



Links Players

RESCUED FROM DEATH 6: LINGERING SIN

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. (Romans 7:21, NIV)

EVEN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, par is mostly a dream. I know, I know, it's only a number printed on the scorecard. But I'm increasingly convinced, as my drives cover less ground and my short game grows chunkier, that the printer—or whoever ordered the printing—is a sadist. Maybe together they delight in the frustration of those who cannot hit greens in regulation or who are illiterate when it comes to reading putts.

One of the ways to push past our golfing despair is to laugh at our ineptitude. It's classier than throwing a club, that's for sure. But it's hard to come to the same conclusion about our sin. Brushing sin away with a humor-minded, self-deprecating remark never works. God isn't laughing with us.

However, God *is* a realist. His holiness cannot make light of sin, but in his mercy he remembers we are dust. And when we understand grace, what we find is that it understands us. It comes with forgiveness because we cannot come with perfection.

The apostle Paul, our subject of these several weeks now, certainly understood forgiveness and grace. He had been the leading conspirator in seizing early followers of Jesus for persecution and death. Though "as for righteousness based on the law, faultless," he was not righteous unto God himself. Like us, Paul lived a thousand miles from God's holiness.

Once the fullness of truth had been revealed to him through Christ, Paul began to recognize a new purpose in the law. Rather than keeping one from sin, it exposed the sin in him. "The law," Paul wrote to the Romans, "is holy." But we, in the light of that law, are not. And Paul's further words in Romans 7 openly recognized this. Paul could not go anywhere, it seemed, without evil dogging him. Surely you have felt this same vexation. Sin goes where you go.

Paul's observations in Romans 7 led to a cry of exasperation: "What a wretched man I am!" But now, as a student of grace, he advanced to an ensuing question: "Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?" In the past, Paul could only appeal to his own law-abiding, which he now knew to be impotent. His salvation came straight from heaven: "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Only in Jesus is there rescue for our lingering sin.

Opening questions How many pars in a round is realistic for you? What most commonly keeps you from making a par? • How aware are you of the sin in your life?

READING 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 7:14-25

Made new (1 Corinthians 6)

In verse 11, do you find meaning in Paul's writing "some of you *were*," rather than "some of you *did*"? What three things happen to those who are changed by Christ from deceived sinners to those living in his Spirit? How can remembering these three things help in your resistance to temptation and sin?

Sin and salvation (Romans 7)

How closely do you identify with Paul's reflections here? How does Christ's rescue allow you to think more clearly about your sin? Whom has God given to you as friends to help you combat the sin in your life and flourish in Christ?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2019 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available at <https://youtu.be/XWn0loggbuM>.