

Heirs Who Make a Mess

Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Galatians 4:7, *KJV*).

Scripture: Galatians 4:1-7

Song: “Grace Greater Than Our Sin”

A new Chinese convert came to get counsel from a prominent church leader. The new believer was distressed by his failures in his day-to-day walk with Christ. After listening to the man pour out his heart, the teacher pointed to his own pet dog and began listing the dog’s virtues: he is house trained, never messy, always obedient, a delight to own. He then pointed out his toddler son and listed *his* behaviors; he throws food, makes messes, and dirties his clothes. After this unfavorable comparison, the teacher pointed out that it is still his son, not his dog, who will inherit his estate and that we are heirs in God’s kingdom not by our perfection but by His grace.

The law reminds us of how messy our sin problem is. It is God’s grace through Christ that has made us His children and has dealt with the mess that is our sin. As children, we are beloved.

God does not require perfection, but is pleased by our faith, humility, and love. We may still make messes at times, but that does not disqualify us from being loved by our heavenly Father, by our *Abba* (Galatians 4:6).

Father, thank You for making me Your child and heir through Christ. In Jesus’ name, amen.

February 6–12. **Richard M. Robinson** is a pastor in Colorado. He and his wife, Donna, have 4 children and 15 grandchildren.

Sin Resistant

If ye will obey my voice indeed, . . . then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people (Exodus 19:5, *KJV*).

Scripture: Exodus 19:1-8

Song: “Take Time to Be Holy”

The coal miner led visitors on a tour of the mine. On one side of the gangway where they stood, he pointed out a plant with a white flower. The visitors were amazed that in a place where so much coal dust was present, this little blossom could be so clean. The miner took a handful of dust and threw it on the flower. The debris slid right off! What a peculiar plant! It so happened that the flower’s surface had inherent enamel—its secret to staying dust-free.

Everything about Israel’s national existence was peculiar. Their deliverance out of Egypt was by a series of spectacular miracles, and their exodus into the desert was a supernatural ride “on eagle’s wings” (Exodus 19:4). But they were still a multitude of undisciplined and willful people. They had traces of Egypt’s wicked ways, clinging to their hearts like spiritual coal dust. God’s plan was to coat them, figuratively speaking, with the enamel of His Word.

For us as well, receiving God’s Word—becoming obedient to the gospel message—has given us an exodus from our slavery to sin and the world. And as we walk by the Spirit in the light of the Scriptures, these become the spiritual enamel, so to speak, that helps guard our hearts from sin.

Father, in a world where sinning is increasingly acceptable, we want to become increasingly sin-resistant by walking in the truth of Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Faith over Feelings

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11, *KJV*).

Scripture: John 15:1-14

Song: “Sunshine in My Soul”

A man once lamented to his pastor that he had been filled with joy after the Sunday sermon but that the next day his joy had evaporated; and in fact, life seemed dark and bleak. The pastor responded by asking the man if he'd ever traveled in a train through a long tunnel. The man affirmed that he had done so many times. The pastor then asked if the man had been frightened at the darkness of the tunnel, an idea at which the man scoffed. He'd had no reason to be afraid, he said, because he knew he'd emerge from the darkness at the other end. The pastor nodded, and the man understood.

Yes, feelings have their dark tunnels, but faith knows the exit is coming. Nine times in today's passage, Jesus used the word *abide*. Our Savior centers His teaching on this word, and feelings have nothing to do with it. If we are abiding in Christ and in His Word, we know by faith that fruit is coming (John 15:5), that our prayers will be answered (v. 7), and that we will abide in divine love (v. 10).

Faith leads the way to it all! When we take Jesus at His Word, our joy will remain (v. 11), even be “unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8, *KJV*).

Father, my feelings, while real, are transient. I want faith to inform and direct my feelings today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Alongside Us

When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, . . . he shall testify of me (John 15:26, *KJV*).

Scripture: John 15:15-27

Song: “To the Work!”

A young man working in a large factory made an important mechanical discovery. His invention needed more work, but his regular job required all his time and energy. He thought, *If only I could talk to the boss about this!* One day the young man was notified that he had been assigned an even more difficult position in another part of the factory. Already taxed and weary, he worried it might be too much. As he reluctantly made the transition, he entered the room where he would be working. A distinguished-looking man was there examining a machine. An attendant explained, “The boss always works beside the man who takes this job. He will be working with you from now on.”

Jesus’ disciples were already working hard . . . and it was about to get harder for them. But Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, the *Comforter*, to be with them. (The Greek word translated *comforter* means “one who comes alongside.”) Through God’s indwelling Spirit, His very presence would be with the disciples continually!

When we belong to Christ, He sends His Spirit, the Comforter, to come alongside us and dwell within us. Come what may, our Lord’s presence never leaves us.

Father, how blessed I am to have Your indwelling Spirit present at all times! No work is too difficult when You are with me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Holy Laws

Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy (Leviticus 19:2, *KJV*).

Scripture: Leviticus 19:2-4, 9-18

Song: “More Holiness Give Me”

The late evangelist Billy Graham (1918–2018) was once asked what he believed true revival would look like. “When revival comes,” he answered, “I expect to see two things which we have not seen yet: first, a new sense of the holiness of God on the part of Christians; and second, a new sense of the sinfulness of sin on the part of Christians.”

In today's passage, after God declared His holy character (Leviticus 19:2), He summarized the Ten Commandments (vv. 3-4, 11-12, 16-18) and outlined other laws. Why? Because the two go hand in hand: God's *commandments* reflect His *character*. It is true that the more we recognize His holiness, the more sorrowful we will be about our own sin. Conversely, the more we observe His life-giving commands, the more we will enjoy the blessings His holiness provides—a glimpse of Heaven on earth!

Read today's passage again and imagine the peace and order, the strength and beauty of such a society. Crime would be almost nonexistent and jails empty. From within a stable and flourishing economy, provision would be ample for those in need. As Christians, we live inside God's grace that covers our sin. We are now free to walk in holiness by the empowerment of God's Spirit. We are free to honor God and make His holy name known.

Father, help me walk in Your ways so I can experience and demonstrate the goodness of Your holiness. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Separation Principle

I am the LORD your God, which have separated you (Leviticus 20:24, *KJV*).

Scripture: Leviticus 20:22-26

Song: “I Am Resolved”

In Colorado where I live, insect control is serious business. Nearly 35 percent of our state has forest cover, and various kinds of beetles are seasonal pests. One of our state’s oldest trees was toppled after standing majestically on a hill for more than 400 years. What lightning strikes, windstorms, and earthquakes could not do, little beetles did! They bored under the bark and chewed away the tree’s fibers until that lordly king of the forest came crashing down.

When God sent Israel to conquer Canaan, the confederate nations that inhabited the land were like tall old trees turned rotten. Wickedness—like gnawing beetles in a forest—had infested Canaan’s culture and eaten up the public character (Leviticus 20:23). It was time for God’s people to topple the Canaanites and to inherit the land promised to Abraham. The Lord gave His people two important protections as they entered the land: (1) a high and holy moral standard, and (2) a separation principle to keep them from the destructive effects of compromise (v. 24). By these, God intended to preserve and bless Israel.

As Christians, our moral standard comes from God as well. And like Israel, we are called to remain detached from the things of this world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Although we are *in* the world, we must take care not to be *of* the world (1 John 2:15-17). Through these principles, God provides safety and blessing.

Father, thank You for Your call to a holy, separated life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Fearless Spirit

God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7, *KJV*).

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

Song: “How Great Thou Art”

Deane and Lorraine Lengkeek of Holland, Michigan, were hiking in Glacier National Park on August 30, 1991, when suddenly they came face-to-face with an angry grizzly bear. Lorraine, a 62-year-old wife, mother, and grandmother of 15 grandchildren, watched in horror as the beast bit her husband in the shoulder, arm, and chest. Then she thought, *You're not going to get him without fighting me to the very end!* And the end was near . . . for the bear! Lorraine raised her binoculars and sent them crashing down on the bear's head. The stunned brute looked up at the fire in Lorraine's eyes and bolted.

How could a five-foot-four-inch, 130-pound woman find the courage to rout a grizzly? Just moments before encountering the bear, Lorraine was musing over God's beautiful creation and singing the hymn “How Great Thou Art.” Indeed, the Lord was great that day! In Him Lorraine had *power* to wield binoculars as a weapon, *love* for her husband of many years, and *a sound mind* that was made clear and courageous.

In today's passage the apostle Paul reminded Timothy (and reminds us today) that we are all unlikely, underwhelming heroes. But if we “stir up the gift of God” inside us (2 Timothy 1:6, *KJV*), which is the Spirit himself, just watch what He will do!

Father, teach me to fight life's battles in the power of Your Spirit. In Jesus name, amen.