

Sermon Title: The Lament Over Sin's Residence in Men, Part 2

Sermon Text: Romans 7:18-25

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

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

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

II. The lament over the conflict between willing and doing. VV.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 the law could be combined with the failure to perform it.

It is not that Paul is viewing the "flesh" as inherently evil, or as necessarily leading to evil, but 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. VV.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-Christian (pagans, moral conscience persons) do strive to do right, because of the unbroken power of sin, they 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

III. The lament over the conflict of the principle of evil in the members of our body and the law of God in our mind. VV.21-23

A. The explanation of the condition. V.21

The continual presence of evil in the believers and unbelievers life is a universal principle that Paul reflects as a common thing but as being true in its commonality, it is a continual operating principle. The dominating sin, or the remaining sin in the believer battles with every good thing the law of God mandates. Evil battles thoughts, intentions, motive, words, and deeds. **Genesis 4:7** "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it."

On the basis of the unsuccessful struggle in this conflict to do the good the law demands by the Mosaic law, Paul now draws a conclusion: "Therefore, I find this law or principle: when I desire to do good, evil is present there with me." "I find then, this law or principle: that when I want to do good, evil lies close at hand." (Gadet; Michael; Kuss; Cranfield)

B. The explanation of the proof. VV.22-23a

1. He delights in the law of God. V.22

Matthew 5:6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.

Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

The law of God, is again the Mosaic law, the Torah, to which Paul as a Jew was devoted. The law in various forms: Torah of Israel, the “law of nature” and the conscience of the Gentiles.

Romans 2:14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, **15** who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their thoughts accusing or else excusing them*)

2. He recognizes a different law or principle at work. V.23a
3. He struggles against a warring principle in his mind. V.23b

Mind can refer to the reasoning side of a person. Here, however, Paul implies that the mind is an ally of God’s law; many conclude that Paul must be describing a Christian with a “renewed” mind able to respond favorably to God’s law. (**12:2; 1 Cor 2:16; Eph 2:3**) Paul is however saying the “reason” or “will” of the non-Christian is capable of approving the demands of God in his law morally. (**Rom 2**)

4. He confesses to times of temporarily being a prisoner to sin in his members. V.23c (Gal 2:11ff)

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. **1 Corinthians 3:1** And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. **2** I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; **3** for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere men*? **4** For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal?

IV. The lament over the conflict of remaining in the flesh and putting on incorruptibility. V.24-25

Paul has now concluded this description of some say is his pre-Christian situation, as a Jew who reverences the Mosaic law and find righteousness through the keeping of the law, yet finds that the power of sin is too strong to enable him to comply with demands of law, in this inward man.

Certainly the Christian who is even more sensitive to his or her failure to meet God’s demands of righteousness and even sanctification, experiences a sense of frustration and misery at that failure (8:23); but Paul’s language here is stronger than what it might be for a Christian.

If Paul is describing his present condition, Douglas Moo in his Commentary on Romans makes several observations:

1. Paul is describing an experience he has, to some extent at least shared in.
2. Paul well knows that this very struggle characterizes most of his “kinfolk according to the flesh.” As he writes this section.
3. However, we must recognize that, while the cry is uttered by a Jew under the law, it is written by a Jew who is in Christ and is discovering just how “wretched” his past condition really was; and this Christian’s insight undoubtedly colors the narrative. (Douglas Moo, “Commentary on Romans. P. 465)

Paul provides the solution for his lament over his condition, proof that validates, and the source of the problem.

While Paul according to Douglas Moo, is not, in his opinion depicting a Christian situation in the paragraph, there are several important theological applications for the Christian.

1. We are reminded of our past – unable to do God’s will, frustrated perhaps at our failure – so that we may praise God for His deliverance with deeper understanding and joy.
2. We are warned that the Mosaic law, and hence, all law, is unable to deliver us from the power of sin; the multiplication of “rules” and “commands,” so much a tendency in some Christian circles, will be more likely to drive us deeper into frustration than to improve the quality of our walk with Christ. (Douglas Moo “Commentary on Romans”; P. 467)