

I.N.I.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
July 21, 2013
Romans 7:14-25

In Christ Jesus, whose Amazing Grace is showered upon us in His willing sacrifice as payment for all of our sins, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our service this morning closes with an “oldy but goody”--Amazing Grace. Amazing Grace is one of the most famous and well-liked hymns in the Christian Church. It was written around 1770 by a former slave trader named John Newton who was brought to faith in Jesus and eventually became a pastor.

However, the words of this song could have been written and sung by the Apostle Paul. For throughout this letter to the Romans Paul states the same truths that are found in this song. Paul writes about how great and amazing God’s grace—His undeserved--love for sinners is. He too was lost but was found when Christ appeared to him on the way to Damascus. And Paul calls himself by the very same name that Newton used in the first verse of that famous hymn---a wretch.

A wretch means an outcast, an evil, mean person, one who is very miserable and supremely unhappy.

What a very fitting name for lost mankind. We are all outcasts from God. That began with Adam and Eve who were cast out of the perfect Garden of Eden. Paradise was lost because of their sins. We too have been cast out of, removed from the family of God, because of our sins. We at conception and birth were sons and daughters of Satan, wretches at heart.

But as we know God so loved us wretches, in fact so loved this whole world of wretches that He sent His only Son to redeem us, to buy us back, to ransom us. Thus through faith in Jesus we are once again God’s sons and daughters, children of the Heavenly Father ransomed from Satan. But we still have sin in us corrupting everything that we think, say and do.

Therefore a good name for a Christian is a **RANSOMED WRETCH!** Paul was a ransomed wretch, and as a ransomed wretch he knew about sin and grace. From our text this morning we learn that

THE RANSOMED WRETCH...

I: RECOGNIZES WHAT SIN IS ALL ABOUT...

II: RECOGNIZES THE WAR AND STRUGGLE BETWEEN HIS FLESH AND HIS NEW MAN...

III: RECOGNIZES DELIVERANCE ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

At first reading Paul’s words may sound sort of confusing. For he uses words like “I would, I do not, I would not, but I do.” But all of what he says is true and factual. For Paul, the sinner-saint, is trying to understand the conflict that he feels within himself. He is a saint and a slave to God; but he also is a sinner and a slave to sin.

In our first verse Paul says that the Law of God is spiritual, that is it comes from God; but we are carnal, sinful, of the flesh, sold to sin.

What does it mean to be “sold under sin.” He explains in the next verses. **FOR WHAT I AM DOING, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. FOR WHAT I WILL TO DO, THAT I DO NOT PRACTICE; BUT WHAT I HATE, THAT I DO. IF, THEN, I DO WHAT I WILL NOT TO DO, I AGREE WITH THE LAW THAT *IT IS* GOOD. BUT NOW, *IT IS* NO LONGER I WHO DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLS IN ME.**

Paul says we are not free to choose our own way of living. For the things we do, we many times don’t understand. The things we want to do, we don’t do, but the things we don’t want to do, in fact what we hate, we end up doing. We are sold to sin, we cannot escape that hold on us that sin has. For sin is throughout our body, in our thoughts, words and deeds. And how do we know this? Because of the Law, the Law of God shows us our sins!

The ransomed wretch, the believer, sees that the main purpose of the Law is to show us our sins, so that we recognize what sin is all about. It leads us to confess as Paul does, **FOR I KNOW THAT IN ME (THAT IS, IN MY FLESH) NOTHING GOOD DWELLS.**

In Paul’s letter to the young pastor Timothy, Paul states, **THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTANCE, THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, OF WHOM I AM CHIEF.**

Who of us would make this kind of statement. Oh, yes, we do confess our sins in church as we did this morning with other members and yes, we confess our sins daily before God in the privacy of our homes. We may even confess certain sins to our pastor, or family member or close friend, but who of us would publicly declare to the whole world: **“I AM THE WORST OF ALL SINNERS!”**

Paul did. He wrote it in this inspired letter to the Romans which is part of God’s Word in the Bible, the most widely read book of all time.

Paul is not boasting of his sins, as some do, who brag about how many times they’ve been drunk, or how much they curse and swear, or how many sexual conquests they’ve had.

No, Paul says this with shame. Yet he says it with all boldness and boasting in Christ. For even though he is the worst sinner of all people, yet Christ died for him.

Now the worldly psychologists and psychiatrists of our day would say that Paul has a problem. He is plagued with an inferiority complex, or a severe guilt complex. He feels he is worse than others because of some mental imbalance, probably from some childhood abuse that he suffered.

No, Paul as a ransomed wretch knows what sin is all about, because of God’s Word. He knew David’s words: **BEHOLD, I WAS BROUGHT FORTH IN INIQUITY, AND IN SIN MY MOTHER CONCEIVED ME.** And Isaiah’s words: **BUT WE ARE ALL LIKE AN UNCLEAN THING, AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUSNESSES ARE LIKE FILTHY RAGS.** Paul wrote: **BECAUSE THE CARNAL (UNBELIEVING) MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD; FOR IT IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD, NOR INDEED CAN BE.** And he quoted from the Old Testament: **THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE...THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, NO, NOT ONE.**

This as Ransomed Wretches we also know. The Law condemns us daily. But

THE RANSOMED WRETCH...

II: ALSO RECOGNIZES THE WAR AND STRUGGLE BETWEEN HIS FLESH AND HIS NEW MAN...

Paul puts it so succinctly in vs. 19-23: **FOR THE GOOD THAT I WILL TO DO, I DO NOT DO; BUT THE EVIL I WILL NOT TO DO, THAT I PRACTICE. NOW IF I DO WHAT I WILL NOT TO DO, IT IS NO LONGER I WHO DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLS IN ME. I FIND THEN A LAW, THAT EVIL IS PRESENT WITH ME, THE ONE WHO WILLS TO DO GOOD. FOR I DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE INWARD MAN. BUT I SEE ANOTHER LAW IN MY MEMBERS, WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND, AND BRINGING ME INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE LAW OF SIN WHICH IS IN MY MEMBERS.**

Isn’t this exactly how we live. We know that it is wrong to disobey and speak back to our parents; we know that it is wrong to cheat in school; we know that it is wrong to fight, quarrel, gossip, lie, curse, envy, lust, and a whole multitude of other sinful things and yet we still do them.

According to our Christian nature, the New Man, we delight in God’s Law, we love and want to do what God says. We want to obey Him out of love and thanksgiving for all that Jesus has done for us, but right alongside of us is our sinful flesh, the old Adam, constantly bringing our bodies and lives into captivity, leading us to do what we do not want to do and not do what we want to do.

Paul is not making excuses here! He is simply telling us that this war, this struggle is extremely dangerous and deadly--for our flesh is very powerful and it feeds on sin everyday. It daily tries to rob us of our faith, to destroy that New Man in us. Satan knows that it only takes one sin to push us over the brink from faithfulness to unbelief. It takes only one intentional sin to destroy our repentant heart and make it dead and cold once more.

How scary! Should we despair? Only if we rely upon ourselves. For our defense, our protection in this war going on inside of us, cannot be found from inside of us, but can be found only in Christ and His Word. Therefore

THE RANSOMED WRETCH...

III: RECOGNIZES DELIVERANCE ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

Paul cries out: **O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH? I THANK GOD -- THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD! SO THEN, WITH THE MIND I MYSELF SERVE THE LAW OF GOD, BUT WITH THE FLESH THE LAW OF SIN.**

Many times we too weary in this fight and we need to also cry out, **O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH?** So often we do not win in the battle with sin. Not because God’s Word is weak, but because we are weak and we forget to turn to it

for our strength or don't listen to it and apply it. Jesus turned to the Word when He was tempted by Satan.

At times we let ourselves get into tempting circumstances like Lot moving into the area of Sodom and Gomorrah, or we just intentionally forsake God's Way and follow our alluring flesh, like David when he committed adultery with Bathsheba.

As a pastor, I too cry out with Paul, for I see the actions of sin in my own life and also see how Satan can so easily get God's people to follow after him and their sinful flesh. They are led to forsake their weekly worship of their Savior-God and the hearing of His Word. They neglect their coming to the Lord's Supper on a consistent basis to strengthen their faith and they neglect the spiritual needs of their children.

But even as Paul does not despair, neither should we. Yes, we have our sinful flesh with us everyday of our lives until the day we die, for it is a body of death that we live in. But thanks be to God that we Ransomed Wretches have been completely forgiven alone through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

And thanks be to Christ, that He has ransomed this body of ours and sanctified it so that we can serve Him now here in time and some day with a glorified body, completely purged of any sin, will serve Him forever in heaven.

Yes, Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!

Amen.

Our study in the letter to the Romans this morning leads us to chapter 6. With this chapter the Apostle Paul takes up a new topic in his letter---Sanctification, the life of the Christian.

Thus far Paul has laid before us two major points.

1) What Adam did brought sin and death upon all of mankind. None of his descendants have any righteousness of their own to bring before God---neither the Gentiles, who did not know God and did not have God's Law, nor the Jews, who knew God and who boasted in having God's Law. None of them could keep it. All showed the effects of Adam's sin in their original sin and its consequence of death.

2) But just as what Adam did had the effect of bringing death and condemnation upon all people, so what Christ did had the effect of regaining righteousness and giving the free gift of life and salvation to all people. Jesus lived the perfect life us sinners couldn't. Jesus died the death we sinners deserved. Through His work there is now a robe of righteousness given to all who believe in Jesus.

Martin Luther called this an "alien righteousness." It is righteousness that comes from outside of us, credited to the believer without any inner change or moral improvement in the recipient. God declares us to be righteous. We have been justified. All of this is done by God upon us, done by His grace.

But now that we are brought to this saving faith, a marked change does take place. The driving force or power behind the believer's life change from living in sin to living for God is the same driving force or power that brought life and salvation to him in the first place. The perfect life, the sacrificial death and the victorious resurrection of Jesus.

His death and resurrection frees us from an old life of disobedience and empowers us to now live a new life of obedience to God's will.

We have entitled this: **FREEDOM FROM THE CLUTCHES OF SIN**

I: BY BEING UNITED WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH THROUGH BAPTISM.

II: BY BEING UNITED WITH CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION THROUGH BAPTISM.

Paul ended chapter 5 with this surprising statement: **BUT WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE ABOUNDED MUCH MORE.**

Paul anticipated the unbelieving perverse logic to then conclude, "If that's the case, then why not go on sinning all the more, so that grace will abound all the more."

Paul cuts off any such notion in no uncertain terms with his response in verses 1-2: **WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? SHALL WE CONTINUE IN SIN THAT GRACE MAY ABOUND? CERTAINLY NOT! HOW SHALL WE WHO DIED TO SIN LIVE ANY LONGER IN IT?**

But how did we die to sin? Paul answers with his next statement: **OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT AS MANY OF US AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH?** Baptism is not just some mere symbolical ritual. It is a means of Grace. It is effective in doing something. It accomplishes something. It brings God's grace to us. It puts us in touch with Jesus, or more precisely it unites us to Jesus, makes us partners in His death and burial.

That is Paul's next statement: **THEREFORE WE WERE BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH.** Not only did Jesus die for us, or in our place, in baptism we died with Christ. In baptism we enter into all of the events of Jesus' life for us. Our sins became His, and His righteousness now belongs to us. Even as He was buried in the tomb, we are buried with Him. And all of this frees us from the clutches of sin!

The purpose and power of baptism is to forgive sins; in some cases to create faith; and in all cases to strengthen faith and to unite us with Jesus. It is to make us Christlike. In Galatians Paul put it this way: **FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST.**

We were baptized that we might live a new kind of life, totally different from our old way of life, which was doomed in slavery to sin. Through baptism we have real life, spiritual life here and eternal life hereafter.

Baptism into Christ's death means death to sin. Here Paul portrays baptism as a funeral ceremony which proclaims and seals the testimony that a death has occurred—the old Adam is being put to death. In 2 Corinthians Paul writes: **THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION; OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW.**

But there is more! Being united with Christ means we are also united with Him in His resurrection. Paul writes: **THAT JUST AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD BY THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, EVEN SO WE ALSO SHOULD WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.** Even as God so gloriously showed His almighty power by raising Jesus from the dead, so also He shows His power in the lives of those who have been baptized through the Gospel message leading us to live a new life. The Old Man is put off and the New Man is put on.

Christ's death and resurrection was the basis for God to declare all of us righteous in His sight and to credit Jesus' righteousness to us. But that same death and resurrection of Jesus also empowers us to lead a new life doing what is pleasing to God. It is that life of obedient faith to God's will, not rebellion against His commandments. We have been set free from the clutches of sin!

Paul restates or summarizes what he has just written in the next few verses: **FOR IF WE HAVE BEEN UNITED TOGETHER IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH, CERTAINLY WE ALSO SHALL BE IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS RESURRECTION, KNOWING THIS, THAT OUR OLD MAN WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, THAT THE BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, THAT WE SHOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES OF SIN. FOR HE WHO HAS DIED HAS BEEN FREED FROM SIN.**

We see that our Old Man was crucified with Christ. Crucifixion was one of the cruelest means of execution, reserved for only the worst criminals. That kind of death was very appropriate for us "criminals" who were conceived and born with the sinful seed of Adam. Our "Old Man," or "Old Adam" is the evil nature we were born with, which is always inclined only toward evil. It will not and cannot be changed or trained in the way of righteousness. This is the sinful human condition of all people.

But in our baptism that body of sin is done away with so that we are no longer sin's willing slaves. The power of the Gospel message has freed us and continues to give us daily strength to crucify our sinful flesh, to say "no" to sin and to live for Christ.

Paul's next statement is so wonderful, so glorious we should have it printed on every one of doorways in our homes, on our bathroom mirrors, at work, wherever we spend a lot of time. **NOW IF WE DIED WITH CHRIST, WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM.**

Paul goes on to describe our new life in Christ: **KNOWING THAT CHRIST, HAVING BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, DIES NO MORE. DEATH NO LONGER HAS DOMINION OVER HIM. FOR THE DEATH THAT HE DIED, HE DIED TO SIN ONCE FOR ALL; BUT THE LIFE THAT HE LIVES, HE LIVES TO GOD.**

When someone is in a deep sleep we sometimes say, "He's dead to the world." Meaning nothing can make an impression on that person; it has no control or influence on him—he is so deep in sleep.

That is the situation between Christ and sin. Sin has been paid for and the sinner justified. The wages of sin, which is death, has been taken care of with Christ's death. Death no longer has any hold on Jesus. He swallowed up death in victory. Forevermore, because of His resurrection He lives a holy, blissful existence to God. Although Jesus still has His human nature, it is a human nature that is now glorified and immortal. It is this kind of blissful life that Paul has in mind with this statement: **NOW IF WE DIED WITH CHRIST, WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM.**

As part of His humiliation, Jesus subjected Himself to human weakness, to mortality, to the consequences of sin, even though He had no sin. When God made Him, who had no sin, to be sin for us, death truly had dominion over Him. The lifeless body of Christ was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. Death had its way with Jesus...but then came Easter! **DEATH NO LONGER HAS DOMINION OVER HIM.** And being baptized into Christ, death no longer has dominion over us!

Jesus died once. He subjected Himself to sin's curse once, but that is now all over! Now He lives, He lives forevermore. So we shall die once, but then be resurrected to eternal life. Eternal death is not our future, eternal life is!

What Paul has been leading up to is the Christian's grateful response for everything that has been done for him. What Christ has done for us and what He continues to do in us now enables us to respond with a life of cheerful obedience to God.

Paul writes: **LIKEWISE YOU ALSO, RECKON YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD INDEED TO SIN, BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

So, should we sin all the more, so God's grace abounds all the more? Paul again answers that unbelieving perverse logic and says "Christian look upon yourself as dead to sin, but alive to God."

According to the new man we strive to please God, not the sinful desires of our flesh. We want to live a life pleasing to God because we are in Christ Jesus. Through Jesus' work of redemption, we find the motivation to live as our Savior lived. His sacrificial love and the power of His resurrection in us moves us to live in cheerful obedience even in the face of suffering and sadness. Our comfort and the strength to resist temptations in those times comes only from our Savior's great love for us as found in His powerful Word.

We close this morning with the reading of Hymn 298 verses 1, 2 and 6.

Amen.