

Stay Out of the Mud

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[0:00] Good morning, everybody. He had just had a bath, too.

Yeah. Why do we do that? Like Finley. His name is Finley, by the way, in case you haven't seen him around town. He's a small horse.

He's hard to wash, and then he promptly goes and rolls in the dirt. Look, we would never do that, right?

We'd never go get ourselves all clean and then go out and roll in the mud. You feel good about yourself. You've been working outside, take a shower, put on clean clothes, and then promptly go outside and dive straight in the mud and get all dirty again.

Nobody would do that, right? That is Paul's reminder or question or challenge to us in Romans chapter 6. So here's what we're talking about today, y'all.

[1:10] Stay out of the mud. It's what I really wish my dog would learn. Stay out of the mud. Jesus washed us clean. So why do we insist on going back and crawling through the mud?

Turn with me, if you would, to Romans chapter 5. We have been on this series, Went in Romans, for quite a few weeks now. I think this is week 11 that we've been diving through Paul's letter epistle to Romans.

We're going to try to dig through two chapters today, Romans 5 and Romans 6. Romans 5 talks about what Jesus did for us. Romans 6 talks about how we then live.

If this is what Jesus did for us, which we're going to see in Romans 5, then Romans 6 tells us how to apply that. So how should we live? So as you turn to Romans chapter 5, I'm reminding you we started at the back of the book and we've been working our way forward to the beginning, and we're going to see why when we get there.

Romans chapter 5. We're going to begin in verse 1. I'm reading from the New Living Translation. If y'all wouldn't mind, if you're able to stand, would you mind joining me in standing?

[2:24] And let's read through these first five verses of Romans 5 together. Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

Boy, think back to everything that Jesus did for us. That's how you and I can have peace with God. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand.

And we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. Imagine all of God's glory, all of his power, all of his majesty.

You and I will get to share in that glory. And we can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, which we're all going to. For we know that these problems and trials help us develop endurance.

And endurance develops strength of character. And character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment.

[3:32] For we know how dearly God loves us because he's given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. Would you bow your heads with me?

God, we approach you today having sung your praises, having listened to your name lifted up. Having seen a baby dedicated to you.

His parents' desire to raise him up in the way he ought to go. God, that's all of our desire is just to follow you more closely. To learn more of what it means to be your child and walk through this life as a child of God.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I pray that God would teach us exactly that today from Romans chapter 5 and Romans 6. We're going to start off with this.

Jesus changed your status. So this is the first truth that we get from Romans chapter 5 is Jesus has changed our status.

[4:28] Look back at the text with me if you would. If you don't have a copy of the word of God, there should be one there in the seat back in front of you. Or you can pull out your handy little phone and get the Bible app up.

I don't care as long as we're all looking at the scriptures together. So Romans 5, let's look down at verse 6. When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. And now look down at verse 8. This is a very well-known verse. If you've been around the church a while, you've read the Bible, then you've probably heard this verse before. But God showed or demonstrated or commended his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Those verses before that talk about the difference. It's how, yeah, maybe somebody might be willing to lay down their life or die for a good person, right? But who would die for a bad person? Who would die for an evil person?

Who would die for a sinner? And that's the point that Jesus is making. I died for you when you were sinners, not because you earned it, not because you were deserving of the ultimate sacrifice, but because I love you.

[5:39] I showed you this love by dying for you while you were still sinners. And then look down at verse 10. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his son, while we were still his enemies.

Boy, we went from sinners to enemies. Real quick there. Yeah, God, we're sinners. Nobody's perfect. But you're calling us your enemies? Yes, because you belong to the power of darkness. Because you're trapped. You can't break out. You belong to the wrong kingdom. And Jesus came to break you out, to free those chains. So now you're no longer at odds.

Now you can be in God's, not just on his team, be in his family. Be in God's family. So he says in verse 10, while we were still his enemies, then friendship with God was restored by the death of his son.

And he said, because of this, we certainly will be saved through the life of his son. What a demonstration. What a gesture of love that someone would die for you.

[6:49] But then if they can go on living for you at the same time, well, that's impossible. But that's exactly what Jesus did. He said, not only will I die for you, but I will raise myself back to life by the power of God.

And then I will be alive for you as well. And you will have my living spirit living with you. So this is what Jesus has offered us.

So we're talking about how God can change our status. And if you are a child of God this morning, then he has changed your status. What do we mean when we say status? Y'all, maybe it's a generational thing, but you know what the first thing I think of when I think of status is?

Facebook. Yeah. Anybody ever update their Facebook status? How many of y'all remember the early days of Facebook when it was really awkward and just information you didn't need to know? And they were like dragging it out of you? It would be a complete the sentence kind of thing. Like Sam is feeling blank and then you fill in the blank and share Sam is feeling tired.

[7:59] And then you share that. And the people that see it are like, why are you telling us this? Take a nap. Sam is feeling hungry. Eat a sandwich, Sam. And while you're at it, make me one too.

Anyway, kind of silly, the whole status thing. But statuses change all the time. And Facebook wanted to play on that. Give us your status update. What's going on with you? Employment status can change real quick.

One moment you've got a job, you're gainfully employed, and you're moving forward in life. And then you get a phone call, and all of a sudden you don't have a job anymore. Your employment status has moved to unemployed.

And that's no fun to be in that situation. You're like, oh boy, what are we doing now? Relationship statuses can change. Everything's moving along, and all of a sudden, one mistake, one conversation, and now you're not in a relationship anymore.

These statuses are very fluid. They can change. That's not the kind of status that Jesus offers us. He offers us a permanent status change.

[9:10] Your status, your situation, your outlook, your identity is probably a better word. It's secure. It is cemented when Jesus changes your status.

And here's what it was. It was from slave to sin to son of God. From slave to sin to son of God. Now look over in Galatians chapter 2.

You don't even have to turn in your Bibles if you don't want. You can just look at the screen. Paul was writing, and he said, He's kind of fleshing out how the whole status change thing works.

When God changes your status, this is how he does it, and this is how he leaves you. I was crucified. My old status, my old self, my old identity was put to death with Jesus.

It's no longer that person who lives anymore. Now it's Christ giving me a new life. It's his life. It's him living in and through me. So when I live in this earthly body, which I still have, and it reminds me of that from time to time, when it wants to do the wrong thing, think the wrong thing.

[10:32] We've talked about that in recent weeks. Last Sunday, we talked about in Romans 7, how Paul's just all over the place saying, I know I shouldn't do this, but I find myself doing it. I know I should be doing this, and I don't do that.

So when this earthly body reminds me of how, oh man, this is still who you are. You're still that same old guy, that same old girl with all the same problems, all the same issues.

He says, I live in that earthly body. How? How? Only by trusting in Jesus. Jesus. He's the source of my life. He's the source of my new status.

My new identity. It's because he loved me so much. And he gave himself for me. So now I can offer up this, this earthly body, this new identity, this mess that I am, this conflict going on within me.

I can offer that back up to Jesus and say, God, this is what I give to you. This is the sacrifice I bring to you. You say, man, that's kind of a mess. How great of a sacrifice is that to offer to God?

[11:35] It's the sacrifice he wants. It's exactly what he wants. He wants you with all of your inner conflict, all of your turmoil, all of your mess, all of your inconsistency.

He wants that. He wants you to say, Jesus, take it. You take it and shape it and teach me how to live for you. And that's what he's going to get into in chapter six.

But this is the status change from slave to sin to son of God. You ladies could put daughter of God if you wanted to. That's fine.

Okay. We're just talking about children of God from slave to sin to daughter and son of God. It means we're at peace with God.

It means we're part of his family. And we didn't earn this status update and we can't lose it by having a bad day or having a bad week or having a bad month or having a bad season.

[12:33] So stop trying to work for a status update that Jesus already purchased for you from slave to sin to son of God.

Number two, Jesus is changing you. Jesus not only changes your status, he changes you. He changes me.

He's literally in the process of changing you. It's not just your identity. He's not just saying, now I've rescued you from the kingdom of this world and I've brought you into my kingdom.

I've rescued you from being a slave to sin and I've brought you into my family. He's not just giving you a status change or even an identity change. He says, now I'm changing how you live.

I'm changing even more than that. I'm changing who you are. Now look, we've said this a couple of times but I'm going to keep hitting it, okay? That's why there's really no excuse when you and I are encountered with some way that we need to change or something that God wants us to do and we just respond with, well, that's not me.

[13:40] That's just not who I am. That's really not an excuse because what God wants to do is change who we are. He wants to change us and this might be an important step, whatever it is, in the process of him doing that.

So let's look down now at Romans 6. Jesus is changing you. Romans 6, let's look at the first couple verses. Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?

What a warped way of looking at it, right? Boy, if Jesus just shows us grace and he takes all that sin and all that mess and all that conflict and says, here, give it to me. I'll give you grace in exchange.

Then you say, well, God, let me just give you more and more opportunities to show me grace because I'm going to go out and do whatever I want. That's not the answer, right? But Paul deals with that because he knows how his sin nature works and guess what?

He knows how our sin nature works too. And he says, should we just keep on sinning so God can show us more grace? Of course not. Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? [14:52] Dog, I just washed you. Don't go roll around in the mud. And that's what he's saying. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin would lose its power in our lives.

That's the key there because you were under the power of sin. So don't let it have the same power over you that you had before because you don't have to anymore. Before you didn't have a choice. You were a slave. Sin held power over you. You couldn't break those temptations. You couldn't resist those temptations. You couldn't break those addictions. You couldn't break that curse. You were trapped under it. But then you gained access to divine power. Jesus' power. The same power that raised him from the dead. The same power by which he resurrected.

The same power by which he conquered and broke death. Look, death is the thing that you and I can't avoid. We don't know when it's going to come. If Jesus has power over the thing that we can't beat with all of science and all of technology and all of the developments of modern man, we haven't figured out a way to beat death.

[16:11] And we never will because only God holds the keys to life and death. And if he says, you've got access to that power, then you can break addictions.

Then you can beat depression. And you can change by the power of Jesus Christ. Maybe God will use all kinds of things in your life to help you through those.

But he's got the power. And you've got access to it. What does he tell us at the end of Matthew 28, the end of the gospel record of Matthew? He says, all power is given to me.

Now you go with that power and do the work I've given you to do. That's what it's about. So he says in Romans chapter 6 here, we know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so sin would lose its power in our lives and we're no longer slaves to sin.

And now skip down to verse 12. Do not let sin control the way you live. Don't give in to sinful desires. What is Paul saying? Should we keep sinning so God can keep showing us more grace?

[17:28] Of course not. Absolutely not. I want to share this quote with you from an old Baptist pastor from many, many years ago. We need restraining grace as well as saving grace.

We love when God's grace saves us. It's a little harder to swallow when it restrains us. What do we mean by that? It keeps us from doing something.

We love it when God's grace was extended to us and forgave our sin and wiped our slate clean and continues to wash us clean. And keep us right with God and in right relationship with God.

The harder thing to swallow about God's grace is that it walks through us in our lives and restrains us. You ever had to restrain your child at times from running out into the street or from saying something really embarrassing in public and you're like clapping your hand over their mouth? Don't say that! They didn't hear, did they? You gotta restrain them sometimes. Husbands, your wives never have to restrain you, right? I don't know why it never goes the other way around.

[18:34] It's not the husbands restraining the wives, it's the wives restraining the husbands. It's part of it, man. It's who we are. As much as I love this concept, I think there's actually a better word.

I think instead of restraining grace, hang on a second, let's go to Titus 2 first. I'll show it to you in the scriptures. Titus chapter 2, we're gonna find a better word for restraining.

That's part of what grace does. It's part of what God does for us as we walk through this life with him. He definitely restrains us, but there's more to it than that. I'm looking at the New Testament for everyone.

It says, you see, the grace of God has appeared. Bringing salvation to all people. We love it. That's our saving grace that we get from God. But then what does it do?

It, let's say that together, can we? It trains us. Do y'all remember two years ago? Of course you don't remember. I'm crazy. Some of you are nodding your heads. You know where I'm going with this.

[19:32] We went through a series. I got it from a pastor in Oklahoma and then I tried to share it here. We're not trying. We're in... Look at y'all. You do remember.

We're not trying. We're in training. That is what God's grace does for us. It trains us. This is the how we're in training.

It's through God's grace. So I would almost say that we need retraining grace as well as saving grace.

Restraining is part of how it trains us, but there is so much more. We have to retrain our flesh. We have to retrain our brains. We have to retrain our desires, our wants, our habits.

We retrain all that and we do it through the power of God's grace. It trains us to do what? To reject ungodly ways and worldly desires. To live sober, upright, and godly lives in the present age while we wait for the appearance of Jesus, the Messiah, who gave himself for us to rescue us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a special people eager to do good works.

[20:45] That's how God trains us and what he's training us to be. So here's the truth about grace. Grace is your personal trainer. Look, I can't afford a personal trainer, all right?

They're stinking expensive. When the gym was open here, what is going on with the gym? We don't need to go down that road right now. When the gym was open here, you know, I was there for a long time. Now I'm trying to just run and lift dumbbells at home, you know, but look, grace is the personal trainer that we all need every day.

And it's not just a three days a week or a once a week and I'll try to work out with grace when I get a chance. It's every single day grace is working on us. Grace is training us.

God's grace is there available every day and we experience it and we live in it every day. And even when you don't even realize it, God's grace is retraining you.

And when you do realize it and you lean into it and you embrace it and you pray for it and you ask God to retrain you more, oh, he loves to hear that and he'll do it.

[21:54] And then we see transformation happen. Real positive change to becoming more and more like Jesus happens. and then our spouse notices it too.

Our kids notice it too. And kids, your parents notice it. And your friends notice it. Your brothers, sisters notice it. You are becoming different. Yeah, because grace is retraining me.

This is a process. This doesn't happen quickly. But this is exactly what God does for us. Grace is not standing in front of a classroom instructing you or just teaching you.

That Greek word, remember the New Testament wasn't written in English, it was written in Greek. It's that Greek word that it uses for training in there. Training is the best possible application to that. There's a part of it that would say instruction or teaching, but it really comes down to how a parent would train a child. It's kind of what the word meant that they were using. Well, there's a lot of training that goes on with kids, right?

[22:57] When you're raising kids. That's what God's doing with us. He's training or retraining us. Now go back to Romans chapter 6. We're going to finish up this chapter.

Romans 6. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. verse 20. And now on to verse 21 down through verse 23. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right.

And what was the result of that? Well, a lot of shame. You're now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you're free from the power of sin and you become slaves of God.

Let me tell you, it's a whole lot better to be a slave of God than a slave of sin. And normally, I think Paul was making the comparison here, slaves of sin, now slaves of God or righteousness.

[24:01] But normally, the word that Jesus would use is servant or son, daughter, child. That's what he would use. So this is what you are now.

Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. Not eternal doom. Eternal life. For the wages of sin is what?

Everybody looking at the Bible? The wages of sin is what? Yes, it is. But the free gift of God is eternal what? Through who? Christ Jesus, our Lord.

That is the gospel. That's what Jesus offers us. He says, this is who you were and this is what it was leading you to.

But then you found me. I found you. And I offered you something different. I offered you to follow a different way. You know, that's what the earliest Christians were called.

[25:01] Before they were called Christians, they were called followers of the way. And that's what you and I still are. We're still following that same way that those early believers who put their faith in Jesus did.

That's what you and I still do. And when you follow that way, when Jesus becomes Lord of your life, you experience a whole different wage.

What's a wage? Anybody know what a wage is? Something you've earned. Call it a paycheck. Whatever. Something you earned, right? What have we earned through our slavery to sin? Death. What have we earned now by becoming a child of God? Life. That's what's offered to us now. But that wasn't a wage.

He calls it a gift. He says, you can't earn that. It was my gift to you. You earned this. You did everything you could. Most of you tried to do the best you could.

[25 : 59] You tried to live clean lives. And this is what you earned for all of your efforts. You earned eternal death because that's the only outcome of that way of life. That team has already lost and you're going to experience the loss when you stay on that team.

But when you join Team Jesus, the family of God, then you're not offered anything to earn. You're offered a free gift and it's eternal life.

So he says, because of this, because of his saving grace, now live with his retraining grace and let that same grace that you put your faith in to forgive you of your sin and become God's child, let that same grace retrain your thinking, retrain your behavior, retrain your attitudes, retrain your personality, retrain who you are to become more like Jesus because that's what he promises. So, we've been talking this year about direction, not perfection. This is a year of direction, not perfection. We're not going to achieve perfection in this church, but we can start moving in a common direction toward Jesus.

And when we do that, this is what it looks like. God's grace retraining us. You don't have to clean yourself up to come to Jesus. His grace washes you clean right where you are.

[27 : 28] But when he washes you clean, let him keep you clean. And don't keep running back to the same old dirt, the same old mud.

Let God's grace retrain you. Don't use grace as an excuse to go jump back in the mud. Would you pray with me right now? God, God, right now, I ask you to speak to us from your word, to speak to us by your spirit.

And as we open our hearts and our minds to listen to you leading us and guiding our thoughts right now, we're going to be getting out of here in just a second. We're picking up kids and going off and grabbing some food and figuring out whatever we're going to do with the rest of our day.

But before we rush off, I pray that you would use these couple of moments of quietness that we could hear from you right now.

Your spirit doesn't wait to retrain. It can start training right now. As soon as we turn our minds toward you, you speak to us. God, we thank you for your grace.

[28 : 41] We don't need to use it as an excuse to go get dirty again. We need to remember that grace is what frees us from the power that used to make us go get dirty.

We're not bound by that power anymore. God, but if there is someone here who's still bound by that power of sin, they haven't yet made that decision to choose Jesus for their life, say, I want to follow Jesus Christ.

Let him change me. I want to be God's child. Then please don't let that person walk out of this room today without knowing that you want them more than anything else.

I'm going to ask this question. If there's somebody in the room, maybe a guest, or maybe you've been coming here a while, regardless, you believe that today is the day you need to make the decision for yourself and say, I choose Jesus.

I want to follow Jesus. I want him to change me. I want to become God's child. Then with everyone else's heads bowed, would you just slip your hand up quietly? And I'd love to talk to you. I'd love to pray with you.

[29 : 52] But if that's you this morning, say, I want to become God's child. I want to pray for you now. Thank you. You can put your hand down. Let me ask this question.

There's somebody who says, God has been working on me. Maybe his retraining grace, grateful for his saving grace, but God's grace is training me and I need to give in to that.

Maybe there's an area of my life that God's retraining me in. Would you pray for me that I will submit to God's grace in my life and let him change me in the areas I need to change in? Would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you as well?

Thank you. Thank you. God, I pray for those who raised their hand. I pray for everyone who's talking with you right now. You're listening.

You're always listening. And your grace is so real. Pray that you would remind us of that as we go off our separate ways.

[30 : 50] Let this truth from Scripture stay with us, stay in our hearts and stay in our minds that we would not run back to the mud tomorrow. We would let your grace change us, retrain us, and then you'll get the glory for it.

Never look at me, look what I've been able to conquer, look what I've been able to do, but always look what God's grace has done in my life. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
Amen.