

PAUL'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY

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Romans 7:7-25

1. In Romans Paul carefully develops the Gospel, looking at all of its facets.
 - a. In Romans 1:16 he declares the Gospel to be the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.
 - b. From Romans 1:18 to 3:18 he meticulously shows that all people, both Jews and Greeks (non-Jews) are all under sin and subject to the wrath of God.
 - c. Starting at Romans 3:19 and continuing to the end of chapter five Paul establishes how guilty sinners can receive what he refers to as the gift of righteousness or justification.
 - d. Once justified every believer must also come to understand God's provision related to this body of sin in which the justified believer still resides.
 - e. In chapter six Paul deals with the fact that a new believer has also died to sin so that they can walk (live) in newness of life. Romans 6:4.

NOTE: Every Christian should know and believe the spiritual realities that are clearly stated in Romans 6.
2. Last week we examined Romans 7:1-6, and dealt with the fact that we as believers in Christ have died to the Law, through the body of Christ (earthly life and death), so that we can be joined to the resurrected, ascended and glorified Christ in order that we may bear fruit for God instead of fruit for death.
3. This morning we are going to focus on Romans 7:7-25.
4. Various commentators have varying views related to what Paul was describing here.
5. Rather than examining those views I am going to limit myself to what I believe Paul was trying to communicate.
6. To understand Paul it is often helpful to examine his conclusion related to whatever matter he is dealing with.
7. So the key to this passage is found in verse 24 where Paul cries out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"
8. In his opening statement on this passage William Newell wrote, "Before beginning the study of this great struggle of Paul's let us get it firmly in our minds that Paul is here exercised not at all **about pardon**, but **about deliverance**: "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The whole question is concerning indwelling sin, as a power; and not committed sin, as a danger."
9. Here we see Paul's testimony related to a stage in his spiritual development, prior to his full understanding of the truths he sets forth in chapters six and eight; a period of time when he tried to live the Christian life the same way he lived life as a committed Jew.
10. What Paul writes about here was not true of his whole Christian experience, and was included to serve as a warning and not an example.

I. Paul the man.

A. In his letter to the Philippians Paul referred to his past life by stating:

1. "A Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee." 3:5
2. "As to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." 3:6

B. Paul, was a zealous, conservative Jew who was fully committed to the letter of the Law.

C. When he was defending himself before King Agrippa he declared, "So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; 5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion." Acts 26:4-5

D. Like every human being Paul was a product of his culture and his religion.

E. When Paul encountered the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus he was a man who possessed a unique personality and personality traits, certain perspectives and convictions, along with social norms and prejudices.

NOTE: The same is true of every one of us here today regardless of when and how we came to Christ.

II. Paul the new Christian.

A. Again notice his testimony before King Agrippa found in Acts 26:12-18.

"While so engaged (in the active persecution of Christians) as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. 14 "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' 19 "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."

B. Imagine the immediate impact Paul's encounter with Jesus Christ must have had on him.

C. In the early stages of his Christian life Paul's message was simple and straightforward, but things became more complicated as Paul the new Christian came face to face with the realities of the Christian life.

III. Paul and the Law.

- A. In His letter to the churches of Galatia Paul wrote the following.
“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. 18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.” Galatians 1:11-18
- B. Paul the man had been **extremely zealous for (his) ancestral traditions**.
- C. It is unreasonable to believe that Paul went from being Paul the man to Paul the fully instructed Apostle without having to experience some of the same struggles that other Jewish Christians had to deal with.
- D. In Romans 7:7-25 we see Paul's personal testimony related to his attempt to live the Christian life the same way he lived his life as a committed Jew.
- E. He failed miserably as will anyone who tries to live the Christian life based on personal commitment and dedication, rather than relying on the Holy Spirit and the grace of God.
- G. Note the following:
1. Prior to his conversion Paul was concerned about the letter of the Law, but suddenly he begins to understand the intent of the Law. 7-8
 2. Through his new understanding he came to see the utter sinfulness of sin. 13
 3. He also came face to face with his inability to live the Christian life in the same manner he lived as a committed Jew. 18

III. Paul and grace. 21-15

- A. Every believer is dead to sin, but that does not mean that sin is dead.
- B. We must still deal with the law of sin that is in our members.
NOTE: Paul came to understand God's provision related to this ongoing struggle, and consequently we have Romans 6 and Romans 8.
- C. But, like Paul, we must come to the point where we recognize our inability and start trusting in God's provision and God's ability.
- D. Please note that Paul's question was not, “Wretched man that I am! **What** will set me free from the body of this death?” rather it was, “**Who** will set me free from the body of this death?”
- E. “Thanks be to God it is through Jesus Christ our Lord that we are set free!”

APPLICATION

1. Right now, all across our land, earnest Christians are being encouraged to rededicate themselves to the Lord.
2. Many will come forward and will earnestly recommit themselves to try harder and to do better, only to experience defeat and frustration.
3. Sadly, some will even be told that this is the norm, but, praise God, they are saved by grace through faith.
4. What Paul wrote about in this chapter was never intended to be the norm, nor is it even necessary for every believer to go through this painful process.
5. However, most do, and sadly, some never move from chapter seven to chapter eight.
6. That we will do in next week's message, and I pray, in ours personal lives as well.