

Prayers to Remain – Part 2

As we faithfully persevere in prayer, you may wonder if anything is changing. But if you haven't noticed, our hearts are changing, our prayers are changing, and God is moving among us. While the war feels like it's been going on for a year, we have been facing this issue for a little over two months. It feels like an eternity, doesn't it? This is our seventh week of prayer, and we are beginning to feel in real ways what it means to "remain" in Christ. By persevering in suffering *with* Jesus instead of *without* him, we have grown in our love for one another and in God's grace to overcome some of the sins we face in our suffering. Perhaps we are even beginning to feel strong enough to reach out and comfort others. Our grief is still with us, but we laugh a little more, pray a little more deeply, and knit our hearts together a little more tightly in hope for a new beginning.

Jesus does call us to remain in him, but he doesn't expect us to know how to remain with him without his help. He gives us the Holy Spirit, along with many instructions and tools to help us stay faithful! Read the verses below and discuss how the Lord's promises and direction give us hope and strength.

Lesson 2

(Answers are provided by Ukrainians and other attendees.)

In this lesson, we're going to explore a fascinating connection between the Old and New Testament as we explore a special law that God designed to help us understand more deeply how Jesus desires to keep us within his love and care. The story begins in the Old Testament when the Lord is giving Moses instructions about how to manage the Israelites just before they conquer the territory of Canaan.

Numbers 35:2-25

² "Tell the Israelites that they should give some of the cities in their part of the land to the Levites... ⁶ Six of those cities will be cities of safety. If a person *accidentally* kills someone, that person can run to those towns for safety...¹² That person will be safe from anyone from the dead man's family who wants to punish the murderer until that person is judged in court...²⁰⁻
²¹ You might hit someone with your hand or push someone or throw something at them and kill them. If you do that out of hatred, you are a murderer, and you must be killed...²² You might *accidentally* kill someone, maybe by pushing or by accidentally hitting them with a tool or weapon. ²³ ...You didn't plan to kill anyone. You didn't hate the person you killed—it was only an accident...²⁵ If the community decides to protect you from the dead person's family, the community must take you back to your city of safety. You must stay there until the official high priest who was anointed with holy oil dies..."

Числа 35:2-34

И сказал Господь Моисею на равнинах Моавитских у Иордана против Иерихона, говоря: ² повели сынам Израилевым, чтоб они из уделов владения своего дали левитам города для жительства, и поля при городах со всех сторон дайте левитам...⁶ Из городов, которые вы дадите левитам, [будут] шесть городов для

убежища, в которые вы позволите убежать убийце; и сверх их дайте сорок два города...¹² и будут у вас города сии убежищем от мстителя, чтобы не был умерщвлен убивший, прежде нежели он предстанет пред общество на суд...²⁰ если кто толкнет кого по ненависти, или с умыслом бросит на него [что-нибудь] так, что тот умрет,²¹ или по вражде ударит его рукою так, что тот умрет, то ударившего должно предать смерти: он убийца; мститель за кровь может умертвить убийцу, лишь только встретит его.²² Если же он толкнет его нечаянно, без вражды, или бросит на него что-нибудь без умысла,²³ или какой-нибудь камень, от которого можно умереть, не видя уронит на него так, что тот умрет, но он не был врагом его и не желал ему зла,²⁴ то общество должно рассудить между убийцею и мстителем за кровь по сим постановлениям.²⁵ и должно общество спасти убийцу от руки мстителя за кровь, и должно возвратить его общество в город убежища его, куда он убежал, чтоб он жил там до смерти великого священника, который помазан священным елеем...

Explain the concept of the “city of refuge.” What was its purpose? What were its rules?

- The city of refuge was a place where a person who had committed an unintentional sin could escape.
- The person would be judged, and if the judge found that the sin was unintentional, he could stay in that city and be protected by the law from punishment.
- If the person left the city of refuge, then he risked being punished.

What was the role of the Jewish high priest over the people in this protected town?

- The priest performed sacrifices for the unintentional and future sins of the person.
- The priest covered this person legally and spiritually and protected them from condemnation and punishment.

When was a person allowed to leave the city of refuge?

- The person could leave when the high priest died. The priest was responsible for covering this person spiritually and physically. So when the high priest died, the person was free to leave the city, but he was still protected by the law.

Accidental sin in the New Testament is also called *unintentional* sin, the opposite of *intentional* sin. Discuss the differences between intentional and unintentional sin. Give some examples of each.

- Intentional sin is premeditated (the person thought about it in advance) – there was a motive, an opportunity, and a plan that they carried out. Unintentional is accidental. It just happened.
- I had a friend at school who was 15 years old. There was another boy who was a bully. In the evening, he was walking, and some boys gathered and captured him and began provoking him. They were asking him for cigarettes and money. The boy unintentionally (maybe out of reaction or fear), pulled a knife and killed one of the boys. Maybe he wanted to hurt the boy, defend himself, but not kill him. It was an emotional reaction. He ran to another city to get protection.
- Intentional – I am hurt, and I want to hurt this person back. And I have a plan to do that – ignoring the person, insulting them, having a hurtful conversation that we’ve

planned. Getting revenge. Intentionally lying to get out of a situation. I want to get drunk, so I go out to a bar.

In the New Testament, James talks more about this problem of unintentional sin in this way:

James 4:17

¹⁷ Anyone then who knows the good he should do and doesn't do it, sins.

Иакова 4:17

¹⁷ Итак, кто понимает делать добро и не делает, тому грех.

The type of sin James is talking about is the sin of neglect. Perhaps we try to “avoid” sin, but do we replace that sin with doing something good instead? I don't drink or smoke or kill people. But am I intentionally doing good for others, serving them, loving them? Or do I think about myself most of the time? Maybe we even think about doing good for someone else, our family, our spouse, our church, or our neighborhood, but we get busy, we forget, we get weighed down with life's problems, or maybe our heart is simply hard or selfish.

Give some examples of good things we can do for others.

- We can tell people about God, invite people to church, share spiritual literature with others to share about Jesus, share spiritual websites with others to encourage them
- Give clothing, food, or money if they need help
- Offer our help – starting with our family, like my mother or aunt in the kitchen or in the garden
- Listening to others – their problems, their needs, the things inside their hearts that they want to share, but they have no one to listen.
- Praying one for another

Where did you succeed this week in doing good? What is something good you know you need to do this next week (or soon)?

- Feeding bread to the birds because God feeds me. There was a cat that was causing the birds a problem – keeping them from eating the bread. So, I shooed away the cat so the birds could eat.
- God puts desires on our heart to help, so we need to help them.
- To be here with friends and my church family to support them and to encourage each other through this time. There are others that we need to support in this ministry, leading them closer to the Lord.
- This week, I gave flowers to my sister to try to encourage our relationship. I know I need to have lunch with my brother because he struggles with anger toward me. And I want to continue working on our relationship and talking about how our relationship can heal.
- One of my colleagues is an old man and recently he had some health problems – a mild stroke. My colleagues decided to share his duties between us until he can recover.

Paul shared openly about his struggle with unintentional sin in Romans when he says this:

Romans 7:15,19

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do... ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

К Римлянам 7:15,19

¹⁵ Ибо не понимаю, что делаю: потому что не то делаю, что хочу, а что ненавижу, то делаю... ¹⁹ Доброго, которого хочу, не делаю, а злое, которого не хочу, делаю.

Can you relate to Paul? You see yourself doing something over and over again. You know it's wrong, you really don't mean to do it, but you see this pattern in your life that is difficult to overcome.

Take a minute of silence to think about your own life. What are some of these struggles in your life or character? Are there relationships or circumstances in your life that make these struggles difficult for you?

- I struggle with insulting others. The flesh is taking over my spirit and over moral things in my life.

Like Paul, you might wonder to yourself, why do I keep doing this? How can I overcome this problem in my life? Perhaps you feel ashamed or embarrassed, or even fearful that the Lord will condemn you for these sins. So, what is the solution? Let's read what Paul says:

Romans 7:21-25

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, fighting a war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ ...Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

К Римлянам 7:21-25

²¹ Итак я нахожу закон, что, когда хочу делать доброе, прилежит мне злое. ²² Ибо по внутреннему человеку нахожу удовольствие в законе Божию; ²³ но в членах моих вижу иной закон, противоборствующий закону ума моего и делающий меня пленником закона греховного, находящегося в членах моих. ²⁴ ...кто избавит меня от сего тела смерти? ²⁵ Благодарю Бога моего Иисусом Христом, Господом нашим. Итак тот же самый я умом моим служу закону Божию, а плотию закону греха.

Paul describes this problem of unintentional and intentional sin in this passage as well. How does he describe this difference?

- Paul wants to do good, but he still sins unintentionally

What is Paul's solution? Jesus, of course! Paul sees his own struggle with sin that wars against his heart that wants to do good. Yet he never questions – am I still in Christ? Am I still remaining if I

have this unintentional sin in my life? Let's read more about how Jesus designed this solution to unintentional sin:

Romans 8:1-6

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death...⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

К Римлянам 8:1-6

Итак нет ныне никакого осуждения тем, которые во Христе Иисусе живут не по плоти, но по духу, ²потому что закон духа жизни во Христе Иисусе освободил меня от закона греха и смерти...⁵Ибо живущие по плоти о плотском помышляют, а живущие по духу--о духовном. ⁶Помышления плотские суть смерть, а помышления духовные--жизнь и мир.

Here, Paul gives more details about how Jesus helps us to remain in him, even though we struggle with sin. What promises does Jesus offer us? How do these promises change us?

According to Paul, how do we know we are in Christ? How does this give us confidence and peace?

Jesus never tells us we will not struggle in this life. In fact, he promises us that we will have many struggles. There will be situations and relationships that test our hearts and challenge our minds. But Jesus did not leave us alone. The Spirit of the Lord changes our hearts to *desire* what is good. In the past, we were going one direction in our lives – living for ourselves, not caring about how our sin hurt God or hurt others. We wore the clothes of intentional sin. But when we give our hearts and lives to Jesus and he in turn places his Holy Spirit in us, our *desires* change. We want to please him, not ourselves. And yet even as we struggle with wanting to do what is right, our hearts still desire to please him! This change and longing for righteousness is evidence of Christ living in us. And as we remain in Christ, we learn and grow in doing what is good.

Do you remember the conditions of the city of refuge? Those who sinned stayed in the city until the Jewish high priest died. That high priest didn't live forever. Yet Jesus is the eternal high priest who protects us from punishment in this life on earth and into the next life in heaven. The writer of Hebrews says this about Jesus:

Hebrews 7:23-25

²³Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵Therefore he is able to save *completely* those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

К Евреям 7:23-25

²³Притом тех священников было много, потому что смерть не допускала пребывать одному; ²⁴а Сей, как пребывающий вечно, имеет и священство непреходящее, ²⁵поэтому и может всегда спасать приходящих чрез Него к Богу, будучи всегда жив, чтобы ходатайствовать за них.

Jesus's sacrifice and blood cover us today, tomorrow, and on to the Day of Judgment because he *never* died. And if we remain in Christ, live by the Spirit, setting our minds on what the Spirit desires, we find true life and peace. Our salvation is secure. The Spirit in us – who longs for what is right and good – he is our seal of assurance that we belong to Christ.

Now that we can have confidence and peace in God's grace through his Son, discuss things we can do to set our minds on what the Spirit desires.

- Read the Bible so we can know God's will daily
- Pray daily
- Get rid of the distractions – internet, video games, too much news, depression
- Remind ourselves daily that we are saved by grace and be thankful
- Every night before bed, forgive others – be thankful that Jesus loves you. Commit to forgiving and loving others.
- Confessing our sins
- Praying for others – so we are thinking more about others than ourselves – think about the good we can do for other people as we pray
- Reading special verses over and over again that strengthen, encourage, or direct us (memorizing verses)
- Listening to sermons, going to spiritual websites, coming to TalkEnglish or Connect the Nations!
- Talking with a friend about spiritual things and the needs in our hearts, listening to others who are sharing
- Going to church, joining groups at church

In what areas do you want to grow personally?

What is something specific that you can start doing this week to help your mind focus on what the Spirit desires in your life? Pray about these things.

What is a good that you want to do this week?

Time of prayer