

THE DIVIDED MAN

ROMANS 7:14-25

Text:

Introduction:

This is one of the easiest passages in the Bible for me to identify with. It tells the absolute truth about the life of the believer!

Some commentators feel that Paul is describing the life of a carnal Christian. That he is telling us how saved men who refuse to yield to the Spirit of God live their lives.

However I don't feel that this is a description of a carnal Christian, but rather a portrait of a maturing saint! It is the way life is for the child of God; described with no punches pulled and no holds barred. This is how life was for Paul.

Most of us, if we were honest, could say that we can identify with everything Paul says in these verses. While Paul is writing his own autobiography, he is, at the same time, writing about our lives as well. Let's look into these verses this evening and see ourselves, as we are portrayed in this passage.

1. PAUL STATES THE FACTS (VS. 14)

Romans 7:14

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

A. The Law Is Spiritual

Paul has just stated in the previous verses that there is a problem between himself and the Law of God. The problem is not the Law, the problem is Paul.

He reminds us that the Law of God is spiritual in nature. The Law is a good thing and it lays down rule for proper living. The very fact that it originated with God is proof positive that it is not bad. The problem does not lie with the Law, but with man!

B. The Flesh Is Sinful

The word "carnal" means "fleshly". While the Law would teach man how to live godly, Man's flesh is only interested in that which is sinful.

What Paul is telling us here is that there is a part of him that is still under bondage to sin! The old nature, that is to be reckoned dead indeed unto sin, is in fact alive and well! There is a part of us that cannot sin! Our spirit has been redeemed and has been forever sealed from sin. We cannot sin in that part of our beings! However, this flesh is as wicked as it ever was! It is as

mean as it ever was and it still possesses all the same old, ungodly, worldly appetites that it has always had.

The flesh is wicked!

We are locked in a battle this evening that is difficult, but it is one that is described in detail in these verses.

2. PAUL SATES HIS FAILURES (vs. 15-20)

Romans 7:15-20

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. ¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 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. ²⁰ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

A. The Contest (vs. 15-16)

Paul describes the struggle that exists within every believer this evening. The word "allow" in verse 15 means "to know". Paul is saying that he does not even know why he does what he does! He wants to live right, he wants to say the right things and think the right things, but before he knows what has happened, he has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The simplest way to understand what the Apostle is saying is that there is a part of him that affirms the Law. That new man, who came to life on the Road to Damascus, wants to do the will of the Lord and strives to do so, but at the same time, there is another part of Paul that yearns for everything the Law denies.

When God says something is good, the flesh wants just the opposite. When the Law says something is bad, the flesh says that it is good. It is a contest between the old man and the new man, Gal. 5:17.

Galatians 5:17

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.

B. The Contestants (vs. 18-19)

Paul tells us that he is a divided man. One wants to do right and the other wants to do wrong. These two men share one body and they fight over everything. He finds that he is hindered when it comes time to do the right thing and he is helped when it comes time to do the wrong thing.

Most of us can identify with this. There is a part of us that wants to please God in everything we do, but there is another part of us that fights us at every turn. Friends, this can be a very frustrating way to live life.

C. The Conclusion (vs. 17, 20)

Twice in these verses, Paul tells us that the problem is his old sin nature. The good news is that it isn't the saved, new Paul that is constantly doing the evil and avoiding the good. It is the old Paul, who still longs for wickedness that is at fault here.

Paul isn't making excuses for his sins! Paul isn't throwing up his hands and saying, "Oh well, why fight it? If it feels good do it!" That isn't his attitude at all, and that will become clear in a moment.

However, that is the attitude that has been adopted by many believers this evening. Many people grow weary from the struggle and give in to the will of the flesh. There will never be victory when that happens!

Paul's statement is not one of resignation, it is one of victory! He is telling us that there is a new man living in his body and that new man is above that old sinful lifestyle. That new man loves the Lord and that new man will fight until the day he is delivered from the fight and from the body of sin and evil!

3. PAUL STATES HIS FINDINGS (VS. 21-23)

Romans 7:21-23

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.

A. A Companion (vs. 21)

Paul's discovery is that every time he tries to do the good, evil is always there!

Every good word, every good deed, every good thought, every good motive and every good thing is challenged by evil.

Any good thing, we're able to do it is always the result of a battle!

- Isn't it true that when we would do good, there is always the temptation to do evil?
- Isn't it hard to keep your motives pure?
- Isn't it difficult to control the thought processes so that good wins out?

The only people who do not struggle with a sinful nature are those people who are lost in sin! They are following the course of nature, Eph. 2:1-3.

Ephesians 2:1-3

¹ And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³ Among

whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

When a person tries to go against the grain of the flesh and the world, there will always be a struggle! Sin is a constant, wicked companion!

B. A Confession (vs. 22)

Paul now lets us in on a secret concerning himself. He loves the Law! Whatever God has said in His Word is a delight to the new Paul!

This is true for every saved individual! If you are saved by the grace of the Lord, you love His Word! When the Lord reveals His will to you, you are delighted and want to do it with all your heart. That is a good sign!

If a person hears the Word of God and hates the thoughts of doing things God's way, that tells me that a person is not saved. However, when the Word of God is our delight and the standard for living that is a sign that we are dealing with a saved individual.

C. A Captivity (vs. 23)

Although Paul's heart is set on doing the will of God, there is another part of himself that fights him at every turn and seeks to bring him into captivity!

Matthew 26:41

⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

This is a situation with which all of us can identify. The inner man wants God; the fleshly man wants the world! Thankfully, there was nothing wrong with Paul's salvation, and there is nothing wrong with yours! Even though Paul struggled with his flesh, he was still right with God.

Paul's problem is that the flesh is ever trying to bring him into bondage. That is a problem we all face day to day. If we are not diligent in our struggle with the flesh, we will be defeated by our sin! If we do not take our stand against the flesh, it will win.

Paul fought the flesh:

1 Corinthians 9:25-27

²⁵ And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ²⁶ I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: ²⁷ But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

1 Corinthians 6:12-13

¹² All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. ¹³ Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

While we are saved by grace, and that salvation is forever, we must fight sin every moment of our lives. It is a battle that will never end.

4. PAUL STATES HIS FAITH (VS. 24-25)

Romans 7:24-25

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

A. Paul's Problem (vs. 24)

Paul expresses his desire to be free from his decaying, fleshly nature. He wants to be free. I think he was frustrated and defeated by his own inability to overcome evil.

He wants to be free!

Paul calls himself a "*wretched man*" Most of here this evening would never describe Paul this way.

I believe that as a Christian matures in the Lord and learns more about God, that person becomes more aware of just how wicked he really is.

B. Paul's Prospect (vs. 25a)

Here Paul states where his victory is coming from. He reminds his readers that the day is coming when the children of God will be delivered from the wretched bodies. When the Lord comes for His own.

We will leave this flesh behind when we leave this world behind.

There is another meaning in view here! I believe the Apostle is praising the Lord for the victory he has right now, in the midst of his battle. Even though we fail and fall into sin, even though we come short so often, there are times when we grow in the Lord.

Even in the middle of my worst day, Jesus is still working on the clay and He is making me in His image! That is a victory.

C. Paul's Proposal (vs. 25 b)

This verse is not a declaration of Paul's defeat. He is not saying that he will just keep wanting to do what is right in his heart while he keeps doing what is wrong with his body. What he is saying is that he is not giving up the fight!

Close:

Have you seen yourself in these verses?

I have seen the same struggle in my life that Paul wrote about, and I am encouraged!

The challenge is this: examine your life right now and see how well you are fighting the fight.

Are you giving in too easily?

Are you allowing the flesh to gain the upper hand without a fight?

If the flesh will make inroads into your life and mine, let's determine that it will not do so without a fight!