

Problem Solved (Easter 2013)

He is risen! My name is Rob Willey, I'm the Senior Pastor here at Harvest, and I'm glad you've joined us on this Easter weekend as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus . . . And focus on the Good News he came to share
To that end, I'd like to start by turning to Rom 3

- When I think back on my teenage years, it's a wonder I lived past 17
I wasn't a drinker or partier, but oh was I reckless and brazen; Which is a nice way of saying "stupid;" You know what I'm talking about?

Like when my friends and I would go up to complete strangers, usually other teenagers, and say – "You got a problem?" Complete strangers
Sometimes they'd just be walking out of a store, or hanging out, or sitting in their car – and we'd walk up, slap the top of the car, and say "You got a problem?"
Which, fortunately, caught them off guard *long* enough that we could get out of there before they realized how *pathetic* we were, and that our bark was worse than our bite

- And while my *intention* is far different this weekend, and my attitude far *better*, I kind of want to say the same thing to *you* this Easter; But not as a question
I want you to know that apart from faith in Jesus and repentance of your sin, apart from believing in his death and resurrection on your behalf – you've got a problem
And so do I; In fact, we all do; Apart from Jesus, we *all* have a problem

And unless you see your problem for what it is, and embrace the solution God provides – you're doomed; B/c it won't go away by itself, and it only gets worse with time

So I want to take a few minutes to lay all that out, *including* the solutions; And then give you an opportunity to respond; An opportunity to *embrace* the solution for yourself

But first, the problem; And it starts with this

Problem #1 – We have a nature we can't shake

A predisposition; An intrinsic quality; A fabric that's woven in to the very fiber of our soul – and it's called sin; Every single one of us has a sin nature
A predisposition to do what's wrong; An overwhelming tendency to think incorrectly
An unavoidable inclination to *rebel*; We have a sin nature

And the Bible's explicit about it; Saying that *by the one man's disobedience* [that's Adam], *the many were made sinners* (Rom 5:19)
By Adam's disobedience in the garden of Eden – we were made sinners; As in considered sinful, just like him; And given a sin nature as part of his lineage
Which we confirm when we act on it – when we sin; Every single day
We have a sin nature

- And the worst part is, we can't shake it any more than we can shake gravity
Any more than we can shed our skin; Any more than we can avoid disappointment
By virtue of the fact that we're human – we're subject to sin
It's a part of who we are, and we're under its power; Look at Rom 3:10-12
"None is righteous, no, not one; [11] no one understands; no one seeks for God. [12] All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

It's a quote from the Old Testament, to make the point – that apart from Jesus, we're all under the power of sin (9), and can't shake it

- Even if we *want* to; A few chapters later, the Apostle Paul himself said (**Rom 7:21-24**)
[21] *So I find it to be a law* [a certainty] *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?* Who will shake the nature I can't?
That's Problem #1*****

Problem #2 – We have a debt we can't pay

In Mt 18, Jesus tells a parable about forgiveness; And in it, he illustrates the problem we face, when it comes to being a part of the Kingdom of Heaven (**Mt 18:23-25**)
Listen to what he says – "*Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. [24] When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents* [in today's money, about \$10B]. [25] *And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.*"

With a fictional story, Jesus illustrates the fact that we have a debt we can't pay; A debt that keeps us from his presence, his kingdom; And that debt, arises from our sin*****
B/c though God might overlook it for a time, he won't do so forever; And can't
His perfect justice demands a payment; A payment for living and thinking and believing contrary to his design, and contrary to his way; And that payment, is death
That's why the Bible says, that *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins* (Heb 9:22); IOW without a payment, our debt remains

- And just like our sin nature, we couldn't pay it even if we wanted to; First of all b/c . . .
 1. We're part of the problem; Expecting us to pay *our* debt, is like expecting a compulsive thief to pay *his*; All he knows how to do is steal more, and rob Peter to pay Paul

I once mentored a guy like that; His name was Steve, he was 26 years old, and had already spent 3 years of that in prison; B/c he was compulsive thief
And when the judge would tell him to shape up and repay his debts, he'd just go out and steal from somebody else to do so, and make matters worse
That's how we are; We're part of the problem, and make matters worse

2. We're dead – spiritually dead; *Dead* in our *trespasses/sins* the Bible says (Eph2:1)
Which makes us fundamentally *unable* to pay, b/c dead people don't do anything
3. The debt's too big; Exceeding our *ability* to pay; Think about it
How can finite, sinful beings, make reparations for offenses against an *infinitely* holy God? That would be like a mosquito trying to make up for biting *you*
Or the servant in the parable trying to pay *his* debt, when he wasn't worth that much
It's impossible; Which means we have a problem

Problem #3 – We have a future we can't avoid

The Bible says that the *consequences* of sin is *death* (Rom 6:23) – talking about real, physical death; Inescapable death; Death we can't avoid

The worst part of which, is that it leads to hell

2 Thess 1:7-9 says – *When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels [8] in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9] They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.* That's hell

A place of eternal torment, apart from God, where there's *no rest, day/night* (Rev 14:11)

And in our unbelief and disobedience, especially our failure to obey the *gospel* as the verse says – it's a future we can't avoid*****

IOW when you refuse to believe in Jesus, and repent of your sin, and follow him as Lord of your life – you've got a problem; A big problem

Fortunately, there's a solution; Starting with the fact, that . . .

Solution #1 – We have a Redeemer who makes us new

We have a nature we can't shake, but a Redeemer, a rescuer – who can; Who *can* shake it One who gives us a *new* nature, and makes us a *new creation*; And his name, is Jesus The one in whom we have redemption *through his blood* the Bible says; And I want you to see it for yourself; So turn to Eph 1:7-8

In him [referring to Jesus; in relationship with him, and under the protection of his provision and power] *we have redemption* [as in restoration and renewal] *through his blood* [through his death on the cross for us], *the forgiveness of our trespasses* [our sins], *according to the riches of his grace* [the abundance of his unmerited goodness and favor], [8] *which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight*

Solution #1 to our problem of sin, is that we have a Redeemer (**2 Cor 5:17**)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ [if anyone has embraced him as the solution to their problems, if anyone believes in him as Lord and Savior], *he is a new creation.* *The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

The nature we can't shake, he can; And does

That's the first part of the solution to our problems*****

Solution #2 – We have a Substitute who paid the price

We have a debt we can't pay, but a substitute who can; And did; Col 2:13-14

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh [i.e. your sin nature], *God made alive together with him* [with Christ], *having forgiven us all our trespasses, [14] by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* Nailing it to the substitute

When Jesus died, the Bible says *he bore our sin in his body on the tree*, the cross (1 Pet 2:24) – suffering God's wrath (1 Jn 2:2), and dying in our place

Which, if we believe and accept, *cancel*s our record of debt, along with its demand for payment, punishment

- That's why God can forgive us, like Jesus went on to talk about in the parable we looked at a minute ago; It says . . .

The servant fell on his knees, imploring him [pleading with his master, saying], *'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'* [27] *And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.* (Mt 18:26-27)

He didn't say okay to the servant, and then wait for him to work it off over time; He *forgave* him; He released him of all responsibility; He *cancel*ed the debt

Why? B/c the man acknowledged his sin, took responsibility for it, and then cried out for mercy; And God gave it; He *showed* him mercy

And he'll do the same for you; No matter what your sin, no matter what you've done, no matter how many times, no matter what your debt . . .

If you call out for mercy – he'll show it, he'll extend it, he'll forgive you

B/c a substitute, his Son, already paid the price and covered your debt – with his life

We have a problem, yes; But there's a solution; And last . . .

Solution #3 – We have a Savior who gives us life

We have a future of death we can't avoid, but a Savior who gives us life forever

Who spares us from the suffering of hell, and blesses us with bliss of heaven

1 John 5:11-12 says – *This is the testimony* [the truth], *that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son* [Jesus]. [12] *Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

If you make Jesus your Savior, your Lord, your Master, your Redeemer, your Substitute, your Provider, your Protector . . .

If you make him Lord of your life, he'll *give* you life – life to the full, and life forever . .

B/c he *is* life; If you receive him as Savior, he'll relieve your debt

If you make your heart his home, he'll dwell there forever

Whoever has the Son, has life; Problem solved*****

- The only question, is have you embraced it?

Have you fallen to your knees, confessed your sin, and cried out for mercy?

Have you embraced him as your Savior, and surrendered to him as Lord?

If not, why not do so now? And if you're not sure, why not *be* sure?

Why not make *this* the day of your salvation? The first day of the rest of your life – your eternal life, in Christ

Pray – Father, thank you for your gift of salvation, your solution to our problem; And thank you for these men and women who just embraced it; Who just embraced you Protect them, preserve them, and grant them goodness and mercy all the days of their life – you in them, and they in you