

I. Introduction and Review. *O wretched man that I am!* v. 24

- A. This is the most debated text in Romans.
- B. The context is important.
 - 1. The law can neither justify nor sanctify you. 7:1-6
 - 2. The law is not responsible for your sin. 7:7-12
 - 3. Nor is the law the cause of your death. You die because of your sin. v. 13
 - 4. The law is spiritual and good. The problem is with your indwelling sin. v. 14-25

II. Paul's struggle with sin: An overview of Romans 7:14-25.

- A. Paul expresses his internal conflict through a series of laments. v. 14-23
 - 1. He acknowledges his condition. v. 14, 18a, 21
 - a. While the law is spiritual, I am fleshly and in bondage to sin. v. 14
 - b. Nothing good dwells in my flesh. v. 18a
 - c. Evil is powerfully present within me, in spite of my desire to do good. v. 21
 - 2. He describes the struggle. v. 15, 18b-19, 22-23
 - a. I do the very thing I hate. v. 15
 - b. I am unable to do good and I practice the very evil I despise. v. 18b-19
 - c. My flesh wages war against my mind, making me a prisoner of sin. v. 22-23
 - 3. He explains the cause of failure, which is indwelling sin. v. 16-17, 20, 23b
 - a. The law is not to blame.
 - b. Paul is not excusing his sin.
 - c. Nor is he saying that the body itself is bad. v. 23 8:23 Phil. 3:21
- B. Paul cries out for help and finds an answer. v. 24-25a
 - 1. I am a wretched man. v. 24a
 - 2. I need a Deliverer. v. 24b
 - 3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only One Who can rescue me. v. 25a 8:3-4
- C. Summary: My mind serves God's law, but my flesh serves sin. v. 25b

III. What is Paul's spiritual state as he speaks?

- A. Some say that Paul speaks of himself prior to conversion.
 - 1. He seems to say things which just couldn't be true of a Christian.
 - a. He says that he is fleshly (carnal). v. 14,18,25
Christians are spiritual! 8:6,9 We are no longer of the flesh. 7:5
 - b. He says that he is in bondage to sin, a prisoner. v. 14,23
Christians have been set free from sin. 6:6-7,17-18
 - c. A Christian no longer sees himself as a wretched man, but as a new creature in Christ. 6:11 II Co. 5:17
 - 2. There is no mention of the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification.
 - 3. It is possible for unbelievers to be very zealous for the Law. 10:2 Ga. 1:13-14
- B. I am convinced that Paul is speaking of his struggles as a believer.
 - 1. While Paul spoke of his pre-conversion experience in the past tense (v. 7-13), he now shifts to the present in speaking of his life as a Christian (v. 14-25).
 - 2. Only a believer sees himself as such a sinner. 7:18, 24, 9 Phil. 3:6
 - 3. Only a believer has such a high inward regard for God's law. v. 16,22,25b,14
12:2 II Co. 4:16 Eph. 3:16 Ps. 1:2 119:11,105
Unbelievers are hostile towards God and His law. 8:7-8 Eph. 4:17-19

4. Only a believer struggles against sin. v. 18, 21-23
There is no such duality in the heart of an unbeliever. 1:28 6:19 Jo. 3:6
5. Only a believer yearns for grace, looking to Christ as Deliverer. v. 24-25
6. This explanation of Paul's struggle is in harmony with the teaching of the rest of Scripture about our warfare with sin. 6:12-13,19 Ga. 5:16f I Jo. 1:8 Phil. 3:12-14 I Co. 3:1,3 Job. 40:4 42:5-6 Isa. 6:5 Ps. 32 51 I Pe. 2:11 Ecc. 7:20 Pr. 20:9 Js. 3:2
7. Paul summarizes the believer's ongoing struggle in verse 25b.

C. Is Paul describing the experience of an immature believer who is not yet walking in the Spirit?

D. I am convinced that Paul is speaking of the ordinary experience of every believer.

1. There is no indication of such a two-staged experience in Paul's life.
Nor is such an experience taught in the rest of the New Testament.
2. Mature Christians experience a deep sense of personal sin. I Ti. 1:15 Eph. 3:8 I Co. 15:9 9:27 Isa. 6:5 Job 40:4 42:5-6
3. Romans 7:14-25 is the typical and necessary Christian experience, but it is not the complete Christian experience. We also enjoy victory through the Spirit. 8:1f

IV. Application: We live in tension between two principles of life and two ages.

A. Before God saved us, we were slaves to the flesh. 6:20 8:7-8 3:10f

1. There was no struggle because there was only one principle at work within you.
2. If you are not engaged in a bloody battle against sin, it is probably because you have never become a Christian.

B. Now that we are believers, we are engaged in a continual warfare between our old fleshly nature and our new spiritual nature. v. 21,23 Ga. 5:16f

1. Christ has inaugurated the new age, but the old age isn't yet completely over.
 - a. You have experienced a decisive deliverance from sin. 6:11
 - b. But you are not yet permanently delivered from the effects of indwelling sin.
2. God has called you to a lifetime of struggle against sin. 6:12-14 Eph. 6:10f
3. You cannot be sanctified by your efforts to keep the law.
4. The Spirit helps you in your struggle. 8:1f
5. The more you grow, the more sensitive you will become to your indwelling sin.
6. The ongoing warfare makes you continually look to Christ. v. 25a
7. There is no spiritual perfection in this life. Phil. 3:12 I Jo. 1:8

C. We yearn for the final deliverance in the age to come when we will be completely free from all fleshliness. v. 24-25a 8:18-25 I Jo. 3:2-3 Phil. 1:6 I Jo. 3:2-3

Discussion Questions for Family Worship.

1. What is Paul saying about the law in this passage? v. 14
2. Why do we still sin? v. 17
3. Why do some think Paul is speaking of himself prior to conversion in Romans 7:14-25?
4. Why do most think Paul is speaking of his present ongoing struggles with sin?
5. Does Paul speak as an especially immature believer or is he teaching about the normal Christian life? Give a reason for your answer.
6. Does Romans 7 tell you all you need to know about sanctification?
What do we have to look forward to in Romans 8?
7. Will you ever be perfect in this life? Why or why not?
8. When will the struggle between your old nature and your new natures end?
9. What benefits do we gain from having to struggle with sin in this life?