

“Indwelling Sin – Part 2”
Romans 7:14-25
(Preached at Trinity, November 30, 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. Last week we began the passage beginning with **Verse 14**. 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!” 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 stated last time, 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. Paul is writing of himself as 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.
 4. The believer delights in the Law of God and desires to keep it perfectly, though he finds he cannot. 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.
 5. This passage is very encouraging to us. It describes your struggles, my struggles. It describes Christianity. Many doubt their salvation because they still see sin in their lives. This sin is in all of us. Paul isn’t writing to excuse our sin much less to encourage it. He is simply stating the reality and the battle that must ensue.
 6. It is the mature Christian that recognizes his sin engages it in warfare with the help of God’s Holy Spirit. This morning I want to address this war that rages in the bosom of every believer.
- I. An examination of the text
- A. Paul describes the struggle
 1. He states the struggle three different times
 - a. **Romans 7:15** – “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”
 - b. **Romans 7:19** – “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

- c. **Romans 7:21** – “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”
 - 2. Paul says he doesn’t do the things he knows he should do and he does the things he knows he should not do. This is sin.
- B. Paul states the reasons for his struggles with sin
 - 1. **Romans 7:14** – “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.”
 - a. By stating that the law is spiritual Paul is again affirming that the Law is holy. The Law exists at a level impossible for sinful man to attain.
 - Romans 7:12** – “Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”
 - b. The reason Paul is unable to keep the Law is because of his mortal flesh. Paul is saying that sin still resides in his flesh
It is at this level that we strive against sin
Romans 6:12 – “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”
Romans 6:13 – “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin” – *parts of the body*
Romans 7:17-18 – “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”
 - c. Paul does not say that he is in the flesh or controlled by the flesh. He is not characterized by sin. Paul is simply saying that he has not been totally delivered from sin.
The Law is perfect. Paul is still imperfect.
 - 2. Paul makes a distinction between his mind and his flesh
Romans 7:25 – “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”
 - a. First he makes it clear that he is more than just flesh
Romans 7:18 – “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:”
 - b. Paul implies that he is warring against his flesh with his mind.
Romans 7:23 – “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind”
 - c. Our mortal flesh is continually seeking to be satisfied. Our mind, our person, our new life is continually seeking to gain control over the inclinations of the body.
 - 3. Before we were saved, while we were still in Adam we were continually motivated by a desire to satisfy the longings of our flesh.
Paul deals with this in **Chapter 8**
Romans 8:5-6 – “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.”

Romans 8:9-10 – “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ¹⁰ And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.”

4. In Christ the power of sin over our body has been deactivated - we are no longer servants to sin

Romans 6:6-7 – “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

5. Our life is one of competing desires.
- a. On the one hand our new nature desires God
 - b. On the other hand our unsanctified flesh still struggles with sin and all its pleasures

6. We are in a spiritual war

Galatians 5:17 – “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

- a. We will not be fully freed from the body of sin until we are glorified
- b. Paul refers to this as a law – An operating principle of sin that keeps 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.”

II. This is the nature of the Christian life

A. Every Christian has undergone a miraculous transformation

1. When God saves us He delivers us from our old nature and gives us a whole new nature.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

2. There can be no such thing as a carnal Christian

Spurgeon – “If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord’s will but does not intend to it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Do not suppose that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to the worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their Saviour, while they are wedded to their idols, and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so I tell them a lie, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.”

3. When God saves us He transforms our mind

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;) 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;”

Romans 12:1-2 – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. 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.”
 4. When God saves us He transforms our hearts
 - a. Our affections change – we no longer love the world

1 John 2:15 – “Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
 - b. We love God’s Law – it has been written upon our hearts

Psalms 119:97 – “O how love I thy law! *it is* my meditation all the day.”

Romans 7:22 – “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:”
 - c. We hate sin.

Romans 7:15 – “but what I hate, that do I.”
- B. But every Christian is in a war
Every Christian is battling three powerful forces: Satan, the world, the flesh
1. Satan is continually on the attack
 - a. He wounds us in our faith

Ephesians 6:16 – “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

Luke 22:31 – “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat:”
 - b. He assaults us with lies and deceptions – he raises up men to teach lies

2 Corinthians 11:13 – “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”
 - c. Satan puffs us up with pride

1 Timothy 3:6 – “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”
 2. The world continually seeks to draw us under its philosophies
 - a. Worldliness is not just bad habits – it’s more than drinking and smoking. It is an orientation, a way of thinking and believing

- b. The world seeks to set the standard by which we live
The world calls the Biblical standard too narrow
- c. The world seeks to control our attitudes about sin
- 3. Our flesh continues to rise up in warfare against our soul
This is what **Romans 7** is referring to.
 - a. Regeneration does not destroy every remnant of sin
 - b. The old man is dead – the unregenerate man has been destroyed.
That which we were in Adam is forever gone.
Romans 6:6 – “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”
Colossians 3:9 – “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”
 - c. Yet there is still this sin remnant – Paul calls it the Law of sin
Romans 7:22-23 – “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 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.”
 - d. There is a war going on within our minds
1 Peter 2:11 – “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”
- C. There is still sin in us
 - 1. We refer to this as indwelling sin
 - 2. Listen to Paul’s descriptions
Romans 7:17 – “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”
Romans 7:20 – “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”
 - 3. All of us are battling with this sin within – our flesh.
- D. This law of sin, this warring of the flesh will not be destroyed until the resurrection
 - 1. We will be raised incorruptible
1 Corinthians 15:52 – “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”
 - 2. We will be glorified and forever freed from the last vestige of sin.
Romans 8:23 even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

Conclusion:

1. As Christians we need to recognize these realities. If we do not our assurance will be crushed. We will look at the remaining sin within us and despair of our salvation. Instead we must war against the remaining sin.
Romans 8:13 – “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”
2. The Christian does not seek to justify his sin but he recognizes its existence. He recognizes his remaining corruptions. He continues to look to the great Rock from he was hewn.
3. Christ has become unto us our righteousness and our sanctification – He has become our motivation. He has become our high desire.