

Teen Challenge Sunday 2018

*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?
Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
(Romans 7:24–25 ESV)*

Who Will Deliver Me From This Body Of Death?

Teen Challenge Sunday

August 26th, 2018

Romans 7:15-25

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Introduction:

Thank you so much team – we love having you here and we have been encouraged by your honesty, your humility and by the evidence of God’s grace in your life; so thank you again for being with us.

And good morning to you church! I’d like to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to Romans 7:15-25; that’s on page 943 in your pew Bible. We’re going to talk today about what’s wrong with the world and who’s going to fix it. So hear now the Word of the Lord beginning at verse 15. This is the Apostle Paul speaking and he says:

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. (Romans 7:15–25 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

A story is told about a time when a famous British newspaper editor sent out an invitation for well known intellectuals to submit an article addressing the question “What is wrong with the

world?” The answer that he received from G.K. Chesterton was much shorter than he had anticipated. It said simply this¹:

Dear Sir,

I am.

Yours, G.K. Chesterton

That probably doesn't make for a good newspaper article but it is the beginning of wisdom. It is the beginning of freedom and in a very real sense it is the beginning of the Christian life.

That's what Paul is saying here.

He's responding to a misunderstanding of his teaching. Paul has been saying that the law doesn't save us – the law can't save us – and from that people thought that Paul was saying that there is something wrong with the law. They thought he was criticising God. They thought he was blaming God and so Paul wants to correct that misunderstanding immediately. Look at the verse that comes right before Paul's testimony. He says in verse 14:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. (Romans 7:14 ESV)

So Paul says to his critics – hey, I agree with you guys. We are all on the same page here. We all agree that the law is good – the law is spiritual. It comes from God! It was written by the Holy Spirit. So the law is not the problem. God is not the problem.

Do you know what the problem is, Paul says?

Me!

The law is spiritual, **BUT I AM OF THE FLESH.**

¹ As told by Will Timmins in *What's Really Going On In Romans 7*.

That's the problem. The problem isn't out there. It's not the world's fault that things are the way they are – and it's not God's fault that things are the way they are.

It's my fault!

I am to blame.

That right there my friends, is where the journey to recovery begins. Not just for ADDICTS – FOR EVERYONE. That's what Paul is doing here. He is speaking on behalf of everyone. Paul is saying ALL HUMAN BEINGS need to understand this. We are the problem. The problem is us. It isn't God, it isn't the world. It's us.

Paul is speaking about human nature – he is describing the human condition. And since he is a human he is describing himself. He wants people to know that when he says that the law can't save us – when he says that people can't build a stairway to heaven – he isn't blaming the law. He is blaming us.

The problem isn't that God's rules are too hard – the problem isn't that morality is ultimately unrealistic – and the problem isn't that society isn't supplying the right conditions – no. The problem is us.

The problem is ME, Paul says; and then he begins to unpack in detail all of what is wrong with him.

Here's What's Wrong With Me:

The first thing he says is this:

1. I can't do what I know I ought to do

Look at verse 15:

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (Romans 7:15 ESV)

He says the same thing again in verse 18. He says:

For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. (Romans 7:18 ESV)

Are you hearing that? Can you identify with that? Paul is saying – it isn't that I disagree with the law – I agree with all of it – I just can't do any of it! Nobody can!

He's been saying that all along. In chapter 1 and 2 of the Book of Romans he says to the Jews: "You guys think you are better off than the Gentiles because you know more about the law of God. You've written it down and you've counted it up. You've figured out that there 613 commandments in the Old Testament.

Good for you!

The only problem is – you can't keep a single one of them!

Jesus was always saying that. He'd say: You think you're keeping the 6th commandment – you shall not murder – but you're not. You hate your brother in your heart – and that's murder. You're killing him in your heart.

And you think you're keeping the 7th commandment – thou shalt not commit adultery – but you're not. Because you are lusting and fantasizing about your neighbour. You're committing adultery in your heart.

You aren't keeping a single commandment so if you think you are going to OBEY your way into the Kingdom of God you are making a huge mistake.

You can't do what you know you should.

Welcome to the human race!

That's our fundamental problem. We can't do what we know we should. Even if you're not a Bible reader – you know that. Even if you don't know the 10 commandments – you know that. Just sit right now and think about the last 10 things you've said about right and wrong.

You've probably said: "People shouldn't just throw their garbage on the ground. That's wrong."

Ok.

You've probably said: "People shouldn't lie to other people; that's wrong."

Fair enough.

Or maybe you've said: "People shouldn't take stuff that doesn't belong to them. That's wrong."

Or how about this: maybe you've said: "People shouldn't gossip about other people. It hurts. If you haven't discovered the truth then you should just keep your mouth shut."

How you doing so far? That's only 4 commandments but I'm guessing you already agree that none of us does the good we know we should.

That's what's wrong with the world. Its not the rules, its not the government, its not God. It's us. There is something wrong with us. None of us does the good we know we should.

That's the big thing Paul's saying but he not done. There's more wrong with Paul and more wrong with you and me. The second thing he says about himself is that.

2. I am under the influence of destructive and contrary desires

Ya, no kidding, me too. He says in verse 19:

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (Romans 7:19 ESV)

And then again in verse 22 he says:

For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Romans 7:22–23 ESV)

I've got a bunch of desires going on inside me. Some of them are good and some of them are bad. But they're all me.

Do you hear that?

It's so important to understand that. This is why our desires are not necessarily a reliable guide for how to live our lives. You know that song: "If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad"? Ok, well that's not true. In fact, that's very untrue. The truth is that many of the things that make me happy are bad. They are bad for the world, bad for my fellow man and in the long run they are very bad for me.

Anybody here know what I'm talking about?

Outside the church we call that addiction, don't we? What does addiction promise? Short term pleasure. Does it deliver? Absolutely. The only people who say no, have never tried. If it didn't deliver short term pleasure, nobody would do it. It does deliver.

But what else does it deliver?

Long term pain.

That's addiction.

And that's what the Bible calls sin.

Sin is distorted desire. It's wanting things that lead to your own harm and destruction. The bible talks about this all the time:

"The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV)

Your heart is messed up. You want stuff that you think is going to be good but it turns out in the end to be really, really bad.

Who can sort through all that?

Who can predict whether what you want will lead to life or death beauty or harm? Who can figure that out?

Not me, Paul says.

I make stupid choices because I am subject to contrary desires. That's what it means to be human in a fallen world.

Then lastly, Paul says, you know what's wrong with me? He says:

3. I am unpredictable, unreliable and uncontrollable

That's kind of a summary of the whole feel of the passage, isn't it? Look at some of what he says:

I do not understand my own actions. (Romans 7:15 ESV)

I don't even understand myself, Paul says. Look at verse 20:

Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (Romans 7:20 ESV)

There is stuff going on inside me that I don't understand and I can't control. That's what it means to be a human being. That's human nature in a nutshell, Paul says. We are not now what we sense we should be – we are not now what we want to be. We're trapped! We're under the influence! We're confused. Conflicted and out of control.

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24 ESV)

That's the question!

That's ground ZERO for all spiritual and personal recovery.

This is the place you need to get to. Where you dealing with the truth of who you are and what you're in. Who you are is weak. What you are is stuck.

So what you need is help.

Which is why Paul says next:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:25 ESV)

Are you hearing that? Paul says: I'm fallen, I'm broken, I'm stuck; but thanks be to God – I am not abandoned! Thanks be to God for your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Who Will Deliver Me From This Body Of Death?

He is the one who will rescue us from this body of death. He is the one who will come and do for me what I could never do for myself.

That's the Gospel!

That's the Good News!

The Good News is that Jesus came and obeyed the law. He build the stairway to heaven. So you can stop your pathetic thing over there and just come over and trust in what he's done. He did it. It's finished. He did for you what you could never do for yourself.

And he paid for what you have done in his body on the cross.

If you confess your sins and you trust in Christ then God will take your sins and hang them on Christ and punish them in Christ so that you never have to think about them again.

That's very good news.

That's what Jesus did for you.

He lived for you. He died for you. He was raised for you and he ascended for you and he sits right now at the Father's Right Hand ever to make intercession for you.

That's what Jesus did – and is doing – for you – to deliver you from this body of death.

Thanks be to God for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Amen?

Amen!

Now there is one more question we need to answer here this morning. Paul doesn't answer it in Romans 7 – he answers it over the rest of the book of Romans and so we'll have to dip in and out in order to get the information that we seek. The question we're asking is this:

How Does This Work Out Practically?

Do you just believe in Jesus and receive him through faith and then all of the sudden all your problems just immediately disappear; all your contrary desires just evaporate into the air? Is that how this happens? How does this work out practically speaking?

That's the question – and like I said the answer comes out slowly over the next couple of chapters. The first thing Paul says is this:

1. Jesus saves us IMMEDIATELY from the PENALTY of sin

That's literally the next thing he says. Look at chapter 8 verse 1:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1 ESV)

So if you are in Christ – if you put your faith in Christ TODAY – then IMMEDIATELY the record of your sins will be cast into the sea. They will be wiped out. God will stamp in your sin

book: PAID IN FULL. It doesn't mean you never did it – it means that you did it and that Jesus paid for it, in his body on the cross. So it's over. You can't pay for the same crime twice. Not in our legal system and not in God's legal system. If Jesus paid for your sins on the cross then you will never be held accountable by God for those same sins.

That's what the bible says.

Thanks be to God – that is good news brothers and sisters. If your sins are paid for in Christ then you will pay for them yourself. You are free from the penalty of sin.

IMMEDIATELY upon conversion.

That's what Paul says in Romans 8:1. If you confess your sins and put your faith in Christ there is therefore NOW no condemnation. You will never be punished by God in this life or the next for the sins that you've committed.

That's a good deal and you get it now.

The second thing he says is that:

2. Jesus saves us PROGRESSIVELY from the POWER of sin

He says that in Romans 12:2:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2 ESV)

We talked about this last week. That's the weirdest sentence in the Bible, grammatically speaking. It's a passive imperative. Meaning Paul is commanding them to have something done to them. "Be transformed". He doesn't say: "Change". That would be an active imperative. He says "Have change done to you." Well how do you do that? You stand where change happens. You keep your body in the strike zone. You come to church and you sit under the Word. Sunday by Sunday, fastball by fastball you get HIT by the transforming power of God. Then you go

home and get in the batting cage – you open the Bible yourself – and you get hit, pitch by pitch, chapter by chapter by the whole Word of God.

And little by little God changes you.

Paul says that too in 2 Corinthians 3:18.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV)

Little by little, pitch by pitch. One degree of glory to the next - he changes you. He saves you progressively from the power and influence of sin.

Then lastly, Paul says:

3. Jesus saves us ULTIMATELY from the PRESENCE of sin

He says that at the end of the letter. He says:

I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (Romans 16:19–20 ESV)

He says you just keep growing – you just keep submitting to the transforming grace of God in Christ day after day, degree after degree and wait for this. A day is coming – soon – I don't know when – but soon – when the God of peace will thoroughly, finally and utterly CRUSH Satan underneath your feet.

Are you hearing that?

One day soon evil, sin and temptation – will all be gone.

Jesus said that – I figure that's where Paul got it from. Jesus said in Matthew 13:

Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the

fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Matthew 13:40–43 ESV)

Do you hear that? One day soon all causes of sin and all sinners will be gathered out of this world and thrown into the fiery furnace. And then the righteous will SHINE like the sun in the kingdom of their Father FOREVER.

Can you imagine that day?

No temptation.

No contrary desire.

No confusion.

No battle.

No sin.

On that day we will only want to do that which is holy, acceptable and pleasing in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Only, always and forever, you're only going to want one thing.

How does that sound to you?

Are you ready for that day? Are you longing for that day?

Then brothers and sisters, don't you dare miss it! Don't you dare try to dig your way out of this hole that you already dug yourself into. Put down your shovel. Cease your labours and believe in your heart that Jesus came, lived and died for you. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and you will be saved. I know this – I believe this - because this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let me pray for you.