

*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! **Romans 7:24***

Conflicted Man

Doy Moyer

Store In My Heart

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

From beginning to end, John's gospel gives focus to the Son of God. As he states near the end of the book John wrote to instill belief in Jesus as the Son of God. This belief is central to our salvation. Thus the gospel as recorded by the apostle John is one that we need to give close attention in our study. Slow down and soak in the words John recorded. Consider context in this useful message.

The miracles, the teaching, even the interaction with Jewish leaders, will help us strengthen our faith in Jesus as Savior. The events of Jesus' final week are very strong proofs that God sent His Son to die for us. God dwelt among us and demonstrated grace while revealing Truth.

We all know what it's like to struggle inside. We understand the conflict of wanting to do what is right on the one hand, and not doing it on the other. Because of how much we all identify with that struggle, we commonly point to Romans 7 as the example of this problem. Even Paul struggled with it. So what is the issue?

The question has to do with which part of Paul's life he was referencing. The fact that Paul speaks in the present tense through that section (vv. 13-34) does not prove that Paul was speaking of his life as a Christian. This way of speaking (first person, present) is not uncommon as a literary or rhetorical device to make a bigger point. We can back up a little in the context to see how Paul was setting up this section.

Paul argues that he would not have known sin but through the Law (of Moses), but when the Law came, sin become alive and he died (vs. 9). Thus the Law became the means through which Paul died spiritually, even though the Law itself was good. Even so, through the commandments of the Law, sin was demonstrated to be "utterly sinful" (vs. 13). At this point, Paul launches into the contrast between being "sold into the bondage of sin" and being set free in Christ. However, to get that bigger point, we must read into chapter 8 (the chapter break between 7 and 8 is not ideal).

When we read these chapters together, we find the contrast to be very pointed. That contrast is well stated in 8:2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." What Paul is describing in chapter 7 is what happens when someone tries to rely on the "law of sin and death." He describes the indwelling of sin and evil and being under bondage to sin, but these are not descriptions of one who has been set free from that bondage. These describe one who tries to work out the problem of sin on his



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For Our Information

Joyce Venable is feeling better. She has been staying at home and resting for most of the last week.

John & Betty Ragsdale continue to deal with health issues.

Paula Laubach has been dealing with back pain the last few days.

Vickie McKnees is still dealing with pain regularly also.

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

own, apart from Christ, before being set free in Christ. Perfect law-keeping would be required if that were the case, but the Law couldn't provide complete forgiveness of sin (cf. 8:3), and since all have sinned (3:23), such perfection would not be possible. Forgiveness is needed.

A much fuller comparison and contrast can be done, but what convinces me that chapter 7 is referring to the unregenerate man without Christ is the following comparison:

In 7:17 Paul speaks of "sin which dwells in me." In 7:18 he says that "nothing good dwells in me."

Compare that to 8:9-11, where the Spirit and Christ are said to dwell in the child of God.

How can sin dwell where Christ is? And if "nothing good dwells in me," and Christ and His Spirit also dwell in me, what does this say about Christ and the Spirit? These simply cannot be reconciled as dwelling in the same place. Therefore, Paul must be speaking about two different circumstances.

When one tries to work out sin without Christ, he will fail. "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24-25)

None of this is to say that Christians never struggle with sin or commit sin, but it is to say that we cannot live in sin (cf. 1 John 3:9), and we must never rely solely on our own strength to overcome it. Perhaps we find ourselves in deeper struggles like that described in Romans 7 because we are relying too much on ourselves. In that case, we are following the pattern of the flesh far too much and need to be reminded of what Christ came to do for us. If we set our minds on the flesh, then we cannot please God (8:8). If we set our minds on the "things of the Spirit" (8:5), we will have life and peace (vs. 6). That contrast is clear. Romans 7-8 shows the beauty of the gospel with the marvelous reminder: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1).

Why is this important? Because it focuses on how we need to be thinking of ourselves as those redeemed by the blood of Christ. We understand the struggle with sin, but rather than see ourselves as those in whom sin dwells, we must see ourselves as those in whom Christ and the Spirit dwell. "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (8:9). This is not a claim to personal perfection, but it is a reminder of our need to reflect the power of God's mercy through living by the Spirit of God.

(Reprinted from October 2016. I thought this might be a good article to revisit since we recently studied this passage in our Wednesday Class. DLH)



We seek only to serve God according to His Will!