

**FRIDAY: Present Reality & Coming Attraction**

**Read: Romans 6:12-14** <sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

<p><b>REFLECT:</b> I believe Paul would say a hearty “AMEN” to a song on Sunday. In <i>Resurrection Day</i> we sang, “It’s the power of the cross; breaks away sins embrace. And we celebrate our freedom, dancing on an empty grave.”</p> <p>Those words vividly proclaim the reality of a major point Paul is making in chapter six of Romans. The “embrace” of sin (from the song) is analogous to the “dominion” (i.e., ruling, being a master) it had over mankind. Notice it <u>had</u> dominion. Jesus’ death and resurrection guarantees that sin will no longer have “dominion” over those who are “in Christ” (cf. vs9, 14).</p> <p>Yet we are not totally free from the influence of sin on our lives. Verse 14, ultimately, points toward the future when we will be <u>totally</u> free from sin. However, verse 12 is a command to not let sin “reign” over us now. While not totally free, we have been given the power to resist (even overcome) it.</p>	<p><b>RESPOND:</b> Do you ponder and sing the songs we sing on Sunday during the course of the week? Why or why not?</p> <p>What is a specific way in which you can “present yourself” to God for His service today?</p> <p>These verses express the tension of the “already” and “not-yet.” Consider that we’re “already” free from sin’s spiritual death; yet we’re “not-yet” free from its physical impact...</p>
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**PRAY:** Thank God for the guaranteed (for those “in Christ”) and ultimate victory over sin we have. Pray for Brent McCrory, the preaching minister of NLCC; pray for his continued obedience to God, devotion to his wife (Melissa), and their spiritual protection as he serves as a leader at NLCC.

**SATURDAY: Where the “wind” blows...**

**Read:** John 3

<p><b>REFLECT:</b> Poor old Nicodemus. He has often gotten a bad wrap by readers of the New Testament. Some will point out how he stands in stark contrast to the Samaritan woman in chapter four of John. Aside from the gender difference...</p> <p>Some point out that Nicodemus came at night (3:2); the woman during the day (4:6-7). Nicodemus should’ve known better; the woman, well, was a woman – therefore her education was likely limited (although her questions were insightful). Nicodemus was obstinate in his disbelief (3:9); the woman spread the word about Jesus (4:29).</p> <p>But was Nicodemus stubbornly refusing to believe? Is it possible he was honestly searching and merely dumbfounded by Jesus’ teaching? What about you? What about those you know?</p>	<p><b>RESPOND:</b> Are you a “sympathetic” reader of the New Testament? I.e., do you ever try and place yourself in the ‘sandals’ of a Jewish person? How can this be helpful?</p> <p>Do you have questions about your faith? Do those questions bother you?</p> <p>When was the last time you observed something being blown by the wind? How much control did the object have?</p>
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**PRAY:** Thank God for another day of life. Ask for God’s blessing on our corporate worship tomorrow; pray people are encountered by God and that lives continue to transform. Pray we are welcoming and friendly to our guests tomorrow.

**ADVERTISEMENTS ARE INTERESTING  
AREN’T THEY?**

**March 23– 29**

“It just doesn’t get any better than this...”

- The slogan may be familiar to many. It was a line from a beer (Old Milwaukee & Old Milwaukee Light to be exact) commercial. The setting was typically a group of guys enjoying the outdoors during the day and then sitting around a campfire at night.
- What powerful images. Message number one: enjoyable recreation; message number two; the companionship of friends; message number three: a specific alcoholic beverage. Hardly anyone would deny that at least two of those three “messages” do indeed make for a good time.
- However, is “that” really as good as it gets...

What about the speed-talking at the end of a commercial for a “super product?”

- E.g., “Taking ‘xyz’ may have adverse side effects such as elevated blood pressure, a drop in blood pressure, dilated pupils hair loss, dry scalp, oily hair, tooth decay, trouble breathing, trouble eating, trouble sleeping, drowsiness, weight gain, weight loss, an increased likelihood of blood clotting, skin dryness, and/or death.”
- Oh Yes, I’ll jump on that offer to get a three month supply for the cost of a one month supply...for only & \$19.95...

Ok, so that example may be a bit overstated (but not by much). Nevertheless, it certainly seems that things all around us are constantly touted for how good they are, how we can’t live without them, how they will improve our quality of life, etc, etc.

- The problem is many seem too good to be true, and they “are.” This isn’t always the case, but it often is...

What about God? Is God too good to be true? More specifically, are His promises too good to be true? Hardly. In fact, I imagine that God’s promises are better than we realize. In other words, “we can’t believe them to be good enough...?”

- Yet, what about when we read that we’re “dead to sin” or that sin has “no dominion” over us? More than likely our lives don’t match up to those statements.
- Why is that? Is there something wrong with us? Is there something wrong with those statements?

We don’t have to worry about any false advertisement on God’s part. However, misinterpreting, and therefore misunderstanding, His word is another issue. There is an immense amount of power that can be released when we grasp the truth of what God’s word is telling us.

- Yet grasping it is only part of the struggle. Another part is putting into practice what it tells us.

## MONDAY: *Hold on...*

**READ: Romans 6:1-3** <sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

### REFLECT:

Paul just got done saying that grace increased where sin was prevalent (Rom 5:20-21). Unfortunately this beautiful truth can lead some to think, "If God is a forgiving God (and He is) then why not simply let Him forgive me as I live any way I please?" It seems (somewhat) logical...

But that way of thinking would also validate someone saying, "Ssseriously ocifer...the only reason I drove and dranked tonight wassss...sssoo you could do yur job and keep the streets sssafe!" I think we see the problem with that one, and with stealing from an employer because he pays too little, and taking a baseball bat to neighbor's car to give a repair man work to do, and...

Paul didn't take the thought of sinning so grace "may abound" lightly. The phrase translated "By no means!" is the strongest negation contained in the New Testament (cf. Rom 3:4, 6, 31; 6:15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 1Cor 6:15; Gal 3:21).

### RESPOND:

When was the last time you said to yourself, "I know I shouldn't...but God will forgive me anyway" and followed through with the thought/action? What happened?

Paul implies that we (i.e., followers of Jesus) often know better than we do (e.g., Rom 7:1; 11:2; 1Cor 3:16; 5:6; 6: 2, 3,9,15-16). Why is this?

Notice that Paul assumes his readers have been immersed (baptized). Why would he assume that?

**PRAY:** Thank God for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection yesterday. Pray your actions will line up more with what you know is correct. Confess to God the last time you did what you knew wasn't right.

## TUESDAY: *Dying to Live*

**Read: Romans 6:4-5** <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

### REFLECT:

Being "baptized into death" sounds odd to our ears. In fact, it sounds a little morbid. Yet, the verb for "baptize" didn't necessarily have a warm and fuzzy feel to it in the first century world. It was used for people drowning or ships being sunk. Neither are pleasant images.

The word literally means to "dip, plunge, or immerse," or "to put or go under water." Given this definition of baptism, the imagery makes sense. It literally is a burial (being forced under water), which symbolizes death. The beauty is what comes after our baptism (our death); a "newness" of life...

This "newness" of life is a qualitatively different kind of new; a new of a different kind. E.g., when Dodge introduced the Viper in 1993 it was a qualitatively "new" car. It was unlike anything Dodge had done before. The next year Dodge came out with a 'new' 94 model Viper, but it was based on an existing car (this form of 'new' is a different word – meaning 'new' of the same kind).

### RESPOND:

Notice the parallel statements in v 4. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, we too can walk in newness of life...now. Does this sound good to you?

Verse 5 has both a present and future connotation to it. How does the certainty of your future resurrection give you hope?

The word for "united with" indicates two things are joined together and proceed to grow as one. Does your spiritual life illustrate this claim of Scripture? I.e., are you growing closer to God due to your union with Christ?

**PRAY:** Thank God for the resurrection of Jesus. Pray for Bob Griffin, an elder of NLCC; pray for his continued obedience to God, devotion to his wife (Cheryl), and their spiritual protection as he serves as a leader of NLCC.

## WEDNESDAY: *Emphasis*

**Read: Romans 6:6-8** <sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

### REFLECT:

Verse eight basically repeats verse five. Both verses have the thrust of "since we have..." Keep in mind that Paul wrote this letter to believers. Even the most faithful follower of Jesus needs to be reminded of the basics from time to time...

You've likely noticed that "sin" occurs a lot in the verses for this week (10 times in vs. 1-14!). Throughout this passage Paul personifies sin. It's pictured as an unruly tyrant who wants to dominate, and therefore ruin our lives! We used to be powerless to its mastery...

A crucifixion was an execution. With the exception of Jesus, it's unlikely anyone submitted to it "willingly." Notice how "was crucified" is passive. This is another indicator that the time this happened was when we were immersed (cf. the passive verbs before "baptized" in v3).

### RESPOND:

How often do you reflect on the truths you believe as a follower of Jesus? Does your relationship with Jesus impact your daily decisions?

What is a particular sin(s) that has a tendency to wreak havoc on your life? Has looking more closely at Romans 6 encouraged you about your ability to overcome it (them)?

Do you really believe that your immersion (baptism) has set you free from sin? What "proof" do you have (either experiential or biblical)?

**PRAY:** Pray that your actions today will be guided by your relationship with Jesus. Pray for Larry Hayes, another elder of NLCC; pray for his continued obedience to God, devotion to his wife (Betty), and their spiritual protection as he serves as a leader of NLCC.

## THURSDAY: *"Consider" it done...*

**Read: Romans 6:9-11** <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

### REFLECT:

Apparently Paul is trying to drive home some major points. He has already talked about Jesus' resurrection (v4), but he does so again here in verse nine. Also, he already said that as a result of Jesus' resurrection we can walk in "newness" of life (v4), he revisits that theme again in verse 11.

We live in a fallen world. Sin is rampant all around us. Even Jesus was impacted by sin while on earth. He was hurt by sinful people in relationships, He likely got sick, and He was ultimately murdered. Yet all of that is in the past for Him now. Similar occurrences will be for us one day too.

Notice Paul says we are to "consider" ourselves dead to sin. The reality is that even though we've crucified our "old self," sin can still affect us. It can wreak havoc on our bodies...but worse yet it can wreak havoc on our minds. Paul tells us to "consider" ourselves dead to it ...

### RESPOND:

The word for "consider" is a thinking word. How is it good to remind ourselves we've died to sin?

The word "consider" is also used by Paul in Rom 8:18. How can that verse help you "consider" yourself dead to sin now?

What is a specific sin to which you need to "consider" yourself dead?

**PRAY:** Confess to God your tendency to, at times, "consider" sin too powerful for you (we all likely do...). Pray for Roy Andrews, another elder of NLCC; pray for his continued obedience to God, devotion to his wife (Karen), and their spiritual protection as he serves as a leader of NLCC.