

SWIMMING OUT AND BACK

“Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:24

I grew up near the ocean and we young lads would swim out to a point. We never thought of danger, cramp or drowning—we just swam out as far as possible into the ocean deep, and then at some point we turned around and swam back to shore. We would get near the ships that were berthed in the bay. I don't think that we got parental permission. It is amazing that none of us drowned, got accosted by Bro or Sis Shark or any of those aquatic creatures like jelly-fish. Folks are still 'swimming out', going their own way, as far as they can, and doing whatever they will. Once out though, it is tough to get back in, because you've got to swim against the current, and you've got accustomed to the thrills of 'swimming out'.

In that swim-out, I'd like to think that God extended first mercy to me, while I was yet swimming out. Even before I saw my faulty path, His mercy was there. Mercy comes to the fore when we do something that we should not and God forgives through permitting us another opportunity to recover—that is mercy. We don't deserve it but we receive it. He then protects us on the way back to the shore-line by giving us grace or unmerited favor, with blessings along the way, an extension of his mercy. Even before I left the shoreline, God made a provision for mercy. The rhetorical question surfaces-- “Oh, wretched man that I am? Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” Who shall deliver me from the danger of this swim-out? In Paul's time, condemned men would have a dead body strapped to them, and as the body decayed stanching to the skies, devoured by vermin and maggots, it would drive the live man utterly crazy. Paul's hearers understood what it meant to have a “corpse tied to the living being”, and the need to be delivered from “the body of this death”.

If you have swum out in one way or the other, whether by habit or practice of mental thought or physical act, and you'd like to turn around, even though in the depth of some ocean, surely God can grant that mercy and forgiveness, and you can turn right around and head back to the shoreline. In this Christian life, we are all swimming in one direction or the other, and God is there to “fish us out of the water”. For Jonah, he sent a whale; for Moses, he provided the wilderness; for Elijah, he provided a cave and for Samuel a temple; for Abraham, the promise of Canaan; for John, he provided the isle of Patmos and for us He provided the blood of Jesus. Let us encourage each other as we partake daily of God's mercy and His grace. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, sing the Isaacs. <https://youtu.be/O7KuXtWYxpM>