

Series Intro:

Over the course of the Fall this year, we are preaching our way through the entire book of Romans, chapter by chapter.

a) The book of Romans is the most systematic of Paul's letters.

b) Paul wrote Romans to the Church in Rome which was populated by two distinct people groups: Jews and Gentiles. Jews were followers of the Old Testament scriptures, believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, followed the law of Moses, and lived in eager anticipation of a Messiah who was foretold in the prophets. The Gentiles, basically, were everyone who isn't Jewish. Have you ever read the word Gentile in the Bible and wondered, "What is that?" Well now you know! It's simple! And the Jews and the Gentiles were both coming to believe in Jesus. This meant that two people from radically different and often antagonistic cultures and worldviews were being united under Jesus Christ. In Romans, Paul is teaching them how to locate their identities in Jesus as one, united community of Christ followers.

Up to speed:

What the book of Romans has done so far is remind us that each and every one of us shares a common reality. **We can relate today.** And that reality is this:

We are all sinful.

We know this. *I'm only human.* You've heard it used before- maybe even said it yourself. We use it to state that we aren't perfect, we're only human. We can't be expected to live a perfect life. We make mistakes.

We all recognize the truth of the statement in Romans 3:23- "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." None of us are perfect. We are all human. We are ungodly- we do not, when left to our own devices, live godly lives.

A Civil Rights Lawyer named Harvey Silverglate wrote a book in 2013 called Three Felonies a Day. The premise of his book is that the average American commits 3 serious federal crimes every day unintentionally. Surprise- you're probably a technically felon! We are really powerless to do it right all on our own!

And on top of that, none of us has the power to make things right on our own! To be righteous means to have a *right relationship* with God.

Whether it's pride, greed, lust, selfishness, anger, these things often have roots in our lives that bear fruit in the way we live. None of us can live up to the standard of what it takes to make things right between us and God.

Not only that, but we can also know the right thing and still do the wrong. We can make choices that we know are bad for ourselves or others because there is deep down in us some

other motivation that overrides our desire for right. This is our sinful nature- There is that inclination within us that leads us away from making God the Lord of our lives and choosing to be our own lord, King of our own lives, our own saviors.

If this is the case, then **what hope do we have?** This is a grim diagnosis, but you need the right diagnosis to get the right prescription.

We have Jesus. He is our hope. Romans 3:21- "But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through Jesus Christ to all who believe."

And Romans 5:6 say that "at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." Friends we are all sinners, and powerless to overcome the sin and evil in our lives on our own, and unworthy of righteousness. We have no power to make ourselves right with God. That power is His alone.

While we were powerless and undeserving, God in Jesus Christ has made the definitive step towards us. God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were sinners Jesus came and ate at our table. He says, "I'm not here for those who can do it all for themselves- I came not for the healthy but for the sick" While we were powerless to overcome our sin, Jesus overcame it on our behalf. He did this through his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave.

If you put your faith in Jesus, you can consider yourself dead to sin but alive in Christ.

Jesus died to bear our sin. In his death, we give Jesus our sin and he gives us his righteousness- a right relationship with God our Father!

And Jesus rose from the grave because sin and death do not get the last word in this story. We often conceive of this world in super hero movie terms. There is a battle between good and evil. But this is not a Biblical worldview. We aren't in a battle against evil- evil has lost, Jesus has won. He has victory over sin and death. And if we trust him, then so do we! How often do you think of yourself as victorious? Because, in Christ, you are.

Application)

The invitation that God has offered us is not one to get our lives in check and then come to the party. He doesn't say, go clean yourself up, put on some fresh new clothes and then come over for dinner. Jesus invites sinners like us to share his table. Because while we are helpless in our sin, Christ took the step towards us! We see it over and over again in Scripture. The direction of this whole movement is *from* God and *to* you- *to* us! You will not find a story in the Bible where this is not true!

God has made the definitive move towards you. He says, *I* will bear your sin. The guilt and shame of what you've done- *I* will bear that burden, *I* will pay that cost. And *I* will raise you up to new life. Jesus says that through my death you are dead to sin. That means that sin no

longer has power over you, you are set free from sin. Maybe that's a new mindset for you. To think of yourself as free!

In Conclusion, *I'm sure we've all had that dressing room experience at the store. You go on to try something on and see how it looks. I want you to try something on today. It's a gift that God has given you. Try on freedom.*

Perhaps there is a burden you are carrying: a sinful habit, addiction, a wicked mindset, a grudge. Put that burden, that sin down. You are free! When your faith is in Christ, God has forgiven you. Don't carry the burden of sin and shame that God has already removed from you. See yourself the way God does- as his child, set free from sin. Sin shall not be your master, because you are under grace.

Put that burden down and pick up new life! Offer your lives to God as an instrument of righteousness. Your life is like an instrument in the hand of God. Imagine what can be done in and through your life when you are willing to say, I am powerless, but my God isn't. God, Your will be done. I want to be dead to sin, but alive in Christ!