

Title: O Wretched Man

Scripture: Romans 7: 24, 25

Date: 2-15-09

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Princeton, New Jersey

I have the very best that any man can hope to obtain in this world: a church family full of brothers and sisters who love me dearly and whom I love; a wife who loves me, whom I love and admire; a son and a daughter who seek to please their father and mother; family and friends who show nothing but constant love for me. We live comfortably and I have never lacked anything by God's grace.

I have the very best that any man can hope to obtain in the world to come: the riches of Christ Jesus my Lord. Though I have not already attained, though I am not already perfect as I shall be, it is a present reality that, **I *am* my beloved's, and my beloved is mine (So 6:3.)**

You would think that with everything that the Lord of heaven and earth has given so abundantly and so freely to me that I would never have cause to say these words, but from the depths of my soul, I find myself sobbing these words,

Romans 7: 24: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Divisions: I. The believer's cry

II. The believer's Deliverer

III. The believers sweet rest

Proposition: We must be saved from ourselves in 3 ways: from the guilt of sin, from the dominion of sin, and from our fleshly body of sin. God through Christ Jesus has delivered us, is delivering us and shall yet deliver us.

I. THE BELIEVER'S CRY--Paul's Cry is My Cry!

When I am in heaviness and sorrowing and unable to express to my dearest loved ones how helpless I am to win this war, I come across these words of the apostle Paul, and his cry is my cry: **Romans 7: 24: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**

A. Not just what I have done, what I am!

Some might ask what sin have you committed that makes you feel this way? It is more than what I have done--though it is that.

1. It is what I am--*o wretched man that I am!* I live in a body of *death*.

2. Does it involve sin I commit? It involves everything I do, think and say. It involves what I am.

Romans 7: 14: For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

- The trouble is not with God's law--I would not know this about myself if it were not for God's law
- Before God made me hear the law I thought I was fine
- Because of sin I had no way of knowing the depth of my sin
- In sin's blindness I was actually using the law of God to deceive myself and keep myself thinking I was ok.
- But God has made me hear the law and my sin became exceeding sinful
- Now I understand that the law is spiritual--the law demands not only perfection in what I do, but the law demands perfection in the heart

- The nature I received from conception was a sin nature
- The heart I was born with was nothing but sin
- I am, in myself, still carnal, still sold under sin.

So no, the trouble is not with God, not with God's law, the trouble is with what I am in this body of sin and death.

Romans 7: 15: For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16: If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is good.*

- The law is doing just what it is supposed to do when it makes me admit that what I want to do, I don't do
- The law is doing just what it is supposed to do when it makes me admit that the sin which I hate is the very thing I do.

Romans 7: 17: Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

God has created spiritual life in me, but the spiritual life--the new man, the new creature--he has made, still lives in the same old body of death.

Romans 7: 18: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,)dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. 19: For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

- Still, right now, in me, there is a nature just as carnal, just as vile as ever, it loves sin, it delights in sin, it will never be anything but sin--**in me (that is, in my flesh,)dwelleth no good thing**
- **To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.**

Illustration: This world makes it appear that sin can just be stopped.

Oh, how often I ask myself, why do I keep doing this? Why can't I stop? And it is rhetorical question--I know the answer.

I can put on my Sunday suit. Smile. Come to church. Read my bible. Say, "Brother" and "Sister". I can even get a serious look and say what a sinner I am. I can convince you that I have mortified the deeds of my flesh. But do you want me tell you about a believer's will--I CAN NOT stop the very thing I abhor--and I CAN NOT do the good that I want to do--that is the will that is ever present with me--**to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.**

Now, here is the reason I feel like such a wretch!

Romans 7: 20: Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

This is not a cop-out! The apostle Paul is not making an excuse for his sin. This is the very thing that makes sin so evil to the believer. This is my wretchedness!

IT IS NO MORE I THAT DO IT!

The "I" that Paul speaks of, is the new man, that new creature, the inward man which is born of the Spirit of God within this body of death.

John 3:6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Galatians 2: 20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

1 John 3:9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

BUT SIN THAT DWELLETH IN ME!

- Though the believer has been made anew by the Holy Spirit still--
- In the body
- In the flesh
- In the old, carnal nature
- Sin lives--sin abides--sin dwelleth continually IN ME.
- It is not the law of God that is at fault
- It is not the new man created by God the Holy Spirit
- It is what I am, still, in my flesh--it is the "no good thing" that this flesh will always be until it returns to the dust.

Romans 7: 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Illustration: Do you remember when Jacob and Esau fought each other in Rebekah's womb, and she said, Why am I thus? (Gen 25: 22.)

Do you know what Paul is talking about when he says, when I would do good?

1. There is this new, inner, renewed man who delights in the law of God. The will of my inner man is to do what God says is good for me--that is, look nowhere but to his Son, trusting that I have been delivered from guilty by him, that he will deliver me from this present desire of my flesh to look elsewhere--that is the only good that the new man does which pleases God. Faith in Christ is the only way to walk in God's presence. I have a new man in me that knows better than to look any other direction.

2. But an evil, conniving, intruder thrusts himself upon my back. This intruder is presses hard with all his cold dead-weight. This evil one loves everything that is contrary to God, everything that is contrary to the new man and he has no greater desire than to see me turn from God, from Christ, to the strength of my own hand--he is either pushing me to sin against God in immorality or he is pushing me to sin against God by commending my own self-righteousness.

Galatians 5:17: For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

QUESTION: So why would the Almighty, All Powerful, the God who *doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*--why would he leave believer's with such an unconquerable foe? This is how we learn the 3 facts concerning our deliverance from ourselves:

1. Christ frees us from the guilt of sin.
2. Christ must deliver us from the dominion of sin--present captivity in our flesh--continually.
3. Christ must deliver us from this body of dead flesh fully, finally, forever when he takes us to be with him then raises our mortal body.

Illustration: We think we have learned it. But let some sin easily beset us. And our old flesh starts telling us that mortification of the flesh is accomplished by our flesh.

So we try to clean the dirty floor of our flesh with the dirty mop of our flesh and all we end up is twice dirty.

It is only when I am brought to the place where I see the futility of attempting to save myself that once again I behold the exceeding sinfulness that I am. Then the confession of what I am is pressed out of me, I am made to confess in full agreement with God what I still am in this flesh:

- **I am carnal, sold under sin.**
- **what I will to do, I don't; but what I hate, that do I.**

- sin dwelleth in me.
- in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing
- to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.
- **Romans 7: 24: O wretched man that I am!**

So at last we are made to cry out, **who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**

And then he delivers and once again we are made to sing with rejoicing:

Romans 7: 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. OUR DELIVERER

When I begin to see what I am before God. Usually, sadly, I confess my first thought--yea, the very thought of that old sinful, carnal man that I yet am--brings to mind the law of God and the guilt.

As I struggle with that guilt, I am in captivity to the law of sin working in my members. As foolishly as thinking I can deliver myself--by some strength of my own--from the grace, from this dead flesh--my old fleshly nature tries to convince me that I can deliver myself from guilt, and from my present captivity.

CHRIST IS OUR DELIVERANCE FORM OURSELVES:

A. Christ bore the justice I deserved so that the law has no more charge against me

B. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and death so that my old man can never prevail.

C. Christ shall at last deliver me from this body of death to be with him in glory forever more.

This is the great joy with which Paul breaks into in the words of the next chapter:

1. Concerning Christ delivering me from the guilt of my sin:

Romans 8: 1: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

2. Concerning Christ delivering me from myself, from my old evil nature.

Romans 8: 2: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Here is how Christ had delivered me from condemnation and from my own sinful depravity:

Romans 8: 3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit....

3. Concerning how Christ shall yet deliver me fully, finally, from this body of death, into his presence.

Romans 8: 11: But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

So here is the grand conclusion to the whole matter which Christ teaches us continually:

Romans 8: 12: Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16: The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

III. HERE IS THE SWEET REST THAT CHRIST BRINGS US INTO

Romans 7: 25: So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

- How foolish for me to have turned again, to regard my flesh!
- To be encouraged by it or discouraged by it
- God the Father through Jesus Christ my Lord has delivered me, is delivering me, and shall deliver me from this body of death, not me myself.
- He has given me a new spirit in which to worship him, not this flesh

John 4:23: But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24: God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

Psalm 119: 71: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. 72: The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

And what does God teach me about himself? God is spiritual, the law is spiritual, I am carnal, sold under sin. **So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.**

I am resolved to this peaceful rest--my flesh will always be sin, but thanks be to God the Father through Christ Jesus I am a son of God in spirit and I worship God in spirit. He brings me to thank God that through Jesus Christ I am delivered, am being delivered, and shall be delivered. And this glory of Christ--his Wisdom and his Power--which he reveals as we suffer in this way is so sweet a rest and is so good to the believer, that once again we say with utter amazement and anticipation: **Romans 8: 18: For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**

This is how God keeps us from the evil of our flesh, and keeps us in Christ Jesus. May we say with Paul, **Romans 7: 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! I am delivered!**

