

Romans 6:1-14

8/10/25

Have you ever tried to change your behavior? It's not easy. Hope has been trying to change my behavior for 19 years, and the Holy Spirit has been trying even longer. In fact, some studies show that we need to practice the new behavior as many as 18 to 254 days. The reason for the big difference in the number of days is because we individuals are incredibly psychologically different. If you want to have a deep dive in going to Heaven and behavior change, the letter to the Romans is for you! God's Word teaches it's not simply a psychological issue, its spiritual.

As Paul's friendship with Jesus Christ deepens, he proclaims the good news of the possibility of radical behavior change, radical spiritual change. Paul wouldn't use the phrase “behavior change”, as you heard, he is using the phrases “slaves to sin” and “slaves to righteousness” or “dead to sin” and “alive to God in Christ.” Paul believes God wants to save us from sin and the consequence of sin, which is death. Paul believes Jesus lives for us to live well, to live Heaven on earth, to live free!

Let's read to the end of the chapter in Romans 6:15-23.

Let me tell you of one of the most unique encounters in my life that happened to me on Thursday of this week. Thursdays are typically my day off, so the boys and I went down to the strip district at about 11:15AM to have pizza at this excellent pizza shop on Penn Ave. We sat outside, the sun was shining, 3 monster slices of pizza and fun conversation. Sitting next to us was this bodybuilder in his 50's and one of his associates. The outside seating was tight, and the guy spoke loud as if he were speaking to us, so it was easy to overhear their conversation about how no one has common courtesy anymore. I'm not exaggerating this conversation about respect, politeness, and manners was most of their lunch meeting. At 12:10, I had to jump onto a church call, so I told the boys to walk up and down the strip and give me about an hour. At 12:25, this man finished his lunch meeting and began to use the ATM immediately adjacent to my seat. For some reason I was intrigued with the man and watched him get his receipt, crumple it, and throw it on the ground. For some reason the Holy Spirit moved, our eyes locked, and I thought I asked a harmless question, “Did you just throw that on the ground?” He immediately responded with the foulest curse words in the English language. Picture this, I have my earbuds in on a church board meeting call, I check to see if I'm on mute, and respond, “Wasn't your hour lunch about common courtesy?” I received more colorful language at the top of his lungs now making a scene at this lovely outdoor seating. “Sir, just asking questions, I'm on a work call. Common Courtesy.” After threatening my life, he eventually walked across the street got into his monster truck and again our eyes locked lovingly as he drove down the street with his middle finger pointed at me and yelling the same curse words and names he had for me before, and I made sure I was on mute during the church call, and yelled, “Common Courtesy!”

Do you think this was the first time this guy littered? Do you think he really believed the words about common courtesy that he was discussing with his associate? Maybe my words caused him to feel shame? I didn't intend to shame him. I was simply asking a question to benefit him and society. Let's give him the benefit of doubt and say that was the first time the guy ever littered, he did really believe everything he preached about common courtesy, and yes, he experienced shame and had a lapse in judgment in reacting the way he did. Paul addresses all this in Romans.

God's Word teaches there is only one solution to our great spiritual crisis, proclaim the free gift of God who is Jesus Christ. We can't force anyone to have faith. Love does not force. But we can proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ! Tell stories about Him.

Do you want to live well? Paul would say it this way, "Do you want to avoid God's wrath?"
Accept God's gift by trusting that God wants good things for you by following Jesus Christ.

The first step is awareness. I teach the boys all the time, "Don't be zombies." And I have been preaching the image of zombies often because it is a great metaphor of life before and after Christ. Before Christ, we don't even know we are zombies. We are just following our guts, our cravings, our hunger. Zombies aren't alive, they are just living consuming others. For Paul, this is how he understands people before Christ, they are dead to sin. They are living but not alive, not even aware that they are heading to death or they are already dead.

The poor guy who littered in front of everyone seemed to be a zombie. He seemed unaware that he littered, he was unaware someone was looking, he was unaware that the guy he screamed at was a preacher that was definitely going to use this as an illustration, but let's say he was Christian as well. Paul addresses this in Romans. Sometimes we have an inner conflict. We know the right thing to do but we don't do it. That's where practicing the faith of Christ applies. We must pursue holiness.

I like to use brushing teeth as an example. Our boys don't have the choice to brush teeth. From little children, we encouraged, enforced the habit and eventually discussed the reasons why brushing teeth is beneficial because we understand not brushing teeth leads to death. So not only must they trust us that teeth brushing leads to life, but they must pursue this holiness morning and evening.

The more Hope and I discuss what we want for our sons when it comes to the faith of Jesus Christ it is instilling the habits of daily prayer and weekly worship like Jesus did. Hopefully they will come to have faith, but that is between them and the Holy Spirit. Hopefully they will come to believe they no longer have to obey sin. Hopefully they will offer their lives to God and embrace new life in Christ.

Love,
Pastor Curtis