

D-Day and V-Day
Romans 7:14-25

“What’s wrong with you?” I’m sure my parents must have thought that at least a few times when I was a kid. Of course, some of the things I did were accidents, times when I was simply not careful, or just not paying attention – I never was as attentive as my twin brother Brian. But of course there were other times – times when I knew better – times when I knew what I did was wrong. One of the earliest examples I can remember was a time I went to the doctor for a check-up. In the waiting room was the boardgame Candyland. Bored of waiting, I opened the box & checked out all its colorful contents. And for some reason, I just had to have the little red gingerbread man game piece. So I took it. There’s another word for that, which very soon afterward was spoken by my mother – “Christopher Michael! Did you steal that!” Ah. Yes. Yes I did. And I knew it was wrong. But I did it anyway. Why? [Pause]

Why did you do the last thing you knew you shouldn’t? [P] Is there any hope for the human race? Any hope for people who call ourselves Christians? If the holy God of the universe lives in us, why aren’t we more holy? If we are really the children of a perfect Father, why do we do the things we do? [P]

Can we do better? Can we live the kind of godly lives we all know we should? Can we ever find victory over temptation and weakness and sin? The promise of God’s word today is that we can.

As you may know, D-Day in WWII came on June 6, 1944 at the Battle of Normandy. V-Day, Victory Day, came in Europe on May 8, 1945, and in Japan on August 15. Between D-Day and these V-Days, the war raged on, but victory was in sight. The enemy was on the road to defeat, but was not yet destroyed.

In spiritual terms, I’ve often heard that you and I live in the same period of time. D-Day came with the death and resurrection of Jesus. V-Day comes with his return. In the meanwhile, we must fight the enemy every day. We will win some battles and lose others, but we have to wait for V-Day.

I no longer believe that. [P] I now know that V-Day, like D-Day, has already come for Christ-followers. We can have victory over sin and Satan today. We don't have to do the things we do. V-Day can be this day. How?

Admit Your Total Depravity

What is "total depravity?" Theologians mean by this that every part of us is affected by sin. Your mind, your emotions, your attitudes as well as your actions. Not just what you do, but who you are. You are not a good person who sometimes does bad things – you and I are, by nature – morally and spiritually bent, twisted, shattered, dead. As such, it is our nature to sin. Depravity has affected every dimension of our lives.

Romans 7 perhaps gives the most honest expression to this fact in all of Scripture. Paul writes in v. 14, *"I am sold as a slave to sin."* We witness the struggle: *"What I want to do, I do not do; but what I hate, I do"* (v. 15). This is *"sin living in me"* (v. 17). He wants to do what is good, *"but I cannot carry it out"* (v. 18). *"The evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing"* (v. 19). Paul gets even more specific: *"It is sin living in me that does it"* (v. 20).

In his "inner being," Paul loves doing the word and will of God (v. 22), *"But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me"* (v. 23). Paul is trapped between the two, caught in the spiritual crossfire with no way out. He can do well one day and sin another. He can step forward in faith but then backward in defeat. *"What a wretched man I am!"* he cries (v. 24a). *"Who will rescue me from this body of death?"* (v. 24b). If this is true for the greatest apostle in Christian history, what of us? [P]

Paul is simply stating what God's word says of us all. All of us have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).

King David lamented, *"The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one"* (Ps. 14:2-3).

The first step to winning the battle against sin is admitting that you cannot win it. You can fight temptation and sin for a while, but don't we inevitably lose?

Preachers used to speak of "besetting sins," those temptations to which we are especially and individually susceptible. Yours may not be mine, and mine may not be yours, but we all have them.

Charles Finney, in a sermon preached in 1845, made this list: temper, worry, coveting what we do not have, greed, dishonesty, laziness, slander, gossip, jealousy, prejudice, prideful ambition, vanity, sexual lust, overeating, overdrinking, malice, and falsehood.

Are any of these living in your soul? What temptation continually plagues you? What sin do you find yourself struggling to defeat? Start there. Begin by admitting your total depravity.

Claim Your Total Victory

*"Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Paul cries (v. 24). Here's the answer, the incredible good news for us today: "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25) He will say it again in Romans 8:1: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Why? "Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has **set you free** from the law of sin and death!" (v. 2)*

When Jesus died for us, *"he condemned sin in the flesh"* (v. 3). He defeated sin and defanged the enemy. He broke the chains which enslaved us & won for us the victory! Not just one day – *this* day! Not just when he returns – when his Spirit comes to live in each of us!

The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us. The same Spirit who enabled Jesus to live without sin in total victory now lives in us. The same Power who brought him victory has come to bring us victory. V-Day is now ours.

So, *how* is this victory to be ours?

First, *trust in the work of the Holy Spirit*. There is not a more bleak picture than total depravity. As such, we are spiritually dead, incapable of living for God. And so we need One to enter in and do what we could never do – make our spiritually dead hearts beat again – give us life, make us new, set us free. By his grace and power, the Holy Spirit brings life where there was death and sets us *free* from the bondage of sin.

Second, *surrender to the supremacy of Christ*. How do we live under his lordship? By turning from that which used to hold us in its grasp, by casting down the idols in our lives – the things that used to allure us and master us. In other words, we repent. We turn from that which used to have mastery over us. We do more than acknowledge our sin, even more than confess it – we actively *turn* from it by setting our sights on Another – we live under the lordship and leading of a new master – Jesus Christ!

Here's the thing: If you try to fight the battle against sin in *your strength*, you won't have *his*. We won't succeed in this spiritual battle if we insist on using human weapons instead of what He alone can provide.

Dr. Jim Denison writes, "*Self-sufficiency is the enemy of the power of God.*" We have another option: Surrender to His supremacy.

Third, *abide in the Vine*. Jesus said it plainly: "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). What does it mean to stay attached to the Vine, Jesus?

We depend on him. The branch depends completely on the vine for its life and strength. We read the Bible and pray not to fulfill religious duties but to get the enrichment we must have to thrive another day. The spiritual life is not an added elective for those who have time for religious hobbies – it is the fuel and food without which we die.

We rest in him. We trust that he is flowing and working through us. Nowhere does the Bible say how it feels to abide in Christ. We trust that when we are close to him, he is close to us. We trust his presence and power.

And *we expect fruit to result in our lives*. The “fruit of the Spirit” are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Each is the opposite of the sin which so plagues our lives. The branch doesn’t have to try harder to make more fruit; so long as it stays connected to the vine its fruit is inevitable

If you struggle with loving someone who has hurt you, don’t try harder to forgive them – get back to Jesus. If you have lost your joy, don’t try to find it – find Jesus. If you’re not at peace, don’t try harder to feel peaceful – go to Jesus. If you struggle with patience as I do, don’t try to be more patient – get back to Jesus.

Depend on him, rest in him, and expect his character to show in yours. [PAUSE]

And then *His victory will be yours*. It is actually possible to live today in sure victory and full freedom over sin. The Bible is clear: “*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it*” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Jesus has never lost a battle to Satan, and he never will. If you believe in D-Day but have not yet found V-Day, the fault is not his. You’re trying to win this battle in your strength, but you cannot. You may even have given up on victory, on freedom, believing that it is simply your lot in life to live with spiritual defeat and frustration. That’s a lie of the enemy. *Jesus won total victory over total depravity. Now that victory can be yours.*

To sum up this message in a single verse: “*Submit yourselves...to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). Submit, and you can resist. Resist, and you will win. Today can be your V-Day.

As we close, I want to share with you a verse that contains the promise and power and hope of God for you and me. Romans 6:18 – “*You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness*” (v. 18).

“You have been set free from sin,” God promises. But you must leave the prison. You must stop trying to break down the bars which bind you, the chains which enslave you, the enemies who have captured and imprisoned you. Your key doesn’t open this lock. Your self-reliant strength cannot overcome these enemies. There is only One liberator who can set you free. Only One who has defeated the warden of the prison, shattered its bars and broken its chains. Only One.

“You have been set free from sin,” but only when Jesus sets you free. When last did you lay every part of your life on his altar? Your past failures and victories, your present problems and joys, your future fears and hopes?

What temptation have you not defeated? What hurt have you not forgiven? What chains are binding your soul? Give them to Christ today. Believe that his grace is greater than all your sin. Jesus has won the victory. Jesus has set us free. We belong to him now and forever. Rejoice, Christian, and live victoriously!