

Sermon Notes for November 6, 2016

Sermon Series On The Holiness Of God
“Understanding The Struggle Of The
Believer To Be Holy”
Romans 7:14-8:4

Two men who lived in a small village got into a terrible dispute that they could not resolve. **So they decided to talk to the town sage.**

The **first man** went to the sage’s home and told his version of what happened. When he finished, the sage said, **“You’re absolutely right.”**

The next night, the **second man** called on the sage and told his side of the story. The sage responded, **“You’re absolutely right.”**

Afterward, the **sage’s wife** scolded her husband. “Those men told you two different stories and you told them they were absolutely right. That’s impossible—they can’t both be absolutely right.” The sage turned to his wife and said, **“You’re absolutely right.”**

Introduction

A. We Continue Our Sermon Series On The Holiness Of God

1. We all understand, from Scripture, that God is holy
2. But, we also understand, from Scripture, that man is a sinner
 - a. so, how in the world can the Christian truly deal with this tremendous spiritual difference between a holy God and an unholy man?
 - b. will we, as Christians, ever get over “this struggle?”

B. Today, We Will Look At The Apostle Paul’s Explanation Of How To Deal With This Struggle

1. For the Apostle Paul, his spiritual struggle never ended
2. So, today, we will have the blessing of identifying with one of God’s greatest saints who personally knew of the holiness of God WHILE HE ALSO dealt with his own sin
3. This spiritual struggle is found in the seventh chapter of the book of Romans.
 - a. it describes Paul’s spiritual struggle **AND** it describes our spiritual struggle
 - b. trust me, if the believer in Jesus does **not** understand this particular chapter in the book of Romans, he will be confused for the rest of his life on this earth.
 - c. **SO**, please listen carefully about how believers are to deal with a struggle **THAT WE ALL HAVE AS CHRISTIANS!**

I. THE CONFUSION OF THE CHRISTIAN

A. The CONFLICT OF THE CHRISTIAN

Romans 7:15 – “**I do not understand what I do.** For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”

1. In this text, Paul, the Apostle, was speaking of the struggle that **HE** experienced **AS A BELIEVER**

- a. there are many Christians and scholars who do not believe that Paul is speaking of himself as a Christian in this text
 1. for, do Christians REALLY struggle with sin as is seen in this text?
 2. and, how can a “real” Christian be so confused?
 - b. however, most Biblical scholars take the position that Paul **was** speaking as a Christian, not as a non-Christian:
 1. Martin Luther
 2. John Knox
 3. John Calvin
 4. A. W. Pink
 5. Louis Berkhof
 6. Charles Hodge
 7. F. F. Bruce
 8. John Stott
 9. John Piper
 10. R. C. Sproul
 11. Chuck Swindoll
 12. **John MacArthur** – “I believe that **Romans 7:14-25** is Paul’s own testimony of how it is to live as a spirit controlled, mature believer.”
 13. **Dr. Kenneth Berding**, a Professor at Talbot Seminary, tells of an encounter with J. I. Packer – Berding told Packer: “Romans 7! I don’t understand. Romans 7! What’s going on in that passage? “Packer gently leaned over the table, looked me in the eye, and said, Young man, Paul wasn’t struggling with sin because he was such a sinner. **Paul was struggling because he was such a saint.** Sin makes you numb. People who sin over and over again become desensitized to sin. The reason Paul’s “struggle” was so intense was **not** because he was caught in a web of sin or because he thought of himself as hopelessly doomed to giving into the temptations that he faced. **Paul lived a life so sensitive to the Holy Spirit and passionate about the glory of God that he intensely felt his sins whenever he became aware that he had committed a sin.**”
 - c. I like what **Kent Hughes** said: “This is Paul’s autobiography, but it is also the experience of every Christian. **Anyone who has seriously followed Christ has known something of this. This is reality.**”
2. so, why is the Apostle Paul so confused about his spiritual struggle in Romans 7?
- a. **IT IS BECAUSE HE IS A BELIEVER!**
 1. a believer who **knew** that Jesus saved him and changed him
 2. a believer who **understood** the grace of God in his life
 3. a believer whom **God had effectively used** in the ministry of the gospel
 - b. but, **ALSO, WHO WAS A BELIEVER WHO CONTINUED TO SIN!**

1. what Paul is actually saying is: **If I know Jesus Christ and serve Jesus Christ; WHY DO I STILL SIN?**
2. **“I AM A TOTAL HYPOCRITE!”**
3. trust me, there has never been a true follower of Jesus WHO HAS NOT DEALT WITH THIS STRUGGLE
4. so, if the Apostle Paul dealt with this struggle, “You are in good company.”

B. The CONFIRMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN

1. to make matters even worse, besides declaring that he continued to sin, Paul said that; despite his sin, he loved God’s Law!
Romans 7:14a – “We know that the law is spiritual.”
Romans 7:18 – “I have the desire to do what is good”
2. Paul is saying; how is it possible that I can love God’s Law and desire to obey it, **AND YET, CONTINUE TO SIN?**
3. as believers, we need a “balanced,” Biblical view of being both a Christian **AND** being a sinner
4. we need to know that it is a struggle and will continue to be a struggle to desire to be holy and yet fail to be holy.
5. let us look more deeply at this struggle:
 - a. **first**, let us look at the Westminster Confession of Faith (Modern Edition)
 1. of **Justification** (5)
God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified. Although they can never fall from the state of justification, **they may by their sins come under God’s fatherly displeasure and not have a sense of His presence with them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, ask for forgiveness, and renew their faith in repentance.**
 - a. according to the Confession, a believer thus, can be justified, saved, and yet continue to sin!
 - b. that is **WHY WE NEED TO CONSTANTLY ASK GOD FOR FORGIVENESS!**
 2. of **Sanctification** (2)
This sanctification works in the whole person, **but not completely or perfectly in this life.** The old sinful nature retains some of its control in body, mind, and spirit. **And so a continual and irreconcilable war goes on in every believer.** The old nature tries to get its way in opposition to the Spirit, and the Spirit fights to assert its authority over the flesh.
 - a. also, according to the Confession, **THE BELIEVER WILL NEVER BE PERFECT IN THIS LIFE!**
 - b. in fact, as the Confession says; **“It will be a continual and irreconcilable war.”**
 - b. **second**, let me ask you a question: do you believe that the non-believer, the non-Christian; the unsaved, are bothered by their sin?
 1. do you think that the non-Christian has the same emotional struggle as the Christian does over his sin?

2. the fact that you **are** bothered by your sin, that you are disgusted by your sin, **PROVES** that you are a Christian!
3. **THE REASON** that you are so grieved over your sin is that:
 - a. you **KNOW** the love of Jesus
 - b. you have **EXPERIENCED** God's grace in your life
 - c. you want to **OBEY HIS LAW** and represent Him well
4. **Pastor Freddy Fritz** – “The fact that you **are struggling with sin** is **not** a sign of spiritual deadness. It is in fact, a sign of spiritual life. If you were spiritually dead, do you think that sin or Satan would **be** prompting you to be miserable in sin and to war against it? If you are spiritually alive, don't you think that the Holy Spirit would be conducting an aggressive, offensive campaign against that sin? **The very fact that you're struggling is a sign of God's grace. The fact that you're struggling is a sign of spiritual life.** Only a live man can struggle. Dead men just lie there; there's no struggle.”

II. THE COMPANIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN

A. The NEGATIVE COMPANION OF THE CHRISTIAN

Romans 7:17 – “As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, **but it is sin living in me.**”

Romans 7:21 – “So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, **evil is right there with me.**”

Romans 7: 23 – “but I see another law at work in the members of my body, **waging war** against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”

1. what the believer in Jesus **MUST REALIZE** is that **HE/SHE IS STILL A SINNER AFTER BEING SAVED!**
 - a. **despite the fact** that you have trusted Jesus as your Savior
 - b. **despite the fact** that you have given your heart fully to Him
 - c. **despite the fact** that you have served Jesus Christ in ministry
 - d. **YOU ARE STILL A SINNER!**
2. notice what Paul says about how sin was affecting him personally!
 - a. **Romans 7:17b** – “it is **sin living in me.**”
 1. living – greek – to dwell; a house
 2. a present active participle (present active participle)
 - b. **Romans 7:21b** – “**evil is right there with me.**”
 - c. **Romans 7:23** – “but I see another law at work in the members of my body, **waging war** against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”
 1. warring
 2. to make a military
 3. to lead soldiers
 - d. this spiritual battle is between God's call to be holy and the believer's sin nature that does not **want** to be holy
 1. ultimately, we need to realize that believers have “two personalities”
 - a. it is “as if” there is an angel on one of our shoulders and a demon on the other

- b. **Robert Louis Stephenson** wrote Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in 1886
 - 1. Dr. Jekyll was the “good man”
 - 2. Dr. Hyde was the “evil man”
 - 3. Mr. Stevenson was once asked, “Where did you find the model for your character of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.” He said, “**I found it in my nature.**”
 - c. **Greenwood, MS** – I saw two locomotive train engines facing each other as one pulled the train.
 - 2. believers **must** realize that we have “two personalities;” NOT JUST ONE!
 - 3. it is as if we are “spiritual schizophrenics”
 - 3. hopefully, these two verses will show you the difference between your “**position in Christ**” and your “**practice in Christ**”
 - a. our **justification is secure**
Colossians 3:3-4 – “**For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”
 - b. our **sanctification is a struggle**
Colossians 3:5 – “**Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:** sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”
 - 4. **THEREFORE**, as a believer, you will **never** totally conquer sin in your life
 - a. it may be subdued, or immobilized, but it will never go away in this life
 - b. I love this description of the Christian’s struggle:
 - 1. a person with Parkinson’s disease holds the coffee cup steady “**with his mind**”
 - 2. as the Parkinson’s disease “**causes his hand to shake**”
 - c. this is how I handle **my own** spiritual struggle between God’s holiness and my sinfulness
 - 1. “**I AM NOT SURPRISED!**”
 - 2. your spiritual health will be directly affected by your view that you are **STILL A SINNER:**
 - a. there are some believers who think that they no longer sin after their conversion
 - b. lunch with a couple visiting our church; the husband did not think that he still sinned

B. The POSITIVE COMPANION OF THE CHRISTIAN

- 1. **HOWEVER**, let me encourage you believers that all is not lost
- 2. for, inasmuch as each of us have an internal enemy, our sin nature, we also have an internal supporter: The **Holy Spirit of God**
Romans 7:22 – “**For in my inner being I delight in God's law;**”
 - a. the greek word for delight is made up of two words; sune domai
 - 1. sune
 - a. to be with
 - b. to accompany

2. domai
 - a. to delight
 - b. to rejoice
 - c. this greek word, domain is derived from the greek word, **hedone**, from where we get the word hedonism
 - d. it's as if the Christian is a "Christian hedonist"
- b. **THIS "INNER DELIGHT" IS CAUSED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US**
 1. so, despite, the fact that each of us will continue to struggle with sins while we live on this earth,
 2. each of us, as believers, have within us the blessed, all-powerful Holy Spirit of God that causes us to love Jesus and His Word.
 3. **WHO ELSE BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT COULD CAUSE SINNERS TO LOVE JESUS AND HIS WORD!**

C. The NEGATIVE CONCLUSION OF THE BELIEVER

1. so, you now understand the constant struggle of the believer with sin, and that the believer FEELS LIKE A SPIRITUAL LOSER WHEN HE/SHE SINS!
2. a part of you loves the Lord, and a part of you loves sin
3. so that when you sin, you feel badly
 - a. I know Jesus Christ
 - b. He has **died** for me
 - c. and yet, here I am, sinning, **DESPITE** all that He has done for me
4. so, the Apostle Paul says it well to describe the horrible feelings of a believer when he does fall into sin

Romans 7:24 –“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

 - a. “I feel terrible, embarrassed and guilty when I sin!”
 - b. what is most interesting about Paul’s comments is that he feels like he is “wrapped” in “this body of death,”
 1. the Apostle Paul was from the town of Tarsus
 2. history tells us that the penalty for murder in Tarsus was that the sentence of a murderer was that the murdered body would be literally physically strapped very tightly to the murderer’s own body
 - a. that was the sentence for murder
 - b. the murdered body would be strapped to the murderer’s body so that it would have been impossible for the murderer to extricate himself
 - c. the murderer would then be taken to the desert where he would suffer death “through” the person he murdered
 3. thus, Paul used a most descriptive word to describe his emotions about his own sin: **“What a wretched man that I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?”**
 - a. “What a mess I am in”
 - b. “How horrible I feel”

- c. WHO CAN SET ME FREE FROM THIS BODY OF SIN THAT IS STRAPPED TO MY BODY?
- d. I have used these very words many times to describe myself or I have fallen into sin
 - 1. “I am not only a Christian, BUT I AM A PASTOR.”
 - 2. “WHAT AM I DOING SINNING LIKE THIS?”
 - 3. “I AM SO WRETCHED!”

III. THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN

A. The HONESTY OF THE CHRISTIAN

- 1. this was why Paul screamed vs 24b - “**who will rescue me from this body of death?**”
 - a. Paul was **admitting** that **he** could **NOT** solve his sin problem
 - b. Paul was saying that **he** could not get **himself** freed from the sin that dominated him
- 2. Paul was saying; “**I NEED HELP!**”
 - a. if you, as a believer, think that you can rescue **yourself** from your sins, then you are sadly mistaken!
 - b. for, you have, tried and tried and tried to extricate yourself from your sin and have not been able to do so
 - c. and, what makes it worse is that you find yourself “tied up“ by sin
 - d. so, with the Apostle Paul, you can scream; “**What a wretched man I am. WHO will rescue me from this body of death?**”
 - 1. PLEASE NOTICE THAT PAUL ASKS “**WHO**” CAN SET HIM FREE?”
 - 2. **NOT WHAT!**

B. The HALLELUJAH OF THE CHRISTIAN

- 1. The **GREAT NEWS** is that Paul realized **the only one** who could free him **Romans 7:25a – “Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!”**
 - a. the Apostle Paul tells us of **THE ONLY ONE** who is able to set believers free from our struggle with sin:
 - 1. it is **not you**
 - 2. it is **not your Pastor**
 - 3. it is **not your Christian friend**
 - 4. it is **not a sermon**
 - 5. it is **not a Christian book**
 - 6. it is **not a trip to the Holy Land**
 - b. the Apostle tells us that the only one who can free us from our controlling sin is **JESUS CHRIST ALONE!**
 - c. **now, how** can Jesus set us free?
 - 1. confess your sins – particularly
 - 2. repent of your sins – turn from them
 - 3. rebuke Satan, in Jesus name

4. ask God's Holy Spirit to fill you
5. get back into the "means of grace"
2. PLEASE, PLEASE NOTICE THAT after we have confessed our sins; **Jesus declares us as forgiven!**
Romans 8:1 – "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."
 - a. **DO YOU REALIZE WHAT PAUL IS SAYING?**
 1. despite the fact that you are a Christian and that you have sinned: that:
 - a. you have **lived a "double life"**
 - b. you have **been a hypocrite**
 - c. you have **lived as a Christian in sin**
 2. you have been delivered by the Lord Jesus through your confession of sin, **AND THERE IS NO MORE CONDEMNATION!**
 - a. you don't **have** to feel guilty anymore
 - b. you don't **need** to feel condemnation anymore
 - c, Jesus has "cut off" or release you from that "body of death" and you are free to walk in total confidence of your forgiveness
 - b. this **WAS** the Apostle Paul's struggle and this **IS** your struggle
 1. after Paul sinned, he confessed and repented and he was set free
 2. now, will you confess, will you repent, so that you can be set free?

Conclusion

1. So, believer, hopefully you have learned today that at the same time you are saved, you can struggle with sin.
2. Michael Breissen was a new father, and he was not about to let his wife's first Mother's Day pass by uncelebrated. But she was a nurse and on that particular Sunday, she was working at the local hospital, and they weren't able to celebrate together at home. So Michael plunked his new son, Jason, in the baby carrier, drove to the hospital, and in front of all the patients and co-workers, surprised his wife, Miriam, with candy, flowers and balloons that said, "World's Greatest Mom."
 It was a great Mother's Day. But after celebrating, it was time for Miriam to go back to work and Jason and Michael to go back home. So, Michael gathered all the things that had been part of the celebration: the candy, flowers, and balloons. Michael begrudgingly tossed the candy on the front seat and got the flowers arranged on the floor where they wouldn't tip over. He pulled the balloons in out of the wind and got everything arranged and headed home.

On the way home, people began to honk their horns and flash their lights at him. He didn't realize what was going on until he hit 55 miles per hour on the highway. He heard a long scraping noise go down the roof, followed by a loud thump. **He watched in horror in the rearview mirror as the baby carrier bounced off the trunk onto the highway and began to slide along behind the car.** Michael had forgotten that he had placed his infant son on the roof of his car!

Michael screeched to a halt. He ran back down the highway to the baby carrier. Thankfully his baby, Jason, was okay. As the waves of guilt and fear and relief began to wash over him, Michael fell on the highway and began to sob. Michael's sobbing did not stop a passing policeman from writing him up, nor the local newspaper from writing a story about it. A reporter interviewed Michael's wife, Miriam, who showed amazing understanding. She said, **"It's so unlike him. He really is a good father."**

