

Words to Live by
3-Year Bible Reading Plan
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Bible Text: Romans 3:23-8:15
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You know, I have this little quirk in life. Some of you may be familiar with it, that as we're singing together and whether we're doing it corporately or whether I'm alone in my car singing going down the road, is the words to the song, I'm always matching them up with the scriptural support for them. In other words, if there's nothing in Scripture to support what we're singing, there's no reason to sing what we're singing and most of what we just sang in that song comes from Revelation 12 and 1 John 4, but there's this little phrase in that song that's kind of the linchpin to it all and I know we sang it several times because it's not really the meat of the song, it says, "All authority," all authority. That's not something that somebody just came up with for a good lyric, that came from the mouth of Jesus in Matthew 28 when he rose from the grave. He said, "All authority in heaven and earth is mine." So when we talk about overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and that he overcame, all of that hinges on the fact that three days after he went to Mount Calvary, he rose from the dead, and all authority to forgive and all authority for us to overcome is because of what he accomplished not just in the cross but what he accomplished over the grave. Aren't you grateful that Jesus didn't say, "Well, I got most authority or I got some of it"? He said, "All authority in heaven and in earth is mine."

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time in our service, we don't corporately declare truth but we search your truth from your word, Lord, may we recognize that you possess all authority, that you're not just a voice, you are the voice; you're not an opinion, you are fact; you're not just an idea, you are Incarnate truth. So Lord, I pray that as we walk through the Scripture, as we read the words, as we study them, as we're challenged by them, we would see them in light that you possess all authority for our lives, and I pray that if there is anything in our life that is in conflict with or contrary to what we're about to study, that you would take those ideas, those thoughts, those actions, whatever they may be, and you would very slowly and surely remove them from our lives. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles, turn to your Bibles, turn on your Bibles, whichever form you have, to the book of Romans 3. Now as you turn to Romans 3, I'm gonna give you some fair warning we're actually gonna make our way

from Romans 3 all the way to Romans 8. Now for those of you who are maybe not familiar with, we as a family of faith are encouraging us just to systematically walk through the Scriptures either a one or two chapters a day depending on that day's reading for the plan, with the goal of completing all of Scripture over about a three year time period. The reason for doing this so slowly is we kinda want the word to soak in and to be something that we read over and over again and do what 2 Timothy says, that we study the word of God not just read through it, so to speak. Well, this week we've had the privilege of reading this section, primarily the first half of what we know as the book of Romans and I stated this last week and I'm gonna stand behind it: no Scripture should be placed above any other for all Scripture is inspired by God but this part of the Bible just reaches up and grabs us. This is one of those sections in Scripture that just so resonates with us when it shows us his glory and the honor that he is due and our sinfulness and the grace and the mercy that's been bestowed to us from Jesus Christ. But as we walk through these passages today, I'm gonna go ahead and confess to you there are men, ministries and churches that have spent not just weeks and months but have spent years teaching through, walking through, and preaching these chapters in Scripture and we're gonna cover them in less than 30 minutes so we'd better get on it.

With that being said, what I want to do today is walk through and share with you and show you some very strategic words that the Bible uses to describe not only who Jesus Christ is but who we are or should be in him. These are gonna be some foundational words. This could be one of those days where you put some stakes in the ground and you realize not only who he is but who you are to be in light of him. So let me encourage you to turn to Romans 3. We're gonna begin with verse 23 and some of you may find this a very familiar passage as it typically is the first verse that is utilized in what we know as the Roman road Gospel presentation. It says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The first word that I want to define and describe today is the word "redemption." Now I mentioned define and describe, we're also gonna show the distinction between each of these words as well, but to redeem something is to make an exchange on behalf of; it is to allow one to purchase, to buy, or to exchange something of value to themselves and it says here that we are redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Now two things we need to address. The first one is the "who." Who is it that needs redemption? Notice verse 23, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." That is a very critical word. It does not say for most, for some, for the poor, for the wealthy, for the powerful or for the powerless. You see, humanity has a collective sin problem. In fact, sometimes we fall into this trap of saying, "Well, I understand what sin is, it's transgressing the law of God, it's doing things God wouldn't be pleased with, but at least I've never done those things." Isn't it convenient that those are the things that others have done and you haven't? But James 2 says if you've broken one of the laws, it's as if you've broken all of them.

And here it says that all of us have sinned. This is a critical understanding to redemption. Redemption is not needed just for them or those people, it is something that is needed on behalf of every single one of us. The question becomes how does redemption take place?

Now it says very clearly here that we are redeemed, grace through redemption, that is in Christ Jesus. This word or this concept known as redemption, allow me to kind of explore or kinda peel the layers away of how the Bible explains it a little more thoroughly. In your Old Testament there's a book of the Bible known as Hosea. Hosea is one of the 12 minor prophets toward the end of your Old Testament. He's not considered minor because his message is minor, the minor prophets are considered that because typically the quantity of their message is somewhat limited. I mean, you think about it, Isaiah gets 66 chapters, Obadiah, he gets one page in your Bible. I mean, one page. Now if you've got a large print Bible, he may only get half a page in your Bible, so they tend to be minor based on their quantity, not quality. But Hosea as a minor prophet, he stands out in two respects. Number one is this: his message is 14 chapters long. He's one of the longest of the minor prophets. But second and most important, Hosea is known as a lifestyle prophet. Now he does say, "Thus saith the Lord," he speaks the truth of God to the people of God, but it is his life and that which the Lord has him do that is a sermon in and of itself.

Allow me to illustrate. In chapter 1 of the book of Hosea the Lord comes to Hosea the prophet and says, "I need you to go marry a woman and her name is Gomer." Now as you read the book of Hosea, you will discover why the name Gomer is never on a top 10 list of female names in anybody's culture because you discover very quickly that even though they established their family and their home, things appear to be going well, by the time you get halfway through the first chapter, it says that she desires the luxuries of the world, she listens to the voices of other individuals and other men in specific, and by the end of the first chapter, not only has she begun the process of exploring and expanding her territory, shall we say, their family is expanding without Hosea being a part of it. We find her as a woman of ill repute. We find her as a woman who has become completely saturated in the world and has left that which had been established in the home.

Chapter 2 continues and we see her demise and her down-spiraling. By the time you get to chapter 3, this is what's critical to the story of Gomer and Hosea: that Gomer finds herself – listen to this – on the auction block as a slave. That's who she is. Now you think about in our culture whether it's discussing days past or human trafficking of days present which, by the way, can we just admit is just a nice way of saying modern-day slavery? We are appalled at the idea of slavery and rightfully so because it is the story of Hosea with him going to the slave auction and buying his wife back, which is a picture to us of what redemption is. He shows up with 15 pieces of silver and a bunch of barley and you look at yourself and you think, "That's all?" That shows you the condition that Gomer was in, which is a parallel not just to the people of Israel in the Old Testament but to our lives today. When we talk about all have sinned, let's call it what the Bible calls it, we have enslaved ourselves to sin. We have become in bondage to sin and it promises us great fortune, it promises success and power, but all it does is cause us to be enslaved and in bondage to our rebellion and our trespassing.

Lest you believe it's just an Old Testament construct, allow me to go to the New Testament. In the book of Acts 8, we have the story right after what we know as the resurrection, right after the early church gets established, there's a man by the name of

Philip and Philip was one of the first called deacons and he finds himself along the road with a man who we only know as the Ethiopian eunuch. That's all we know of him. And they're alongside the road there and the scroll of Isaiah is opened up and this eunuch admits, he says, "I don't understand what I'm reading. I need somebody to help me." So Philip begins there and he preaches unto him Jesus and over the process of a few verses, he comes to understand his need for Jesus, his sinful condition, and in verse 37 he says, "I believe this Jesus as my Savior." Verse 38, they baptize him. Living proof that Philip had to be a Baptist. How did they find water in the desert I'll never know, but nonetheless, they baptize him there in verse 38. You say, "Well, why is that critical to the story?" Because we look at the story and say, "Well, he was in a chariot. He was with Candace, the ruler of Ethiopia. Look at this wonderful life." He was a slave. You can call it whatever you want but when they take you and make you a eunuch, they have just robbed you not just of your present, they've robbed you of your future. He was in bondage physically. He was in bondage emotionally and the Lord has saw fit that the very first person that we come to see to come to know Jesus Christ in the New Testament one-on-one is someone who is a slave. It's the picture to us of what sin actually does to us and yet we celebrate oftentimes our freedoms in this land, the problem is that sin is not only the ultimate but the eternal slave-master of our life. What does it say in verse 24? Redeemed by Jesus Christ. We all have a sin problem and Jesus Christ is the only means by which redemption or purchasing back can take place.

As we move on to chapter 4, there's another story, there's another situation that comes in in regards to Abraham and it goes back to Genesis 12 and 15 and other passages where Abraham believed on the Lord and it was attributed to him for righteousness, not by his own deeds but by faith. You get to verse 8, it says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute or charge sin." You see, redemption is to be purchased or to be bought back, to be imputed or to be charged is to place it in one's account. In other words, it makes it very clear, "Blessed is the man who the Lord does not impute sin."

Now let's talk about the "who" there because in redemption it's all of us, right? Notice it says here, "Blessed is the man," or the person or the one, "who the Lord will not impute sin." All of a sudden we have a division here because when it comes to our sin problem, it's either gonna be imputed, we'll talk about that in just a moment, to Jesus or it's gonna be imputed to ourselves. You see, it's making it very clear that there's only two roads we can go down, there's only two paths, there's only two ways of doing this, it's either charged to Jesus or it's charged to us.

You see, that's the how, that's what it means, imputation, to be charged. We see this every day in our culture and society whether it be online or actually physically in person. We have these small little pieces of plastic that have magnetic strips, they have chips, and sometimes you just have to tap them and other means by which we buy dinner, by which we go and buy clothing, by which we buy tickets to a sporting event, a variety of things. What do we do? We swipe the card, insert the card, tap the card, do whatever it is, and we "charge it" and the beneficiary of that charge is Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, whoever it may be. We charge it to them but I got news for you if you hadn't figured it out: in a few days you're gonna get the bill. They're gonna send you a bill

that says, "By the way,." This one is coming back to you and if you don't pay it in time, it's gonna come back to you with interest, and if you don't keep up with the interest, you're gonna get in a perpetual cycle that's gonna be very difficult to get out of.

What does this say? "Blessed is the man who the Lord does not impute sin." Here's what the Bible is saying, that there is this ability for our sin to be charged to Jesus' account and we don't have to pay the final price for it. He paid the price at Calvary. He paid the price when they put the stakes in his hand. He paid the price when the crown of thorn was on his head. He paid the price and when he rose from the grave he guaranteed that his ability to pay and his ability to be charged with it would last for all of eternity.

So we see redemption is the Lord's desire to buy us, to pay for us to get out of slavery. Imputation depends on who's gonna take the charge account here, are we gonna lay it at Jesus or are we gonna try to do this on our own? Which leads us to chapter 5. The next word which if you've read through Romans you'll have to be very familiar with, it's the word justification. It says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Now justification, we discussed this a little bit last week, simply means "to be declared righteous; to be one who is in a right standing with God." Now it's here we've got to draw a very clear distinction of the "who" here. Notice with redemption, all had sinned. Notice when it comes to the charging of our sin, it's either placed on Jesus' account or it's placed on yours. Notice the word that's here, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This is very important for us to understand for if you have come to that place and point in time in your life where you have admitted that you're a sinner and asked Jesus Christ to save you, you are part of the body of Christ, you are part of the body of believers. You are justified. You are declared righteous not because of your works but because of his. In other words, it doesn't matter if you've been saved one day, one year, one decade, or one century, one's justification, one's declared righteous, one's standing with God is based not on how you're doing but based on what he has done on your behalf. So the justified, those that are declared righteous are those of us who are in Christ.

Now notice the "how," by faith. I want you to notice the Bible does not say that you're saved and justified by showing up to church. It doesn't say you're justified by giving of your financial resources. It doesn't say you're justified by going on a mission trip. How are you justified? How do you become a believer in Jesus Christ? By faith, believing that you do have a sin problem, believing that Jesus Christ is the only answer to your sin problem and believing that if you cry out and call out to him, he will forgive you of your sins.

You see, redemption is what we all need. Imputation describes the two roads that we can go down. Justification is the declaration that those who have faith in Jesus Christ alone have been declared righteous which leads us to chapter 6 and the next word. Now the next word I want to speak of with you isn't specifically used in chapter 6 but it's the word "sanctification." It means "the process of becoming holy." It means the process of conforming and looking more like Jesus Christ today than I did yesterday. In Romans 6,

beginning in verse 11, it says, "Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Now as I mentioned, to be sanctified or sanctification is this process of becoming holy or looking more like Jesus each and every day. I want you to notice the "who" here, the "who" is you. Now we as the family of faith are justified, the question is are you sanctified? This is the path that you take. This is the path that you decide. This is the path that does not determine your eternal standing but it does determine your fellowship with the Lord today.

I want you to notice the "how." It says, "reckon yourselves to be dead, yield your members." I want to clarify or shall I say clean up a grave misunderstanding in our "culture" today. I think we have this misunderstanding, this error that we're saved by faith but we're sanctified by our works. Nothing could be further from the truth because I've got news for you, it doesn't matter what you do, nothing you do is gonna be holy. Nothing you do is gonna be godly. Nothing you do is gonna be righteous because according to Scripture the only righteousness you have access to is through Jesus Christ, not yourself. And so sanctification isn't what we do, it's what we allow him to do in and through us.

Allow me to illustrate. I want you to imagine either that time in your life or that time in somebody's life where they come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. I want you to imagine that at that point you have before you a large rectangular shaped marble structure. When you see a large marble structure, you as the artist, you as the sculptor know that within that element, within that medium there is a beautiful sculpture waiting to be revealed. That's why Ephesians 2 says we are his workmanship, we are his masterpiece. That beautiful sculpture, all the great pieces of art in the world did not happen because an artist took pieces of marble and glued them together, it happened when they took a slab of marble and chipped away at it. Here's the problem with sanctification, it hurts. A chisel and a hammer is no fun but it is the only way to reveal the beauty within.

When it says here consider yourselves dead, when it says here yield yourselves to righteousness, the picture we get of sanctification is not us doing things, it's allowing the Lord to remove things from our life that are hindering us from looking like and being and living as he would desire. You see, the hard part of sanctification isn't about going and doing something, it's about allowing him to take away, remove, chip away the things in life that we so desperately want to hold onto that don't look like Jesus in our lives. So you notice on the "who" part it gets very personal, it goes from the man to we to you.

Finally, we turn to chapter 8 of the book of Romans, verse 1, one of my favorite verses in all the Bible as I'll explain in just a moment. Chapter 8, verse 1 of the book of Romans, it says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We dealt with redemption and imputation,

justification, sanctification, now it's this word "condemnation." It means "to pay the penalty for." It means "to pay the price of." It means "to be cursed or experience wrath." I want you to notice the first word, "Therefore." You know what therefore is there for, right? It's to connect you to what we've been dealing with and the "who" part of this is them, therefore there is no condemnation to them. This is a collective term for those who are in Christ and so the "no condemnation" part means those who are in Christ, those who are saved, those who are forgiven, they don't have to be concerned with, worried about, or struggling with the eternal consequences of sin and condemnation in their life.

Therefore there is now no condemnation and so the question becomes the "how" part here. How is it that you and I as individuals, even as believers in Jesus Christ who struggle with the sanctification process, how can we go forward as Romans 8 says? Because when you read chapter 7, do you know what you discover about the Apostle Paul? He had a sin problem just like you. In fact, listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, "That which I want to do, I can't seem to do and that which I want to stop, I can't quit doing. Therefore sin that dwells in me, O wretched man am I!" You see, the promise of chapter 8, verse 1, is even though we struggle, even though we have difficulty with allowing him to chip away the stuff of our life, there is no condemnation, notice the "how," in Christ Jesus.

As we close today, let me flip the script. That means if you're not in Christ Jesus, there is condemnation. Why? Because your sins have been charged to your account. Condemnation, the price to be paid, the wrath to be experienced, the eternity that it involves. At the end of the day we realize that our sins are either charged to Jesus or they're charged to ourselves. When he takes our sin, there is no condemnation even if we struggle, but when we say, "I got this, God. I think I can do it on my own." There is condemnation, there is wrath, there is curse and there is punishment.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that individual today, maybe you're here for the very first time, maybe you've been in a setting like this thousands of times, but maybe for whatever reason in days past, it's kind of been one of these, "Let me weigh the good verse the bad, or let me weigh what I've stopped verse what I've quit," and basically this human engineering of good verse bad, and maybe today for the first time as you walked through and you studied the Scriptures, you realized it's not based on what you ever will do or stop doing, it's based on what Jesus Christ alone has done in your stead. Maybe today it finally clicked and you said, "Do you know what? I need Jesus. I need to be in Christ Jesus. I need to be saved. I need to be forgiven." I got great news, Romans 10, just a couple of chapters over, it says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Maybe that's who you are today whether you're physically in this place, whether you're on the other side of our media ministry, whatever it may be, wherever you are today, if this is who you are and where you are, can I encourage you just to have a conversation with the Lord? You don't have to have this conversation out loud. In fact, you don't even have to say maybe the same words that I might use, but maybe your conversation would go a little something like this. "Today, God, I realize I can't do it on my own. I realize today I'm never going to be good enough. I realize today I can never stop the bad enough to be acceptable in your eyes. God, today

I give up. I give up in the sense that I finally understand that I've got a sin problem that only Jesus Christ can fix. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sin on his cross, and I believe he rose from the dead three days later so I can have the privilege of having my sins be forgiven, my soul being saved not on my merit but on his alone. God, today I don't have all the answers to the problems of life, but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. The best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, if that's the conversation you had with the Lord today, we'd love to have a conversation with you. We'd love to celebrate with you what the Lord is doing. But maybe today your conversation is in regards to eternity or salvation, if so we'd love to have it with you. But maybe it's a sanctification issue, maybe it's an obedience issue, maybe it's a fallen in baptism issue, maybe it's about being a part of this great church issue, or maybe you just need to pray with somebody. Whatever the conversation is, whatever the struggle, we just want to be here to facilitate.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time in our service, thank you for your hand of mercy. Thank you for your hand of grace. Thank you that you have not relegated us to the other side of the universe, so to speak, but that we are right in the midst of your presence with your sole desire for us to embrace your love that you bestowed to us. Help us, O God, today to respond appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us, whatever decision, I'll be right here at the front.