

“Indwelling Sin – Part 3”  
Romans 7:14-25  
(Preached at Trinity, December 7, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at the last half of **Chapter 7**. Paul is describing an intense struggle with sin. The struggle is so intense that he finally exclaims in **Verse 24**, “O wretched man that I am!” The question is who is this man? Is Paul speaking as a lost man or a believer – a regenerate man or an unregenerate man?
  2. There have been many positions held throughout history.
    - Some believe Paul is talking about his life before coming to faith in Christ
    - Others have held that Paul is speaking of a carnal Christian, a second rate Christian who has received Christ as Savior but not as Lord.
    - Still others hold that Paul is speaking of a struggle between the old man and the new man – a great conflict between two natures
    - Finally, some hold that Paul is describing a man under conviction of sin.
  3. As I’ve stated, I’m convinced that all of these views are incorrect. Paul is describing the Christian life. He is describing the struggle that every Christian has with sin. He is describing normal Christianity.
  4. Paul was an Apostle of Christ, a mature Christian. But even as a mature believer Paul had a continuing conflict with sin. There is no ultimate victory against sin in this life in which a believer no longer has to contend with sin.
  5. The believer delights in the Law of God and desires to keep it perfectly, but he finds he is unable. He continually falls short. Sin continues to plague him. It still dwells within him. Paul bemoans this state of sin, this body of death. We have been delivered from servitude to sin, but sin is still present within us.
  6. This results in a life of warfare.  
This morning I want to examine this warfare from a practical perspective.
- I. First, the Christian is engaged in the war
- A. This is normal Christianity
1. Paul speaks of a governing principle working within him – an evil within him preventing him from doing the good he desires.  
**Romans 7:21** – “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”  
**Romans 7:23** – “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”
  2. This governing principle is in all of us.
    - a. Every Christian struggles with sin.
    - b. Every Christian delights in the Law of God and yearns to be free from the remaining sin that plagues him.

3. You are not the only one that struggles with anger, envy, pride, covetousness, selfishness.
  4. The thing that marks the believer is he recognizes his sin and is laboring hard in his warfare against it.
    - a. Take anger. A Christian may struggle with anger. He may easily get offended and finds himself holding animosity in his heart.
    - b. He sees it as sin, hates it, and fights hard against it.
    - c. This is far different from an unbeliever that feels justified in his hurt feelings and wants satisfaction.
  5. Paul despised the sin within him  
“Oh wretched man that I am.”
- B. The Bible describes Christianity as a great struggle
1. Christians are those who enter the Kingdom with great effort  
**Matthew 11:12** – “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”  
**Luke 13:24** – “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”
    - “strive” - ἀγωνίζομαι – agonize - “to strain every nerve”
  2. Listen to these other Biblical references to the Christian life  
**Philippians 2:12** – “. . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”  
**Philippians 3:13-14** – “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,  
<sup>14</sup> I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”
    - “seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavour to acquire”**1 Timothy 6:12** – “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”
- C. Our victory over sin only comes through great struggle
1. We are too inclined to seek some quick formula or some mystical spirituality for the victorious life.
    - a. We live in a quick fix culture
    - b. We fix our food in microwave ovens – fast food, Jiffy Lube, quick oats or instant grits  
If we get sick we want a pill to heal us – fast
    - c. There are hundreds of so called Christian self-help books - 10 steps to Christian maturity.  
There are no 10 step programs, no shortcuts
  2. We are too inclined to look for a special outpouring from God.
  3. The Keswick theology of “let go and let God” promoted by D.L. Moody, Scofield, and H.A. Ironside has had a great influence on modern Christianity. The song, “I Surrender All” reflects Keswick Theology.
  4. Ultimately this is spiritual laziness  
**Romans 7** teaches us that victory over sin can only come through intense struggle, not through some shortcut

- D. We have been transformed through regeneration
  - 1. Our minds and hearts have been renewed – we now desire Christ  
Paul speaks of the renewal of the mind in **Chapter 12**
  - 2. But we have not yet been glorified – we still struggle with the remnants of sin. This is what Paul is speaking of in **Verse 25**

II. Every Christian is going through a growth process

- A. We are to progress towards maturity
  - 1. Every Christian begins in spiritual immaturity
    - a. We have much to learn theologically
    - b. We have much to learn about our own sin
  - 2. We are expected to grow, to mature  
**2 Peter 3:18** – “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.”
- B. How do you grow in Christ? How are we to be victorious in our struggle against sin?
  - 1. We must recognize that God has called us to warfare. There is no relief in the struggle  
**2 Timothy 2:4** – “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”
    - a. This calls for constant alertness
    - b. Satan is always poised for attack  
**1 Peter 5:8** - e sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
  - 2. We must recognize that our struggle is at the level of the mind  
**Romans 7:23** – “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”  
**Romans 12:2** And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.  
**Ephesians 4:22-23** – “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; <sup>23</sup> And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;”  
**1 Peter 1:13** – “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”
  - 3. Our mind is a wonderful gift from God. It is one of the things that separates us from the animals. But it is also the level upon which Satan attacks.

- a. He brings thoughts into our mind  
Calvin – “Truth (Satan) assails with lies, light he obscures with darkness. The minds of men he involves with error; he stirs up hatred, inflames strife and war, and all in order that he may overthrow the kingdom of God, and drown men in eternal perdition with himself.”
- b. He interjects evil thoughts
  - (1) Sometimes out of the blue a thought enters into your head, perhaps even during prayer. Where did it come from?
  - (2) Evil thoughts towards each other  
He sows the little seeds of anger which boil and fester like an oozing sore
- c. He tempts us to sin  
We can see this with Ananias and Sapphira (whom I believe were believers)  
**Acts 5:3** – “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?”
- 4. It is with our mind that we wage war against our flesh  
**Romans 7:25** – “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”
- 5. We are bringing thoughts under dominion to Christ  
**2 Corinthians 10:4-5** – “(For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) <sup>5</sup> Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”
  - a. NAS – “destroying speculations”
  - b. These are the attitudes of this present world, their ideologies
- 6. We are to fill our minds with purity – what we put in will ultimately come out.  
**Philippians 4:8** – “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.”

- III. While we labor and strive, the battle, the victory can only come through Christ  
**Romans 7:24-25** – “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
  - A. There are many who “strive” hard against sin, but it is only a human effort
    - 1. They believe with enough effort they will be able to overcome the flesh
    - 2. They believe they can set high enough standards and stringent enough disciplines that they will be able to

3. They simply do not understand the power of the flesh and our own weakness in subduing it.  
This was Peter's problem,  
**Matthew 26:33-35** – "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended. <sup>34</sup> Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. <sup>35</sup> Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."

- a. Peter loved Jesus. He thought he would be able by sheer determination to stand firm until the end
- b. Peter soon found out how weak he was  
NAS **Romans 7:15** – "For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate."
- c. He also found out how powerful Satan's devices are  
**Luke 22:31** – "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat:"

**1 Corinthians 10:12** – "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

- B. We must understand that we must strive, battle, labor – but the victory comes through Christ alone

**Philippians 2:12-13** – "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. <sup>13</sup> For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure."

#### Conclusion:

1. Although **Romans 7** can seem depressing it is actually a great encouragement to us.
  1. First, it is an affirmation to us that we are not alone in our battles. They are consistent with every believer.
  2. Second, We are not alone in our battles. Jesus, our great deliverer, has assured us that He is with us as our mighty conquering King. He will preserve us spotless until the end.  
**Philippians 1:6** – "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:"  
**1 Corinthians 10:13** – "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."
2. We are weak and frail. We are not yet through with sin. Yet, God continues to work in us renewing repentance and preparing us unto glory. Press on ye saints till He makes all things new.