

BibleGuide

WEEK 6



LEAP OF FAITH
2011

DAY 1

Healed By His Wounds

Isaiah 53

- 1** Who has believed our message?
To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?
- 2** My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot,
like a root in dry ground.
There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance,
nothing to attract us to him.
- 3** He was despised and rejected—
a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.
We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.
He was despised, and we did not care.
- 4** Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.
And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!
- 5** But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.
- 6** All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the Lord laid on him
the sins of us all.
- 7** He was oppressed and treated harshly,
yet he never said a word.
He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.
And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,
he did not open his mouth.
- 8** Unjustly condemned,
he was led away.

No one cared that he died without descendants,
that his life was cut short in midstream.
But he was struck down
for the rebellion of my people.

9 He had done no wrong
and had never deceived anyone.
But he was buried like a criminal;
he was put in a rich man's grave.

10 But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him
and cause him grief.

Yet when his life is made an offering for sin,
he will have many descendants.

He will enjoy a long life,
and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.

11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,
he will be satisfied.

And because of his experience,
my righteous servant will make it possible
for many to be counted righteous,
for he will bear all their sins.

12 I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier,
because he exposed himself to death.
He was counted among the rebels.
He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Points of Interest

Introduction: This chapter of Isaiah is perhaps the most famous passage of Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. Isaiah prophesied about 700 years before Christ and his prophecies regarding the Messiah are described in such minute detail that it would be impossible to fake. We also know by the dating of the gospels that it is highly unlikely that the gospel were written to fulfill this passage. This is because people alive during Jesus' life and gospel's writing would have rejected false accounts of the details of Christ's life. The focus of today's bible guide will be cross referencing Isaiah's prophesy with the gospel stories about Jesus death.

v 1 - "Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?": The apostle John references this verse in 12:38 of his gospel. He notes that most of the people who saw Jesus'

miracles still did not believe him to be the Messiah. The apostle Paul quotes this verse in Romans 10:16. Both authors reflect back on this verse and use it to explain why some believe and some do not.

v 3 - “he was despised and rejected...we turned our backs on him and looked the other way”: When Jesus died, he died alone. All his disciples scattered when he was arrested. Peter denied him three times. Nobody was willing to suffer with Jesus or support him at his trial and crucifixion.

v 5 - “he was whipped so we could be healed.” God is a just God who punishes what is wrong, or in other words, sin. Instead of us all of us receiving this punishment for what we’ve done wrong, Jesus took our place and received the punishment on our behalf.

v 7-8 - “He was led like a lamb to the slaughter”: Jesus did not forcefully resist going to the cross. In fact, he continued to treat his enemies with respect throughout their torture of him. In Luke 23:34, Jesus even says, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

v 9 - “He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone:” Seven hundred years before his birth, Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would be completely sinless. He did absolutely nothing to deserve this treatment and execution.

v 9 - “he was put in a rich man’s grave”: Jesus was buried in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. Mark 15:43 notes that this Joseph was a prominent member of the Council, hence a “rich man.”

v 10 - “his life is made an offering for sin”: The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that God made Christ to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God.

v 12 - “I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death”: In Philippians 2:8-9, Paul writes “(Jesus) humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the highest honor and gave him a name above all other names”.

v 12 - “he was counted among the rebels”: Luke 22:37 indicates that Jesus would be “counted among the rebels.” This could mean a that he was seen as a law breaker or crucified next to two criminals. This is another striking prophesy for Isaiah to make. Nobody would imagine a Savior who would be beaten, tortured, stripped naked and nailed to a cross and be considered a criminal. Yet, this is how God chose to save the world.

Taking it Home

For you and your family: Pray for the humble attitude that Christ had. Thank Jesus for taking the punishment for our sins upon himself! Ask God to help you put other people before yourself.

For your six: Pray that they would see God as a God of love and also as a God of justice. Ask God for specific ways that you can humbly bless your six.

For the community: Pray that we would remember the cost of Jesus’ death this Easter. Ask God for a spirit of unity and humility within the church in response to that death.

DAY 2

Repentance

Psalm 51

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
because of your unfailing love.
Because of your great compassion,
blot out the stain of my sins.
- 2 Wash me clean from my guilt.
Purify me from my sin.
- 3 For I recognize my rebellion;
it haunts me day and night.
- 4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;
I have done what is evil in your sight.
You will be proved right in what you say,
and your judgment against me is just.
- 5 For I was born a sinner—
yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.
- 6 But you desire honesty from the womb,
teaching me wisdom even there.
- 7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Oh, give me back my joy again;
you have broken me—
now let me rejoice.
- 9 Don't keep looking at my sins.
Remove the stain of my guilt.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.
- 11 Do not banish me from your presence,
and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and make me willing to obey you.

- 13 Then I will teach your ways to rebels,
and they will return to you.
- 14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves;
then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.
- 15 Unseal my lips, O Lord,
that my mouth may praise you.
- 16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.
You do not want a burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.
You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.
- 18 Look with favor on Zion and help her;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit—
with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings.
Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.

Points of Interest

Introduction: Many of the Psalms have titles giving us some context regarding their authorship. The story of David and Bathsheba can be read in 2 Samuel 11-12. This Psalm seems to flow from David's repentance for his sin.

v.1-2 - "Have mercy on me, O God": Note that the source of the mercy David seeks is located in God. It is the "unfailing love" and "compassion" of God that David is counting on. And notice the nature of what he seeks—total washing away of his sin. David is as bold in his repentance as he was in his sin.

v.3-4 - "Against you, and you alone, have I sinned": Verse 4 is a bit confusing at first blush. If you read the story, David has sinned against many people besides God— not least of all Uriah, Bathsheba's husband who David murdered. What does it mean to say that he has sinned only against God? One way to think about it is to realize that David is the king of Israel. There is no higher authority that could actually press charges against David. But he realizes that he is still accountable to God.

v.5-10 - "I was born a sinner": David recognizes that his sinfulness means more than specific behaviors. He recognizes that his very heart has a level of corruption in it. His response is not determination towards moral improvement, but instead asking God for a whole new spirit within him.

v.11-15 - “Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you”:

David’s ultimate goal is not merely a clear conscience or improved behavior. David’s goal is deep joy and connection to God- even sharing this goodness with others.

v.16-19 - “You do not want a burnt offering”: Verses 16 and 19 seem to contradict each other. First David says God doesn’t want offerings, and then he promises that God will receive offerings. Which is it? It seems that acts of worship are not to be designed to manipulate God, but rather to celebrate his willingness to help (v.18) hearts that recognize their need for him (v. 17).

Taking it Home

For you and your family: Most of us have some habit or behavior that we don’t like, and we sense God isn’t pleased with either. Consider using Psalm 51 to ask God to draw your heart away from destructive habits and towards him. Remember that the point of repentance is more joy in God, not simply obsessing over our failures.

For your six: Pray that they would realize and repent of any destructive habits in their own lives. Pray that instead of feeling judged, they could find a way to feel cleansed and loved by Jesus.

For our city or church: Pray the prayer of verse 18 over any place that we might feel we have suffered: “Look with favor on us! Rebuild our broken walls!”

DAY 3

Jesus Redeems Death

John 11

1 A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. **2** This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. **3** So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, “Lord, your dear friend is very sick.”

4 But when Jesus heard about it he said, “Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.” **5** So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, **6** he stayed where he was for the next two days. **7** Finally, he said to his disciples, “Let’s go back to Judea.”

8 But his disciples objected. “Rabbi,” they said, “only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?”

9 Jesus replied, “There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. **10** But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light.” **11** Then he said, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.”

12 The disciples said, “Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!” **13** They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

14 So he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. **15** And for your sakes, I’m glad I wasn’t there, for now you will really believe. Come, let’s go see him.”

16 Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go, too—and die with Jesus.”

17 When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. **18** Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, **19** and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. **20** When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. **21** Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not

have died. **22** But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.”

23 Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24 “Yes,” Martha said, “he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.”

25 Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. **26** Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?”

27 “Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God.” **28** Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, “The Teacher is here and wants to see you.” **29** So Mary immediately went to him.

30 Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. **31** When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus’s grave to weep. So they followed her there. **32** When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

33 When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. **34** “Where have you put him?” he asked them.

They told him, “Lord, come and see.” **35** Then Jesus wept. **36** The people who were standing nearby said, “See how much he loved him!” **37** But some said, “This man healed a blind man. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?”

38 Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. **39** “Roll the stone aside,” Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man’s sister, protested, “Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.”

40 Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?” **41** So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me. **42** You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me.” **43** Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” **44** And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in grave clothes, his face wrapped in a head cloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!”

45 Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen.

Points of Interest

Introduction: Lazarus’ resurrection from death is one of Jesus’ final miracles before he is crucified and rises from the dead himself. In relation to the larger storyline, Lazarus’ resurrection seems to be the final straw for the religious leaders who are attempting to stop Jesus.

v 2 - “The same Mary later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord’s feet”: There are several individuals named “Mary” in the gospels. It is probable that this is the same Mary who sit at Jesus’ feet while Martha is busy working. Mary is the woman who pours perfume on Jesus’ feet in the next chapter when Judas objects because he said they could have gotten money for the perfume to feed the poor (which he stole).

v 4-12 - “it happened for the glory of God”: Jesus is sent a message about Lazarus being sick and Jesus does not immediately set out to heal Lazarus despite his love for them. God’s purpose in this case was that the situation would not end in death, but that death would still happen so that through it, God and the Son of God would receive glory. It can be an uncomfortable thought that Jesus waited until his friend died to show up at the same time it can an incredibly comforting thought that God can redeem that dire of a situation. He can completely heal you from the effects of even the most final of circumstances such as death. God’s timing is certainly not our own.

v 13-24 - “I’m glad I wasn’t there, for now you will really believe...your brother will rise again”: Whatever kind of faith that Mary and Martha had in Jesus, he seems to say here that this turn of events will cause them to “really believe.” The women believed in his power to prevent death, but it doesn’t strike Martha immediately to think when Jesus says your brother will rise again that it means from death, but that he will rise on the “last day.”

v 25 - “I am the resurrection and the life.”: This is the fifth of the seven great “I am” statements of Jesus in the gospel of John. The other “I am” statements are: I am the bread of life (6:35, 48, 51), I am the light of the world (8:12, 9:5), I am the door of the sheep (10:7, 9), I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14), I am the way, the truth, the life (14:6), I am the true vine (15:1).

v 26 - “Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?”: Every individual must decide what they believe about Jesus. Was he just a man, a good teacher, or is he the son of God? What do you believe about Jesus?

v 27 - “the Messiah”: Messiah is a term given to a future leader by the Jewish people who would restore their glory. Jesus fulfilled their criteria but in a different way than many thought. The people believed the

Messiah would be a political leader who would overthrow Rome and restore the nation of Israel. Jesus, however, said his kingdom was not of this world. He came to restore our relationship with God through erasing our sin and set up the Kingdom of God.

v 37 - “But some said”: One group of people saw Jesus’ emotion and were moved by how much he cared about his friends. This works in contrast to the popular Greek view of the day that the gods didn’t have any messy involvement with people. Another group wasn’t impressed with his emotion and, perhaps cynically, questioned why he couldn’t have saved someone from dying if he had already given a blind man sight. When people talk about something God did, do you praise him for it or criticize him for not doing enough?

v 40 - “Didn’t I tell you that you would see God’s glory if you believe?”: Those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah will see God’s glory.

v 42 - “You always hear me”: It was important for Jesus to say out loud that this was the case so people would believe he was sent by God and that God hears his prayers.

Taking it Home

For you and your family: Pray God would give you faith and belief that, in Jesus, death is not all there is and that God has great power over life and death.

Pray for your six: Pray that your six that they would experience a sense of “resurrection” in their lives where old dreams or hopes that have died would have a sense of new life.

Pray for the church and community: Pray to see how God revitalize and restore organizations, neighborhoods, businesses, etc., in your community. Pray for the church that some things (dreams, ideas, relationships, etc.) that have died would be restored by God to new life.

DAY 4

Jesus Redeems Betrayal

Mark 14:27-31

27 On the way, Jesus told them, “All of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say,

‘God will strike the Shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.’

28 But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.”

29 Peter said to him, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.”

30 Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.”

31 “No!” Peter declared emphatically. “Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!” And all the others vowed the same.

Mark 14:66-72

66 Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest came by **67** and noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and said, “You were one of those with Jesus of Nazareth.”

68 But Peter denied it. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed.

69 When the servant girl saw him standing there, she began telling the others, “This man is definitely one of them!” **70** But Peter denied it again.

A little later some of the other bystanders confronted Peter and said, “You must be one of them, because you are a Galilean.”

71 Peter swore, “A curse on me if I’m lying—I don’t know this man you’re talking about!” **72** And immediately the rooster crowed the second time.

Suddenly, Jesus’ words flashed through Peter’s mind: “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.” And he broke down and wept.

John 21:15-18

15 After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

16 Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

17 A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

18 “I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.”

Points of Interest

14 v 27 - “All of you will desert me”: Jesus is saying this to his closest friends about the night of his death. Jesus is the “Shepherd”, the disciples are “the sheep”, and God’s “strike” is Jesus’ death on the cross.

14 v 28 - “ Jesus is telling them that their failure to be loyal to him will not mean the end of their friendship, and that even Jesus’ own death is not the end of their friendship.

14 v 29-31: Hint: Jesus is right, Peter and the disciples are just a bunch of blowhards.

14 v 66-67 - “You were one of those with Jesus of Nazareth”: We’ve now skipped to a moment after Jesus has been arrested, and is on trial. Most of the other disciples have fled by this point, but Peter has stayed near the scene where Jesus is. This is the moment of truth, the moment when Peter had promised he would not deny Jesus.

14 v 68-72 - “Peter denied it...”: Peter has failed just as Jesus said he would. It’s interesting that he wasn’t really even aware of what he was doing until after the fact.

21 v 15 - “...do you love me more than these?”: This scene happens after Jesus has been raised from the dead and reunited with his disciples. Jesus question seems pointed, and clearly draws on the memory of Peter’s failed claim to be more loyal than any of the others.

21 v 15b - “feed my lambs”: Peter will be one of the main leaders in the church, and “feeding Jesus’ lambs” probably has to do with his role of providing spiritual nurture for the many new believers.

21 v 16-17 - “Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time”: The symbolism is clear- Jesus is reminding Peter of his failure, and offering him a chance at restoration. Yet it is understandable why Peter is hurt by this reminder.

21 v 18 - “...when you are old...others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go”: Jesus seems to be saying that Peter will in fact one day fulfill the promise he had failed to keep earlier. Peter will mature and grow in his faith, and will follow Jesus better in his older age than he did when he was younger.

Taking It Home

For you and your family: Pray that you will keep growing and maturing for a lifetime, and that in your old age you will have faith that you may have lacked when you were younger.

For your six: Pray that their lives would not be ruled by fear, but that they would have strength to stand up for the things they really care about.

For our city or church: Pray that we wouldn’t just claim to care about people, but to actually care in action.

DAY 5

Jesus Redeems Hatred

Acts 9:1-31

1 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. **2** He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. **4** He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

5 "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! **6** Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! **8** Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. **9** He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

10 Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

11 The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. **12** I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

13 "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! **14** And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

15 But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. **16** And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

17 So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. **19** Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. **20** And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!"

21 All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?"

22 Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. **23** After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. **24** They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. **25** So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

26 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! **27** Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

28 So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him. **30** When the believers heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

31 The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

Points of Interest

v 1-2 - "Saul...was eager to kill the Lord's followers": A friend of mine has wondered if the point of these verses is to prove to us that Saul is the worst person in the world. If we think about it, on the Bible's terms, Jesus

is the greatest hope for the world. These early followers of Jesus are then the great hope of the world. If Saul is trying to kill them to shut down their witness, could it be that God is about to show us what he can do with truly awful people?

v 3-5 - “I am Jesus!”: This is after Jesus has ascended to heaven, so Paul’s encounter with Jesus is not the same as the disciples who walked with him during his ministry on earth. Saul’s encounter with Jesus is sudden and profound. It seems to have changed his life instantly because we will see that he does exactly what Jesus says.

v 7-15 - “...the terrible things this man has done...”: We see that Saul’s reputation proceeds him. Ananias, clearly a godly man, is hesitant to go to Saul even which the Lord himself invites him. And yet Saul is God’s chosen instrument.

v 17-20 - “something like scales fell from his eyes”: The transformation of Saul is nothing short of amazing. He has done a complete 180 after one encounter with the risen Jesus.

v 21-28 - “Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers...”: We see the same essential pattern happen twice. First there is doubt about Saul’s conversation (v. 21, 26). Then there is powerful preaching (v. 22, 28). Then there is a threat against Saul and the need for him to flee in secret (v. 25, 30). There has been a complete reversal. The most evil person in the world has been encountered by Jesus. Now, instead of persecuting followers of Jesus, he is preaching about Jesus and being persecuted himself for the sake of Christ.

v 31 - “The church then had peace...”: The source of a period of peace and blessing is the transformation of a sinful human heart, and that hearts subsequent love for Jesus.

Taking it Home

For you and your family: Ask God to give you eyes to see even the most seemingly rebellious people as people who can be loved and used by God.

For your six: Pray that your six would have a powerful experience of their love and destiny in God.

For our city: Pray that God would change people’s hearts and bring blessing from the most unexpected places.

DAY 6

God Redeems Life

Romans 8

1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. **2** And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. **3** The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. **4** He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. **6** So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. **7** For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will. **8** That’s why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) **10** And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. **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.

12 Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. **13** For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. **14** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own

children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” **16** For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. **17** And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. **19** For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. **20** Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, **21** the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. **22** For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. **23** And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. **24** We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don’t need to hope for it. **25** But if we look forward to something we don’t yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. **27** And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will. **28** And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. **29** For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. **30** And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? **32** Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else? **33** Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. **34** Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? **36** (As the

Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) **37** No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. **39** No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Points of Interest

Introduction: Romans is the apostle Paul’s greatest theological masterpiece. He wrote it to a blossoming Christian community in Rome. He was never able to get to Rome himself so he describes the heart of Christianity so the believers there will have an accurate understanding of the Christian faith.

v 1-11 - Life with the Holy Spirit: As believers, we have the Holy Spirit joining with our souls. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit). The Spirit is mentioned in the Old Testament but is sent by God on all believers at Pentecost in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit advocates on our behalf to God, comforts us, empowers and convicts believers, and inspired the Scriptures.

v 1 - “no condemnation”: For the believer, there is no condemnation which means they are declared not guilty of their sin and free from punishment of their sins. This is because Jesus paid the price for our sins. As a result, God sees us as sinless not guilty, just like he saw Jesus.

v 2 - “the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you”: The Spirit of God gives us power to not sin. This, in turn, gives us hope to live a life free from the disastrous consequences of sin in our lives. Galatians 5:22-23 indicates that what the Spirit brings out in us is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

v 3 - “sinful nature”: While the Spirit gives us power to live free of sin, sin still tempts us. There is a part in all of us that we’ve experienced that has impulses and desires that are dark, and that’s our sinful nature. Galatians 5:19-21 explains the results of following the sinful nature end up in “sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these,” basically behaviors that are destructive.

v 4 - “no longer follow our sinful nature”: As believers, we are to leave the lifestyle of the sinful nature behind. While the immediate pleasure of the sinful nature tempts us, life by the Spirit leads to a more fulfilling and more enjoyable life.

v 12-17 - Children of God: Believers can share in all of God’s promises together. As God saw Jesus as his son, he now sees us in the same light (not as a Messiah, but as his children).

v 14 - “for all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.”: The work of the Spirit in one’s life is a sign of the person being a child of God. It is impossible to know God and not be fundamentally changed by him for the better.

v 16 - “for his Spirit joins with our spirit”: When we believe in God, we are considered a new person. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says we are a new creation. In John chapter three, Jesus says a man must be born again to see the Kingdom of God. Jesus is explaining the new creation or new life that comes from the Holy Spirit joining with our spirit.

v 18-30 - Future Glory: Paul concludes the previous section by saying that as heirs in Christ, we will suffer in this life because of him as well as enjoy the benefits of being in life with God. In this section, Paul writes that if anything bad happens to us in this world because of our faith in Christ, it cannot compare to what we will receive in eternity.

v 23 - “we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory”: This is an example of the “already and not yet” Kingdom of God we know have. The Holy Spirit has come and brought the Kingdom of God into our lives today but we will not see the full Kingdom of God until the second coming of Christ.

v 26 - “And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.”: God helps us when we are weak. Sometimes we can be tempted to clean ourselves up before coming to God, however, it is impossible to do that. We cannot clean ourselves up before coming to God because we need God’s power to clean us up!

v 28 - “God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God.”: No matter what happens in our life. We can be confident that the Lord will lead us through the experience and use it for good in our lives. He can heal any hurt that we experience and use it to move us closer to him as well as heal others.

v 31-39 - Nothing Can Separate Us from God: Paul wraps up this section of his letter to the Romans by reminding his readers that nothing can come between God and his people.

v 32 - “he did not even spare his own Son...won’t he also give us everything else?”: When things are going bad, we can be tempted to believe that God has nothing good for us. Instead, we need to remember that God gave up his son so that we can have relationship with him. Paul’s

point is why do we doubt when God already proved his love for us by giving up everything for us.

v 37 - “No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ.” Paul finishes by answering his hypothetical question. He writes that suffering in our lives does not mean God hates us. As Christians, no matter what is happening in our lives or in our community, God is always bigger and he always loves me and you and the people around us.

Taking it Home

For you and your family: Pray for deep faith in God’s love for you. Take a minute and read verse 28 over and over and think about what that verse means for your life.

Pray for your six: Ask God to turn their most painful experience into something used for good. Pray that they would not be overcome by evil but that they would fight evil with good.

Pray for your community: Pray for a special manifestation of God’s passionate love for his creation. Pray that God would bless every person in the community with a great day.

