

Pay What You Owe, Sleepy Head

Romans 13:8-14:4

Romans (no. 38 in the series)

November 6, 2022

Peter Hiett

Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/pay-what-you-owe-sleepy-head/>

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This document was prepared by Brett Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Brett know. Thank you!

Prayer

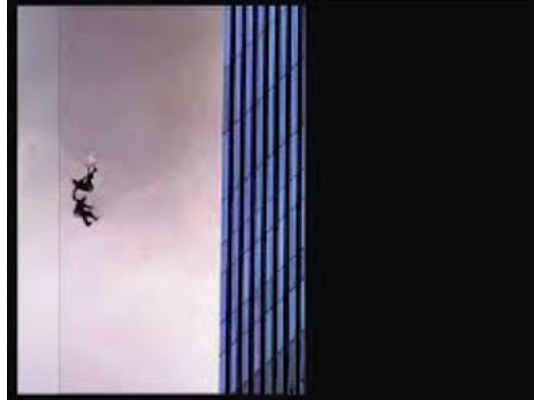
So, Lord Jesus, we want to trust you. Scripture says that the substance belongs to you. I've wondered what that means, and I think maybe it's the substance of everything. So, God, we come here today like shadows, like empty places spread throughout this room (and more watching online later), but you're the substance. And so, God, would you connect the substance in each one of us to yourself and to each other? Would you be glorified in us, Lord God. Would you cause us to give you the glory, for it all belongs to you. Help us to see, Lord God, who it is that you are and who we are. We pray that you would help us to preach. And we pray it in Jesus' name, amen.

Video clip: *Inception*
Warner Bros. Animation (1999)

Scenes from the movie scroll without audio as Peter talks. A boy (Hogarth) awakens and discovers an empty box next to his bed. He begins to look around for a missing piece of the Iron Giant; it is against his window. He opens the window and the piece flies away, flashing. The scene switches to Iceland, where we see other parts of the Iron Giant making their way back toward his head—a leg, an arm, a rolling gear, as the eyes open on his head.

Last week we watched that clip and noted that, if in fact we're dreaming, waking up from this dream would be downright Apocalyptic. "To be or not to be" wrote William Shakespeare in Hamlet. "To die, to sleep—to sleep—perchance to dream; ah, there's the rub, for in that sleep of death what dreams may come."

Last week we saw that Paul seems to think we're already dead, already asleep, and already dreaming that we might not "be."



Source unknown.

We ended with this picture of two people holding hands and jumping from the World Trade Center on 9-11. The apocalypse is not that planes would fly into the towers, or that they would crumble to the ground. The apocalypse is that these two people would choose to hold hands—that is, that as the world we have constructed tumbles to the ground, “Faith, Hope, and Love,” would remain: that’s the “Apocalypse at hand.”

Then I summed up the message by doing this [Peter pulls a piece of pipe from a PVC Pipe Man] and saying, “This is who you think you are: “me, me, me.” This is a metaphysical impossibility. This is a dream.

And this [Peter reconnects the piece of pipe onto the Pipe Man] is waking up. This is reality. This is “putting on Christ,” as Paul would say.

Now let’s pick up where we left off:

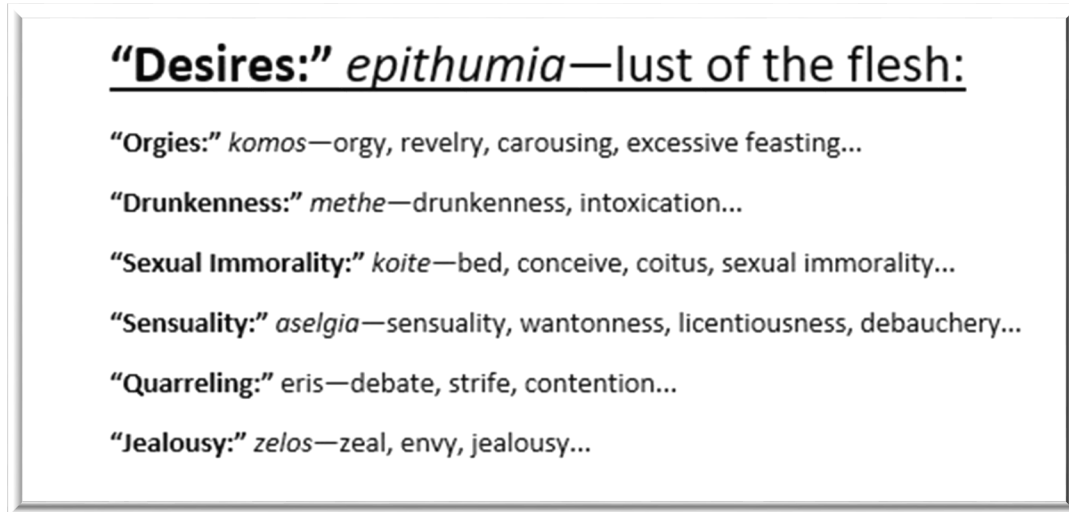
Romans 13:8-14:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, “You [will] not commit adultery, You [will] not murder, You [will] not steal, You [will] not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up [anakephalaio: “brought together under one head”] in [the word (logos)]: “You [will] love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ [The] Love does no [evil] to a neighbor; therefore [the] love is the [fullness] of the law. ¹¹ [And] this [knowing the time], that the hour has come for you-to wake [to be raised] from sleep [hypnos]. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. [Jesus is the light, and light is eternal—for every photon is always NOW]. ¹³ Let us walk [honestly] as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires [It’s *epithumia*: “it’s lusts”].

Now, if you’re like me, you immediately ask, “What are the lusts of the flesh,” ‘cause I’ve got flesh and it does seem to have desires.” Well, Paul just said, “let us walk honestly, not in orgies,

drunkenness, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarreling and jealousy.” And so, you and I say, “Right Paul, what exactly are those things?”

Well, I did some research, and this is what I found:



- The word translated “orgies” is *komos*. So how many of you went to an orgy last week? If you did, stop that. One lexicon said that *komos* meant “excessive feasting.” How many of you have committed excessive feasting? This is weird, but in Deuteronomy, God commands excessive feasting in the temple!
- “Drunkenness” is *methe*. That’s where we get our word methamphetamine. Some of you take those for hay fever, but it clearly means intoxication. So, don’t do that! But what is that? 2 beers, 3 beers or a little cup of wine? It seems awfully careless of Jesus to institute communion with alcohol.
- “Sexual Immorality” is the Greek word *koite*—which can mean coitus and implies immorality, or conception, but technically it just means bed. Coitus is the first commandment in the Bible.
- “Sensuality” is *aselgia*—also translated, wantonness or licentiousness. And this one stresses me out, because I want stuff and I’m a sensuous guy—I mean I’ve got five senses and I use them all.
- “Quarreling” is *eris*—debate. Didn’t Paul do some debating?
- “Jealousy” is *zelos*—most often translated “zeal” in the King James. Paul tells the Corinthians that he has a divine zeal for them. John tells us that “zeal for [God’s] house” consumed Jesus.

That’s all confusing and so we say “Pastor, I need more knowledge of Good and Evil, if I’m supposed to say No to the lusts of the flesh!” When I was a youth pastor, all the parents were always on my back to get me to tell their horny teenagers what sexual immorality was. What they meant was, “Draw some lines and tell the kids when to say ‘No!’”



The liberal youth pastors got together drew the line here and said, “Well after three months of dating, it might be OK to touch your girlfriend anywhere outside the area shaded in black.”



The conservative evangelical youth pastors usually said, “No, if you love Jesus you have to draw the line here, and don’t even think about what’s on the other side of the line, that’s called the lust of the flesh. Now think super hard about not thinking about the other side of that line.”

And then the super-committed, hard-core, youth pastors said “Nope.”



“We draw the lines here.” This is basically a burka. Enforcing these lines is Sharia Law. I’m not convinced this will make you righteous, but it will make you lust for wrists and ankles.ⁱ

So, what are we saying?

A) That there should be no lines? That’s what some people call antinomianism—it basically means “no laws.” These folks will often form some sort of commune, have a bunch of orgies, indulge in every form of sensuality and intoxication. And then, if they don’t die, they grow absolutely miserable and convert to fundamentalist Christianity or maybe Islam.

B) And yet, if all you do is make laws, in an effort to justify yourself, you just keep taking fruit from the tree of knowledge and damning yourself to outer darkness like that Old Pharisee, Rabbi Saul.

Well, this is the problem of ethics: Where to draw the lines?

And that’s what the governing authorities want you to do on Tuesday: Join their team and agree to their lines—that’s called legislation: Republicans draw them in one place, and Democrats draw them in another. Legislation and adjudication—That’s how they judge whether or not you crossed the line. Legislation, adjudication, and execution—that is how they enforce these judgments and what they do about it when someone’s crossed a line. We tend to call that “justice” and we define it as “making people pay.”

And now we need to own up to this fact: the Institutional Church has been a powerful governing authority ever since about 325 AD. And ever since Adam and Eve, took the fruit from the tree, folks have been crossing lines and then trying to pay. For about a thousand years from 500 to 1500 AD, the institutional church seemed to say that if you crossed the line, you had to pay with works or suffer the consequences. Around 1500 AD, some of the Institutional Church started saying, “Hey, it’s not works it’s faith—you pay with faith.” And then they began to explain faith

as agreeing to a special offer defined as the “penal substitutionary atonement.” Which means agreeing that Adam sinned, and so you sinned, and there is no possible way that you could pay that sin—for no matter how much you suffered it would never be enough suffering. But Jesus paid, so if you believe that Jesus paid, you don’t have to pay. But if you don’t believe, you do have to pay, but can never pay enough, so you must suffer endlessly, tormented by the End, who is God and Love. But you have to really believe, and you’ll know if you really believe by whether or not you sincerely love God, which means you won’t give into the lust of the flesh.

And so, were back to our question: “Pastor, what’s the hell is ‘the lust of the flesh?’”

- We need more knowledge of Good and evil!
- We need to legislate, adjudicate, and enforce justice!
- We need to cut ourselves off from sinners and so save ourselves from God.

So, what is the lust of the flesh? My flesh is hungry. I want some food! Am I even allowed to even eat food, to feed my flesh?”

Romans 13:14-14:4:

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision (provide no food) for the flesh, to gratify [its lusts] its desires. [Next Verse, remembering that Chapter Divisions were added in 1560 ADii]...**provide no food for the flesh, to gratify its desires. 14:1 As for the one who is weak in faith, [CUT HIM OFF! ...actually, it doesn’t say that] As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him [proslambano: “take him by the hand”] but not to quarrel (diakrisis: argue judgments) over opinions (dialogismos: reasonings).² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.iii³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed [has accepted] him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant [oiketes: house servant] of another?**

Do you see what Paul just did? It’s just what he did at the end of Romans One. He talked about ethics—he listed all sorts of sins, and then he suddenly said, “You who judge are guilty of the very same things.” For Paul, it seems that the thing that makes sin sinful is not crossing some line but drawing a line in the first place. In 1 Corinthians 15 at the end of an utterly revolutionary chapter, he writes, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin—the thing that makes sin so sinful—the power of sin is the law.” That’s an utterly remarkable statement from an old Pharisee like Saul.

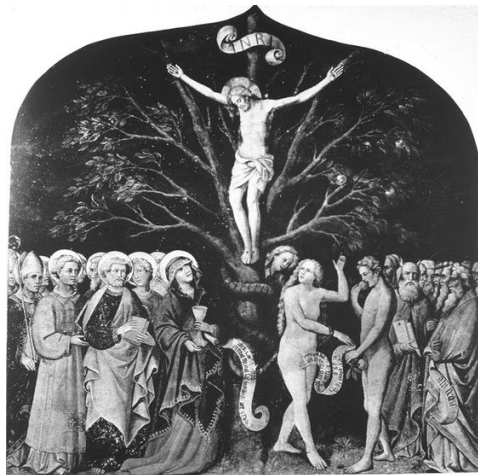
He’s not rejecting the law, but he’s seen something that utterly transforms the meaning of law. He’s not denying some sort of “rejection,” but under all the temporal rejection, he sees an eternal election—he sees the resurrected body of Christ, and the glory of God shining in his face brighter than the sun. He’s seen the Apocalypse, the Judgment of God, and the Glory of God.

We were just asking, “What does it mean to feed the flesh?” And his answer doesn’t have anything to do with what you eat or don’t eat. But it has everything to do with judging people for what they do or don’t eat.

- The lust of the flesh is to legislate, adjudicate and execute.
- The lust of the flesh is to judge, and not be judged, and go back to sleep.
- The lust of the flesh is to dream, that you are our own Creator, Savior, and Redeemer—it's to dream that you can justify yourself.

To the Colossians Paul wrote, “Why... do you submit to regulations—Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch... these indeed have the appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.”^{iv}

Now, here in Romans, he's saying: Not only are regulations of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh; they actually are the indulgence of the flesh. The flesh desires to judge others, and so protect itself from judgment.



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

You know the snake tempted Eve, who is also Adam, to take the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, in order to make herself like God. And so, Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and to be desired to make one wise—she was tempted to take the fruit, in order to feed her flesh, and make herself like God, and so was that first Adam. Then they hid in darkness and lies from God and from each other. They suddenly knew they were alone, and each chose to remain alone. They were asleep and began to dream a dream that would become a nightmare.



Gibson, Mel (Director). (2004). *The Passion of the Christ* [Motion picture]. USA: Icon Productions.

We're all Eve and so we crucify the Messiah, our husband, our helper We take knowledge of the Good, and so take the Life that is the Good—that is God in human flesh. In the words of Victor Hugo, “We still dream what Adam dreamt.”^v

So, I've wrestled with this question for years: Did we actually kill God? For “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” writes Paul.^{vi} And yet the book of Hebrews claims that Jesus became our high priest by the power of an “indestructible life.”^{vii} That's *zoe* in the Greek; It's eternal. Yet, the English word “life,” is also used to translate the Greek word, *psyche* and that's not necessarily eternal; you can lose it, at least for a time.

In the beginning God made Adam by breathing his spirit, his life, his *zoe*,^{viii} into a ball of dust—and Adam became a living *Psyche*. If death is the destruction of a *psyche*, or a *psychikos* body, as Paul puts it—well then, we did kill God in Flesh, we killed Jesus. But if we think that death is the destruction of “the life”—then the idea that we killed God is just a dream we dream in space and time.

The cross reveals that we each dream what Adam dreamt: we dream that we killed God in order to be God—and we feel it as shame. And yet, if there were no God, we couldn't even dream that God is dead. In other words, your existence separate from God, is a metaphysical impossibility. In God you live and move and have your being. In God, you dream that you are utterly alone. We dream that we took the Life of God, and we feel it as shame. In reality, God gave us his own Life, and we know it eternally as Grace. We dream that we are utterly alone—and that's hell. We wake to the eternal communion that is heaven.

But right now, I hope you see that the problem with the flesh is not that you would enjoy sex—Heaven is described as a honeymoon in Scripture. The problem with the flesh is not that you would enjoy pizza—Heaven is described as endless feasting in Scripture. It's not that you enjoy pizza; it's that you only enjoy your own pizza Your flesh only feels its own hunger and its own satisfaction. The problem with flesh is not that it lusts, but that it lusts to be alone. Which means it lusts for death and non-being and yet it cannot take its own life, for the life that's trapped alone in the flesh is eternal.

And now, I'd like to point out that Jesus, who is the life, lusted. Luke 22:15, "when the hour had come," Jesus literally said, "In lust I have lusted, or in desire I have desired, I have earnestly desired, or I have earnestly lusted (*epithumia*). In lust I have lusted to eat this Passover with you." Then Jesus broke the bread, which is his body, and poured the wine which is his blood—and the breath, the spirit, the life, is in the blood.

- Our flesh lusts to be alone. And the Spirit of Jesus lusts for communion.
- Our flesh lusts for non-being—that is I Am Not
- And the Spirit of Jesus lusts for the very being of God—the communion that is God; God is Love, three persons one substance in the dance of Life.

The lust of the flesh is to judge, and not be judged, and go back to sleep. The lust of the spirit is to NOT judge, but be judged, and so wake from this nightmare and live our life—our eternal life, the life of Love.

So, making wrongs right is most definitely NOT about not crossing lines. It's all about waking a new desire: not to take, but to give; to give life, even as you take life.

- a desire to lose your life, even as you find your life,
- a desire to present yourself a sacrifice to God at the temple of your neighbor.

It's all about a new heart that bleeds a new desire—eternal desire.

In chapter one of Romans Paul talked about wrong and right, and then revealed that we're all wrong, and all dead, and all asleep. Then for 10 chapters he revealed the one who is right, and now he reveals how we become right, and it's not ethics. Or you could say it's a new ethic; you could call it "waking up."

Let's read our text again. Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything, except...love" That's quite a statement, he just said pay taxes, revenue, honor, and respect. And yet you don't owe anyone anything except love. "Owe no one anything...Does that include God?"



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

“Owe no one anything, except...love” Owe God nothing but love, and what is Love?

In 1st Corinthians 13, Paul tells us that Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and love never ends. In 1st John, John tells us that God is Love—so real love must be God. Love is not simply a thing in space and time; Love is the foundation of all of space and time. Love is not a commodity, which can be possessed like a thing; Love is the One who possesses all things You can’t store love in a barn, to use at a later date. Love is I am that I am, who is always NOW.



Gibson, Mel (Director). (2004). *The Passion of the Christ* [Motion picture]. USA: Icon Productions.

At the tree, we took the life of Love, which is the life of God. And now the thing that we owe to God is...God. So how could we possibly pay?

[Peter takes a piece from the body of Pipe Man] If I imagine that I’m separate from God and just took the life God, I could never ever pay God God—I just killed God and became my own God forever alone in a kingdom of I Am Not. [Peter puts the piece back onto the body of Pipe Man] But if I wake to the reality that I’m in God, live in God, move in God, and have my very being in God (as Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17). If I wake to the revelation that I could never be separate from God, then...

- I wake to realization, that I could never take from God what he hasn’t always given to me and isn’t giving me right now.
- I wake to the Knowledge that everything is Grace and Grace is the Good.
- I wake to the knowledge of the Good and live the life of Love.ix
- I pay what I owe and have no interest in evil.
- I bleed the blood, even as I receive the blood—the life is in the blood.

We sing “Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.” And lo and behold Jesus is the very thing I owe—And the very thing I pay, for he pays it in me, through me, and even as me. He is love in me, bearing me, believing in me, hoping in and for me, enduring this nightmare with me, even as me, but always with me.x Faith, hope and love in me is Christ in me, having descended into my dreams to wake me from my nightmare. The nightmare in time is that I take what God has not given. And the reality of eternity is that God has always given anything I take, in particular: “me”—“my life.” Before we took his life on the tree in the garden, he gave his life as

communion at dinner the night before. He always commands love, for he constantly gives love—it is the lust of his Spirit, the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of God. So, wake up, sleepy head, and pay what you owe.

Imagine if one of my sons came to me and said: “Reverend Hiett, there is a tractor trailer outside the house and in it is 800lbs. of Macaroni and Cheese, 2000 large pizzas, 347 movie tickets, 947 diapers, 346 band aids, etc., etc. \$80,000 for rent and \$5000 dollars for gas. Now we’re even, justice is satisfied, and you can leave me alone.” That would be far worse than paying nothing; that would literally be the abomination of desolation—in the temple of my son’s soul.^{xi} And what do I desire? I earnestly desire my own love returning to me as a word riding the spirit exhaled from his lungs as he says. “Abba, Daddy, Dad, I love you.” Everything else is chaff, hay, and stubble.

“Owe no one anything, except to love them.” Your Father is Love. He resides in you and in the temple that is your neighbor. The life in you is the life of love in you—he doesn’t simply belong to you. And the life in your neighbor is the life of love in your neighbor—he doesn’t simply belong to your neighbor; but both of you belong to him. Until you believe it, you feed the flesh that is a dream that turns into a nightmare that some call hell. But when you believe, your flesh becomes his flesh: the very body of Christ. And when all are one and one is all, you feel no pain and experience all pleasure. That’s Heaven. That’s God’s Dream, and God’s dream is no mere dream; It is reality.

Romans 13:8-9:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For ~~the commandments~~, “You [will] not commit adultery, You [will] not murder, You [will] not steal, You [will] not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up [anakephalaio: “brought together under one head”] in [the word (logos)]: “You [will] love your neighbor as yourself.”

He didn’t write “you *should* love your neighbor as yourself,” but “you *will* love your neighbor as yourself.” You see the command isn’t a threat, it’s a prophesy, for it’s a reality, in eternity, which is where we are, when we are awake. You will love your neighbor as yourself for your neighbor is yourself, for as Paul wrote in the last chapter, “We though many are one body in Christ.”

Romans 13:10-14:4:

[The] Love does no [evil] to a neighbor; therefore [the] love is the [fullness] of the law. ¹¹ [And] this, ~~you know~~ [knowing] the time, that [for us] the hour has come [is now] ~~for you to wake~~ [egeiro: to be raised] from sleep [hypnos]. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor [hoplon: weapons] of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly [honestly] as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires [It’s epithumias: “it’s lusts”]. ^{14:1} As for the one who is weak in faith [that would be a sinner], welcome him [accept him],

but not to quarrel over opinions [that is arguments over what's wrong and what's right]. ² **One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.** ³ **Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him** [accepted him]. ⁴ **Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld** [literally, "he will be made to stand"], **for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

So back to the ethics: what is right and how do we do what's right and help others do what's right? Well, we don't judge our neighbor, because they've already been judged, and just our knowledge of that fact is the judgment. We welcome them. Our neighbor will stand, for our neighbor will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand, so we don't reject him, we accept him.

And just that fact is judgment on his judgment that he is alone. And it's the dream that he is alone that feeds his flesh and feeds your flesh. Don't reject the sinner, accept the sinner, and you will be conquering the sin. Don't reject the dreamer, accept the dreamer, and you'll be rejecting the dream that the dreamer is alone. And it's out of the dreams of a lonely heart, that flow all manner of wickedness.

You know if you come to me depressed, I can judge you and tell you not to be depressed, or I can be depressed with you—I can weep with the one who weeps, and before long we'll stop weeping. You can come to me feeling sorry for yourself, and I can just you tell you not to feel sorry for yourself, and you'll feel sorrier for yourself, or I can feel sorry for yourself with you, while you feel sorry for myself with me, and soon neither of us will be sorry. You can come to me feeling lonely, and I can tell you not to feel lonely, in which case, you'll feel even more lonely, or I can feel lonely with you, and feeling lonely together, we'll realize that neither of us is alone.

You can come to me feeling rejected—everyone came to Jesus feeling rejected, except those who thought they were accepted because they had rejected someone else. But everyone that felt rejected was accepted—Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners—and they no longer wanted to be tax collectors and sinners. Like he says in the Gospel of John, "I judge no one," but his judgment of not judging, is the "true judgment" on all our judging... the lust of our flesh. He said, "I judge no one" and "I have much to judge" and that's because he is the Judgment; He is the love of God in human flesh

I have a friend who felt rejected by God and went to an S&M club, where Jesus miraculously revealed to her that she was not alone; he was with her. I have another friend who almost drank herself to death, and in the emergency room Jesus revealed that she was not alone; he was with her. I have a friend who felt tired and alone and so went to a seedy old x-rated theater in San Francisco, and sitting next him, he saw Jesus, with him... and then together, they left the theater. I have really struggled with feelings of rejection. And so, sex, drugs, depression, and self-loathing are all tempting places to hide—but time and time again Jesus has shown me that he's

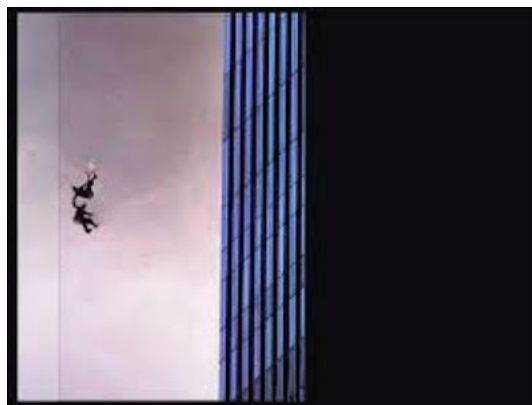
rejected with me, and rejected with him, I could not be more accepted by God, and one day, by every neighbor.^{xii}

Even if I cry out “My God My God why have you forsaken,” it’s Christ in me, feeling forsaken with me, which is the revelation that I’m not just me—I am so very, forever not alone. Jesus descends into every nightmare; he does it in you, and even through you, and for you, through your neighbor.^{xiii}

On May 11th, 1935, Bill Wilson had been sober for 6 months. But for years before he had been a hopeless drunk—hopeless until he had an encounter with the Lord and learned to share his struggles with his neighbors. But on this night, May 11th, 1935, at the Mayflower hotel in Akron Ohio, he stood alone in the lobby feeling dejected and dangerously depressed. A business deal had just collapsed and now he could hear laughter and the clinking of glasses coming from the hotel bar. As he turned toward the bar, he thought to himself, “I need a drink.” Then suddenly a new thought stopped him in his tracks: “No, I don’t need a drink—I need another alcoholic.”^{xiv} He found a phone, made some calls, and found an alcoholic named Bob—Dr. Bob, who didn’t believe it would help, but agreed to meet for 15 minutes. They talked for five hours and together founded alcoholics anonymous.

At an AA meeting there are no professionals that judge people in or out, a success or a failure. Instead, alcoholics just welcome each other and try to be honest. Each person stands up, says their name, and confesses to their addiction. So, I’d say “My name is Peter and I’m an alcoholic; I’m addicted to alcohol.” As you know, AA has been the most successful program—if you can even call it a program—in freeing alcoholics from alcohol addiction.

At church, we all ought to stand up and say something like, “My name is Peter, and I’m a sinner; I’m addicted to my own ego; I think I’m God, and you’re not.” If we were honest, we’d wake each other from our arrogant dreams and begin to dream what Jesus dreamt. We’d dream what the 2nd Adam dreamt—and that’s not hell, that’s heaven. Our proud towers would crumble, and we’d find ourselves holding hands.



Source unknown.

One of my favorite movies is titled *What Dreams May Come*. In the movie Robin Williams plays a man name Christie who dies and goes to Heaven, to discover it’s a land of shared dreaming—People dream reality together; they dream that we all would “be.” But then he discovers that his

wife isn't in heaven, she's in hell, dreaming that she would "not be." She's blaming herself for the death of a child, and so she had committed suicide unable to pay, but constantly trying to pay.



Christie decides he'd rather be with her in hell, than without her in heaven. He finds her alone in the darkness and just sits with her there. He says "People end up in hell because they can't forgive themselves. I know I can't, but I can forgive you." "For killing my children?" she finally responds. And my sweet husband?" "For being so wonderful," he answers, "that a guy would choose Hell over Heaven, just to hang around you." And at that the lie is broken and hell turns into heaven.



You may feel like hell, you may be trapped by hell, you may have raised some hell, but at this table...you're welcome.

Communion

For your helper took the bread and he broke it, saying this is my body given to you—do this in re-member-ance of me. And in the same manner he took the cup saying, "this is the covenant in my blood," poured out for the forgiveness of sins. And then he said, drink of it, all of you, and do it in re-member-ance of me.

So, you may feel like hell (holds up a piece of the bread), you may be trapped in hell, you may have even created (or raised) some hell. But Jesus descends into hell (dips bread into wine cup) just to be with you, and that's how hell becomes heaven.

Pray with me:

I have rejected you Jesus, and that's sin. But you have accepted me, and that's grace. And so now, at the junction of eternity and time, I repent—I think about this whole thing differently. In Jesus' name, God is salvation. Amen.

Benediction

So, Pay What You Owe, Sleepy Head.

And what should be your punishment if you don't pay what you owe? Should it be that you can never, ever pay what you owe? What you owe is the one who would never leave you behind. If you don't pay what you owe, you're holding him captive, in the darkness with you. Well, that's ridiculous. The punishment is that you will love, as you have been loved. This is how Paul puts it (this comes up next in Romans):

This is your punishment: “We will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.’ So, then each of us will give an account of himself to God.” I'll cash in my old self and get a new one. In fact, I've already got him, and he's growing. He's the one that was singing those songs a minute ago.

I will build my life upon your love; it is a sure foundation.
I will put my trust in you alone.

Now, who's singing? Because love trusts all things, love bears all things, love endures all things. So, who am I? I can't make myself God. And yet, low and behold, in some incredible way, God makes me himself. God was singing to God through me and through you. Wow, how could you escape such a great salvation. You can't. So, in Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ I think many supposed Christians might be happier with fundamentalist Islam than all the confusing sayings of Jesus.

ⁱⁱ The Parisian printer Robert Estienne created another numbering in his 1551 edition of the Greek New Testament, which was also used in his 1553 publication of the Bible in French. Estienne's system of division was widely adopted, and it is this system which is found in almost all modern Bibles. Estienne produced a 1555 Vulgate that is the first Bible to include the verse numbers integrated into the text. Before this work, they were printed in the margins. The first English New Testament to use the verse divisions was a 1557 translation by William Whittingham (c. 1524–1579). The first Bible in English to use both chapters and verses was the Geneva Bible published shortly afterwards in 1560. - Wikipedia

ⁱⁱⁱ That was my friend Chris's favorite Bible verse “the weak man eats only vegetables.” But it's probably not referring to what we would call vegetarians. It's referring to new gentile believers that didn't want to eat something that had been offered to a demon in a pagan ritual. It's referring to a very committed young Christian.

^{iv} Colossians 2:20-23 ESV

^v "Always night, never blue skies, never dawn; we march but so far we have not progressed an inch. We still dream what Adam dreamt" - Victor Hugo

^{vi} 2nd Corinthians 5:19

^{vii} Hebrews 7:16

^{viii} Romans 8:10-11, But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

^{ix} Love the gift that is constantly given so I can constantly give.

^x We are most deeply asleep at the switch when we fancy we control any switches at all. We sleep to time's hurdy-gurdy; we wake, if we ever wake, to the silence of God.

-Annie Dillard in Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), p. 209.

^{xi} Mark 13:14 But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Luke 16:15 And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Pride is an ego which seeks to justify itself and so sets itself up in the place of God in the temple of the human soul; it is the Imitation Christ, the Antichrist.

Just the manifestation of the presence of the true Christ destroys the Antichrist.

2nd Thessalonians 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming [the *epiphanao* of his *parousia*, the manifestation of his effective presence].

2nd Thessalonians 1:9 They [Those who do not obey the Gospel: "God is Salvation." The Proud] will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, ~~away~~ from ["away" is added by the translator] the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

The Presence of "God is Salvation," destroys the illusion that "You are your own salvation," the imitation Christ, the antichrist, the Old Adam.

^{xii} And when we fall into sin and forget him and forget to safeguard our own souls, then Christ alone bears the whole burden, and so he stands sorrowing and lamenting. Then it is fitting for us, out of reverence and kindness, to turn quickly to our Lord and not to leave him alone. He is here for all of us alone: that is to say, he is only here for us. And whenever I am cold towards him through sin, despair or sloth, then I let my Lord stand alone, to the extent of my sin; and so do all of us who are sinners. But although it is true that we often do this, his goodness never allows us to be alone; but he is always with us, and he tenderly excuses us, and he always shields us from blame in his eyes.

- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 173

^{xiii} To the abandoned soul God is visible even in the proud souls who oppose him. Every creature, whether good or evil, reveals God to him.

- Jean-Pierre De Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, p. 116

^{xiv} According to historian Ernest Kurtz, Alcoholics Anonymous came out of a discovery Bill Wilson made in his first meeting with Doctor Bob Smith. On his own, Bill had stayed sober for six months until he made a trip out of town, where a business deal fell through. Depressed, wandering a hotel lobby, he heard familiar sounds of laughter and ice tinkling in glasses. He headed toward the bar, thinking "I need a drink."

Suddenly a brand new thought came to him, stopping him in his tracks: "No, I don't need a drink-I need another alcoholic!" Walking instead toward the lobby telephones, he began the sequence of calls that put him in touch with Dr. Smith, who would become AA's cofounder.

Church is a place where I can say, unashamedly, "I don't need to sin. I need another sinner."

- Philip Yancey, *Church: Why Bother?*, p. 52