

**Understanding the Believer's Battle with Sin, Part 2**

Scripture: Romans 7:14-25

Code: 90-307

We are continuing and sort of winding up our series on the doctrine of sanctification, talking about spiritual transformation, what happens in the life of a believer after salvation, or from the point of salvation on. And that has drawn us through the sixth and seventh chapter of Romans. In just a kind of overview in these wonderful truths and we come again to Romans chapter 7 verses 14 through 25. Gave you sort of an introductory look at it last time, and I will give, what I trust, is just a brief sort of reentry point here.

This particular section deals with the issue of the believer and the battle with sin which we are all quite familiar with. The most discussed doctrine regarding salvation is, of course, the doctrine of justification, that is the great doctrine that is at the heart and soul of the gospel, the great truth that God's righteousness is credited or imputed to those who believe. And we discussed that a little bit in our message this morning. That is to say, divine righteousness which is alien to us, which is that which belongs to God is given to us because of our faith in Jesus Christ. We are then declared by virtue of that imputed or credited righteousness to be righteous before God.

It is also true but far less discussed, I think, that not only are we declared righteous by the righteousness of God being credited to our account, but we are at salvation actually made righteous. And that is what we mean by sanctification. We are in a very real sense sanctified, it means to be separated or set apart from sin. Sanctification is the inseparable partner to justification. God does not declare us righteous only, He then makes us righteous. And so sanctification which is begun at our salvation is a true and real divine miracle that changes us, not in the material way but in the immaterial way. God actually creates a new person in us. We talked about that last time. It is not just legal salvation that is declared such, as in the doctrine of justification, but it is real salvation, personal and miraculous.

And just to tag a few statements on that so that you understand it a little better. In Christ the old self has become a corpse. What you were has died and a corpse by definition is an entity with no remaining vestige of life. When we come to Christ, we are no longer the person we were, that person has ceased to exist. That's why we talk about transformation rather than addition. It is not just that we receive something new added to what we are, it is a death and the coming of a new life. The old life, the old man, as Paul calls it, the old person that we were was not partly sinful, was not mostly sinful, but totally sinful, completely sinful. And not only that, there was in that old person no potential

for righteousness, no potential for holiness. So it had to die and be replaced by a new life. New life pictured in the death of the old in the dying of Christ and the giving of the new in His resurrection is created holy, it is created righteous, it is created pure, it is created by God and God can only create that which is pure. And the indication that this new life is a pure life is that it is eternal, it has no death principle in it, therefore it has no sin component. This new life, this new person, this new man that I am, that all believers are, is created in righteousness, is created in holiness. It is a purified soul, it is a purified heart, listen to this, beyond the reach and the touch of contamination by sin and corruption by transgression. The new self is so pure as to be acceptable to God and ready for heaven, acceptable to God and ready for heaven. The old was crucified, the old has died, the old has ceased to live. That's why we hear all that language that we've been talking about, about being in Christ and being a new creation, being a new person. That is exactly what Scripture means by it. We are completely new. We have been begotten again. We have been regenerated.

The Christian then in that new person, in that essential new eternal life which has been granted to us is holy and righteous and fit for heaven. And it's important for us to understand that because that's the truest and purest understanding of who we are. There's really no virtue in going around thinking that you are the same person you used to be and living in some kind of woe begone condition because you think that is the case. The fact is that now for the first time righteousness which was alien to your nature is now normal to your nature and sin is alien. John Newton, the slave trader, the very wicked man by his own confession, said, "I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not even what I hoped to be. But by the cross of Christ I am not what I was." And that is exactly correct.

When you die, when I die as a believer, or meet Christ if He were to come, my inner person does not need to change. That may surprise you. You already are the possessor of the life of God, a new nature, a new creation, eternal life. And that is why you groan, according to Romans chapter 8, if you look at it, verse 21. There is a sense in which verse 19...we'll start there...there's an anxious longing of the whole creation waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. The whole creation, according to verse 22, groans waiting for its liberation. But not only this, verse 23, we ourselves possessing the firstfruits of the Spirit, that new life, even we ourselves groan within ourselves. Put your own life in that ourselves. We groan. We are distressed. We are disturbed. We are disappointed. We agonize within ourselves on the inside waiting eagerly for our adoption, namely the redemption of our body. The problem now is not that there's something wrong with the new nature, with the inner man, with the new heart, the new spirit with that eternal life, but rather that this new person is still incarcerated in this fallen body. And so we groan. And where does the groaning come from? The groaning, the agony and the disappointment and the pain comes from the expression of that new life that is the truest and purest part of us.

At the end of the great third chapter of Philippians, Paul talks about our citizenship being in heaven and he says, "We wait, in fact we eagerly wait." What are we waiting for? Verse 21, "The Savior, Christ Jesus who will transform the body of our humble state." We don't need another inner man. We don't need the inside to be changed. We need the outside, in a sense, to be changed.

Now if we are new and if this new life is the truest life, the purest life that God can create, and He can only create that which is pure and true and righteous, why do we go on sinning? That's the issue in Romans 7? Why? Was God's work in some way incomplete? No. The work was complete, the inner man is new, what we were is dead, we are new in Christ. It is eternal. But the problem is we still have the faculties of our humanness. We have a new birth from God but we still have the reality of the first birth from our parents. We are like a holy seed in an unholy shell. We are incarcerated, we are imprisoned, we are locked in, bound and subject to all the weakness and all the wickedness of our humanity.

And I don't mean by that just the body itself, just that material part of us that we think of as the body, I mean everything apart from that new eternal life...thought and emotion and will and all our human expressions which express those elements of our being. We still have not only sinful actions but sinful motivations, not only sinful deeds, but sinful ideas. We have this remaining humanity that has sin in it. Sin can still have a great impact on us, it can still overpower us though it is no longer ruling, it is no longer the sovereign, according to Romans 6:14, sin is no longer the master over us. It no longer dominates us in the way that it did, but it is still present. It no longer enslaves us the way that it did, but it is still there. And it is a battle to subdue it. First Corinthians 9:27 Paul says, "I beat my body to bring it into submission lest in preaching to others I might become a castaway. I have to engage in literally a war against my remaining humanity, my remaining flesh. In Romans 12:1 we are told, and here's the beginning of the whole practical section in Romans, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship, to go on putting your bodies, your humanness, your...your human faculties up on an altar and resacrificing or consecrating them to God. At the same time we are putting our bodies before God as a living sacrifice, we have to have our mind renewed so that we can be transformed. We engage in this struggle. Paul uses the language in 1 Corinthians 9, not of presenting something on an altar but of fighting a battle to the death.

The bottom line is this. Sin is not the master anymore. Sin does not own you. It does not have dominion over you, it is still present, however, in you and in me. This is no small matter but it is really helpful to understand that the truest and purest me is the new creation. That's the deep and abiding and everlasting person that I am in Christ. It's my remaining flesh that creates the problem.

With that in mind, let's look at the text. What you have from verse 14 to 25 is a pretty simple section of Scripture. In fact, it's one of those passages that is repetitious, three laments are given here. This is really a lamentation. This is a dirge. This is funeral song. This is a kind of a personal, I guess,

eulogy you could call it. This is a painful soliloquy that the Apostle Paul carries about with himself as he contemplates the agonizing and the groaning that he feels over remaining sin.

In each of the three laments there are three components. He describes his condition. He gives the proof of it and he identifies the source of it. All of this is very important for us to have a good understanding of who we are in Christ. Number one, let's look at his condition. The first lament is verses 14 to 17, then we'll look at the second one, and finally the third. The first lament goes like this. "We know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin, for that which I am doing I do not understand for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I'm doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now no longer am I the one doing it but sin which indwells me." This is very, very important language that Paul uses here.

He begins with his condition in verse 14. Here's his condition. We know the Law is spiritual, he's been saying that already, essentially what he said in verse 12, the Law is holy, the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Now he says we know that the Law is spiritual and holy and righteous and good. But here's his condition, "But I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." I know the Law is good but I also know that I am sinful. When he says the Law is spiritual, he means it in the pure sense, that it is from the Spirit of God, that it reflects the holy, divine nature of God.

At this point I think we can clearly see we have the testimony of a regenerate man. We have a testimony of a man who understands the Law of God, who loves the Law of God, who sees it for what it is, the holy, pure Law of God. Unbelievers do not perceive it as such. And, of course, down in verse 22 he actually says, "I joyfully concur with the Law of God." This is not an expression that could be made by an unregenerate man. He is alienated from the life of God and has no interest in the Law of God. He says, "I, however, no matter what my interest in the spirituality of the Law am of flesh." I am fleshy.

The Law is spiritual, that is it emanates from the Spirit, it emanates from the spiritual world. It comes from God. It is holy, pure and good. On the other hand, I am unspiritual. I am fleshy. He does not say, "I am in the flesh," that is the way you describe an unregenerate person. Back in chapter 7 verse 5, "While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions that were aroused by the Law were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." When you were in the flesh, your passions were running amok and producing death. He doesn't say "I'm in the flesh," he doesn't say, "I'm controlled by the flesh." By the way, in chapter 8 verse 8 it says, "Those in the flesh can't please God," another description of an unregenerate person. He doesn't say I am in the flesh as a state, he says I am *sarkinos*, I am fleshy, I am human. To be in the flesh is to be unregenerate. He is not saying that, he is really saying, "I'm not in the flesh but the flesh is still in me...it's still here." He says there's

something foul, verse 18, in my flesh. He says at the end of verse 25, "With my flesh I serve the law of sin." It's not that he's in the flesh, it's that the flesh is still in him.

This is our humanity. This is that which we received from our natural birth. This is what chapter 6 verse 12 calls your mortal body. And even though you have been freed from the dominion of sin, you still must actively, aggressively fight so that you do not let sin reign in your mortal body and wind up obeying its lusts. You have to, as verse 13 says, present your members as instruments not of unrighteousness but of righteousness. This is the battle because while you're no longer in the flesh, the flesh is still in you. Christian, you need to make the statement clear, this is not who I am really, this is not the purest and truest definition of my person, but I am still fleshy. It is a general statement about my humanity.

He even goes a little further in saying this, "Sold into bondage to sin." Sold into bondage to sin. Another way to say it is in verse 23, "A prisoner of the law of sin, a prisoner of the law of sin." There are times, he says, when even though I've been delivered from that bondage and rescued from that prison of sin, I sell myself back...as it were. He is not saying that he is not redeemed. Back in chapter 6 verse 17 he says, "You were a slave of sin, but you have been delivered from that." In verse 8, "You have become slaves of righteousness." Chapter 6 verse 22, "You've been freed from sin and now enslaved to God, but just as sin longer has dominion over you, you can still allow it from time to time to reign and just as though no longer you are the slave of sin, you can be enslaved by it." The language is saying the same thing. I am fleshy and I can succumb to the power of sin. I have been in the inner person freed from it. Its dominion has been broken. I am no longer captive to it. Which makes this whole experience all the worse and that's why it's a lament because he feels the pain of his remaining flesh. And any of us, and we do, can sell ourselves back into the dominion, into the power, into the captivity of sin.

Only a Christian can really understand this battle. Only a Christian can understand this struggle. It's not something that a non-Christian can identify with at all. Listen to the language of Paul in Philippians 3 again, verse 12. He is talking here, before we get to verse 12, about what it's like to have found righteousness not of his own derived from the Law, but a righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. He is ecstatic about what has happened in his life. He is experiencing knowing Christ and the surpassing value of knowing Christ. He has been granted a righteousness from God through faith in Christ. He has the promise of relationship with Him, power, sympathy from Him and eternal life and glorification in the resurrection from the dead. With all of that he comes to verse 12 and says, "Not that I've already arrived...not that I've already become perfect." All that and I'm not what I ought to be. "I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." I'm not what I want to be, not what I should be, not what I hoped to be, I am not what I used to be...to borrow again the words of John Newton. Paul is saying the same thing. With all that God has given me, I still have not arrived. I have not become perfect, so I press on in order to

lay hold of that which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. That is I press on to lay hold of righteousness in a practical sense of Christ's likeness. In fact in verse 13, "I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do..." You know, I love the fact that he can boil down Christian experience to one thing. I like simplicity, one thing, what are you doing, what is the one thing you do? "Forgetting what lies behind, looking forward to what lies ahead I press on toward the goal which is the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." I press on toward the goal of being like Christ. That will be mine when I see Him. That will be mine in the future. And it is my goal in the present to be as much like Christ as I can be.

So here is Paul basically saying the same thing. With all that I have in having Christ, I haven't arrived, I haven't become perfect, I haven't laid hold of the purpose for which I was saved, but I am pursuing it with all my strength. And I can't wait, as I read earlier from the same chapter, until this body which is inhibiting me is transformed. For the present, those of us who are Christians live in a...I guess we live in an era between two ages, the old and the new. There was a time when the Apostle Paul, like us, was exclusively a sinner. And there will be a time when we will be exclusively a saint. In the middle here, we are sinner/saints...a saint to be sure, a saint to be sure with a new nature fit for heaven, but still a sinner. And this is the tension, the struggle which we all experience.

When Paul says...let's go back to Romans...when he says sold under sin, it doesn't mean that he has lost his salvation. Not that. It doesn't mean that he has reentered the domain of darkness and now become a slave permanently of sin. He's just...he's putting his feelings in his words and he's saying, "I find myself voluntarily enslaving myself to sin." You see the Law is spiritual. You have a new nature that loves the Law, longs to keep the Law. And yet you realize not that you're minimally sinful, but that you're powerfully sinful and you can actually reengage yourself under that old dominion, under that old slavery, under that old captivity. And particularly so as Thomas Scott, the old commentator said, "When the believer compares his actual attainments with the spirituality of the Law and with his own desire and aim to obey it, he sees that he is yet to a great degree carnal in the state of his mind, and under the power of evil propensities from which he cannot wholly emancipate himself. He is carnal in his own mind in exact proportion to the degree in which he perceives the Law of God and perfect conformity to it." That is really, that's sort of a paraphrase of what Thomas Scott said, but it's a great statement.

It's this. You know how sinful you are only in proportion to how much you understand the Law of God. So as I've said to young people, it's a question that comes up all the time. They say, "Will I sin less as I mature?" And I say, "Yes you will, you will sin less and you will hate it more." You will sin less and feel worse because as you mature and you get a greater understanding of the Law of God and a greater understanding of the glory of the Law of God, and the holiness of the Law of God, and the righteousness of God that is behind the Law which is nothing but an expression of God's holy nature, you will as your understanding of the Law flourishes and grows and develops see yourself as

even more fleshy because the comparison is more clear and stark. Another way to say it is the more you know about the sinfulness of sin as measured against the Law, the more you see your own fleshiness. So thus does Paul describe his condition and ours.

The proof of it in verse 15. The proof that he is this way? Somebody might say to him, "Paul, why are you saying this, that you're of the flesh? Why are you saying that you find yourself back, as it were, from time to time selling yourself into bondage to sin? Why are you saying that?"

Here's why. Here is the proof, verse 15, "For that which I am doing I do not understand, for I am not practicing what I would like to do but I'm doing the very thing I hate." Wow. That's proof, isn't it? Self-righteous moral man isn't going to admit that. Self-righteous man is going to deny that, deceive himself. But a true Christian really recognizes that. True Christians want to triumph in this struggle. They want all the help they can. I was warned so many years ago that if I overemphasized sin in my preaching, it would drive people away. If I preached too frequently on sin it would offend people and people wouldn't come. And if I continue to preach on sin it would wear people out.

I don't believe that, I never have believed that.

If you try to deal with sin people aren't going to come because they don't want to be exposed to that, it's too intimidating and threatening.

Listen, I know one thing about the true children of God. Their inner person desires holiness and they will pursue an environment where they are aided in fulfilling those longings. Here is a very mature believer. What he does, he doesn't understand because it's not what he wants to do, it's what he doesn't want to do. And what he doesn't want to do, he ends up doing. This is a real inner conflict.

And that battle goes on inside. It's almost as if we have this inner voice, this sanctified conscience speaking independently of our flesh, independently of our fleshy will. We have in us in the new nature God's presence, God's spy...God's spy in our hearts, God's policemen to arrest us when we head in the direction of sin. The voice is loud in the believer. We want to do what honors God and our want is frustrated, our will is frustrated. We have a good will but we also have an evil will and an evil want. And the evil one wins enough for us to see that we fall miserably short of God's holy perfect Law. Yes we have not arrived, we have not been made perfect, we are not what we should be. True believers, if you look at 1 John, admit their sin, confess their sin. If you look at the Psalms and many other places in Scripture, they grieve over their sin, they hate their sin.

So Paul describes a condition. He gives the proof in verse 15, that is that he doesn't do what he really wants. What that new man wants doesn't happen all the time. He gives the source. He describes why, verses 16 and 17. "If I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law,

confessing that it is good." This is so important, verse 17, "So now no longer am I the one doing it but sin that indwells me." That is so interesting. Paul says this is alien to who I really am. This whole sin thing is not me. It is alien to who I am. That's what he says. So now no longer am I the one doing it. In one sense he says it's really not even me. In his heart he understands that he's a new creation. In his heart that new life loves the Law of God and longs to obey. And that is the truest and purest expression of who he is to such a degree that he says, "When I sin it's not even I doing it, it is sin that indwells me," as if sin is some alien thing. Very important distinction...very important.

If you look at that little phrase, "So now," verse 17, "no longer *de ouketi*, it's a negative adverb of time. It's a negative adverb of time, and he's splitting some hairs here, talking very carefully. He says, "Now, what now, since salvation...adverb of time...since the time of my salvation on, sin is alien, it is a foreign body, it is a virus that is attacking me." Paul is saying, in a sense, that sin is no longer the real me. He has been recreated into an incorruptible new creation, the new will never die, the new is above and beyond sin, it is the divine nature, it is an eternal seed that cannot sin. That is clear. Since that time, he says, this new life longs to do what is right, but there is an alien in me called sin which indwells me. This is the way to understand it. This is the way to view it. After salvation, the part of man where sin lies and resides is not in the new creation, the real self, the true you. But it is in you somewhere. Where is it? Verse 18, "It is my flesh." That's simply a word for my humanness. But even my humanity, in a sense, is alien to me. I now have an eternal life. This world is not my home. My home is in heaven. My name is there, my Father is there, my life is there. My life is hid with Christ in God, my heavenly life. And all of a sudden my humanity becomes alien. But my humanity, according to Galatians 5, is still producing things like verse 19, Galatians 5, "Morality,(meant immorality) impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, dispute, dissension, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these." Those are the kind of things that characterize people who aren't believers but they are still residual in an alien form in my new life. And that is why my salvation is not yet complete. I haven't had the redemption of my body, as we saw in Romans 8:23, so in verses 24 of Romans 8, "In hope we have been saved." We still have something to hope for. We are still persevering to that day when hope is realized.

So what we have is not reigning sin, but surviving sin. It is not consistent with our new life, it is alien. The second lament comes in verse 18, follows the same path, identical path. The condition is described again in verse 18, and he goes over it three times because of the pathos that he feels. We understand that. He is pouring out his heart. Verse 18, "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh. I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh." That is the description of his condition again. He says, "Look, in my humanity there's no good thing. There's no eradication of sin. Sin has not been eradicated. It's there. But the technical qualifier, but it's in my flesh." He locates sin again in his humanity. Always in this section he limits sin to the flesh, the unredeemed mortality of our humanity. And as I said, he is not in the flesh, but the flesh is still in him. Those who are in the flesh, Romans 8:8, can't please God, as we said earlier. He gives the proof again in verse 18. He



says, second half of the verse, here's the proof, "For the wishing is present in me but the doing of the good is not." And then in verse 19, "For the good that I wish, I do not do but I practice the very evil that I do not wish." I know what I want, I want the Law of God to be fulfilled, I want to do what's right and holy and just. I just can't do it all the time. O certainly, there's a pattern of righteousness. John in 1 John is very clear about the one that is born of God, does not continue in a broken pattern of sin. It is not that it is an uninterrupted pattern of sin, it's just that it's there. And he's saying, "As much as I don't want sin, I want to do what is good, I find myself doing what is evil." Again, this is an evidence of a man's real godly maturity. The sin that bothered him most was his own. The godly man is prone to see only his own sin and thus we note his maturity.

By the way, this is the real source of humility. The real source of humility is a recognition of one's own sinfulness. When you meet a person who is very proud and very self-promoting and self-confident and self-satisfied, they obviously don't live in the lament of Romans 7, because this is a crushing thing. We understand how we should be grateful for what God has done for us. We understand how we should live lives of unbroken holiness, we understand how important it is for us to live lives of praise and thanks to God and lives of service and to set examples of godliness and virtue for all who are around us. We understand that and all failures, all failures are causes of lament and grief and sorrow and disappointment. Unsaved people don't have any clue about that, none at all.

So he repeats the idea again of verses 15 and 16 that says if you're questioning the truth of this condition, let me give you the proof again. Verse 18, "I want to do what's good, I just don't do it. The good that I want, I don't do, I find myself doing the evil that I don't want." And again what is the source? The third element is here in verse 20, "If I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I'm no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." He says it for the second time, it's not really me...it's not me, no more I. And you go back to that, "so now," verse 17, "no longer," that adverb of time, since my salvation, this is not the real me. This is an alien behavior. So I am fighting an enemy within that in a sense is foreign to me. You can imagine it as some germ, some virus, some deadly parasite that is embedded in us.

And by the way, those people who suggest that this might be Paul describing himself when he was an unbeliever have a very hard time explaining the little phrase "I am no longer the one doing it," that can't mean anything other than he's not who he was. This is alien to who he now is. You would think that might be enough to unburden his heart, but it's not so he gives a third lament starting in verse 21. The condition, "I find then the law or the principle," some of your translations may say "law," it really means the principle, the operative principle. "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one...the one who wishes to do good." Same thing exactly. There is a principle, there is an operative principle, there is a functioning power within me that is evil and it's present all the time. But...he says...it's in me and who am I? I'm the one who wishes to do good. Again it's completely alien. As Pogo said, "We have met the enemy and the enemy is us." And what's the proof again, third time?

Verse 22, here's the proof, "For I joyfully concur with the Law of God in the inner man." What a great statement. "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." Here's the proof, "But I see a different law, a different principle, a different operating power, a different presence in the members of my body, that is in my...in my humanity inherited from my human birth. And it wages war against the principle, or the law, or the operative principle of my redeemed mind and makes me again a prisoner of the principle of sin which is in my members. It's the same thing again...same thing again.

I delight...he says...I joyfully concur with the Law of God in the inner man, *sunetomi*(?), a way to say it would be in our vernacular, I delight in the Law of God from the bottom of my heart. It's what we call hapax legomena, it's the only place it's ever used in Scripture. From the bottom of my heart I delight in the Law of God. I think as a believer you understand that. You understand that. Inner man is reserved to refer to the redeemed nature. This is the new creation. This is the new man. This is the new heart. This is the new spirit. This is our new life in Christ. And even, according to 2 Corinthians 4:16, "When the outer man is decaying, the inner man is always being renewed day by day." The inner man is unassailable by sin and iniquity and whenever the outer man is in decay and disrepair and corruption, the inner man just continues to be divinely sustained and renewed. It is unassailable and it is the truest and purest essence of who we are. Paul says in Ephesians 3:16 that the inner man is strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit.

If you were to read Psalm 119, we may look at it in a minute, you would see again and again and again and again and again how the psalmist says, "I delight in the Law of God, I delight in the Law of God, I delight in the Law of God, I love the Law of God, I find my desires fulfilled in the Law of God." and he says it again and again and again. Maybe I'll just make a comment on it now, you don't have to turn to it. But what is striking about it is you have 175 verses, all of them referring to the Law of God and he goes over and over and over saying he loves it, he delights in it, he obeys it and he comes to the end and after 175 verses affirming his love for the Law of God, he ends with verse 176, this is what he says, does David, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." What? He lived in Romans 7, too. A 175 expressions of loving the Law of God, and you end, "I've gone astray like a lost sheep. Same battle, same war, same conflict, precisely and exactly. But from the bottom of David's heart and from the bottom of Paul's heart and from the bottom of yours and mine, from the depth of our redeemed being, we concur joyfully with the Law of God. But here's the proof of the condition said a third time, "But, there is...verse 23...another principle, a different principle, a different law, operative force in the members of my body, in my flesh, in my humanity. Not just the physical body but all that goes with being human, thought, mind, emotion. And it is waging war...very, very strong language...it is waging war against the law of my mind, the principle that operates in my new mind. And it brings me into captivity, or it makes me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. It's like being enslaved again for a time, it's like being imprisoned again for a time, it's like having sin dominate again. And by the way, this could only be said by someone who had been freed and was sold back into bondage and taken back into prison. This again is very, very careful language.

My condition is this, I am in conflict. The proof...I don't do what I want to do, I don't do what I love to do. Why? Sin, it's not the truest and purest of me but it's in me. It is an alien living in me with great power. And the struggle is intense and relentless and unending and to win it I have to be strong and I have to beat my body into submission. By the time he gets the cycle through the third time, he's really wailing. This is a true lament. And so verse 24, "Wretched man that I am." What's wretched? Miserable...miserable man, distressed man. Again I say to you, men perceive themselves to be sinners in proportion to their understanding of the holy Law of God. And this is a very mature man. And any mature Christian lives with a sense of misery with a sense of overwhelming disappointment, with a grief and a groaning and a longing, a longing that expresses itself in the words of Paul, verse 24, "Who will set me free from the body of this death?" Who is going to get me disconnected from my flesh? Who? Who is going to separate me from this body which is subject to sin, this unredeemed body? And I told you last time there were times when someone committed a murder, it was even reported to be the case in areas around Tarsus where Paul was born, that some of the tribes of people who lived there inflicted a terrible penalty on murderers by strapping their victims, the corpses to the murderer, shoulder to shoulder, back to back, thigh to thigh, arm to arm and then drove the murderer out of the community and the murderer was eventually consumed by the decaying flesh of his victim. So tight were the bonds he couldn't free himself...a few days and the death of the one became the death of the other. Paul sees this sin that's in hi as an alien...he is alive, but he is attached to death.

When he says, "Wretched man that I am," he tells us that we are perfect in our position before God, we are perfect because we've been declared so by justification. But our sanctification is still a work in progress...progressively working. When we were first converted, if you're a new Christian, your understanding of the fountain of corruption is small. You think it's just a little trickle. And the more you grow in Christ, the more you know about your corruption. The more you know about the Lord, the more you know about His work, the more you understand it, the more you love Him, and worship Him and serve Him and grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, the more you would think you would grow away from this and that you would become, in some ways, very indifferent to sin. That's not true because your understanding of sin and hatred for sin is in direct proportion to the depth and height and breadth of your understanding of the holy Law of God, the more you understand that, the more you see sin for what it is. And so we all cry with Paul, "Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death?" Who will? Oh he answers it in verse 25, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Some day Jesus Christ is going to deliver me from this. This is triumphant hope. This is assurance of ultimate deliverance. This is assurance of resurrection. This is assurance of glory. This is assurance of Rapture. This is assurance of the glorious manifestation of the sons of God. This is exactly what we were looking at in Romans chapter 8. This is that for which we hope. This is the freedom of the glory of the children of God. This is the glory that is to be revealed in the future. This is what Paul had in mind when he said, "This perishable will put on the

imperishable. This mortal will put on immortality and death will be swallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory in Jesus Christ." This is the time when we'll get rid of these bodies and will receive a glorious body like unto His body.

But back to reality, verse 25. Important little words. "So then...almost a sigh...so then, on the one hand, I myself with my mind," and here he uses the mind as a term to refer to the new and eternal person. "So now, or so then, on the one hand I myself with my mind the real I, the new one, am serving the Law of God, but on the other hand, with my flesh, the law of sin." You might think he solved his problem in verse 25a, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord," no, that's anticipation, that's hope of glory. But glory hadn't come when he wrote this, and so he goes on to say, "Let's go back to reality, for now until that day of glorification, I go on with my mind, my real self, serving the Law of God and my flesh goes on serving the principle, the operative power of sin."

I am a person as a believer that who in terms of my most essential nature, my deepest self, the bottom of my heart, the inner man, the new man is a creation of God that does not sin. I am righteous. I am righteous not only by declaration, I am righteous by nature, delighting in the Law of God. This new man is not simply a capacity. It's not simply an idea, it's reality, it's the real me. I am not the person I was, that person is no more. I was a child of wrath, that is now dead and gone and buried. I am now a child of light. If I die right now, my inner person doesn't have to be changed, it is prepared for heaven. Even though all that is true, even though I am in the inner man a saint, I am still inseparably linked to unredeemed flesh. Not just my bones and muscles and my glands and my senses, but my mind and my emotions as well. The vast reality of my humanity with its intricate chemical electronic components and all the influences that find their way into that humanity is a residing place of sin. And I will never know the full deliverance until this body is transformed. But until then, the battle goes on.

Good news, though. Chapter 8 verse 1, "There is therefore now...what?...no condemnation...no condemnation." And some day we will experience, as he says later in the chapter, the glory, verse 17, we will be glorified with Him. Verse 18, "The glory will be revealed in us." Our hope will become reality. And we will enter the freedom of the glory of the children of God. And maybe that should be the next subject for next week. The end. Glorification.

Father, what a great day it's been. What joy to worship and fellowship and learn and offer to You again anew and a fresh our devotion, our love and our obedience. Your Word is so rich and so precious, we are stunned by it no matter how often we come to it. Thank You for the greatness of our salvation. Thank You that You have truly made us new. Help us to live not just anticipating triumph in the future, but enjoying victory over the flesh as we apply what You've given us, the Word and prayer and obedience and worship and fellowship and all those means by which You work triumph in our lives over remaining sin. We would desire to be conformed evermore to the holy life of our Savior

Jesus Christ, to walk as He walked, that we may give testimony of Your saving power to all who see.  
And we thank You in Your Son's name. Amen.

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