

The Holy War *Romans 7:14 - 25*

7What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. 9Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. 13Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. 14We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. 19For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 20For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 21Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 22So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 23For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 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. 24What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

In today's Bible lesson, at the end of Romans 7, Paul described for us a common struggle that he faced and we continue to face - the struggle against sin and sin's power. Paul spoke for us with only four words in verse 14 "*but I am unspiritual.*" He may also have described how we often feel with his words in verse 15, "*for what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do.*" How often do we find ourselves wondering "why did I just do that? Why did I say that?" Sin can have a pervasive and awesome sway over us. Paul recognized and realized this in his life as much as anyone. By ourselves we are incapable of carrying out all the mandates and prescriptions of God's law. Therefore we cannot be justified. Paul himself admitted that scrupulous keeping of the law was impossible. He lived with the ongoing tension that what he wanted to do or knew he ought to do, he failed to do.

There is an almost lyrical or musical quality to Paul's writing in this section. His consistent use of the pronoun "I" underscores just how deeply personal

this entire struggle was for Him. He wrote confessionally and introspectively about how this battle with sin had weighed upon him. His conclusion was, "I am one wretched man" (verse 24). And indeed he was, and so are we.

David Jeremiah characterized Paul's struggle in three ways: a conflict between powers (verse 15-17), a conflict between practices (verses 18-20) and a conflict between principles (verses 21-24). The conflict between powers (verses 15-17) involved the raging battle between good and evil, what was and what ought to be and, quite frankly, between Paul's desire to serve God and Satan's desire to ruin Paul. As David Jeremiah wrote, "*the conflict was caused by knowing the good and not being able to do the good.*"

The second conflict between practices (verses 18-20) involved the choice between doing things God's way or Paul's way. There were two components to this conflict between practices...not doing what God wanted him to do and doing what God did not want him to do. Paul probably often felt he was trapped between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Still, though the conflict was intense, Paul refused to give up the battle.

The third conflict between principles (verses 21-24) involved the law of God (22) and the law of sin (23). He likely felt pulled in two different directions. And often we can sympathize with Paul's ordeal or dilemma. Often the mind and body can stand in conflict as do the spirit and will. Knowing what is right and pleasing to God can often be far easier than actually doing such things.

In verse 25, Paul honestly concluded that he was often a divided man...belonging to God and the ways of God in His mind. But in his nature and flesh, he was often a slave to sin and surrendered to sinful ways. The struggle that Paul described here at the end of chapter seven set up Paul's great discourse in chapter eight on life in and through the Holy Spirit. Though the battles and conflicts Paul described can often be overwhelming, the power and victory offered through Christ and the Holy Spirit provide us with great consolation and encouragement.

Applications . . .

1. Try to memorize the first part of verse 25.
2. In only a few sentences, describe any struggles you may have between following God's ways or your own ways. What conflicts do you face between serving self and surrendering to the Lord?
3. Recall a time in your life when God gave you victory in a struggle or conflict you were facing.

- 4. Read all of chapter seven one final time before you move on to Romans**
- 8.**
- 5. Pick out a friend at random today and pray for him or her. Let that person know that you remembered him or her!**