

Romans 7:13–25 "Why Do I Do The Wrong Thing (When I Want To Do Good)?"

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Date: 21 June 2026

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless. Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, once again, we come to a part of your Word which is easy for us to misunderstand. But once we do, Father, I know, well, Father, we just we give you thanks and praise that you're so patient with us and love us, that you reveal and make ourselves known to you in light of who Jesus is.

And so we ask that you would bring this your Word deep into our heart, that we might see Jesus and understand ourselves more and seek to live for his honour and glory. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Saviour. Amen. Please be seated.

So there's a common human problem. And I mean, there's many common human problems, but this is a common human problem. I'll just, you know, use somebody like me as an example. I might come to the realisation of that over the last several nights, maybe I haven't spent as much time with my wife as I should when I come home from work, getting caught up in, I don't know, maybe doing some exercise, watching some podcasts or listening to them, reading a book.

[2 : 28] And so I say to myself, when I come home tonight, it's going to be different. I'm going to make sure I don't do those things. I'm going to spend some time with my wife. That's the good thing to do. And then I go home and before you know it, the evening has passed by and I actually am just like other nights. I didn't spend time with my wife. I spent time doing all those other things.

And didn't really spend good quality time with my wife. Well, why is it that I do that? Or maybe I'm thinking of one man who confessed to me that he had a very sharp tongue and anybody who knew him knew that he had a very sharp tongue that liked to sort of insult people. And he said, you know, I'll begin my day and I'll pray that I, and I know that I shouldn't have a really sharp tongue that really, you know, tears people down. But then, you know what, by the time I'm coming home from, for supper, I realized that I did it just as much as I, as I've always done. I mean to not have such a sharp tongue and really put people in there, like really drag people down. But before I know it, I'm doing it just like I did before. Well, why is it that things like this happen? And why is it that they're very common to our experience? The Bible text that we're going to look at today, that Victor read very, very well, is directly talking about this. And it's talking about this problem in a way that will not give us grandiose, a grandiose sense of how we're going to live in the future. It undercuts any grandiose. That's like really big, you know, I'm never going to do this again for the rest of my life, etc., etc. By the way, just as an aside, one of the things that the devil loves to do with repentance is the devil will make us over-repent or over-amend our lives, that this will never happen again. Like he loves that because he knows it will happen again. And then we get sort of a different type of despair. But the Bible is going to be, it both, it's very profound.

Only the Bible has this profound analysis of what human beings are actually like. And it reveals it in a way that undercuts any grandiose claims. But at the same time, it's very realistic and very hopeful in light of the gospel. So if you would turn with me to Romans chapter 7, and we're going to be looking at verses 13 to 25 primarily. And that's what we're looking at today.

And here's how the text goes. And by the way, one of the problems, this is a very complicated text, but one of the problems that we have is a lot of us read quickly. I just discovered that I know somebody who virtually never listens to a podcast at the normal speed. Their choice is between 25% faster or 50% faster. And it's the same thing, I just discovered that same person virtually never watches a movie on YouTube at the normal speed. They always speed it up by 25%.

25%. So this is a text that requires slow reading, not fast reading. If you go by fast reading, you're going to be completely and utterly lost. So Victor's nice pacing was a really good way to read it. But let's see what it says. It begins with a question. Did that which is good then bring death to me?

[5 : 36] Did that which is good then bring death to me? So you're wondering, well, where is it? Well, it's obviously the context is that just before this, Paul was explaining how when you get a very clear moral command and it comes to people, what happens? And one of the examples I gave last week, which is just useful for us still to hear, is we might look at somebody, let's say a Kanata soccer mom. And we look at a Kanata soccer mom and we think, how on earth could I ever share the gospel with that Kanata soccer mom?

Like, I mean, she's, she's, you know, she's young, she's, she's pretty, she's athletic, her, her husband, you know, she's happily married, she has great kids, she volunteers, they have a nice house.

Their life seems to just be completely, like, way better than my life. Like, everything about her, she just seems to ace it and it's way better than me. And how on earth could she ever meet Jesus or need Jesus? And if you think of somebody like that, just imagine as a thought experiment for a moment that all of a sudden God was to reveal himself very clearly and say to that Kanata soccer mom, you shall go, you shall observe the Sabbath by going to church every Sunday morning. Now, if that actually happened, you would soon hear foul language coming from her mouth. Who are you God to tell me that? How dare you tell me that? In fact, I'm going to definitely not do it just because you tell me that. And could go on and on. And she'd tell everybody about what God had said and how resentful she is about it and like, and maybe even say who made him God and all of that type of stuff.

And so what Paul was saying is that what happens when, because of the fact that there's, we have this great power within us to do things which you take, take, take, take God out of his place and put ourselves in God's place. And that's deeply ingrained in us. What happens is that sometimes the moral command will come to us and rather than us saying, okay, God, thank you so much. The Kanata soccer mom doesn't say, oh God, thank you so much. I didn't know that before. From now on, I'm going to do it every week. Well, if I gave that as an example, all of us would know that that's not how that woman would react. She doesn't react with thankfulness. She reacts with resentment and with refusal to obey and, and, and on and on and on, probably calling God names. And so Paul was just saying that what the, one of the things that God's moral commands do is it reveals things to us about what we're really like. And it reveals that in fact, we are in fact very in rebellion against [8 : 22] God in a way that's going to be towards death. So that's the context. And that's why then now read verse 13 again, and now you'll understand why he asked the question, did that which is good then bring death to me? And by the way, if you think about it, it's a very postmodern, very Canadian type of question where people don't like right and wrong, although they do in certain areas, but they like a lot of gray with their moments of black and white. And it's almost as if, no, no, no, you know, that don't, don't get too good. That good is going to cause you harm and problems. It's a very modern question, but they, so that's the question then is, is what God's sending moral commands is that, and it causes death, like what's going on with that? Doesn't that mean maybe the good isn't actually good if it brings about more sin? Like in a sense, why didn't God just leave that Canada soccer mom alone?

Because it comes and then it just provokes all this anger and rebellion in her soul. And so how does Paul answer the question, did that which is good then bring that to me? The second part is by no means. He just says no. That's completely wrong. By no means. Absolutely not. Now, as we all know, if a four-year-old says, you know, if you say to a four-year-old, can you stop playing with your grandfather's, you know, models, you're going to break them. And the four-year-old says, why

should I stop? Well, you just say, because it's wrong. Well, why is it wrong? Because it's wrong. You don't tell a four-year-old, don't try to explain to a four-year-old why it's wrong. You just want them to know why it's wrong. But God can't say to us, you know, that's just a wrong way to think about goodness and and sin. He has to give a reason. And he does. That's what happens now in the next little bit that we're going to look at. So verse 13, did that which is good then bring death to me? By no means.

Now, here's where things start to get very interesting. Here's his sort of initial answer to the question of why it's not what the Bible, it's not what goodness does cause death.

He says, it was sin producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. So what he's saying is that at all times, it's always sin that causes death. It's always a rebellion against God that causes death.

Now, just a pause here. You see, one of the things which is very revolutionary about the Christian faith is that the average Canadian thinks that death is just a biological reality. And Christians understand that death is not a mere biological reality, that God originally created human beings good and we wouldn't have died. And how did death come into the human order? Death came into the human order when we rebelled against God and separated ourselves from God. And when we separated ourselves from God to be God ourselves, we separated ourselves from the very source ultimately of life, the one who would keep us alive at all times. And we separated from that and that's how death came into the world.

[11:37] And there's a whole other thing we could say about it, but that's sin. It's a rebellion against God, our desire to be a God ourselves that causes death. And what God has done, in a sense, if the angels were to say to God, God, why did you go ahead and send this command to that Kanata soccer mom and ends up just getting her all mad and upset and resentful and calling you names and swearing and doing all of this type of stuff and actually making a campaign with your neighbors to have nothing to do. Like, why did you do that? He said, well, obviously, he said, what I did is I did this because I wanted to reveal to her, to human beings, that sin exists in them. And I wanted them to see how much sin has a hold of them.

And that's why I did it. I did it in a sense in the hope that if they start to realize, if they go beyond that command to other commands, and if they, especially in the example Paul used the week before, last week, in terms of that inner life of resentment and pride and anger, all that other inner life that can go on inside of us, even while outwardly we're very good at following rules, I wanted them to realize the depth of sin in the hope that they would call out to me to deliver them.

That's why I did it. Now, Paul doesn't just leave it here. He unpacks this a little bit more to help us to have a deeper self-knowledge about ourselves, a self-knowledge that is not going to be grandiose, but it's going to be very realistic and, in Christ, very, very, very hopeful, and will provide energy for us to repent of the sin in our lives and try to become more like Jesus. So he does it, he continues on. Look at verse 14, and it's a very, verse 14 is a verse that probably the 90% of Canadians and maybe even 90% of Canadian Christians don't understand. And just look at it, verse 14, verse 14, for we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh sold under sin. For we know that the law is spiritual, we go, whoa, like George, like that's completely ridiculous. Don't you know that in Canada there's a difference between being spiritual and being religious? And anything that has to do with laws is clearly religious and patriarchal and oppressive. Like, spiritual is completely different. How can the

Bible say that the law is spiritual? By definition, the law can't be spiritual, George. Spiritual has to be something else, because for Canadians, when we think of spiritual, we think of a rich interior life.

We think of the fact that maybe that we can appreciate daisies and beauty and really good music. It means that we actually are a bit more thoughtful. It means this rich, inner, emotional, and aesthetic, curious life. And that's what it means. And law seems to be the exact opposite. And so right off the bat, we're a bit confused. So just to help you, when it says here again in verse 14, for we know that the law is spiritual, what the Bible means here by spiritual, and maybe in a couple of years when they redo the thing, they'll have to think of a new word for it, because it's going to confuse North Americans. What it means here is he's saying that the law comes from the Holy Spirit and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. When you see the word spiritual generally in the New Testament, it doesn't mean an aesthetic, rich, emotional life where there's no rules. It means comes from the Holy Spirit and is Holy Spirit empowered.

[15 : 39] So what he's saying is, okay, this situation of the law, what you need to understand is that the law is a word that comes directly from God by the Holy Spirit to us. And it comes from the, by the Holy Spirit. It's a little bit like in Ephesians 6, where it talks about the Bible being the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God being the sword of the Spirit, or Hebrews, whatever. It comes from the Holy Spirit, and it is empowered by the Holy Spirit when it hits us. So look at it again, for we know that the law, that is God's commandments, his moral rules, they come from him. But me, who am I? Well, I am of the flesh, sold under sin. And what that means, it's not referring to us having bodies. It's saying that there's, I have a sinful nature now. There's a part of me which is very, very strong and very, very powerful, that always wants to put myself first, that is rebellious against God, that wants, in a sense, to have God go away so I can be God, or I can pursue my idols, the idols that will help me have those positions. And that's me. And when it says, sold under sin, it's an analogy of slavery, that I am, in a sense, become a slave to this desire to be in rebellion against God.

And then Paul takes, then Paul goes on and says, sorry, I've lost my place here. Okay, you might say now, okay, George, well, that's like an interesting observation, but it doesn't really deal with the thing that you began with. Like, why is it, George, that I go home at night, and I want to spend time with my spouse, but I do the opposite?

Well, Paul is getting there, and he gets there, he starts to get here, but look at what happens next in verse 15. He says, for I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Like, isn't that just, I mean, I think there's lots of clues as to why the Christian faith is correct, and that the triune God exists, and that Jesus did, is the Savior who died on the cross and rose from the dead, so that when we put our faith and trust in him, we can be made right with God. And I think there's lots of reasons and clues for that, and there's good historical evidence. But one of the beautiful things about that, isn't it just objectively true? Verse 15. Like, if you, for I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what

I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Like, I think if somebody told you that they never, that that verse doesn't resonate with them, I'd say, really? Like, are you so completely unaware that you don't think that happens? Unless you're just so completely and utterly selfish all the time that there's never anything, you never want to actually do anything good? Like, it's just a true statement about human beings. And the Bible is putting it in a context where we can understand this, but not cause us to despair, but to have hope. Look at the surprising consequence he takes from it at verse 16. Now, if I do not, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that is the moral law that comes from God, that it, that is the moral law that comes from God, is good. Now, this is like a surprising insight to people. The average Canadian thinks that basically, in a sense, I'm the arbitrator of right and wrong.

Like, you're the arbitrator, you know, you know what is right and wrong for you, and you know what's right and wrong for you, and you know what's right and wrong for you, and I know what's right and wrong for me, and it has to be right for me, and it has to be right for you, and, and then there may be some other bigger rules about just trying not to hurt each other. But, you know, in a sense, I'm the moral arbiter of my own life. But the surprising thing here that, that Paul wants to get human beings to realize, especially Canadians, because we're very prone to this way of thinking, is if the moment you have a moral dilemma, and you want to do something, but you do what you don't want to do, and you realize that, and you want to deal with it, what you've actually just acknowledged is that functionally, you know there is a moral law higher than you that you need to obey. And for anybody who's even reflective, they know that it's not just a Canadian law, or just a law of their culture, but there's something higher than them to which they're struggling to try to live in. So, in an odd way, it shows that even the most skeptical and relativistic person

[20 : 46] Christian wants to acknowledge that there is a God that does exist. And so then, then he goes in a, he continues to develop this in a, in a surprising way. Look at verse 17. Actually, I'm going to read now that a few verses in a row. But you know, just before we go any further, some people might wonder why it is that God allows us to have sin, this desire to rebel against God, why it is that it almost seems to enslave us, and, and why it is that evil seems to be so strong, and the moral commandments seem to be so weak in our lives. And what you need to understand about God is that at the end of the day, the parts of me, and the parts of my world, and the parts of my system which is in rebellions against

God, that's motivated by envy and coveting. We want God's place. We don't like that God has that place. We want to have him demoted so we can have that place. And you know, in the Bible it says

several times that the reason that the, the, the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to kill Jesus was because they envied him. Envy always, and coveting always involves hatred and leads to, to greater hatred.

And it is of the nature of hatred to enslave. But God is love, and it is of the nature of love to woo you.

Sin involves envying, envying God and coveting his place, and that leads to us hating him. And hatred always enslaves. And the tragedy is that human beings can't enslave God, they end up enslaving themselves.

to rebellion against him. But God doesn't come in with a new slavery movement. He comes in to woo you, because he loves you.

[23 : 04] And if he started to act like out of coveting and envying, he's not, he loves you. He wants ordinary people like you and me to enter into his love.

And to actually, in a sense, breathe it and eat it and dream it and speak it and rejoice in it and delight in it for all eternity. That's what he wants. So he woos. He woos. But, but verse 17.

So now it is no longer I who do it. Whoa, that sounds weird. It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh.

For I have the desire to do what is right, for I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Now, if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. Now, this sounds really weird. And it almost sounds a little bit like, I don't know if they have posters like this because I, my kids are at a certain age and all that I don't go into stores that have posters like this. But it used to be you could buy mugs or posters that would have something like this.

[24 : 25] It would say, as a result of therapy, I now realize all my problems are my mother's fault. Or variations on that. Like, you know, you now you had your therapy. It's all because I wasn't raised the right way and my mom didn't, you know, I don't breastfed me or she did breastfeed me or this or that or whatever. Can throw in dads, but it's always somebody else's fault. And we're, we live in the age of excuses as you well know. So people rarely apologize anymore. What most people think of as an apology is, well, I'm really sorry you feel that way.

I'm really sorry you feel that way, but you know, it's, it's because of this and because of this and because of this and because of this that I do it. So they don't actually apologize. What they do is they sort of insult you because you can't control your emotions. Not they, we, that's what we do. We insult the other person. They can't control their emotions. They react in an emotionally insecure way. And by the way, I have just a whole list of excuses. So it's not actually my fault. So the supposed apology just ends up making it look like it's all my fault and somebody else's.

People don't take responsibility for me. So is that what the Bible's doing? Is it Bible saying, I have really good news to you Christians for the rest of your life. It's not your fault. It's just sin. Woohoo! You don't have to, you know, it's just sin. That's not what the Bible's saying at all. It's saying, and part of the reason, not just because I'm saying this, but if the part that is like, but the ends chapter six, it begins seven, chapter seven says this, for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. So as he's saying, we are going to face a judgment from God for the sin that we do. And what the Bible is assuming that we know and understand is that all that is in me is me. All that is in me is me. And therefore, I'm responsible for it. But see, what the Bible wants to do is it wants to remove the simplistic ways that we think and understand of ourselves. In some ways, it is the great precursor to all depth psychology, all of Jung and Freud and Kierkegaard and all of the depth psychologists, which are superficial compared to this profound insight in Romans chapter seven, that there are multiple me's and different powerful forces. When I do wrong, it's not that, okay, I'm a really perfect person, completely good. Oh yeah. Okay. I did that one wrong thing. I'm a perfect person. And okay,

I did another wrong thing. But it's a perfect person doing wrong things is how we tend to think of ourselves, unless we go the complete opposite way, which the devil likes. He likes it if you think you're a good person, just as the odd wrong thing. And then he loves it because he can flip that on us and we get consumed with shame. Guilt is you feel guilty for something you do. Shame is you feel that the you, the I is wrong. There's something deeply wrong about me. And so it gets flipped. And now there's something terribly, terribly wrong and broken about me. And so we're either, we don't either feel guilty enough for the wrong things we do, or we feel ashamed when those good things come home to us in some type of a painful, harmful way. And what the Bible is trying to show

here is that human beings are actually very complicated. I mean, it's really funny that the Bible has to tell us that because on one level, all of us should be going, duh, like, of course we're complicated. But why is it that we forget that we are, right? And so it's not saying that there's, you know, the Bible here is not saying there's this other thing that means we have an excuse.

[28 : 20] It's saying that all that is in me is me. Part of me is this rebellion against God based on envying God and coveting his position, which leads quickly to hating. And I am in complete bondage to this.

And I'm in bondage to ways to deal with it by idolatry. And I'm in bondage to it. And then when it talks about sin doing things, sorry, just a moment here, a little pause.

Just those of you who don't like stuff like this, just a pause, give me some mercy. Some people complain about this text that is guilty of an error in thinking called reification.

When you reify something, it's when you treat an idea and act as if the idea does something. It's called reifying. Some of you may have never heard of it. It's a new idea. But this isn't reifying. This is a synecdoche, another technical word. And it's where you use a concrete noun to describe a whole series, a whole ecosystem of actions. So an example would be if I say the problem with Hollywood, and then I fill in the blank that it's too woke, you know, that it despises its fan bases. Hello, Star Wars despises its fan bases. You know, all of those types of things. We're just saying Hollywood for a whole ecosystem of actors. If people, we go out and there's a protest and they say the problem in Canada is that Mark Carney's listening to Wall Street too much, or he's too into Davos. We're using a single noun to describe a whole complex of ideas and actions. And that's what the Bible's here doing with the word sin. It's not an error of thought. It's trying to say there's this whole ecosystem of coveting and hating God. It involves our flesh. It involves the world that our systems and our plausibilities and our plausibilities and involves the devil and evil spirits. And there's this whole system which it's just using this one word sin to try to open our eyes to that has this powerful place and role within me. And when talking about the I, it's not saying, it's not the same thing as when Jordan Peterson says that every human being has the divine spark within them. And lots of people like that idea, but it's not a biblical idea. And it's in fact actually quite wrong because it implies that there's a part of me that's God. And that is exactly the whole sin envy issue of coveting God's place, to think that there's actually a part of the divine of God actually in me. That's going to, while he's been very helpful, it's going to actually confuse things and make it hard for you.

[31 : 06] The Bible is saying that's not the case whatsoever. The I in this text is what Paul's been trying to identify over the last few things, is chapters, which is, you know, when I put my faith and trust in Christ at an actual real level, if you could see the world the way God sees the world, when I put my faith and trust in Christ, I actually enter into him and am in union with him. And he actually enters into me as in union with me. And that's why the death he dies, it's my death he dies for me. And the resurrection that he has becomes my resurrection. And the penalty for my sin that I deserve actually does really fall on him. And his destiny, his right standing before God is given to me. And I now have that guaranteed.

And Paul has just used a variety of things to try to help us to understand that we have a brand new identity when we put our faith and trust in Christ. We have a brand new authentic I, an authentic me. And that authentic I is, I am now one who is redeemed out of slavery to sin, to belong to Jesus. And it uses the imagery of slavery, and then it used the image of marriage, which is an intimate image that I now actually belong to Jesus. I don't belong to death. I don't belong to sin. I don't belong to evil spirits. I don't belong to my addiction. I don't belong to porn. I don't belong to greed.

I don't belong, I don't belong to Canada. I don't belong to Wall Street. I don't belong to Hollywood. I don't belong to my tribe. I don't belong to the shame that so consumes me. I do not belong to any of those in Christ. I belong to Jesus, who loved me so much that he died on the cross for me.

That is my new authentic identity, which is given to me as a gift when I put my faith and trust in Christ. That is the unshakable, unstoppable, unfailing new I at the very center of who I am.

[33 : 42] There is a new principle and power at work in my life. One of the reasons I love the hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness, is I love that final thing, I love that final thing. I love that final thing. I love that final thing.

And there's the whole idea of his presence in me and a new power in me. And that is what God is saying here in this text. Human beings are complex. And on one level, when you become a Christian, God has now added to the complexity of who you are by giving you a complete new identity, authentic identity.

The real you in all your uniqueness is found in Christ. And if you think about it, if you go up and see the fentanyl addicts that are wandering around outside, the fentanyl addicts, the greater the evil comes into their life, the less their personalities exist, they get completely reduced to that sin. And it's the same if you go to see a group of people completely and utterly consumed by alcohol. Or if you were to go into a room and everybody's completely consumed by the porn that they're watching on the screen, or the greed that is working in their lives. Sin always flattens and destroys and reduces and reduces. But goodness, goodness is variety. Mozart is different than Bach. It's different from the Beatles. I know there's a big gap between Bach and the Beatles, but you get my point. Goodness creates diversity and difference and uniqueness. God made every fingerprint and every snowflake different. And you being authentic in him, he does not do that to crush you and to enslave you.

[35 : 35] But the new, authentic, real you is now there at the very center. And it is unstoppable because he is unstoppable in his grace. Isn't that beautiful?

So just finish the text and a couple of takeaways from this. Verse 20, 20, 21. So I find it to be a law that is a principle or a logic that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, the God's moral law, in my inner being, that's the very center of who I am. But I see in my members, that's the bits and pieces of me, another law. And here now he's referring to a type of power, waging war against the law, the principle and that which I hold in my mind, in making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am!

Who will deliver me from this body of death? And here, this is not a cry of despair. It is a cry of longing. It's like the psalmist, how long, O Lord? How long will it be, Jesus, before you return? How long?

How long before I see you face to face? That's the cry. That's the spirit of it. He acknowledges his wretchedness. Gosh, there's far more bad about me than I ever dreamed of. Who is my hope and my savior? Thanks be to God. Who will deliver me? Verse 25. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord, so that I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

And it ends triumphant. It's saying, well, how does it go? Just look what happens next. You know, it's not going to be on the screen. You just have to have your Bibles. Look how he continues on. It's just the chapter heading is needless. He goes on. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ from Jesus, from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh. And for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk according to the flat, not to the flesh, but according to the spirit. And then he goes on in this spectacular chapter, and chapter 8 ends in verse 31 with these ringing words. What then shall we say to these things?

[38 : 12] If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect, God's children? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died.

More than that, he was raised. Who is at the right hand of God? Who indeed is interceding for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No! In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen! That's the gospel.

So, brothers and sisters, in light of this, to coin a phrase, God calls us in Christ to a long repentance in the same direction with heaven at the end. God calls you and me to a long repentance in the same direction with heaven at the end. It teaches us that we are actually way, we have the sin in us is way more powerful than we ever imagined, but the hope we have in Christ is far greater than we ever imagined.

And the hope in Christ is greater than our sin. So, in your daily life, as you struggle with sin, remember the gospel. Remember Romans 8 and Romans 7.

[40 : 20] Never surrender and make a treaty with sin. If you're struggling with greed, never say, that's an acceptable amount of greed that I can live my life with. If you're struggling with porn, don't

say, that's an acceptable amount of porn. Always struggle against it. Always repent. Always ask God's help for you. Never make a treaty with sin. Repent and amend your life knowing that God is drawing you to this end. He is at work in you in a long repentance in the same direction with heaven at its end.

And remember that you do not do your day alone. That's going to come up more in the next chapter. You do your day with the Holy Spirit and with Jesus and pursue the means of grace. Read your Bible. If you have a hard time reading, then listen to your Bible when you're doing other types of things. Get the Bible into you every day. Take time to pray. Make sure you don't forsake the assembling of yourself together with other Christians. Join a small group. Find a mentor. These are all means of grace. Practice financial generosity to the gospel and to the relief of the poor. It's a means of grace to show financial generosity. Pursue the means of grace. God has called you in Christ to a long repentance in the same direction with heaven at the end. So take heart. Repent. Call out to him. And if it's a matter of repenting 15 times in the same day, repent 15 times in the same day. Never surrender to lies, to evil, to injustice. Never surrender. [42 : 14] Father. I invite you to stand. Our heads in prayer.

Father, I don't know how your word has affected people who've heard it today. I ask, Father, for myself and through myself for all of us that, Father, help us not to be too intimidated by the apparent goodness of those that we see who are outside of Jesus.

We ask that you, Father, would put it on our heart to pray for their salvation. And we ask, Father, that you would give us opportunities to bear witness to Jesus. And, Father, we ask that you would help the gospel, who Jesus is and what he's done for us on the cross, to become ever more real to our hearts.

And as who he is and what he's done and what he has won for us becomes more real, Father, may you help and strengthen our moral clarity to see the evil in our lives more clearly and fan in the flame within us a deep desire to repent, to amend our lives, and to pursue Christlikeness.

And we ask that you would help us to spur each other on in this and pray for each other and encourage each other. Help us, Father, not to be a place of gossip or slander, but of encouragement, of urging each other on in hope.

[43 : 42] And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior and all God's people said, Amen.