

Untitled (63)

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: 05 July 2020

Preacher: Caleb Evans

[0:00] Amen.

Amen. Romans chapter 7 and 8 because it so thoroughly treats practical aspects of the Christian life that are common to all of us.

In fact, when I read this passage, I think of my own experience as a believer, and I also think about the counsel that I have given to others as a pastor. I have found that one of the most common struggles in the Christian life is the struggle over assurance of salvation.

Those nagging questions, am I really saved? Do I really have eternal life? Related questions that are common. If I'm really saved, why do I keep sinning?

If I'm really saved, why haven't I improved more than I have? Is God going to get tired of my stupid mistakes? Is He going to cast me out?

[1:54] At what point is He going to say, enough is enough, and kick me out of the family? I'm going to guess that most of us here this morning have struggled with some of those questions.

And I think that all it takes for us to realize why we struggle with those questions is to remember a couple of facts. Fact number one, God is holy and utterly opposed to sin.

Fact number two, all of us still sin. When I'm giving pastoral counsel to someone who is struggling in that way, here's what I don't say.

Yeah, you know, I have lived a perfect life after becoming a believer. You should really try that. First of all, that would be a lie. Secondly, I know of only one person who has ever lived a perfect life, and his name is Jesus.

We do grow in grace and grow in holiness as believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. The trouble is that that has the effect of making us more aware of our sins, not less aware of our sins.

[3:04] This struggle is so often a part of the Christian life. And in our text this morning from Romans, we see what I think is an incredible source of biblical comfort for us when we are tempted to despair over our sin, and when we worry that God is going to finally get tired of us and toss us onto the garbage heap.

Now, something to say up front. The meaning of our text has been debated. I have pretty firm opinions about the meaning of our text.

But people wonder who Paul is talking about. I believe that the plainest, most obvious explanation is that Paul is talking about his own experience as a believer.

And I think that this is applicable to the experience of all believers because we can certainly relate to what Paul describes here. So with that information in place up front, let's look at our text in Romans chapter 7 and 8.

Starting in verse 21, Paul writes this. Paul said, I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

[4:52] Ouch. Ever been there? I've been there. I will just say that if we want to live and act in a way that is honoring to God, we need to be aware up front that doing so will be an act of war.

Spiritual warfare will be part of our experience as Christians. So there is a reason why, you've seen this when you've seen me baptize someone, I make the sign of the cross on their forehead, and I say these words.

Receive the sign of the cross as a token of your new life in Christ, in which you shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, to fight bravely under his banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue as his faithful soldier and servant to the end of your days.

We have a battle to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and we are called to fight bravely and faithfully as soldiers of Jesus Christ.

The really difficult thing about that warfare against the flesh is that it takes place inside of us. We are, in a sense, living war zones. Because each one of us has sin in us, the broken part of us that Paul calls the flesh, and to be clear, Paul doesn't mean that our physical bodies are inherently bad, but that our fallen humanity is subject to sin and death.

[6:38] We have that broken part of us. We have that sin in us. We have been forgiven. We are being transformed by the Holy Spirit. But in this life, we have sin in us that is not dead yet, and it doesn't go down without a fight.

That's why believers struggle with sin. That's why we sometimes stumble and fall.

Having been blunt about that, let me be equally clear. Do not let that reality damage your sense of assurance of God's love for you, or damage your assurance that He has saved you.

Don't do it. Why not? Because that struggle is the experience of every Christian. And God knew all about our sins and wretchedness when He chose to save us, and He still chose to save us anyway. But the struggle is real. That is why Paul says, Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? What believer hasn't felt the sense that we are wretched and that only God's amazing grace can save us?

[8:01] I mean, who else can save us from our sins? We have someone who can. Paul goes on, Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, So then I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

That's where the warfare comes in for us again. We have the Holy Spirit in us as believers, changing us from the inside out, but none of us are completely changed yet in this life.

That's some serious tension, isn't it? That question, If I'm really saved, why do I still sin? You still sin because there is a war raging inside of you, and the sin in you still has some dying to do.

That's true of me as well. Is it really any wonder that it hurts? The battle continues.

But let's be clear as Paul is clear in our text. Even as the battle continues, the outcome is assured. It's as clear as day.

[9:24] Paul says, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. But wait a minute.

Paul just said that he's a wretch. He's a wretched man. And by extension, that's true of all of us. How would God not condemn us?

Well, to put it bluntly, God will not condemn us because there is no condemnation, even for wretched sinners who come to Jesus Christ for mercy.

How can that possibly be? Let's continue in our text. Paul goes on. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ 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 through sin, He condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

[10:47] There's a lot to unpack there. God's grace in Jesus Christ has set believers free from sin and death.

And that's the only way we could be set free because as Paul has made clear, our sinful fallen flesh failed the test of obedience to God's law.

It's not that God's law is bad. It's not. It's good. The only problem with God's law is that sinners can't keep it. In other words, the problem isn't God's law.

The problem is us. Our failure to keep God's law has its consequences. Our failure leads to separation from God.

Our failure to obey God's law leads to death. That's a real predicament to be in. We can't fix it.

[11:47] The law says sinners will be condemned. So God sent His Son to become one of us and to die in our place.

To take the condemnation that we deserve, to take the punishment that we deserve, to set us free from sin and death. And that means that the requirements of the law are fulfilled for everyone who trusts in Christ.

Practically speaking, in my life, I still struggle with sin. I still fall short and I will for the rest of my life in this world. And so will you. The warfare that we wage against the world, the flesh, and the devil will continue all the days of a believer's life.

Does that mean that we aren't actually saved? If we are in Christ, it does not mean that at all. Do you really think that the God who sent His only Son to save you when you were dead in your sins is going to get angry and toss you into the trash bin because you haven't achieved perfection yet? Absolutely not. And you especially need to hear this and I do too because the Holy Spirit is working in you if you are a believer and that means you're going to become more aware of your sins as you grow in Christ.

[13:37] That means that it's often going to feel like you're actually getting worse, that you're going backwards because you see your sin more clearly than you did before. If you're a believer, you will have the experience of wanting to do good and finding evil close at hand.

You will have the experience of the battle against the flesh going on within you. You will have the experience of falling short and feeling yourself to be a wretch.

You will probably have the experience of being discouraged that the battle against the sin in yourself isn't over yet. You will probably have the experience of being tempted to feel discouraged that you keep having sins to confess and repent of every day of your life.

life. But let me be clear. None of that means that you aren't really a Christian.

None of that means that you aren't really saved. None of that means that God will finally get fed up with you and kick you out of the family. And none of that means that God will stop loving you.

[15:05] None of that means that you don't have eternal life.! Why? Because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

If only people who reach a sinless state in this life are saved, then no one will be saved. Jesus saves sinners.

Jesus saves the kind of people who cry out, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me. Let's be clear.

Say it again for emphasis. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Christ. On that point, I'm going to close with the words of the 17th century preacher and writer Thomas Brooks. Brooks said this about those who are in Christ. Christ is to be answerable for all those who are given to him. At the last day, and therefore we need not doubt that he will certainly employ, all the power of his Godhead to secure and save all those he must be accountable for.

[16:33] Christ's charge and care of those that are given to him extends even to the very day of their resurrection, that he may not so much as lose their dust, but gather it together again, and raise it up in glory to be a proof of his fidelity.

for saith he, I shall lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day. Brothers and sisters in Christ, if you are tempted to feel discouraged, if you find yourself plagued with worry, that God is eventually going to get fed up with you and give you the boot, remember this, Jesus will not lose so much as your dust.

Why? Because he is faithful. So we say with the Apostle Paul, thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.