

Who Will Rescue Me?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 July 2023

Preacher: Rev. Andrew Ong

[0 : 0 0] We hope that you enjoy this teaching from Christ Church. This material is copyrighted and no unauthorized duplication, redistribution, or any other use of any part is permitted without prior consent from Christ Church.

Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Today's scripture reading is from Paul's letter to Romans, to the Romans chapter 7, verses 4 to 25, as printed in the liturgy.

So, my brothers and sisters, you have also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful patterns aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law, so that we serve in the new way of the spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

What shall we say then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not. Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was, had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was, if the law had not said, you shall not covet.

[1 : 2 5] But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the law.

But when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the command, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good. Did that which is good then become death to me? By no means. Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.

We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do.

But what I hate, I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

[2 : 4 1] For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing.

Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work.

Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being, I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature, a slave to the law of sin.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Good morning, welcome to Christ Church. My name is Andrew, one of the pastors here. I am not the lead pastor.

[3 : 52] Our lead pastor is coming back from vacation tomorrow. His name is Jonathan. And just to let you know, he texted me this morning because he actually happened to be reading Romans chapter 7 today in his time with the Lord.

And he texted me and he said, Andrew, man, thanks for taking one for the team. Because, man, what a passage, right? So we're going to go for it. Let's pray and we'll dive in.

Father, we need to hear from you. And God, we understand better after reading a passage like this why the Apostle Peter said that some of Paul's teachings are hard to understand.

And this is one of them, God. So we don't come on our own, but we want to ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to illuminate us, to give us eyes to see and ears to hear what you want to say to us in your holy word.

So would that happen today unto your glory and for our good, we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. All right. So I do want to say just at the top, it's going to be a little bit longer and just a little bit different because chapter 7 of Paul's letter to the church in Rome is probably the hardest passage in this entire letter, one of the most contested passages in the whole Bible.

[5 : 03] And you should know that like a hundred people, thousands of people smarter than me and godlier than me disagree with each other about the meaning of this text, all right? So if I could use like a bouldering metaphor for those of you who like to climb, you know, I consider myself maybe like a V5 or a V6 kind of preacher.

Maybe on a good day I can climb a V7, but this is like a V12 passage, all right? So I'm going to do my best. But today's going to be a little bit different in how I preach. You know, here at Christchurch, we try not to use a lot of Christianese.

We try not to get too into the weeds or too technical in our exposition of the scriptures, but this passage kind of demands that today. So just a heads up, if it feels a little dry or too technical, more technical than normal, this is what I think is needed for us to handle this text with care and with respect, all right?

And if, you know, after all of this, mistakes are made in the interpretation and application of God's word, as they probably have been from this pulpit, to be honest, thank God, right, for the first six chapters of the letter to the church in Rome, right?

Thank God, because those chapters have been clear that the righteous preacher will not live by perfect interpretation or perfect preaching, but the righteous pastor will live, will be justified by faith.

[6 : 23] Amen? Amen. All right, praise God. All right. Just covered myself now. All right. Now, the last two weeks, we've been in Romans chapter 6, and we were looking at the main objection that Paul has had to his message of justification by faith.

People were like, yo, Paul, if you can be justified and declared righteous by God, apart from the works of the law, and simply by faith, then what will keep us from living, like, terribly awful lives.

And Paul said, you don't live a good life in order to be justified by God, but because of what Christ has done for you and in you and because of who you already are in him. If you have been united with Christ by faith, if you have been crucified with Christ, you are dead to sin, raised with Christ and slaves to righteousness, and therefore, you shall no longer go on sinning.

But now, can I just, by a show of hands, can you just let me know who here, after listening to my last two sermons on Romans chapter 6, who here has lived a perfect, blameless, flawless life?

Anyone here? After listening to my preaching for the past two weeks? No one. Shocker. Now, maybe you're wondering, like, what's up with that? All right? What's up with that?

[7 : 35] Like, okay, Paul's given us his reasons for why we should not sin. We've died with Christ. We are slaves to righteousness. We have a new master. But for the many Christians in this room, you know, I don't doubt that you believe these things, but I also imagine that you're probably still wondering, like, well, then why do I still fight with my spouse?

Why do I still carry this resentment toward so-and-so? Why did I keep blowing up at my kids? Why did I view pornography this week? Why am I still so lazy and selfish and greedy and anxious? If you're a Christian, you've probably pondered these questions, and if you're not a Christian, you've still probably pondered these questions about Christians, like if Christians are supposed to be people who are declared righteous by God, justified by faith, and if Christians are supposed to be people who are united with Jesus, dead to sin, no longer under its dominion, slaves to righteousness, why do we find ourselves still so complicit with sin and unrighteousness?

What is up with that? Is it that we're all hypocrites? Is it that our faith isn't actually genuine? Or is it that the work of God in Christ is actually not sufficient to save us and to change us and to make us new?

And so that's the question we'll be grappling with today as we open up Romans chapter 7. Why do Christians still continue to fall into sin? And more importantly, where can we find the power to fight sin, to stop sinning?

You know, this is not just a question for the Christians in the room. This is a problem for all of us. No matter what we believe, no matter what we like to call it, whether sin or not, why do we all keep doing the things we know we ought not to do?

[9 : 08] The things that harm and dishonor ourselves and others and God? And where will we find the strength to stop? That's a question we're all trying to figure out, right?

So let's look at those two questions. The first question, why do we keep sinning? Why do we keep doing things we ought not to do, right? Especially for those of us who are Christians, why does it still feel like such an affliction and a disease that we persist in our wrongdoing so much?

Now, a lot of people will say, whether you're religious or irreligious, a lot of people just chalk it up to being mere humans. Like, oh, I have this bad habit that I can't kick. And someone will say, oh, it's fine.

You're only human. You're only human. You know, I understand this answer. I get why people would say that. But honestly, I hate this answer. I hate this answer, and let me tell you why. It's because I think that this is way too low a view of what it means to be human.

If the definition of being human is someone created by God, made in His image, right, for the purpose of ruling and reigning over His creation, for His glory, then no, to be stuck in a destructive habit isn't the essence of what it means to be human.

[10 : 18] We must never concede that an ongoing habit of wrongdoing is a natural part of God's creation order. Because see, if we think that wrongdoing and evil are natural to God's creation order, then first of all, can we even call evil evil if it's merely natural?

Or should we even hope for the triumph of good over evil? Or wouldn't that just be something unnatural, right? I mean, if evil is natural, then it'd be like, you know, getting into this, you know, the Star Wars universe, right?

The Star Wars universe, you have the Force, and you have the dark side, right? But in that universe, the dark side actually, by its very nature, can never actually be vanquished, right? And so Disney can make tons of money, right?

Because the story goes on forever and ever. They can make tons of money off of our misery in this, like, pantheistic yin-yang universe, all right? And then secondly, if we see evil and wrongdoing as natural, then we'll also mistakenly think that we can come up with natural and creaturely solutions.

Solutions to the problem of evil. So like the liberals often say that evil comes from scarcity and poorly managed systems and structures, so we just need better social programs, more education, early intervention, more access to food to help people behave better.

[11 : 39] And thus, our world can be healed from the outside in through united, globalized effort. But while rightly acknowledging the wider factors that do influence people's behavior, this perspective, it doesn't sufficiently recognize the reality of the human will and that we are moral beings with often wayward hearts.

Liberals often won't admit that there's a Mr. Hyde in every Dr. Jekyll. And then the conservatives often say that the problem is due to a lack of discipline and self-mastery and willpower.

And so we just need everyone to rationally consider the pros and the cons of their decisions and to exercise more self-control and better restraint to behave better. And thus, our world can be healed from the inside out, one individual at a time.

But while rightly acknowledging individual responsibility, conservatives telling people just to try harder and have more self-control, it doesn't sufficiently recognize the weakness and the instability of the human will.

Even with all the independence, all the autonomy in the world, we can never bootstrap and will our way to righteous living. So I think if we're honest with ourselves, we all know that there is something sinister outside of us and inside of us, something we hate and yet that we're drawn to at the same time that has more influence on all of us than we care to admit.

[13 : 01] And if you're looking for a way to describe that, the Christian tradition calls this sin, particularly our sinful nature, the sinful nature that we've all inherited from our great, great grandfather, disobedient Adam.

None of us can escape this sinful nature, even those of us who have been justified, even those of us who've been united with Christ. Until Jesus returns and calls us home, we will still have our sinful natures.

This is what Paul is getting at in verse 15 when he says, For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do. And in verse 19, For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do.

This I keep on doing. And really from verse 14 all the way to 24, look down with me. Verse 14 all the way to 24, he describes a war within himself and within everyone who is united with Christ.

Verse 14, The law he wants to obey is of the Holy Spirit. It's spiritual, but he is of the flesh. I don't like that translation. It's not unspiritual. It should be, I am of the flesh and sold to sin.

[14 : 02] All right? Verses 15 and 16, He wants to do the right thing, but he doesn't always do it. Verse 17, Sin is still living in him. And so in a sense, it is not he and his truest identity who's doing it, but sin in him.

Look at verses 18 through 20. His sinful nature and his desire to do good are at war. And sometimes he even does the sin that he doesn't want to do because of sin living in him. Verse 21, He finds a law or a power at work hindering him from doing good.

This power that's trying to match his good with evil. Verse 22, In his most inner self, where the Holy Spirit dwells, he delights in God's law. But verse 23, There's another law of sin, another power waging war against his inner self and against his mind.

And then in verse 25, he describes it in this way, In my mind, I am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature, a slave to the law of sin. There's this war going on in each of us, even if we've been united with Christ.

So you see, the reason that even those of us who are justified, sanctified in Christ, the reason that we still fall into sin is that while sin has indeed lost its soul and ultimate influence upon us, our sin nature, it lingers.

[15 : 12] It lingers. Just like we talk about Christ's resurrection as the first fruits of new creation, and yet we still get hurt, right? And there are still tears, even while we wait for the final fruits of new creation, where every tear is wiped away.

In the same way, though Christ's kingdom has been inaugurated, and though Christ's spirit lives within us, Christ's kingdom has yet to be consummated, and his spirit has yet to perfect and glorify us.

And we call this period of time in between the first and the second coming of Jesus as the already and the not yet. And that's a huge key for understanding the scriptures.

The kingdom has already come, and yet the king will come again to finally establish the kingdom. The spirit is already within us, and yet the spirit's work is not complete amongst us.

And this explains how Paul can say in chapter 6 that we are slaves to righteousness, and then in chapter 7 that we are sold to sin at the same time.

[16 : 15] But now, what am I saying? What am I saying? Am I saying that we should just resign ourselves to being stuck in sin even though God justifies us as righteous, even though God makes us slaves to righteousness?

No. Even though we will inevitably fall and sin until Jesus returns to make all things new, we now have the agency, if we're united with Christ, we have the power to wage war against our sinful nature.

And Paul will really get into that next week in chapter 8. But he tees it up for us. He gives us a little taster here in chapter 7. So now what I want to talk about is that second question. Let's move on to that question, where will we find the strength then to say no to sin, even as the sinful nature still lingers?

And heads up, this is where we're really going to get into the weeds, like a lot more than usual, but try to stay with me. And as the Bible teacher Paige Brown says, I want to see tops of heads. I want to see you looking down at your text printed in your liturgy.

I want to see the top of your head. And even if you want to open the Bibles in your pews to page 915, because we're going to do a deeper dive to normal. And we won't always do it like this, but I think this challenging passage really merits our extra attention.

[17 : 25] All right. So let's go here in verses 4 to 6. What Paul is doing is he's summarizing what he said in chapter 6. And I want you to notice a couple of the new terms, though, that he uses in that summary.

So verse 4, So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit for God.

For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. But now by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

All right. So there's a lot here. And I don't have time to explain it all. But what I do want you to notice are the terms law, flesh, sinful passions, and spirit.

Okay. Law, flesh, sinful passions, and spirit. So notice in verse 4, he talks about us dying to the law in Christ. And what he means here is virtually the same thing he meant when he talked about us dying to sin in Christ.

[18 : 34] When we died to sin in Christ, we died to the demand of the law that was against our sin, calling for our judgment, calling for our death. And so that's how Paul can talk about us being released from the law in verse 6.

We were released from the law's condemnation of us, and that's what that means. And that's what Paul's getting at here when he says in chapter 6 earlier, that we are not under the law, but under grace. All right.

Now, I also want to bring your attention to verse 5, where it talks about the realm of the flesh. And what that is, it's not a contrast between our physical bodies and our spiritual souls.

All right. The contrast isn't material versus immaterial, but between our corruptible existence in Adam versus our incorruptible existence in the Holy Spirit.

I know that's crazy. All right. We can talk about that more. But to help us explain, if you turn back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 1, if you can do that, Romans chapter 1, verse 3, Paul there describes Jesus as someone who is descended from David according to, it says earthly things, I think, in your NIVs, but also in the Greek, it's according to the flesh.

[19 : 42] Jesus is descended from David according to the flesh, but then what does he say? But then he's raised into a new realm, a new state, a new status, no longer subject to the curse of sin and death and suffering.

He's raised in the power of the Holy Spirit into a new, glorious, imperishable, incorruptible estate and existence. So like the flesh, the flesh isn't necessarily bad, but it's also not perfected.

It's like Adam, all right? Adam was created good, but with the possibility of corruption. So again, the flesh for Paul is our corruptible existence, the existence in which our sinful passions, as it says in verse 5, can be aroused by the law.

And honestly, that's what happened to the first Adam. He was created good, and yet he was only in the realm of the flesh, and not in the spirit, and so he wasn't yet perfected. He wasn't yet glorified.

So when the law came and prohibited Adam from eating that fruit, his sinful passion was activated against the law, and death entered the world when he broke the law.

[20 : 47] All right? I know it's a lot, all right? But that's kind of what's going on here, and I think it's very important to understand. But what Paul is saying, basically, in verse 6, is that through the atoning death of Jesus, we've been released from the condemnation of the law against us.

And by Christ's resurrection, we now serve not just trying to obey the law to avoid condemnation, but we've been raised with Christ by the same spirit that raised Jesus from the grave.

And so we don't just exist in the corruptible realm of the flesh, but in the newness of the spirit. Everyone who's united with Christ is both in the flesh and in the spirit. And we have this war going on in us, the sinful nature, but also the spirit, this new power that's broken into history and entered into all of us who are united with the risen Christ.

And I know, again, this is a lot, and it's quite theological and abstract, and I'm sorry if it's as clear as mud, but I hope that at least for some of us, it's helped us make sense of what Paul is talking about here and the terms that he's using, all right?

But here's the bottom line, though. Here's the bottom line. What Paul is saying here is that that strength, that power that we're all looking for, that strength we need to fight sin in our lives, it's not going to come from the law.

[22 : 03] It's not just from some technique. It's only got to come from God. It's only going to come from the Holy Spirit. And we're going to talk more about that next week in chapter 8.

But before Paul launches into chapter 8, he, and again, he anticipates another objection. And the objection goes like this. Paul, how dare you, how dare your gospel message spurn the law of God, this law that God gave to us through Moses, all right?

So they're listening to everything that Paul's saying and how he's saying the law isn't enough. We need the Holy Spirit. And they're saying, how dare you speak against our law? So if you have your pew Bibles, again, you could turn back to page 913.

And you can begin to see, though, why Paul's Jewish readers might have this objection. If you look at chapter 3, verse 28, Paul says, And then in chapter 5, verse 20, he even says that the law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.

And then in chapter 6, verse 14, he says we're not under the law, but under grace. And now here in chapter 7, he's saying in verse 4 that we died to the law. In verse 5, that the law aroused our sinful passions.

[23 : 19] And then in verse 6, that we have been released from the law. And even worse, he's saying that we should live in a new way, right? And not in the old way of the law, of the written code. So it's like, man, Paul is sounding very un-Jewish right now.

And honestly, even worse than that. See, for many in Paul's Jewish audience, the law was their identity. The law was their righteousness. Their highest boast is what made them special and distinguished them from all the other nations in the world.

It was the very way of life given to them directly from God himself. For many of Paul's Jewish readers, the law wasn't just some ancient, irrelevant book of rules and restrictions, like maybe some of us Gentile Westerners might see it.

But for them, the law was the way, the truth, and the life. And no one came to the Father except through the law. So for many, Paul seemed to be attacking the cornerstone of their Jewish identity.

And it sounded to them like he was even calling the one thing that they were sure was good, the law, that he was calling it evil. And that's why Paul anticipates their objection.

[24 : 25] Verse 7, What shall we say then? Is the law sinful? To which he responds, Certainly not. Certainly not. So what Paul does here from verses 7 to 25 is he explains how the law is definitely not sinful, even while preparing us for something better.

From verses 7 to 25, the point Paul makes, and this is going to be the point for the rest of the sermon, the point he's making is that God's law is good, but God's liberation is better.

That's the point of 7 through 25. God's law is good, but God's liberation is better. So in verse 7, Paul says, Hold up, hold up. Okay, I am a Hebrew. Okay, I'm a Hebrew of Hebrews, all right?

And I have the utmost respect for the law, but my fellow Jewish people, you need to understand what the law was meant to do and what the law wasn't meant to do. Now he says, Let me tell you what it was meant to do.

First of all, verse 7, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law, for I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, You shall not covet.

[25 : 33] And what he's saying is, The law helped me understand what sin is. Like the sin of coveting. Man, I thought I was a super righteous Pharisee, he says. I never did anything bad. I did tons of super good religious stuff.

But when I saw the final 10th commandment, Thou shalt not covet, oh man, it got me. It got me, and I realized I was way more sinful than I thought, and that sin wasn't a matter of merely following religious rules, but it was a matter of my heart and my heart's desires.

And when I saw that, my coveting actually grew worse, showing me even more of how sinful I was. Verse 8, See, for Paul, it was like the more he was prohibited from coveting, the more he was exposed to this law from God telling him not to covet, actually it made him yearn for those things even more.

And have you ever experienced that, right? Like someone told you you couldn't have something, you couldn't do something, and it just made you want it even more, right? I think we've all experienced that. The famous North African bishop, Augustine of Hippo, he famously tells the story of how he was 16 years old, and just for the heck of it, he and his buddies went into a private vineyard, and they stole a bunch of pears, not because they were hungry, not because they liked pears, they didn't even eat any of them, they fed them to the hogs later, just for the sake of it.

Just because they knew they weren't supposed to, just because they wanted to be defiant against the law. And he writes, It was foul, and I loved it. I stole simply that I might steal.

[27 : 14] My sole gratification was my own sin. And so the law actually revealed to Paul not just his sin, but his sinfulness. It served as an occasion for him to see how sinful he was, and it convicted him deeply.

Look at verses 9 through 11. Once I was alive, apart from the law, meaning he thought he was fine, he thought he was living well. But when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died.

I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death, for sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment, put me to death.

See, just like God's commandment to Adam and Eve, not to eat of the fruit, was meant to bring them life. This is the way to live. Don't eat of that fruit. It became death to them when they were deceived by sin into thinking that God's command was contrary to their well-being.

They were deceived by sin. The command to not eat the fruit wasn't evil. Sin was evil. It was sin, not the law. Sin that led to their death. And the law is what makes us aware of our sin and impending death, and thus convicts us of how wicked we've been toward God and toward each other.

[28 : 31] So then what Paul says here in verse 12 is, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good then become death to me? By no means. Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, sin used what is good, the law, to bring about my death, so that through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.

Paul is saying, so don't you see, the law isn't sinful, but sin is sinful. So sinful, that it sneakily and subversively works in collaboration with the law to bring about my death.

So Paul's making it absolutely clear here that he doesn't at all spurn the law as wicked or sinful or bad. To Paul, it is good. It is holy. And it was always meant to reveal our sin and to convict us of our sin.

But the thing is, there's something that was never meant to do. What it was never meant to do was actually solve the problem of sin in our hearts and deliver us from our sinful nature.

And that's why he talks about this battle, right, in verses 14 to 24, to show that the law could never save us. The law could never save us. The law was never meant to triumph over our sinful nature, but only to expose our sinful nature.

[29 : 46] And if we don't understand that, then we don't understand the heart of Christianity. See, our source of strength to live our best lives, we'll never find it in the law.

And if we look in the law or any other kind of behavioral guide, we will only ever find ourselves feeling further and further condemned. You know, I can testify to this. I've experienced this.

I've lived this. And this is why I love the gospel. I remember a very low point in my life. I had just graduated from UC Irvine. It was 2009, a really hard time to find work. Eventually, though, I found a job so I didn't have to move back in with my parents so I could stay down in Irvine, be close to my girlfriend and be close to my church.

It's my first job, all right? Full time, with benefits, \$14 an hour, high rolling, right? But enough to live on, okay? And I worked there for almost two years and they were super hard years because I sucked at my job.

I sucked at my job. Every day, I thought I was going to get fired because of my carelessness. My relationship was rocky because every day I was just being so selfish and I was just lacking so much thoughtfulness.

[30 : 54] And then this whole time, I was also at this church that emphasized pursuing holiness, you know, through spiritual disciplines and scripture memory and reading tons of scripture and homeless ministry and prayer meetings and fasting and reading tons of Christian books.

And I tried to do it all, but I always felt behind and constantly miserable and jealous of others who seemed like holier than me. And I was miserable. I remember one hard day when I felt like I was on the brink of losing my job, losing my relationship, losing my status in the church as a godly person.

Even after honestly trying my hardest, I tried my hardest. I went out for a drive. I skipped my lunch. I went out on a drive on my lunch break and I just drove and I wept.

And I cried out to God and I just said, God, I can't do it. I can't be a perfect employee, a perfect boyfriend. I can't be the holy guy I want to be.

I can't stop failing in all these areas in my life. Even when I really try my hardest, I said to God, I can't. I can't, I can't, I can't.

[31 : 59] There's nothing more I can do. But in that moment, I received a word from God from Paul's letter, 2 Corinthians chapter 12. My grace is sufficient for you.

My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness. And in that moment, something changed in me. And the gospel of God's all sufficient grace became real to me like never before.

And you see, it's precisely in moments like these when the law or whatever it is we're trying to live by has really done its work on us and we've come to the end of ourselves and we cry out to God just like Paul, wretched person that I am, who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death and sin.

It is precisely in this moment that we are ready to encounter the God of grace revealed to us in Jesus Christ. And to say with Paul in verse 25, thanks be to God, God who delivers me through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Deliverance and liberation not from the law but from God himself who promises to never leave us nor forsake us even in our ongoing battles with sin.

[33 : 17] And this is the gospel. This is the gospel that what we cannot do and what the law cannot do, God himself can do and will do and desires to do for all of us.

And we'll read more about this next week but to give you a sneak preview from chapter 8 of Paul's letter to the church in Rome, he writes, therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free.

And listen to this, for what the law was powerless to do, God did by sending his own Son. And so as we await the return of the King when at last our sinful nature will be done away with for good, as we wage war in the meantime as slaves of righteousness against the sin that lingers, let us not look to the law or to some hack or some technique for God's law is good but God's liberation is better.

Let's look up from the battle to God, to his Son, Jesus Christ, to his Holy Spirit to find strength for our fight as the apostle writes in the letter to the Hebrews, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Jesus Christ and the gospel is not just the ABCs of the Christian life, it's the A through Zs. We need to look up every second of our union and communion with Jesus Christ.

[34 : 45] We need to look up and watch as he conquers sin within us as the years go by till he returns or calls us home. And if you want deliverance today, if you want deliverance today, if you are crying out with Paul, wretched person that I am and you're so sick of it, and if you're asking and you have no idea where, who will rescue me from this body that is subject to sin and death, to this cycle of doing all these things I don't want to do anymore, God presents to you not a law but a liberator, one who fulfilled the law on your behalf and in whom there is no condemnation because upon a cross he stood condemned in your place and this is the gospel and we'd love to celebrate this good news with you together now at this table.

Will you pray with me? Father, this was a hard text and I have no idea how I did but your promise is that when your word goes forth it does not return void and we thank you for that promise that the blessing does not depend on the preacher but upon the word of grace that you speak toward us in Christ.

We thank you that you're not just a God who gives us a law but you're a God who gives us a liberator and I pray that we would so trust that we would so delight in and so glory in our liberator Jesus Christ whose body was given to us broken for us and his blood was shed for our sins so we might be brought to you righteous cleansed and holy even as we're in process and on the way oh God lift up our eyes to your son the author and perfecter of our faith and we thank you that you who began a good work in us are faithful to bring it to completion.

Thank you God for your grace all of grace thank you Lord in Jesus' name Amen it for my God just