

CHRISTIAN OUTREACH DEPARTMENT

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THEME: HOW CAN I PROTECT MY SOUL IN THIS WORLD OF SIN?

We may think that Paul's address in Romans 6:12-23 only concerns going against God's will in sexual life or substance abuse. Sin is the opposite of righteousness. Doing wrong in any area of life is sin.

Paul introduces three kinds of death. First of all, physical death; secondly, death with Christ in baptism and thirdly, the eternal death that attempts to destroy us through sin. (Romans 5:12; 6:3-4, 21-23).

A person who lives in sin is in a constant state of corruption. Sin degenerates and ruins us whereas living according to God's will recreates and brings forth good fruit. It is important for us to understand our weaknesses. As Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:33-34: "Bad company corrupts good character," A Christian lives in the midst of a battlefield. We know what is right but we do not necessarily obey God's will.

Since God is merciful to us, we must reflect on the actions we take in daily life. God's grace makes us set new priorities, creating a desire to avoid evil deeds. Forgiveness by grace is real and if we believe in Christ, we may have a fresh start in life. God gives us strength to change our lives if we are willing to accept His help. Christians are greatly tempted to adopt a lifestyle that goes against God's will. The conflict between the values in this world and God's world is great. In faith we can determine between right and wrong and trust our conscience in following God's will in daily life.

God hates evil, not us. Without His wrath, his love would not exist. There would just be immense indifference. The apostle Paul needed prayers, support, and encouragement from Christians. How could we not need what such a great apostle needed?

As we struggle in this world of addictions, it is important to shift our perspective from our powerlessness to Christ. Christ acts in so many ways and levels in this world. Let us not look down on good treatment facilities, qualified professional help and helping doctors. They all are a part of God's infinite grace. Trusting in God's power is not a drug but believers live by faith and can gratefully accept all help God provides for us in our struggles.

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THEME: FACING JUDGMENT

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32). The freedom Jesus means requires us to be attached to the truth, which is anchored in God’s Word. Christian freedom does not consist of fulfilling one’s desires as they emerge. If our conscience is not tied to the Word of God, we are internally enslaved, insecure, and restless. “Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.” (James 1:8). True freedom begins when we encounter the Word of the Gospel and we attach ourselves to the Savior, who proclaims: “Then neither do I condemn you.” Jesus declared, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8:11). Jesus, our Savior, is merciful and sets free the slaves of sin, but simultaneously, he ties us to his Word and to a new obedience in it.

Faithful obedience is not a burden because being obedient in faith brings forth a desire to follow the Lord Jesus. Paul says: “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.” (Romans 6:18).

God heals us in a universal manner, but we need encouragement and comfort even if we walk by faith. Difficult temptations will not leave us alone. But we have a Defender in temptations: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13).

The devil is our prosecutor, but Jesus defends us in these constant attacks. Our Defender also intercedes for us in front of God (Hebrews 7:25). In the midst of trouble and fears, we are God’s people. Christ has even changed the circumstances of human life. Jesus’ teachings have had a revolutionary effect on human culture and the execution of societal justice. The Gospel of Christ belongs to the entire world. We may often be narrow-minded in our thoughts about this for there is a lot of spiritual discrimination. The Gospel supposedly belongs exclusively to a certain group of people, or only to those whose lives appear righteous.

We are all equal, since we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:22-24). To avoid developing wrong thoughts, we sometimes must retreat to solitude with God. As we are peaceful and “bare” in front of God, we become freed from adulation, group pressure, and distorted priorities which can lead us on the wrong path.

Even believers can be engaged in such a manner. The Old Testament offers a word of warning. “Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong” (Exodus 23:2). It is a serious matter, since we cannot leave the world. It is necessary to cooperate with those who have different ideas and values. That’s what makes it vital for us to encounter God in solitude to reflect on our life and our earthly dwelling. The still small voice of our conscience can much better be heard in silence than in a noisy crowd.

We should bow our heads in silence before God every night before resting. It is also a good opportunity to pray for those that God gives to our hearts. A prayer calendar with topics to pray for can also be a useful tool.

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DAILY DEVOTIONS (to enhance your spiritual life)

1. Bow your head in silent prayer. Ask God to speak to you through his word.
2. Read a scripture.
3. Think about the main message of the text: Is it a promise, an exhortation, a command, a good or bad example?
4. Think about what it says about God, and about people.
5. Let the Word guide you and your life.
6. Pray and act, let the Word affect your words and actions.

In your White Ribbon Sisters' meeting, discuss the topics you want to pray for yourselves and the matters you would like to suggest for international prayer themes.

PRAYER CALENDAR Individual Prayer Themes for the Week

Sunday:

Pray in thanksgiving for your salvation; pray for your spiritual life to be strengthened and for the unity of Christian churches.

Monday:

Missionary work. Pray for Christian life to be strengthened among young churches. Pray for fruitful missionary work and its expansion and for God's protection to missionaries from our countries.

Tuesday:

Pray for family and a spiritual home; for work places; and for schools – the teachers and our children and youth.

Wednesday:

Pray for our neighbors and everyone we encounter.

Thursday:

Pray for our country, our leaders, and society.

Friday:

Pray for the Church of Christ and for God to bring together all believers through the ties of His uniting love and common agreement.

Saturday:

Pray for peace for all nations on earth. Give thanks for God's gifts and guidance and ask for forgiveness of our negligence. Pray for eternal life after life on earth.