

Sermon Title: The Lament Over Sin's Residence In Men, Part 1

(The Lament Of A Man Trying To Maintain Righteousness By The Law)

Sermon Text: Romans 7:13-20

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to understand the importance of the law to control sin within.

Sermon Proposition: There are 4 laments reflected by Paul over the Law's inability to control sin within.

Introduction:

Holman Christian Study Bible: pp. 1938

“7:14-25 This section is probably the most difficult and controversial passage in the letter to the Romans. For the most part the Eastern Church has interpreted it as referring to an unregenerate person [e.g., Paul before his conversion]. The Western Church has followed Augustine, Luther, and Calvin in thinking it refers to a regenerate person [Paul after his conversion]. Some suggest a mediating position. One such view interprets the subject as an OT believer who loves the law [Pss 1; 119] but struggles to perform it. Living before Christ and Pentecost, this person does not have the permanent and empowering gift of the Holy Spirit, as do new covenant believers. Another view holds that the subject is almost converted to Christ and is now under conviction of sin by the law.

The view that the subject of 14-25 is a regenerate person is sometimes modified in the following ways:

(1) The subject is saved but has not had “baptism” in the Pentecostal sense or a second work of grace [as held in some types of Wesleyan theology]. (2) The subject is an immature believer, not yet equipped for warfare with his fleshly desires. (3) The subject is a believer trying to become sanctified by legalism.”

The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans by Douglas Moo p.445-446

“The most important reasons for thinking the experience depicted in vv. 14-25 is that of an *unregenerate* person are the following:

1. The strong connection of *ego* with “the flesh” (vv. 14, 18, and 25) suggests that Paul is elaborating on the unregenerate condition mentioned in 7:5: being “in the flesh.”
2. *Ego* throughout this passage struggles “on his/her own” (cf. “I myself” in v. 25), without the aid of the Holy Spirit.
3. *Ego* is “under the power of sin” (v.14b), a state from which every believer is released (6:2, 6, 11, 18-22).
4. As the unsuccessful struggle of vv. 15-20 shows, *ego* is a “prisoner of the law of sin” (v. 23). Yet Rom. 8:2 proclaims that believers have been set free from this same “law of sin (and death).”
5. While Paul makes clear that believers will continue to struggle with sin (cf., e.g., 6:12-13; 13:12-14; Gal 5:17), what is depicted in 7:14-25 is not just a struggle with sin but a defeat by sin. This is a more negative view of the Christian life than can be accommodated within Paul’s theology.
6. The *ego* in these verses struggles with the need to obey the Mosaic law; yet Paul has already proclaimed the release of the believer from the dictates of the law (6:14; 7:4-6).”

“The most important reasons for thinking that the experience depicted in 7:14-25 must be that of a *regenerate* person are the following:

1. *Ego* must refer to Paul himself, and the shift from the past tenses of vv. 7-13 to the present tenses of vv. 14-25 can be explained only if Paul is describing in these latter verses his present experience as a Christian.
2. Only the regenerate truly “delight in God’s law” (v. 22), seek to obey it (vv.15-20), and “serve” it (v. 25); the unregenerate do not “seek after God” (3:11) and cannot “submit to the law of God” (8:7).
3. Whereas the “mind” of people outside of Christ is universally presented by Paul as opposed to God and his will (cf. Rom. 1:28; Eph. 4:17; Col. 2:18; 1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 2:15), the “mind” of *ego* in this text is a positive medium, by which *ego* “serves the law of God” (vv. 22, 25).
4. *Ego* must be a Christian because only a Christian possess the “inner person”; cf. Paul’s only other two uses of the phrase in 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16.

5. The passage concludes, *after* Paul's mention of the deliverance wrought by God in Christ, with a reiteration of the divided state of the *ego* (vv. 24-25). This shows that the division and struggle of the *ego* that Paul depicts in these verses is that of the person already saved by God in Christ."

The Book of Lamentations is a mournful postscript to the Book of Jeremiah. Through the use of five funeral laments, the author grieved over the fate of Jerusalem because of her sin. Yet the book contains more than just the backward glances for vindicated prophet. "It is a mute reminder that sin, in spite of all its allurements and excitement, carries with it heavy weights of sorrow, grief, misery, barrenness, and pain. It is the other side of eat, drink, and be merry coin" (Charles R. Swindoll, *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*, "Introduction")

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary: pp. 471

Lament: To express or feel sorrow; to mourn greatly. To express deep sorrow for or about.

- 1) Expression of grief or sorrow; lamentation.

This section of Romans is the lament of a person of the Mosaic law, who longs to be delivered from the fallen human body and its members as weapons of sin, which still wages war against the new redeemed inner man.

Sarkinos vs Sarkikos – fleshly composition vs fleshly tendency. (made of flesh is the idea of "sarkinos.")

The Christian struggles between the times of Christ's first and second comings; hence inner conflict is inevitable, as is the need for continual exhortation.

Understanding the conflict in personal sanctification involves seeing the relationship between what the Mosaic law can do about sin, and what Christ has done.

The reflection of v.13 needs to guide our understanding of the next section.

- 1) The law is good
- 2) Sin is made "manifest" through the law
- 3) Sin works through the law to produce death

I. The lament over the conflict of the good law and fallen humans. V.14-17

A. The explanation of the condition. V.14

Paul's essential teaching about the inability of the Mosaic Law to rescue sinful people from spiritual bondage is the same whether that bondage is the condition of the unregenerated person – who cannot be sanctified and ultimately delivered from the influence of sin through the law.

1. The law is spiritual. V.14a
2. I am carnal, or I am of the flesh. V.14b
3. I am sold under sin. V.14c

Romans 6:8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, **9** knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. **10** For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

In lamenting his personal experience in 7:14-25, Paul consistently uses the present tense whereas he had been using the imperfect and aorist tense. He was lamenting over the inability of the good law to overcome his fallen humanness, and sin's power within.

Yes, this can be true for a Christian to some extent, sin also still resides in a believer's humanness, we are still subject to sin's penalty physical death, also indwelling sin in the members of our body still seeks to claim control of that which it still thinks is its property.

B. The explanation of the proof. V.15

(lit., “what I am producing I do not know”). He was like a little boy whose honest answer to why he did something wrong is, “I don’t know.” A person’s actions are at the dictate of someone or something else besides himself that they really don’t understand.

Paul under the Mosaic law, willed to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law of God, but what he found himself doing, was not in line with the law of God. He found himself doing that which was prohibited by the law of God.

C. The explanation of the source of the conflict. V.16-17

Paul now provides the explanation, or the source, of the inability to perfectly fulfill the law of God, and he starts with a defense of the divine standard of God’s law. The perfectly righteous law of God is not the source of the problem when it comes to sin (v.12). While the moral or Jew, or believer may long to honor the law and keep it perfectly and even lament over their sin, they find another law conflicting with the law of God, within themselves.

The more a person is exposed to the Word of God (law of God) the more they perceive the law’s goodness, holiness, and glory. But they start to sense their inability to meet the requirements.

In verse 17, Ouketi (no longer) is a negative adverb of time, indicating a complete and permanent change. Paul’s new (I) (ego), his new inner self, no longer approves of sin that still clings to him through the members of his flesh.

Whereas before his conversion his inner self approved of the sin he committed, but the new inner self strongly disapproves of sin within his members.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

The source of the problem is the sin that dwells or resides in the members of our flesh. After salvation, sin like a deposed and exiled ruler no longer reigns in a person’s life, but it manages to survive. It no longer resides in the innermost self but finds its residual dwelling in our flesh, in the unredeemed humanness that remains until the believer meets the Lord at the Rapture or at death.

Acts 5:16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. **17** Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation,

Because of the power of “sin dwelling in me,” Paul is lamenting over the frustration of carrying out what he knows to be God’s good will according to the law of God. He fixed that responsibility on the power (within) the person (sin) which leads that person to do what is sin.

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹² They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." ¹³ "Their throat *is* an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps *is* under their lips"; ¹⁴ "Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ Destruction and misery *are* in their ways; ¹⁷ And the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. **8** So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

II. The lament over the conflict between willing and doing. V.18-20

A. The Explanation of the condition. V.18a

Paul wants to reveal the “dividedness” of Jews under the law as a way of explaining how sincere respect for that law could be combined with failure to perform it.

It is not that Paul is viewing the “flesh” as inherently evil, or as necessarily leading to evil, but that he considers the material body to be that “part” of the person which is particularly susceptible to sin, and which in the non-Christian falls under the dominion of sin.

B. The explanation of the proof. V.18b-19

Paul emphasizes the conflict of “willing” and “doing” as a way of demonstrating the extent to which the “flesh” has fallen under the control of sin. The willing to do good is there, the ability is not. His point is that the Jew under the law, and, by extension, other non-Christians, do have a genuine striving to do what is right, as defined by God (2:14-15). But this striving after the right, because of the unbroken power of sin, can never so “take over” the mind and will that it can effectively and consistently direct the body to do what is good.

C. The explanation of the source. V.20