strong, I mean your faith in the goodness and faithfulness and Word and will of God – so that you are able to rest in, find comfort in, and be at peace with whatever God does or allows.
  - b. And when I say your confidence grows strong, I mean your confidence in the power, assistance, wisdom, provision, and

protection of God – so that you feel safe, empowered, and confident to press forward in driving sin out and replacing it with godliness.

2. Persevering in this process results in the death of double-mindedness and the building of a single-minded commitment to humble obedience – so that you willingly and even zealously submit to God’s will and word, even when it is personally costly, publicly humiliating, extremely challenging, or life-threatening.
3. As you continue through this process,
  - a. the Word of God becomes ever more precious, because as you persevere, you will increasingly see its power to teach, reprove, correct, and train you in the ways of righteousness;
  - b. the Word of God becomes more alive, because the more purposefully and intently you look into it and practice it, the more you discover God speaking to you about the things you need to know in order to keep growing in godliness;
  - c. the Word of God becomes ever more effective as a tool in resisting temptation and directing your thoughts, desires, words, and deeds God-ward, and especially as you memorize and meditate on it;
  - d. and the Word of God becomes more and more transforming as you continue to measure yourself against who it says God is, what it says about how you are to live.
4. It is through this process of driving out sin, evil thoughts, unholy desires, ungodly fears, and sinful habits, and putting godliness in their place, that you grow in the desire and gain the freedom to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to revere God, and to want to please and honor Him above all others – including yourself, and to love your neighbors as you ought. And when I say you gain the freedom, I mean that you cannot love God supremely, and you cannot love your neighbor as you ought, when you allow known sin to remain in your life. Driving out sin frees you to love as you ought.
5. Over time, your prayer life takes on a life of its own, as it were, so that you want to pray often, and you learn how to pray wisely – about almost everything. In fact, your private and silent prayers will more often be conversations than prayers of request. In other words, your prayers will increasingly become more about fellowship with God than about needs and wants from God.
6. This process nurtures more deeply honest self-examination, ears that want to hear criticism and complaints about your behavior, a heart

that wants to change for God's sake and the good of those around you, and the determination to get back up and continue on in spite of setbacks and failures.

7. This process builds the church life, that is, the recognition that you are not an individual, privately working your way toward God and godliness, but rather you are part of a body and a community of believers. This is what builds true unity, love for one another, support, accountability, and encouragement. And it is what makes church discipline rational and important.
  8. Over time, you will see that Christian service without humility of heart and holiness of life is more detrimental to the Kingdom than no service. And you will see that Christian service not only includes exalted positions in the church or missions or religious organizations, but that it includes the daily, humble, small, and often unseen ways you serve those around you.
  9. This process brings you into a settled joy and anchored inward peace that are not easily lost regardless of the circumstances. And if they are lost, it is usually only for a moment. Why? Because the further you go in being transformed, the more sure you are that your life is safe in God's hands.
- G. And though there is more that can be said, I will conclude by reminding you that under Joshua's leadership, Israel spent approximately thirty years working God's prescribed method for clearing and taking possession of the land.
1. It is my belief that this is as much an example for us as is the rest of Israel's story.
  2. Therefore, rather than despairing over how long this process takes, or rather than giving in to discouragement and giving up, I urge you to learn from Israel's example and persevere to the end in working God's method of driving out sin and putting on godliness.
  3. It may take longer than you would like. You probably will discover you are far more sinful than you thought you were at the start of the process – which means you will have more sin to drive out and replace than you thought you had when you began the process. However, because of God's exceedingly abundant grace and the saving power of Christ's redemptive work, you will make progress and you will gain victory after victory.
  4. Paul confirms the certainty of victory in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 . . . “O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?

[56] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57] but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. And Jude ends his letter with these encouraging words: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy, [25] to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

## II. Communion

- A. What God has graciously done for us through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ goes far beyond giving us eternal life and an eternal home in heaven after we die.
  1. What God has graciously done for us includes giving us new life, here and now, by freeing us from the power of sin and empowering us to die to our old nature and put on Christ-likeness.
  2. He sets us free from our past, so that regardless of what we have gone through or how we have been treated, we can leave that behind and enter into a new life that is not crippled or hampered by our past, but rather is being made into the likeness of Him who created this new life.
  3. And enables us to love like He loves – graciously, patiently, kindly, persistently, and enduringly.
- B. And so today, we come to the Lord’s Table to remind ourselves of all that God has done, and to celebrate what we have been so graciously given – by Him who is holy, by Him in whom there is no darkness, by Him who possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, and by Him who is the giver of every good and perfect gift. And of course, this is all possible because of Him who died and rose again on our behalf.
- C. As we pass around the bread and the cup, if you wish to add your own words of praise and exaltation to these already spoken, please do so.