

Dear Ladies,

the weatherman is calling for snow and I still have entire trees with green leaves on them. It must be autumn in New England. I know I used a Fall analogy last week but bear with me. It's my favorite season. I love almost everything about it-apple picking, sweater weather, mulled cider and raking leaves. I treasure nice days because I know they're coming to a close. Most of all I love turning my clock back. That's the night shifter in me- craving every possible minute of sleep.

So with all my love of Fall, who would have guessed it could be the season indirectly responsible for my eternal damnation. Leviticus 19:19 tells us we can't plant two kinds of seeds in the same field. It's one of God's laws. October is an ideal time to throw down new grass seed. I use a blend of rye and Kentucky bluegrass so already I'm on shaky ground. Even if I stuck to a single seed I broke a commandment when an acorn fell onto my newly seeded lawn.

As long as I'm confessing, that's not the only command I broke today. I put cheese on my burger mixing meat and dairy, and I caused my husband to become unclean when I insisted that he touch the trap with the dead mouse in it. Driving on the highway inspired murderous thoughts to run through my head, and despite the fact that I was in the 10 item or less lane I added a pack of gum onto the belt, thus breaking God's law prohibiting the use of dishonest standards when measuring length, weight, or quantity. (Leviticus 19:35)

Ladies I am a hot mess. Clearly I'm a sinner. I can count. Not only did I boldly lay that pack of gum on the belt I justified doing it because I needed it. (I'd had onions on my burger too.) And I had to make Peter defile himself because while as a nurse I may need to touch dead bodies-rodent disposal is most definitely "man's work". And tomorrow when he hauls the trash can to the side of the road he'll be defiled again because that's where the mouse corpse currently lays.

All these things may seem silly but they are all violations of God's written law. I don't know that God would send me straight to Hell for failing to pick up fallen acorns. The reality is that I broke all these commands, willingly, in the space of a few hours. At my current rate I would break nearly 9000 commands between birthdays and I can't even plead ignorance of the law. No wonder Paul writes "I know that nothing good lives in me-that is in my sin nature, for I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18)

I didn't set out to be a serial sinner this morning, but I am one, and surely I'll add to that list of offenses before this day ends. Did I mention that we're having ham for supper? This is the burden the Jews faced. It's impossible to keep every single one of God's laws. What a huge burden for them to carry. Yet God in His infinite mercy provided us with a Savior to carry it for us.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a mouse killer like me.

Love, Renee

So on to this week's lesson:

Read Romans 8 1:17

1. What are the benefits listed for those who are in Christ Jesus? (Name at least 3)

2. Have you accepted that you have been released from death's row?

3. How do these verses illustrate the futility of sin?

4. How do we know that we are children of God?

Read Romans 8:18-27

5. How does our present life compare with our future life in Heaven?

6. What does your waiting look like and how can spiritual maturity cause us to wait more patiently?

7. Can you tell of a time when you lacked the words to pray, but still felt the Holy Spirit's guidance and comfort? What was that experience like?

Read Romans 8: 28-39

8. What verb tense do we see in verse 28 and what does that tell us about our on-going relationship with God?

9. How do these verses illustrate that the cross proves God's willingness to do whatever it takes to save us?

10. How does your life reflect that you are convinced of the truths in verses 38-39?

For personal contemplation:

Nothing, absolutely nothing can separate us from God's love. No amount of sin, no amount of opposition, no powerful people, no unyielding co-worker. Not time, distance height, weight. It doesn't matter who you are or who you come across in life. NOTHING!!!! What can that possibly mean to us? We're often told that if something seems too good to be true it probably is. There's a catch here too. Unless we submit our will, and accept that we indeed belong to God we don't get this incredible gift.

For the good of the group:

Which message in these verses did you most need to hear this week and how can we pray for you in this?