

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession:

Give us courage, Lord that we might search the deepest and darkest corners of our being for anything that offends Your holy Name. Give us mercy that we might stand in the brilliance of Your light. Give us grace that we might go from this place cleansed from our sin and refreshed for Your service.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Going through life we experience good and bad situations. Sometimes it can be hard for us to understand that God has orchestrated all of that in our lives. Especially the bad things, we cannot imagine that God would want us to suffer. He creates these events because it allows us to draw closer to Him and continue to build our relationship with Him. While it can be difficult to understand we know that God is working through us to lead us to His path. Take time as a family this week to talk through how you can continue to turn towards God in those moments together and pray together to remind each other of all that God can do in your lives.

MONDAY 4.26.21

Romans 6:1-14

The conclusion Paul had reached at the end of chapter five was that God's grace has always surpassed human sin—something supremely demonstrated in the gift of Jesus Christ. But returning to rhetorical style, Paul addresses the potential rebuttal: well, if sin leads to greater grace, perhaps sin has a good purpose—to make God's grace all the more evident! But Paul insists that when we are baptized into the family of Christ, we are to begin to identify FULLY with Jesus, who was without sin. Paul uses language of “baptism into death,” “dying to sin,” the “body of sin being done away with,” the “old self being crucified,” and being “freed from sin” to make this point. It is this final language that is perhaps most helpful to us—the point is that when we immerse ourselves in Jesus, sin loses its authority over us. We are no longer “slaves” to sin, because our new identity is in Christ, who was empowered to live a sinless life. It is this absolute, complete, total transfer of identity from our former selves to a “new life” in Christ that is to define our self-image. If we offer ourselves to God in complete obedience (like Jesus did), sin will not control us, grace will control sin. Dying to sin, we will live to God ... eternally, like Jesus.

- Do you feel this kind of self-defining “union” with Jesus?

TUESDAY 4.27.21

Romans 6:15-23

Paul extends yesterday's argument into perhaps uncomfortable territory. We would probably applaud the fact that this grace that God gives frees us from slavery to sin ... but now Paul continues to use the language of slavery to refer to this new identity in Christ. Now, he says, we are “slaves to obedience” and “slaves to righteousness”! No one likes the idea of slavery—whether it is to another human being, to sin, or even to righteousness. But for Paul there are only two choices—yield to the power sin holds over our lives, or receive the grace of God that cancels out the power of sin but that simultaneously places us under the power of God. Slavery to sin inevitably leads to death, but slavery to God leads to eternal life. The “Quest” NIV Study Bible has a great, positive metaphor for the kind of slavery Paul writes of—“A kite is only free to fly when it is ‘a slave’ to the string. Cut the string and the kite's freedom to fly is severed as well. Slavery to God frees us to fully be what we were created to be!” Slavery to righteousness means an uncompromising obedience to the will of God, not to the will of what Paul calls our “natural selves.” It is through embracing God's grace that our allegiance is transferred from the “master” of sin to the “master” of righteousness.

- Are you receptive to the language of being a “slave to God”?

WEDNESDAY 4.28.21

Romans 7:1-6

As we have seen since beginning our study of Romans, the Jews believed that God's gift of the Law of Moses was THE way that God's grace was shown to the world. It was purely by an act of grace that God provided both rules for holy living and outlined the ramifications of breaking those rules. For the Jews, the Law would have been the Law regardless of whether God had shared it with humanity—but by God's grace, He gave the Law so humanity would know God's requirements and expectations. But Paul is arguing, in Romans, for a new understanding of the role of the Law of Moses. By empowering REAL righteousness through identification and union with Jesus Christ, God has demonstrated that humanity has misunderstood the ultimate purpose of the Law. Not only have we misunderstood it, but it has even worked against God's purposes by arousing within us the rebellious desire to break it. But now, with control of our daily lives transferred from sin to the Holy Spirit, our relationship with the Law is utterly transformed as well. No longer are our lives to be guided by a list of laws, but by the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself! We have been “released” from the written code of law!

- How have you experienced being released from the law?

THURSDAY 4.29.21

Romans 7:7-25

Paul is extraordinarily aware, yet again, of how his argument might be interpreted. So he insists, loudly, that the Law itself is a good and holy thing. The Law really and truly does demonstrate God's requirements and expectations. As God intended, humanity would not know what those expectations were without the Law. But because of our literal slavery to sin, when confronted with these requirements and expectations, all we want to do is violate them. And sadly, that violation leads, inevitably, to our death. So not by God's design, but because of our own slavery to sin, the good and holy Law of Moses actually became an impediment to true righteousness. Even when we intellectually KNOW all this, Paul says, we can't help ourselves from breaking the Law, from committing sin, because, once again, we are SLAVES to sin! We do what it demands because we are bound to it. Paul's language of “it is not me who does it, but sin living in me that does it” may sound like a cop-out to our ears, but Paul is simply describing the absolute, controlling power of sin in our lives, even when we are aware of God's requirements—even when, in our MINDS, we want to be obedient to God.

- Can you relate to Paul's description of WANTING to be obedient, but feeling controlled by something outside of “you”?

FRIDAY 4.30.21

Romans 8:1-17

Many people read the end of chapter 7 of Romans and feel a great sense of relief that Paul commiserates with them about the struggle with sin. But the whole upshot of Paul’s recent argument has been that we need no longer live as slaves to sin OR as slaves to the Law of Moses! So, beginning in 7:25 and continuing through chapter 8, Paul rejoices that the law of the SPIRIT OF LIFE has set him free from this law of sin and death. The critical words are in verses 3-4: “For what THE LAW WAS POWERLESS TO DO in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, GOD DID by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering ... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, WHO DO NOT LIVE ACCORDING TO THE SINFUL NATURE BUT ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT.” Now that righteousness, and not sin, is our master—now that the Spirit, and not sin, is in control—we are truly able to live lives pleasing to God. This was utterly impossible before, while slaves to sin, but now, as slaves to righteousness we have the power—and, Paul says, the obligation—to choose to live by the Spirit. Learning to do this every day is what the journey of discipleship is all about.

- Notice all the “if” language around the promises of eternal life in 8:9-11. What is the prerequisite for eternal life?

SATURDAY 5.1.21

Romans 8:18-27

At the end of yesterday’s passage, Paul had returned to the image of absolute union with Jesus as the appropriate self-image for the Christ-follower. That self-identity is found first in the complete submittal, in daily life, to the power of the Spirit rather than in submittal to the power of sin. Such submittal makes us as much “sons of God” (regardless of our own gender) as Jesus is the “Son of God.” Because our identity is in Jesus, we are heirs of eternal life, because JESUS has inherited eternal life. But now, Paul makes another uncomfortable correlation of our life with Jesus’ life—just as Jesus suffered, WE should expect to suffer. While this suffering is real, it pales in comparison to the glory to come. The promise of this coming glory is emphatically NOT a liberation or an escape FROM this world, but a redemption OF this world, and a redemption OF our own suffering-prone bodies into a new creation. The gift of the Holy Spirit we have today is merely the “firstfruits” of the life of the Spirit we will know then. Furthermore, it is not just we who hope for such a transformation, but the very creation itself yearns for it. Even when we cannot find the language to express just what it is we hope for, the Holy Spirit knows, and shares those hopes with God the Father.

- Why should we anticipate suffering as bearers of the Spirit?



Daily Study Guide

April 25-May 1, 2021

Sermon Series: Being Moved

Week Two: “Taking it All In” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, April 25: Romans 8:9-17

“But you aren’t self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God’s Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ, they don’t belong to Him. If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God’s righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through His Spirit that lives in you. So, then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn’t an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. All who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons and daughters. You didn’t receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as His children. With this Spirit, we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God’s children. But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God’s heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with Him so that we can also be glorified with Him.” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Josh Luter
- The Quintana family
- Chris Riegel
- Patrick Loughran
- Sandy Baum
- Charlotte Ottley
- Delaney Digman
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org