

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #27

Romans 7:19-25

In Romans 6:14, we read these wonderful words, “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.” Those are uplifting words that speak of our new position in Jesus Christ. In Christ, we have been set free from sin and the law and we are guaranteed everlasting life. This is powerful, positional truth that can and should revolutionize our lives.

The problem is, every one of us realizes, practically speaking, it doesn’t seem to be real. There are moments in every one of our lives when sin does master us. There are times when we want to do what is right but do just the opposite. There isn’t an honest believer in this sanctuary that cannot relate to the struggle of the apostle Paul. In his own life he struggled with a nature that caused him to do just the opposite of what he really wanted to do. Make no mistake about it; Paul was a spiritual believer, not a carnal believer. **One main difference between the two is that the spiritual believer sins but hates it (7:15), whereas the carnal believer sins and loves it, or, in the Corinthian’s case, boasts about it (I Corinthians 5:2).**

It doesn’t matter how long you have been a believer or how mature a believer you have become, spirituality is a struggle and there are times when all believers, even the best of them, fail! We must not ever underestimate sin’s magnetic power and we must never think that victory over sin may be achieved on our own.

The problem is not what we want to do or want to be, the problem is doing it. Our problem is ourselves. We don’t have the power to live victoriously over sin, in and of ourselves, and the moment we think we do, we are going to fall. Our strength lies in seeing ourselves as weak sinners. When we are weak, then we are strong. **Our strength lies in our position in Christ, not in our power.**

THERE IS A WRETCHED SIN PRINCIPLE IN US THAT CAUSES US TO DO JUST THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT GOD’S LAW SAYS WE SHOULD DO, AND IN VIEW OF THIS, VICTORY WILL NEVER BE FOUND IN OURSELVES OR IN OUR WORKS.

OBSERVATION #1 – There is a “no good” principle which indwells us. **7:18**

Do not misunderstand this key point - you and I have a nature living inside us that is capable of doing and loving all types of wickedness, including the darkest and most depraved kinds of things. There is within us a depraved heart-hardened pride, a depraved love of the perverse and depraved pursuit of the sinful that is so dominant that no warning of God’s judgment or presentation of God’s grace and mercy can get rid of it.

If God were to replay our lives and open up every word we have ever spoken, every thought we have ever had, every act we have ever performed, all would conclude we have broken every commandment of God and have had days and nights when our lives were full of sin. We have committed so many sins that we cannot even categorize all the types.

We have sinned with our minds and our imaginations. We have sinned with our words and our thoughts. We have sinned against neighbors and at times have coveted what they had. We have done at times just the opposite of what God wanted us to do and the reason for all of this is that “nothing good dwells in me.”

The verb “dwells” means to inhabit. The verb is present tense, meaning there is a continual nature that inhabits every one of us that is no good and that will do nothing good when it comes to God, His Word and His will.

Now the Apostle Paul, by any standard except God’s, was a very good, religious man (Philippians 3:4-9). But Paul came to see his heart for what it actually was, deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). **When the Spirit of God took up residency in Paul’s heart and mind, Paul saw the real truth about himself and his own heart and God’s law.**

Albert Barnes said there is not a stronger statement of total depravity than this statement right here - man, in and of himself, is incapable of doing the good things of the law (*Barnes Notes on the New Testament*, p. 600).

There is absolutely nothing in us that is morally, religiously or spiritually good that will commend us to God in any way. God is good and we are not. In fact, God says there is not even one person who does good, not even one.

OBSERVATION #2 – There are times when we do just the opposite of what we want to do.
7:19

There are moments when our new nature will prompt us to do one thing and our old nature will end up doing just the opposite. There are moments when your new nature will say don’t gossip and then you’ll gossip. There are times when your new nature will say don’t lust and then you’ll lust. There are times when your new nature will say don’t covet and then you’ll covet. There are times when your new nature will say you need to pray more and you won’t do it. Paul discovered there were times when he did just the opposite of what he wanted to do.

That verb “I do” at the end of **verse 19** is very depressing. It is the Greek verb “prasso.” This particular verb seems to have in view more of the “mind” or “thought” process. In other words, this word suggests setting your mind in achieving something and then achieving it.

The implication of this verse is that of continually setting your mind on accomplishing something and never once doing it. Paul is saying there is an evil principle that continually prevents him from doing that which he desires to do, namely keep the law.

John Calvin said even our best works are “stained with some blots of sin” (*Romans*, Vol. 29, p. 268).

OBSERVATION #3 – The old sin nature defeats the new nature when one tries to keep the law. **7:20**

The context of this whole chapter is the law of God and being delivered from it.

The believer who tries to keep the law will keep discovering his sin nature keeps winning. Put yourself under the law and you are destined for one failure after another.

OBSERVATION #4 – The old nature never vanishes. **7:21**

John Calvin said even when we strive to do what is good, there is a “tyrannical power” that is always operative because it is “implanted in our very marrow and bones” (Ibid., p. 269).

Evil is always present in the person who wishes to do good. Think what Paul is saying in these verses:

- 1) The old nature does not do what the new nature wants to do.
- 2) The old nature does just the opposite of what the new nature wants to do.
- 3) The old nature continues to defeat the new nature.

Now Paul says the old nature is always present.

If a person tries to live his life under the law, he has absolutely no chance of succeeding. That old nature is relentless and is stirred when it focuses on the law of God. That old nature will not quit, it will not go away and when we focus on God’s law, that old nature wins time and time again.

OBSERVATION #5 – The new nature never wins. **7:22-23**

Paul says, “I know there is within me a nature that wants to do the will of God. There is part of me that wants to do what is right.” But he says, “When I focus on the law, that side never wins; I am a prisoner of the old nature.”

Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, “No wonder the believer under the law becomes tired and discouraged and eventually gives up; he is a captive.”

Paul was so depressed that in **verse 24** he cried out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free?” Paul said, “I cannot keep the law. In fact, I am absolutely miserable. Spiritually speaking I am in a neurotic depression.”

What is the answer? Who is the answer? It is found in **verse 25**. Recognize that spiritual victory is not found by keeping the law; it is found in Jesus Christ. As long as a person tries to keep the law he will live in misery. But when one focuses on Jesus Christ, he can have a life of victory.

Do you get this point? Victory in our life must come by Jesus Christ. It will not be something you and I will achieve ourselves. We need to depend on Jesus Christ for victory every second, minute, hour and day. If you want to hear Him say “well done, good and faithful servant” you will need His help. You can go forward in as many church services that give an altar call and you won’t have victory. You can raise your hand when some minister asks you so he may pray for you and you won’t have victory. Victory will come to you as you depend on Jesus Christ. It is you and Jesus Christ. He is the one who has enough power to give us victory in view of the wretched man or woman we truly are.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth He taught his disciples to live joyfully. In fact, one of the reasons for His Word is so that the believer’s “joy might be full.” Do not let the law ruin your joy. Get out from under the law. You have been set free in Jesus Christ by the Grace of God. Focus your mind on God’s Grace in Christ and joy will be yours.