

Split

To the Romans..., Pt. 14

We're taking our time in studying Paul's letter to the Romans – because quite honestly, it's worth taking our time over. We've finished the first section – the first five chapters – in which he very systematically and orderly lays out his theology of salvation – of justification by faith we called it. What's gone wrong with the world and what God did to set it right through his Son, Jesus Christ – through his life, his death and his Resurrection – the gospel. That's the first part.

Last week, we started looking at the second theme of the letter. How does what Jesus *did*, actually bring change in our lives? If the first part was maybe theological, this second part is very practical. Romans 6, 7, and 8 ask the question...How does change really happen in somebody's life? How does Christ, how does faith in Christ, very concretely and practically lead to life change? Last week we looked at Romans 6 as a whole, and we saw some principles.

This week we look at Romans 7 as a whole, in which we have in very stark, shockingly realistic terms a depiction of the human heart – in other words, this is *where* those principles from last week have to be applied.

Then when we get to Romans 8, we'll take two or three weeks looking at the more practical aspects of *how* you apply the principles to the heart so as to bring about change.

Now, I'm kind of excited about today because chapter 7 is a real doozy of a Bible passage. Very controversial in church circles. Let me read you what Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones – the great 19th century London preacher who has been something of a guide for us during this series – what he had to say about it: “The 7th chapter is one of the most famous chapters in the Epistle to the Romans, and indeed in the Bible as a whole. Anyone who knows anything about Christian doctrine and theology will often have talked about and argued over this chapter. No other chapter, perhaps, has been more frequently the cause of discussion and disputation and argument.”

Sounds fun! Well, before we get into the hub-bub, we ought to at least read the thing. At least most of it. I'm going to read **Romans 7:1–9** and then drop down to **18–25**: *“Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.”* And all the ladies said, “Amen!”

3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. 4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

We’ll continue reading in verse 18, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability

to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Now, the great point of the controversy is, “Who is Paul talking about?” Is he talking about himself as he was at the time of writing? Is he describing what he was like *before* being transformed by the gospel? Is this a generalized view of pre-Christian humanity? Or is he describing the struggle of every Christian? I have found that some of the people that endeavor to take the Bible at it’s most “literal” – plain reading of the text – fail to do so at this point, for the very reason that they don’t *want* this to be true of them. It’s a rather pessimistic view of the human condition – the *Christian* condition. I don’t want it to be true of me either. But I think that’s denial. Because I have found that Romans 7 makes a great deal of sense to the world I see around me.

But I understand that it seems backward to some. So this morning, I'm going to move from the end to the beginning. We're going to look at the last part of the passage, the middle part of the passage, and then the first part of the passage. We're going to reverse engineer it. And when we look at Romans 7 like that, I think we'll learn three things: what our biggest problem is; what *won't* work against it - what will not address or solve that problem - and what *will*. So let's dig in.

Number one, What our biggest problem is. And Paul very succinctly gives us his thesis in **v. 18** when he says, "*For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.*" There it is. "I can envision and aspire to the good, but I don't find in myself the power to actually execute and *do* it." Why? The answer is what we'll call here the deep split of the human heart. That's the title of the message, we're spilt.

Because in **verse 20**, he says, "*Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but **sin that dwells within me.***" What a statement! He says, "There's *me*, and then there's something *in* me." He says it's "sin". In fact, in verse 19 he talks about "evil" that resides in him, resides in us.

Now, notice that word "dwell". It's very, very important. Evil and sin is not something that just acts upon us from the outside, nor is it something that comes into us temporarily and camps out and, if you know what you're doing, you can shoo it away. It is at home in us. It dwells in us. It resides in us. It's deeply rooted in us. And as a result, there's this deep split of good and evil about us.

Now the classic depiction of this in literature is Robert Louis Stevenson's book *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Have you ever really read the book? I don't mean the movies, because they are often very different. But I read the book again last Monday night - it's like 80 pages, a pretty short book, but a fascinating book. Make your kids read it, it's a real morality tale that doesn't feel like one.

You know the basic narrative. Dr. Jekyll came to realize he was "committed to a profound duplicity of life" - of good and evil, of conscience and coveting. And he felt because of this, his bad nature held his good nature back. So he could *aspire* to do things, but he could never follow through on them, just like Romans 7.

But he comes up with an idea...a potion. He's going to concoct a potion that will separate the two natures out from each other. And he intends to drink the potion at night to let his bad side out, but during the day when he's doing his work, he'll be his good self. And his good self will now be unencumbered. It will be free from the influence of the evil and will be able to realize all of its goals.

Nice theory...but when he takes the potion and his bad nature side comes out, to his shock he's *far* more evil than he ever dared believe he was. That's the problem. And he essentially says in the narrative in the book, "I knew myself at the first breath of this new life to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine...Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil...His every act and thought centered on self."

Why is his bad side named Edward Hyde? Do you know why? First of all, because he was hideous – everyone bristled just at the sight of him. It's the hideousness, but also because he was hidden, even from Dr. Jekyll. He had no idea he was this evil. And so here's how the narrative goes on. When Edward Hyde comes out, he's far more evil than Dr. Jekyll ever thought he would be, and he starts doing terrible things including murder. We'll get back to that in a second.

Finally, Dr. Jekyll says, "I'm going to try to stop it then. I'm going to try to repress this evil side," but Edward Hyde more and more gets the upper hand and more and more is in control. And when Dr. Jekyll realizes he's about to lose complete control and not even remain Dr. Jekyll anymore but permanently become Edward Hyde, he kills himself. It's a very, very disturbing narrative, *but* it's right out of Romans 7.

Because what Romans 7 is saying and what Robert Louis Stevenson is saying are the same thing. And that is, first, even the best people, even the most brilliant and decent Dr. Jekylls, or apostle Pauls, even the best people have at the core of their being a hideousness, an evil, a capacity for incredible self-centeredness.

Notice Robert Louis Stevenson actually, in a very biblical way, defines what was so hideous about Hyde: *absolute* centering of every thought on the self. And it's that self-absorption and that self-centeredness and "It's me and *my* needs and *my* interests and *my* desires." That incredible ability to center on the self is what *leads* to the evil.

So even in the very best people, there's a core of evil, a capacity for doing terrible things *way* beyond what you believe it to be, far greater, far worse than you ever imagine. It's *hidden* from you...but sometimes there are certain situations that act as a potion: stress, temptation, marriage to a difficult person...

And the real wickedness, the real capacity for evil, that incredible hideousness, that enormous, almost endless capacity for self-centeredness, self-absorption, self-will, and self-indulgence comes out, and then you're dead. Do you believe this? That the very *best* person is capable of such awfulness? What we're being taught here is your assessment of your own capacity for evil and sin is *way* too small. Way too small.

Sufjan Stevens, an indie rock artist some of you know, has a song called "*John Wayne Gacy Jr.*" It's a song about a serial killer, John Wayne Gacy, who killed 33 people and hid 29 of them under the floorboards of his house. And Sufjan sings about this serial killer, and the last two lines of the song are absolutely astounding. Bone chilling. It's a disturbing song about this serial killer. What a terrible person. But the very last lines are what haunt me...

And in my best behavior
I am really just like him
Look beneath the floorboards
For the secrets I have hid

He says, "Look beneath the floorboards of *my* life, and you will see the capacity to do terrible things." Do you believe that? Do you really? Do you believe what Robert Louis Stevenson is saying, what Sufjan

Stevens is saying, what Paul is saying...that in you you have a capacity for hideousness and selfishness and evil way beyond what you really think you're capable of, but at some point you might find some situation bringing it out, and then you're dead? So if that's the case - and it's important to understand that *is* the case - what do we do about it?

Point two, What *won't* work against it. The main solution by which most people try to quiet their inner monster, Paul says doesn't work. What is that? It has to do with the moral law. Twenty-three times Paul makes mention of "the law" in this chapter. He's thinking of the Mosaic law. He's a Jew, and he's thinking specifically about the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic law. But what he says here really holds true across all the cultures. It's universal.

At the very end of C.S. Lewis's book *The Abolition of Man*, he has an appendix which is incredibly valuable. And in that appendix he compares the moral law of Confucianism and Hinduism and Buddhism and Islam and Christianity and Judaism, and he shows a remarkable convergence and a remarkable consensus about the basic requirements that God has of us, what the basic requirements are of a moral life. He calls these "illustrations of the Natural Law" – what everyone believes.

And therefore, we do understand the moral law – regardless of our religious background. We do know what it is, and across all of the cultures and across all of the religions, what most people do about the fact that we have a bad nature is we *take* the moral law and with an enormous exercise of willpower, we apply that moral law to our bad nature. In other words, we try to wipe out our Hyde with our Jekyll. We try to deal with our Edward Hyde by just being incredibly Jekyll; incredibly good, incredibly obedient.

We form moral communities in which we read the moral law every week. And we amen it, we obey it, and we instruct our children in it. And we say by applying the moral law of God to people's lives, that is how we're going to overcome our hideousness; that selfishness, that pride, that self-centeredness, that destroys people. *That's* how we're going to overcome it!

And Paul says it won't work. In fact, Paul says something *absolutely* amazing in verse 5. Look at **v.5**, he says, "*For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, **aroused by the law**, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.*" "Aroused by the law"! Paul says the law has a greenhouse effect on what's wrong with us. It doesn't shrivel it. It aggravates it. It *grows* it.

You say, "What? How could that be?" He's saying that applying the law of God through willpower, just insisting and bringing the law of God to bear on somebody's life and saying, "This is what you have to do," it doesn't make you a better person; it makes you worse. It brings out - it aggravates - what's wrong with you.

How could that be? Well, at one level nobody talks about this better than Saint Augustine. Saint Augustine in his famous book *The Confessions* reflects on an incident in his youth. At one point, as a young man, he broke into a private orchard and stole some pears off a tree. And later on he reflected theologically and pretty profoundly, actually, on that incident. Here's what he says about his mental state at the time, "Yet I desired to commit robbery, and I did it. I was driven by no deprivation...I stole things I had much more of, and much better. I wanted the stealing, not the thing stolen. I wanted the sin...Simply what was not allowed allured [me]." (Augustine *Confessions*, II.9, 45)

You see, he wasn't stealing because he was poor. His father was very wealthy, he could have had all the pears he wanted. He wasn't stealing because he was hungry, he didn't even eat the pears. After he stole them, he threw them to some pigs. He didn't even *like* pears, but he went and stole the pears. *Why* did I steal the pears? And the answer is, "I stole the pears because somebody told me they were forbidden." In other words, someone says, "Thou shalt not take those pears." He says, "Until someone said, 'Thou shalt not ...' I had no interest in the pears, but once they said, 'Don't take those pears,' I wanted them."

Tuesday night, we had our Connect Group, right here at the church. And a member of the group – a longtime friend – came in wearing a mask and on the mask it said, “Don’t touch the face”. And I told her, “I’ve known you for the better part of the decade and I have never had the inclination to touch your face...and now I want to touch your face *so bad!*”

There is something about the heart. Deep inside the heart there’s an aspect of our hideousness, of our self-centeredness, of that self-absorption, that says, “Nobody tells me how to live!” Now there are a lot of people who that is right on the surface of their lives, because there are a lot of people walking around talking like that all the time. “Nobody tells *me* how to live *my* life. Nobody puts baby in a corner”. You see.

But the rest of us, a lot of us, are very nice, but deep inside - you Mr. and Ms. Jekylls - is a part of our hearts that absolutely *hates* being told how to live. That’s part of what’s wrong with us, and when you bring the moral law to bear on a child or you bring the moral law to bear on people, instead of it shriveling up that aspect of our beings, it actually *aggravates* it, and people do things *because* they’re forbidden.

But there’s more to it than that. How *does* the law act as a greenhouse to what’s wrong with us? In verses 8 and 9, Paul actually gives us a little autobiographical sketch of how he moved from being a legalistic Pharisee into being a Christian, and it’s not an easy sketch to grasp. It’s very, very nuanced. He says, “I was alive apart from the law, but then one of the Ten Commandments, ‘Thou shalt not covet...’ came home and killed me.” What does that mean? Here’s what I think it means.

What Paul was saying is when he looked at his life, he was a Pharisee, he was a pretty good person, and he felt like, “I’m spiritually alive. I have a real chance to be saved – to be among the righteous. I have a real chance to get to heaven. I have a real chance for God’s blessing. I’m really good.” And the reason he felt alive and like a good person was because he tended to look at the Law of God the way most of us do. And that is, he read the Ten Commandments in terms of external behavior only.

So he would go down the list, and he could tick it off. He’d say, “Okay, I don’t bow down to any statues. Ok, that’s good. I call my mother and father once a week from Austin, so I’m honoring my parents. Okay. I’m not committing adultery, I’m not stealing, and I don’t kill anybody. I mean a few Christians maybe, but they had it coming.”

So he was alive. As long as he was looking at the law in terms of external behavior, he'd say, "Hey, I'm okay," but then...the tenth commandment. And the problem with the tenth commandment is there's no way to read it in terms of behavior. It's about motives. It's about your heart. It's about your intentions.

"Thou shalt not covet..." Do you know what the opposite of coveting is? Contentment. And he realized it was saying, "If you really love God, if you really were resting in God, if you really had God, the commandment is, 'Thou shalt love God enough to be content.'" But when he looked inside his heart, he saw all kinds of coveting. He saw all *kinds* of stuff. He saw anger, because he was *killing* people who didn't agree with him. He was persecuting the church.

He saw fury and self-righteousness and envy and comparing himself to other people. He saw that inside, he was a *mess*. And he says, "It killed me." **V.9**, "...*but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.*" Do you know what that means? "I realized I was as spiritually dead as the lawless people. That underneath all my morality and underneath all my goodness, I realized the law was actually *creating* something inside. It was creating all of this insecurity, creating all of this problem, creating all of this anger, creating all of this envy."

What is he talking about? Why would he say, "I'm just as lost, I'm just as dead spiritually as the immoral people out there"? Robert Louis Stevenson in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has a fascinating passage. When I read it, I was blown away by it, and this is why you have to read the book, because it never comes out in any of the horror films based on the story.

When Dr. Jekyll realized Edward Hyde had actually killed someone – just cold-blooded, unprovoked murder in the street - he made a resolution. First of all, he said, "No more potion. I'm *not* taking that again. I'm never going to take the potion," because that's how he became Edward Hyde. And secondly, "I'm going to live such a good life. I'm going to be better, more moral, more generous, kinder, more upright than I've *ever* been, than anyone has ever been. And I'm going to, with an act of my will, obey the moral law, and I'm going to actually squeeze out and repress Edward Hyde so he never shows up again."

He does a very good job, but we're told this. Just such a brilliant turn. He says, "I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. You know how earnestly in the last few months of this last year I labored to relieve suffering; you know that much was done for others..."

He was being a pillar of the community, but then something happened: “It was a fine, clear January day...and the Regent’s Park was sweet with spring odors. I sat in the sun on a bench...and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active goodwill with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vainglorious thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and dreadful shuddering...I looked down...I was once more Edward Hyde.”

This is the turning point, and this is the beginning of the end, because when he became Edward Hyde *without* the potion, he knew he was cooked. But why would he have become Edward Hyde without the potion? The answer is not *in spite of* his goodness, but *because of* his goodness. Did you hear what he said? Did you hear what the passage said?

It was *as* he was thinking about how much better he was than everyone else, *as* he was thinking about how, “Other people are cruel. Other people are living selfish lives, and I’m not. I’m living a very good life. I’m caring about everybody.” At that moment, he became Edward Hyde without the potion. Why? He became Edward Hyde *through* his goodness, not in spite of his goodness.

Why? Because there are two ways to be self-centered. One is by being **very bad** and breaking all the rules. But the other is by being **very good** and becoming a self-righteous Pharisee. There are two ways to be your own savior and lord rather than God and trample on other people. One is by saying, “I’m going to live my own life. Nobody tells me how to live my life. I’m going to break all the moral laws if I want.” That’s being your own God. Right?

But see, if you say, “I’m going to be so good God is going to *have* to bless me and take me to heaven,” you’re being your own savior. Right? You’re not letting God be your Savior. And even though there’s all kinds of moral behavior in your life, inside you are *filled* with self-righteousness and cruelty and bigotry. And, you’re *miserable* because you’re always comparing yourself to other people, and you’re never sure you’re good enough.

What does that mean? It means you can’t deal with your hideousness. You can’t deal with that self-centeredness. You can’t deal with that self-absorption by trying to be a good person and by just bringing the moral law to bear so you can say, “Now I’m going to be a really, really good person.” That can just make you *worse*. You don’t deal with your hideousness with an act of the will. You need a complete transformation of the very motives of your heart...or you’re dead. So that’s our problem, and that’s what *won’t* solve our problem. But...

Point three, What will work against it. And the answer is up in verses 1–7. The very beginning of this passage is kind of weird when you first read through it. Didn't you notice that? You really couldn't figure out what was going on at the beginning, and as time went on you sort of figured it out. That first part is very weird, and here's why.

Paul is dealing with a question. He actually poses it in v. 7, “*What then shall we say? That the law is sin?*” He's connecting the dots, “Okay, then considering all we've been talking about, that the law doesn't really sanctify us, the law doesn't really make us any better, the law, if anything, has a greenhouse effect on what's wrong with us... What then shall we say? That the law is bad? That the law is sin? Shall we just throw the law out and say, ‘When you're a Christian, you don't have to listen to the law?’”

Is that what he's saying? No. He says, “By no means!” He says, “If it weren't for the law, I wouldn't *know* what's wrong with me. I wouldn't know how I should live.” So every indication in verse 7 is as a Christian, you *should* follow the law. You *do* need to obey it. You do need to let it sift through you and guide you as to how you should live your life. You *do*.

But then what is he saying we *shouldn't* do? And that is, he's saying - in verses 1–4 especially - we should obey the law, we should follow the law, but we mustn't be **married to the law**. Married to the law. Now, the metaphor is a little bit odd. In verses 1, 2 and 3, he's talking about a woman who's married.

He's saying, “Well, if you're married and there's a death - if you're married and one of the spouses dies - you're free to remarry. Marriage is binding, and you just can't go off and do anything you want. But if there's a death, if one spouse dies, then the other spouse is free to remarry.” Right? “Till death do us part” – that's the promise. That's what he's saying in verses 1, 2, and 3.

Then he suddenly shows what the metaphor is all about. In **verse 4**, he says, *Likewise, my brothers, you also have **died to the law** through the body of Christ, so that you may **belong to another**, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.* And what he means by that is up to this point we are *married* to the law. We're in the arms of the law. What in the world would that mean? Why would he talk about being married, spiritually speaking, to the law of God?

Well, think about it. When you first become married, not only does your entire life revolve around your spouse, but so does your self-image. Here's what I mean by that. Your self-regard, your self-understanding is massively reprogrammed by your spouse. See, Your self-image is the product of what everybody says about you. Your parents have said things about you. Your siblings have said things about you. Your friends, your parents, your teachers, your coaches...People have been saying things about you all your life. They say you're good. They say you're bad. And out of all that you chisel a feeling of who you are, what you're good at, what you're bad at.

But when you get married, because of the *power* of the relationship of marriage, you can look into the face of your spouse, and your spouse can overturn what everybody is saying about you. In the face of your spouse, you can have your entire self-image reprogrammed. In other words, if everybody calls you ugly but your spouse looks at you and says, "You're beautiful," you feel beautiful. Your spouse has that kind of power to massively reprogram your self-understanding, your self-image, your self-worth.

What does it mean to be married to the law? It's not just you follow the law to please God or you follow the law in order to serve your neighbor. That's fine. You have to do that.

To be "married" to the law means you're getting your very *self* from your performance. You're looking into the face of the law, and you're saying, "Because I'm good, because I'm obedient, because I'm moral, because I'm religious, because I read the Bible, because I pray, because I do all these good things...now I know I'm a good person."

You're trying to *prove* yourself to God or to other people or to yourself by your moral performance. And if that's the case, you're married to the law, and verse 6 goes beyond that and says you're "*bound*" to the law. It's a word that means imprisoned, chained up like a slave. Do you know why? Because the dominant motive in your life is fear. You may be incredibly good. You may be incredibly moral, but the dominant motivational structure of the heart is fear.

So for example, if you're married to the law and you're a very good person, you tell the truth. Right, isn't that something a good person does? You don't lie. But *why* do you tell the truth? Because you're scared. You tell the truth because you're scared God will get you, He'll condemn you, He'll send you to hell. Or maybe you went to UT Business School and you took an ethics course and you're scared because it'll ruin your reputation and thus your earnings potential.

See *everybody* in this culture, whether it's inside the church or outside the church, gets you to be good through fear. "You don't want to be like *those* awful people. You don't want people to find out. You don't want to be caught. You don't want God to punish you." Fear, fear, fear. And do you know what? If you are, therefore, trying to, in a sense, *earn* your salvation, *earn* your self-image through your performance, you're *driven*. Just like a slave before the lash.

Inside you're always comparing yourself to other people. You're crushed by criticism. You're furious and condescending toward people who don't share your beliefs. You can't handle failure. And if you try to deal with your fear - and fear is basically self-absorption. You know what fear is? Fear is thinking of yourself. Fear is, "What about me? How am I doing? How am I looking? How are people treating me?" Fear is incredibly self-absorbed.

And you cannot, therefore, deal with self-absorption and fear by saying, "I'm going to be really good, and then God will have to bless me and people will really see I'm a good person." It just makes it worse! Oh, wretched people that we are! Who will deliver us then from this body of death?

Verse 4 says you can die to the law, that you may "belong to another." You need to become their spiritual spouse. You need to have someone else's love. You need to have someone else's face that you're looking upon in order to find out who you are. You die, according to verse 4, to the law, and you belong to another "through the body of Jesus Christ", through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

See at the end of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Jekyll kills himself. Do you know why? Because justice is at the door. Edward Hyde had committed a vicious murder, but he was never brought to justice, because the police couldn't find him - because he kept becoming Dr. Jekyll. But when Jekyll realized he was becoming Hyde permanently, he realized he was going to be caught by the police, and he was going to have to pay for his sins. Judgment day was at hand, so he killed himself anyway. And it's quite a metaphor for judgment, is it not?

No matter how hard you hide, no matter how often you put it off, eventually your sins will find you out. There *will* be a judgment day. Your hideousness *will* be revealed. And there's nothing you can do to stop it. Judgment Day will come. But there is something...there is hope...you don't have to kill yourself. Isaiah 52 and 53 prophesy about someone to come, the Suffering Servant, who comes to save us. It's a picture of Jesus Christ who is to come. And they give a description of him. In fact, this is actually the only physical description of Jesus that we find in the Bible. Think about *that!*

And it's not the blond haired, blue eyed Jesus from the Sunday School paintings. Actually, the description is more like a Hyde than a Jekyll. **Isaiah 53:2-3**, "*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*" **V.5**, "*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*" Did you hear this? We were appalled at him. He was so hideous we couldn't look upon him. We turned our faces from him.

What does it mean when **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" God made him sin, treated him as pure evil. Jesus Christ became the hideous one, and he took our Judgment Day upon himself. He died for us *while* we were hideous. And in doing so, he gave us his divine beauty.

Ephesians 5:25-27, says, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*"

The only thing that is going to silence that self-centeredness, that fear at the center of your life, that black hole that's making your life and everybody else's miserable, that says, "Oh my gosh! Me, me, me. I have to have this. I have to do that..." You know there's a *moral* version of that: "I'm afraid God is going to get me, so I'd better be good," and there's an *immoral* version of that: "I'm afraid God is going to oppress me, so I have to live the way I want to live."

But *only* Jesus Christ as your new heavenly Spouse who has given himself for you unconditionally when you were hideous to make you beautiful, only Jesus Christ looking at you in the face and saying, "I love you unconditionally..." If you look into his face and see that, *only that* will destroy - eventually - the fear in the heart of your being that is just driving you into the ground. That fear that constantly rattles on, "I have to do this. I have to do that."

Jesus Christ says, “I have a new motive for you: gratitude, security, and love. Tell the truth to resemble *me* and to please me and to delight me and to become like me out of gratitude, not because you’ll be condemned.” Because now there is *no condemnation* for those in Christ Jesus because of what he did. Tell the truth. Be a peacemaker. Give your money to the poor out of love, out of joy, out of gratitude. That’s the *only* motivation that won’t drive you into the ground. Let the spousal love of Jesus Christ completely reconfigure the motivational structures of your heart.

Cast your deadly “doing” down—
Down at Jesus’ feet;
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete.

Let’s pray...