

# The Wretched Man's Victory

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Date: 11 October 2020

Preacher: Rev RJ Campbell

- [ 0 : 01 ]     Welcome to our service this morning and as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing. Let us pray.
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- [ 4 : 13 ]     the void that they find in their hearts today. And we pray for our young people and our children. Oh, that thou would raise up a generation that would fear thy name.
- Remember the elderly and the lonely today. And pray, O Lord, that they may know that there is one that sticketh closer than any other.
- That they would be unable today to come and to unburden themselves in thy presence. And to know that thou art the one that can meet with them at their point of need, out of the riches of thy grace, through Jesus Christ.
- Remember us as a nation, we pray thee, have pity upon us. And seek, O Lord, that it may please thee to bring our nation to days of repentance.
- Oh, days when they would look unto thee. Days when they would honour thy law. O Lord, we have erred from thy way. We have gone astray.
- [ 5 : 17 ]     But we pray, O Lord, that in thy mercy, that thou would return us again to be a nation of thine own truth. Who would value thy truth.
- Who would honour thy truth. And who would seek to live by thy truth. We pray, O Lord, that thou would be pleased to bless thy word to us as we come to read and to meditate upon it at this hour.
- That portion that we set aside, O Lord, may we have the enlightenment of thine own spirit and lead us to understand thy word.
- And to meditate upon it in a way that would honour and glorify thine own name. Oh, that it may indeed become a living word to each and every one of us.
- We pray, O Lord, that thou would continue with us as we wait upon thee. And all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins and for all our shortcomings is in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 35 ] Amen. We shall now read the word of God as we find it in the epistle of Paul to the Romans, beginning our reading in chapter 7 and reading a few verses also from chapter 8.

So we begin our reading in Romans chapter 7 and we shall read from verse 9. For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

And the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me.

Wherefore the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me, God forbid. But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good.

That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not.

[ 7 : 51 ] For what I would, that do I not. But what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

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. For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that, I would not. It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

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.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death, I thank God through Jesus Christ, O Lord. So then with a mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

[ 9 : 03 ] There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do and that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sin for flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. And so on, may the Lord bless to us the reading of that portion of his word.

And seeking the Lord's help, let us turn now to Romans 7 and read again at verse 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ, O Lord. So then with a mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin.

[ 10 : 06 ] What have we learned from our recent studies on Romans? As we looked at chapter 3 and 7, we have learned the following.

We have learned that mankind is under the law of God and therefore accountable to God. However, because we are sinners, we cannot keep the law of God.

We cannot attain to the righteousness that the law requires, hard as we may try. For the law is spiritual. It is not only concerned without outward actions, but also the actions of the mind, even the imagination.

We are lawbreakers, and as such we come under the condemnation of the law, and hence the sentence that the law enacts upon all those who fail to keep its precepts.

Man is in a helpless and hopeless condition. However, we also learned that God intervened, and that God has provided a righteousness through the life and death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

- [ 11 : 23 ] That this is a righteousness provided by God, a righteousness prepared by God, a righteousness that is made available by God.

As Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, For he hath made him, that is his Son, Jesus, to be sin for us who you know sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This righteousness can be imputed to us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we come from a helpless and hopeless state under the condemnation of the law to a state in which we have hope through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ, we are no longer under the law for our salvation, but we are under grace. As those who have committed themselves as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, as those who have the righteousness of Christ reckoned to their account, so that we can stand justified before God.

What then? How does this new life as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ affect me in my daily life?

- [ 12 : 47 ] Well, Scripture makes it quite clear to us that every follower of Jesus Christ is involved in fighting a great battle.

They have a fight on with the world, they have a fight on with the devil, and they have a fight on with the flesh, which Paul reminds us in Ephesians chapter 6, where he says, For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. We wrestle against the world, and we wrestle against principalities and powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

However, there is a more constant opponent that has a foothold within every Christian what we call indwelling sin, or this body of sin.

The battle between the new person that we are in Christ and the sin that still resides within us. And this is a relentless battle.

- [ 14 : 13 ] There is never a truce, never an agreed ceasefire. It is an ever-on-going battle. It is an internal strife.

And this passage in Romans 7, verse 15 onwards, is an account given to us of this battle. It is an account of Paul's own ongoing struggle with sin.

And once a person has been justified by faith, this battle ensues within them. We have often spoken of the fact that justification and sanctification cannot be separated.

Where there is one, there must be the other. However, we must know that justification is an act, while sanctification is a work.

As we noted recently, how the Catechism puts it, justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

- [ 15 : 25 ] justification is done not by us, but it is done for us, and that by someone else. You see, justification is an act of God, done once, never to be repeated.

It is not continuous, or something that can be improved over time. You may recall that when we studied Paul's letter to the Philippians, that we noted that the term salvation, or saved, is used in the Bible in three different tenses.

That is something that has already happened, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. That is, in the past, we have been saved, in that sense, in our justification.

But we also noted that there is another sense in which we can think of salvation as totally in the future, because there is a day coming when we shall be finally and completely saved, and that is our glorification.

That is the final aspect of salvation, and in that aspect, we shall be completely delivered from sin in every respect. But there is a period between justification and glorification.

[ 16 : 47 ] And in this period, we can say that we are still being saved. We have been saved from the power and pollution of sin. It is a process that is going on within us in the present.

So the Christian can say, I am saved in the past in my justification. I will be saved in the future in my glorification, but I am being saved in the present from the power and pollution of sin in my sanctification.

And it is this process of sanctification that Paul speaks of when he says, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. sanctification is a process that begins at the very beginning of our spiritual life when we are justified and will only be complete and perfect in our glorification.

And this is the process that Paul speaks of here in the end part of chapter 7 of Romans. He brings before us that the Christian life is a fight for holiness.

When God, through the Holy Spirit, begins this work in us, he calls us to live a certain kind of life. He calls us to change our behaviour, for we are to live as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

[ 18 : 15 ] And this is a great test of our Christian faith. We may be quite glad to hear the gospel and all that it has to offer, but when he calls us to change and live in a particular way, to change and to restructure our behaviour, then very often the reaction and attitude towards the gospel changes.

But the truth is that when a person is converted by the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit comes to indwell in that person and the Holy Spirit implants in that person the seat of holiness.

And that person immediately begins to decide holiness. Sin is an affront to that person. And so commences the battle.

Paul writes, For that which I do, I allow not. For what I would, that do I not.

But what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent into the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

[ 19 : 33 ] The question is that if we have a new nature with new affections and the Holy Spirit indwells in us, why do we still sin?

Paul says, For that which I do, I allow not. Or as the New King James puts it, For what I am doing, I do not understand. Or as the ESV puts it, For I do not understand my own actions.

The word allow not or understand can be used in the sense of approve. He does not approve of what he is doing. Now, this can be very perplexing and be frustrating for the Christian.

For what I would, that do I not. But what I hate, that do I. The New King James puts it, For what I will, to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate, that I do.

The ESV puts it this way, For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. But all these translations brings before us is the discrepancy that exists between that which the person's will on the one hand and the person's action on the other hand.

[ 20 : 59 ] Paul is telling us here that what he wants to do, he knows that he is not practicing it. Instead, he is doing the very thing that he hates.

This is a struggle that is very real. It is an intense struggle that is found within all true believers. The Christian may feel that he or she is a walking contradiction.

When one sins, the thought may cross their minds, What is wrong with me? Last week, we noted Rebecca's words when she said, If it be so, why am I thus?

Well, the Christian can say, I profess to be born again. I profess to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I profess to have the Holy Spirit within me.

I profess to have the seed of holiness implanted in me. Why do I go on sinning? Why do I go on doing that which I hate?

[ 22 : 07 ] Why do I go on doing that which is against what I desire to be and to do? The desire for holiness is implanted by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.

The desire is decided for personal holiness. The Christian has a new desire to walk worthy of their calling and yet they find that what they decide and what they actually do seems to be contradictory.

The psalmist said in Psalm 38, I am feeble and sore broken. I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee and my groaning is not hit from thee.

The desire is there but practice does not always line up with the desire. The Christians so often find themselves doing what they hate, caving in into temptation, compromising their witness.

Paul confesses that he does the very thing that he does not wish to do. But Paul knows as we recently saw and as he wrote down in his letter to the Philippians, not as though I had already attained I, they were already perfect.

[ 23 : 38 ] But I follow after that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I could not myself to have apprehended but this one thing I do for getting those things which are behind and reaching forth into those things which are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul, even as a mature Christian, is still entrenched in the battle against indwelling sin. And it is no different for me and you who today are believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This battlefield is within us and it is not going to go away. Sin is not vanquished and although it is no longer reigning upon the throne it still abides in the palace of our heart and tries to disrupt and spoil our Christian witness although it cannot destroy the Christian.

Paul goes on to say and he says if then I do that which I would not I consent unto the law that it is good. Now we have said quite a lot about the law over the past few weeks and maybe although I hope not that we looked upon the law in rather negative terms.

But one of the ministries of the law is to expose sin in our lives. Now this is not a negative thing but an incredibly positive thing because in revealing to us the sin of our heart the law is diagnosing our great problem.

[ 25 : 24 ] And although the law cannot save us it shows us our need of a saviour. As Paul says wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.

But we must not get the idea that once we are justified and become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ that once we become Christians that once we are set free from the condemnation of the law and we come under grace that the law has no more purpose in our lives.

Paul here says if then I do that which I would not I consent into the law that it is good. As a Christian he is saying that the law is still performing a needed and useful and positive ministry in his Christian life.

The law is still exposing the sin that is in his life and however much Paul laments his condition he has this consolation the fact that he is doing what he does not want to do shows that he is not against the law.

He gives this whole hearted endorsement of the law I consent into the law that it is good. He is all for it.

[ 26 : 47 ] he agrees with it. The word that Paul uses here for good can mean beautiful. In other words Paul is saying that the law is morally beautiful.

Then in verse 17 Paul says now then it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me.

the fact that Paul has endorsed the law as good and morally beautiful shows that it is not the real Paul who does it.

Now then it is no more I that do it. Although he doesn't specify what thing he does not do in the context it is referenced to the sin which the law forbids that which he does not want to do of verse 16.

On the contrary it is the sin that dwelleth in me that does it. Sin is pictured here by Paul as one who inhabits a house.

[ 28 : 06 ] Sin that dwelleth in me. we have already in our study come across this thought that sin is something that dwells in us.

Sin is not something that we acquire or something that is outside of us. Sin is a problem of the heart. And another thought we have come across is sin's great power.

He says here now then it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me. It is the sin that lives in Paul that produces the acts that Paul hates so much.

And the same is true of every Christian. Sin is out of character for the Christian. But although sin has been dethroned it has taken up residence as a squatter and it is impossible for us to eject him.

Now Paul is not reestablishing his responsibility in relation to sin. As he has said in the previous chapter let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lust thereof neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

[ 29 : 36 ] Or as he exhorts in the next chapter and we'll use the New King James version here for if you live according to the flesh you will die but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you shall live.

There is a putting to death of the Christian's responsibility with the help of the Holy Spirit.

You see there must be discipline in the Christian life. In 1 Corinthians chapter 9 Paul says but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.

You see sin is there and sin will take every opportunity it will find. Therefore Paul brings his body into subjection. There are those who will say that Paul the man of Romans 7 is the exact opposite of Paul the man of 1 Corinthians chapter 9.

In Romans 7 the man is defeated but in 1 Corinthians the man is able to bring his body into subjection they say. Well both are true. Is that not the difficulty of the Christian life?

[ 30 : 50 ] At times sin does defeat us and at other times we are able to bring our bodies into subjection. The rabbis could say of sin that at first it is like a passing visitor then it is like a guest who stays longer and finally it's like the master of the house.

Have we not already spoken of not only the power of sin but the deceitfulness of sin? It can begin so small and so plausible and soon it takes over and takes control.

It is my opinion that the differences between the man in Romans 7 and the man in 1 Corinthians does not mean that they are not both experiences of a converted of a converted person.

How often we feel defeated by sin and at other times may be more seldom but we are able to bring it into subjection. Both experiences of a truly converted and justified person.

here in chapter 7 Paul is pointing us to the source of the problem of why he does what he does not desire but that which he hates.

[ 32 : 06 ] Now then it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me. That Paul repeats in verses 18 to 20 more or less what he has already said in verses 14 to 17.

Paul has been saying that he cannot stop doing things of which he disapproves. But now he says in verse 18 to 20 he says that he cannot carry into action the things which he approves.

For I know that 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. For the good that I would I do not but the evil which I would not that I do.

Now if I do that I would not. It is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me. Paul uses the words my flesh here and in reference to the fallen state of man.

Flesh is not inherently evil but it is weak and not able to do what Paul approves. Paul finds that he does what he does not want to do and also fails to do what he wants to do.

[ 33 : 18 ] What we have set before us is the dilemma of the person who wants to do good and cannot. Luther borrows an illustration from horse riding.

He says it is as with a rider when his horse does not trot exactly as he wishes. It is he and yet not he that causes it to trot as it does.

For the horse is not without him nor he without the horse. Then Paul says I find then a law that when I would do good evil is present with me.

He is summing up what he has just been saying. The word law here means as such says controlling principle. Which later on he refers to, Paul refers to as the law of sin.

Paul rejoices in the law of God. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. Paul has already said that the law is spiritual and that he consents unto the law that it is good.

[ 34 : 25 ] But here he says that he delights in the law of God. It is like the blessed man we find in Psalm 1. But his delight is in the law of God and in his law he meditates day and night.

He delights in the law of God after the inward man. What is the inward man? Well Paul writing to the Corinthians in his second letter chapter 4 says, But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

The inward man refers to the mind and understanding. That part of us that can be illuminated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. So Paul is saying that with a mind and understanding he delights in the law of God.

Now that cannot be said of any unregenerated person. As we have already noted to them, the law of God is a burden. But for Paul obeying it is another thing altogether.

And to that he now turns. For he says, But I see another law in my members, warning against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

[ 35 : 39 ] He sees a law of a different kind that is at work within him which he calls the law of sin.

And the law works through what he calls his members or his body. The law of sin works through our mouth, through our lips, our tongue.

It works through our feet and hands. It works through our eyes and ears. Now we know that the body in and of itself is not evil.

But this law of sin works through the body. This law is warning against the law of his mind. In other words, Paul delights in the law of God with his mind and wants to do it.

But then he finds that there is this other law in his members of the body that urges him to do the opposite and prevents him from doing what he wants to do.

[ 36 : 36 ] Paul goes further and says that it conquers him, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Paul represents himself as led captive to the law of sin, since he does that which he does not will, what he does not want, what he does not desire.

The psalm writer could write in Psalm 119, Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law.

Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go on the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. Incline my heart into thy testimonies and not to covetousness.

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity and quicken thou me in thy way. And surely that is the prayer of a person who finds himself in this war.

[ 37 : 42 ] And then Paul's deep emotion explodes in the exclamation, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.

Paul is expressing in very forceful terms his dismay at what sin does to him. He finds unbearable that there is in him anything contrary to the law of God.

He goes on to ask, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The body of death is the physical body. There are those who will say that this cry could not be made by a person who knows Christ as Saviour, who knows the glory of the cross and who knows about the Spirit, that such a person could not simply cry out, Who?

For the person, they say, that is speaking, is a person who does not know who can deliver him. They say these are the words of a person under conviction, but not converted.

Well, I am not of that opinion. I take the question as that of a regenerated person who is fully aware of the Christian struggle with indwelling sin.

[ 38 : 57 ] The person has already said that the law is spiritual and that he consents into the law that it is good and that he delights in the law. But he knows that the law cannot save him, that the law cannot deliver him from its condemnation, and that he knows that he cannot save himself.

Paul gives the answer to the who. It is not a who of ignorance, because both the question and the answer cannot be separated. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ, O Lord. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The law cannot, and I cannot myself.

But thank God through Jesus Christ, O Lord, that I can be delivered. In other words, he answers the question of verse 24 by saying, no one can, but he answers it with joy.

I thank God through Jesus Christ, O Lord. Paul gives the answer. I thank God through Jesus Christ, O Lord. This is a triumphant assurance of ultimate deliverance from the body of this death and from the captivity to the law of sin, which produces the anguish of his complaint.



[ 40 : 17 ] Oh, wretched man that I am. Now, we know that when a Christian die, that death is gain. To be with Christ is bettered by far.

Sin will have been left behind forever. The conflict will have ended. However, if this body of this death refers to the physical body as we believe it does, that it is the body through which the law of sin carries on its warfare, then what is in you here by his thanksgiving is not simply death, but the resurrection.

He is looking forward with assurance to that day when the body of his humiliation will be transformed into the likeness of the body of Christ's glory. You know, it is interesting that it was not death that Paul longed for as a blessed hope, but the deliverance bestowed when the corruptible will put on in corruption and the mortal immortality.

And we know that the victory is God's. And it gives us that victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And notice here that he mentions the full name, Jesus, which means Saviour, Christ, which means Anointed One, Lord, which means the Sovereign Ruler.

I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. It's personal, isn't it? It is all of God's grace.

[ 41 : 45 ] Our redemption is not yet complete. It is but the first installment of greater things that is still to come. And Paul is looking forward to that day. And he's looking forward to that day with thanksgiving.

Amen. Then in the light of that blessed hope, Paul repeats in summary the life of conflict and struggle that has been unfolded in detail from verse 14 to 24.

So that with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. The fact that he repeats this after his triumphant thanksgiving indicates that he is fully aware that the conflict and struggle continues, but that he is upheld in the conflict by the assurance that finally there will be complete deliverance.

Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

But I have this assurance that I will have ultimate triumphant victory over sin through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[ 43 : 01 ] But the battle continues in the present. Well, where does that leave me and you? Do we have this daily battle with sin?

Can we say like Paul, for what I am doing I do not understand or approve, for what I will to do that I do not practise, but what I hate that I do?

Well, I think I'd answer that we have already noted, following Paul's own practice. Not as though I had already attained, neither were already perfect.

But I know after, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that, for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but there was one thing I do. This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth into those things which are before, I press out the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.

[ 44 : 11 ] Is that where we leave you today? Is that where we leave you this morning? Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth into those things which are before, are you pressing out the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?

Well, that was what Paul was doing. He could cry out, Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death. And at the same time, he knew the answer.

He had the assurance of that ultimate victory. I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. But in the present, I have to continue the fight.

I have to press, tells the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. May the Lord bless our thoughts today.

Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we acknowledge that at times when we feel ourselves so confused and perplexed, and sometimes we feel so frustrated because of the battle that we are aware of that goes on within us.

[ 45 : 38 ] We are so conscious of the struggle daily with indwelling sin. And we acknowledge that very often it defeats us, very often it gains ground on us.

But we give thanks that we can look to that ultimate victory that we will have in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the meantime, O Lord, we know that we have to continue in this struggle.

And we ask that it may please Thee to grant to us the grace to enable to continue in this battle, knowing that the battle is the Lord's, knowing that we are not separated from Thee, that we are united to Thee by faith, and that the battle is Thee, and that in Thee, through Thy Son, we shall have victory.

Grant to us, O Lord, Thine own mercy as we continue in this struggle, and as we continue throughout this day, and the days, and the weeks, and the months that lie ahead.

O Lord, grant to us the grace that we would be unable to discipline ourselves, and to do everything that is within our own power through Thy Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body, and to bring our bodies into subjection.

[ 47 : 12 ] We ask, O Lord, that Thou would continue with us. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.