

FROM FUGITIVES TO FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS

I. Romans 3:9-26

A. Many of you will remember the TV series, *The Fugitive*, which ran from 1963 to 1967. Others will recall the 1993 movie, *The Fugitive*, starring Harrison Ford as Dr. Richard Kimble and Tommy Lee Jones as US Marshall, Samuel Gerard. Both the series and movie trace the ever elusive steps of Dr. Kimble who'd been wrongfully convicted of his wife Helen's murder. Kimble's quest was to not only to evade capture by the police but to find the real killer, the *one-armed man*. In the series and the movie, the one-armed man is eventually caught and Kimble exonerated.

B. Most of you have never been fugitives from the law--neither for some crime you committed nor for something you were wrongfully accused of doing. Few feelings are worse than being falsely accused. Therefore being wrongfully pursued by authorities or enemies trying to capture you to make you face justice, or injustice, or do you any type of harm, is as horrible as it gets.

C. But the truth is we all were once (or still are) fugitives with respect to the law of God. Lawbreakers who've yet to be apprehended and face the consequences for their misdeeds before a judge, are essentially fugitives in bad standing. We can pick our title: lawbreaker, spiritual fugitive, sinner.

D. In today's Romans 3 text, Paul compiles several OT verses to finger all men (and women) as sinners. The Reformers use the term "*total depravity*" to describe the fallen state of man which began when our great-grandparents Adam & Eve sinned in the Garden. Their spiritual DNA of sinfulness was bequeathed to all humankind, including us. Sin is the cosmic treason against God; it is the terminal disease that only leads to death. But is there hope for treasonous fugitives bound for death row? Is there hope for those who are spiritually terminal? We shall see...

E. Romans 3:9-26 (from the New Living Translation (NLT))...

1) **V9-18: 9** *Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. 10* *As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous--not even one. 11* *No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. 12* *All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one."* **13** *"Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips." 14* *"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15* *"They rush to commit murder. 16* *Destruction and misery always follow them. 17* *They don't know where to find peace." 18* *"They have no fear of God at all." (Following Adam & Eve's eviction from the Garden, the Scriptures show how mankind's rebellion against God continued. Our perversions and profanities only worsened. God's judgment came by flood even while He brought redemption through Noah. God gave His covenantal promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but their descendants also sinned and became slaves in Egypt. God chose Moses for Israel's deliverance, giving them His Law inscribed on tablets. But God's Law was again rejected by man. It pointed out sin but it could not save. The people of God and pagans alike*

continued to rebel. Through numerous epochs and empires, rebellion continued, sin flourished. Then God sent the ultimate Deliverer & Remedy--His only Son.)

2) **V19-22: 19** Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. **20** For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. **21** But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. **22** We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. **(Jesus was the perfect Law-keeper! The Righteous One is truly righteous, without sin, holy.)** And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. **(Are you a Jew or a Gentile? Are you a self-righteous sinner or a sexually immoral sinner? Are you both? Are you a liar or a thief? A cheater? A manipulator? A deceiver? Greedy? Stingy? Bitter? Unforgiving? Proudful? Self-absorbed? Do you think more highly of yourself than what you ought? Are you a slanderer or gossip? Are you an atheist or an agnostic? Are you a cult member or occultist? Are you a disciple of pop culture? Do you embrace the carnality and worldliness of man? Do you reject the Word of God? When it comes to Jesus Christ, do you love the Lamb or are you on the lam as a fugitive from Him?)**

3) **V23-26: 23** For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. **24** Yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in His sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins. **25** For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. **(Jesus freed us from the penalty of our sin by absorbing the penalty for our sin!)** People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding His blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when He held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, **26** for He was looking ahead and including them in what He would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate His righteousness, for He Himself is fair and just, and He makes sinners right in His sight when they believe in Jesus. **(God is Just! And He alone Justifies!)**

F. The Bread & Cup remind us of much; some of those things are:

1) **Jesus came to exonerate fugitives from the Law by fully keeping the Law and by writing the Law on the tablets of our hearts. He turns fugitives into faithful followers. He turns orphans into adopted sons & daughters. Enemies into friends. By His stripes those spiritually terminal are healed. The Bread & Cup remind us...**

2) **Jesus came to deliver us from sin & death by becoming sin on our behalf and facing death in order to destroy it. He has. He will. He removed our names from death row and wrote them into the Lamb's Book of Life. He not only saved us from death but gave us life, and that more abundantly. The Bread & Cup remind us...**

3) **Jesus came to free captives and He now captivates the hearts of freedmen and freedwomen and will captivate us forevermore. His amazing love has brought us peace that surpasses understanding as well as joy unspeakable! The Bread & Cup remind us...**

*** Pray & Serve Communion...**

*** Our Benediction: Galatians 2:20-21 (NET) with a corporate rendering, I & me turned to we & us: 20** *We have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. So the life we now live in the body, we live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. 21* *We do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!*

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Romans 3:9-26 (NLT)

9 Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. **10** As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous--not even one. **11** No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. **12** All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." **13** "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips." **14** "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." **15** "They rush to commit murder. **16** Destruction and misery always follow them. **17** They don't know where to find peace." **18** "They have no fear of God at all." **19** Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. **20** For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. **21** But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. **22** We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. **23** For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. **24** Yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in His sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins. **25** For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding His blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when He held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, **26** for He was looking ahead and including them in what He would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate His righteousness, for He Himself is fair and just, and He makes sinners right in His sight when they believe in Jesus.

Galatians 2:20-21 (NET)

20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **21** I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

Bonus Stuff

"I Surrender All" - Matt Boswell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYoZmDHSM8Q>

The Hound of Heaven by Francis Thompson (A Modern Adaptation) Oxvision Films
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXlgz4aBKt8>

"Thou Oh Lord" - Prestonwood Choir & Orchestra (Thanks Michelle!)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aY3Y7v2m0k4&feature=youtu.be>

The Fugitive (1963-1967) The Final Episode - Richard Kimble Meets the One Armed Man
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDb7pligfRA>

The Fugitive (1993) Final Movie Scene - The One Armed Man is Captured
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8yC02TH3lw>

Psalm 14:1-3 (ESV)

1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. **2** The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. **3** They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Psalm 53:1-3 (ESV)

1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. **2** God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. **3** They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 (ESV)

20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Psalm 10:6-7 (AMP)

6 He says to himself, "I will not be moved; for throughout all generations I will not be in adversity [for nothing bad will happen to me]." **7** His mouth is full of curses and deceit (fraud) and oppression; under his tongue is mischief and wickedness [injustice and sin].

Psalm 36:1-4 (AMP)

1 Transgression speaks [like an oracle] to the wicked (godless) [deep] within his heart; there is no fear (dread) of God before his eyes. **2** For he flatters and deceives himself in his own eyes thinking that his sinfulness will not be discovered and hated [by God]. **3** The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. **4** He plans wrongdoing on his bed; he sets himself on a path that is not good; he does not reject or despise evil.

Psalm 130:3 (AMP)

3 If You, LORD, should keep an account of our sins and treat us accordingly, O Lord, who could stand [before You in judgment and claim innocence]?

Psalm 140:1-3 (NASB)

1 Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; preserve me from violent men **2** who devise evil things in their hearts; they continually stir up wars. **3** They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; poison of a viper is under their lips. *Selah*.

Psalm 143:1-2 (ESV)

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In Your faithfulness answer me, in Your righteousness! **2** Enter not into judgment with Your servant, for no one living is righteous before You.

Isaiah 59:1-21 (NLT)

1 Listen! The LORD's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is His ear too deaf to hear you call. **2** It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, He has turned away and will not listen anymore. **3** Your hands are the hands of murderers, and your fingers are filthy with sin. Your lips are full of lies, and your mouth spews corruption. **4** No one cares about being fair and honest. The people's lawsuits are based on lies. They conceive evil deeds and then give birth to sin. **5** They hatch deadly snakes and weave spiders' webs. Whoever eats their eggs will die; whoever cracks them will hatch a viper. **6** Their webs can't be made into clothing, and nothing they do is productive. All their activity is filled with sin, and violence is their trademark. **7** Their feet run to do evil, and they rush to commit murder. They think only about sinning. Misery and destruction always follow them. **8** They don't know where to find peace or what it means to be just and good. They have mapped out crooked roads, and no one who follows them knows a moment's peace. **9** So there is no justice among us, and we know nothing about right living. We look for light but find only darkness. We look for bright skies but walk in gloom. **10** We grope like the blind along a wall, feeling our way like people without eyes. Even at brightest noontime, we stumble as though it were dark. Among the living, we are like the dead. **11** We growl like hungry bears; we moan like mournful doves. We look for justice, but it never comes. We look for rescue, but it is far away from us. **12** For our sins are piled up before God and testify against us. Yes, we know what sinners we are. **13** We know we have rebelled and have denied the LORD. We have turned our backs on our God. We know how unfair and oppressive we have been, carefully planning our deceitful lies. **14** Our courts oppose the righteous, and justice is nowhere to be found. Truth stumbles in the streets, and honesty has been outlawed. **15** Yes, truth is gone, and anyone who renounces evil is attacked. The LORD looked and was displeased to find there was no justice. **16** He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So He Himself stepped in to save them with His strong arm, and His justice sustained Him. **17** He put on righteousness as His body armor and placed the helmet of salvation on His head. He clothed Himself with a robe of vengeance and wrapped Himself in a cloak of divine passion. **18** He will repay His enemies for their evil deeds. His fury will fall on His foes. He will pay them back even to the ends of the earth. **19** In the west, people will respect the name of the LORD; in the east, they will glorify Him. For He will come like a raging flood tide driven by the breath of the LORD. **20** "The Redeemer will come to Jerusalem to buy back those in Israel who have turned from their sins," says the LORD. **21** "And this is My covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit will not leave them, and neither will these words I have given

you. They will be on your lips and on the lips of your children and your children's children forever. I, the LORD, have spoken!

Job 11:13-15 (CEV)

13 Surrender your heart to God, turn to Him in prayer, **14** and give up your sins--even those you do in secret. **15** Then you won't be ashamed; you will be confident and fearless.

Freed From Slavery, Free To Serve

The fact that Christ has bought us makes us desire to belong to Him. See the account of the beautiful mulatto girl put upon the auction block at New Orleans. "\$500, \$700"- (sold)-at \$2,500! The next day the successful bidder called at the home where the girl was a slave; and when she saw him who was now her owner she said sadly, "I am ready to go with you." But the man replied, "I do not want you to go with me. I bought you in order to set you free." When the amazed girl was able to take in the meaning of his words, she said, "Then I will be your servant forever!" So the purchase of Christ binds us to Him with the bonds of love.

Justification & Sanctification

By Jerry Bridges

During the long years of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, a Russian air force pilot flew his fighter plane from a base in Russia to an American air force base in Japan and asked for asylum. He was flown to the United States where he was duly debriefed, given a new identity, and set up as a bona fide resident of the United States. In due time he became an American citizen.

The Russian pilot's experience illustrates to some degree what happened to us when we died to sin and were made alive to God. He changed kingdoms; he was given a new identity and a new status. He was no longer a Russian; he was now an American. He was no longer under the rule of what was then an oppressive and totalitarian government. Now he was free to experience all of the advantages and resources of living in a free and prosperous country.

This former Russian pilot, however, was still the same person. He had the same personality, the same habits, and the same cultural patterns as he did before he flew out of Russia. But he did have a new identity and a new status. As a result of his new identity and status as a citizen in a free country, he now had the opportunity to grow as a free person, to discard the mind-set of someone living under bondage, and to put off the habit patterns of a person living under the heel of a despotic regime. Furthermore, as a benefactor of our government's intelligence establishment, he was furnished all the resources needed to make a successful transition to an American citizen.

In effect, this Russian pilot "died" to his old identity as a Russian citizen and was "made alive" in a new identity as an American citizen. As an American, all the resources of our

government were at his disposal to become in fact what he had become in status. But this could not have happened without first changing his status.

When we as believers died to sin, we died to a status wherein we were under bondage to the tyrannical reign of sin. At the same time we were granted citizenship in the Kingdom of God and, through our vital union with Jesus Christ, were furnished all the resources we need to become in fact what we have become in status. We have been given all we need to bring the imperative—"do not let sin reign in your mortal body"—into line with the indicative—"we died to sin." But this could not have happened without a change in our status. And it is through our legal union with Christ in His death and resurrection that our status has been forever changed.

We must count on this and believe it. We must by faith in God's Word lay hold on the fact that we have died to the reign of sin and are now alive to God, under His reign of grace. Unless we do this we will find ourselves seeking to pursue holiness by the strength of our own wills, not by the grace of God.

- Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace: God's Rule and Our Rule in the Pursuit of Holiness*.