

Romans 7:14-25 - The Struggle within – 23 Oct 2011

This morning, let's return with that confidence in the Word of God to Romans 7. We are going to look at Romans 7:14-25 together. Romans 7 and let me read verse 14 onwards to you:

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

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.

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.

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.

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May the good Lord bless the reading of His Eternal Word.

One of the classic stories of our times, would be the strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, first published in 1886, a London, it was a roaring success, it captured the imagination of the people, because it tells of the intriguing story of how an evil Mr. Hyde and a good Dr. Jekyll could coexist and are really the same person. It touches

on the classic scene of the battle between good and evil. There is that evil that ever seems to want to creep out of us and this theme, this story, written by Robert Louis Stevenson, is said to be the inspiration for stories that follow after it, such as the Incredible Hulk and Two-Faced in Batman.

Robert Louis Stevenson was once asked, what was the inspiration behind this story, who is the model for Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and this is what the author himself said:

"I found it in my nature.

He was a Christian and had learned that there is indeed inside of every child of God a Beast.

Every saved person has a New Nature and an Old Nature.

I find that there is always a struggle with the "Beast that lives within me."

I don't think Robert Louis Stevenson was a Christian, I read about his life, but nevertheless, what he said is interesting, because it alludes to the struggle within.

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His parents are believers, Christians, but he himself may not be. But maybe along the way of his life, he has been taught intellectually, that there is a struggle within a Christian.

Today, we are going to consider the struggle within you.

If you are a child of God, if you are born again, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, let me say that there will be a great struggle within.

Paul in Romans 7, describes his struggle within. I know it is a personal struggle of Paul because he uses the personal pronoun, for himself, no less than 36 times. I actually counted the I, the me, the mine, added up 36 times in 12 verses, it can't get more personal than that.

So, Paul is describing in Romans 7, his personal struggle as a Christian. He describes that as a Christian because in verses 14-25, he uses the present tense. Now, that's in sharp contrast to verses 1-13, when he uses the past tense.

The sermon last week, was really talking about a man who was previously unsaved. Today, in verses 14-25, we see a Christian man and how he has that internal struggle and conflict within.

If you are a child of God, I think you can very quickly identify what Paul is saying here. It's gripping, it's real, because you could say, "Amen, Paul, this is exactly how I feel. I want to do that which is right, but I find myself and doing that which is wrong, that which I do not want to do, I end up doing it. And as that struggle, that tension, that conflict, that dilemma within, because there is a struggle within."

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Isn't it true, because we often wake up saying, "I am going to live for Jesus," and then you end up reviewing the past 24 hours and you realize you didn't. Why? Well, there's a struggle within every child of God. Paul describes his struggle in four pairs of contrasts in the verses you have just read.

He says this, in verse 14, for we know that the law is spiritual, he says, the law is good, I know it's good, I am a born again child, I loved the Word of God, but, he says, I am carnal, I am fleshly, sold under sin. Struggle, conflict, tug of war; I know this is good, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

He says again in verse 16, I consent unto the law that is good.

It's remarkable, because an unsaved man would never say the Word of God is good. He at enmity against God, he hates the law of God, but Paul here is saying, there is that nature in me that says, it is good. However, then, it is no more I that is do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. When I go against the law, when I break the law, is not that I don't think it is good, but somehow, there is that struggle, there is that sin nature in me that results in these obedience.

He says again in verse 22, I delight in the law of God, after the inward man, 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.

And in verse 25, and other contrast, so then with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin.

You see his dilemma, you see the struggle, you see the conflict within the soul of great apostle Paul. Why is there such a struggle?

You've got to understand, that in a Christian person today, a follower, a born again child of God, that exists within him, two natures. You have got to understand that, I am not saying that you become two persons. Just one person, but with two natures, an old nature and then a new nature. An old nature that was given to you at your first birth and then a new nature at your second birth.

Isn't this what Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter nor see the kingdom of God." A true child of God is born twice, first, on the day that is reflected in your birth certificate, second, on the day you came to Jesus for salvation and life. So, in anyone of us, there are two natures, therefore the struggle and the conflict.

Allow me to make this simpler and clearer for you. Let's understand that there are two births, in a Christian man or woman, first birth, second birth.

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The first birth, gives you physical life, that's why you can breathe, that's why you on this Earth, that's why you are living today, physically. But you know, when you have the first birth, you still do not have the spiritual life.

What you mean by spiritual life pastor? Is it that I can't (pastor pretends to meditate and then answers) no! Spiritual life is properly relating to God in the Spirit. And a man who is not born again, has no spiritual life, because he has no real relationship with the God of the Bible, the God of the heavens in the Spirit. He does not know God, he does not approach God, he hates God, he doesn't have spiritual life, until he is born again.

It is God who alone who gives us spiritual life.

John 3 (8) tells us, we are born again by the Spirit and it is the Spirit that bloweth where it listeth..., is the sovereign will of God that saves us, that gives us new life and man is called to respond to the sovereign work of God by believing in Jesus Christ.

The word born again, or the phrase, born again, can easily be translated, born from above. So, new life, second birth, spiritual life, the ability, the relationship we can have with God, is from God Himself. And so, a man, needs to be born again, to have spiritual life. So, let's move on.

Thirdly, in this new birth, you now has a new position. In your first birth, you are born physically and it's in Adam and it's not a nice thing to be in Adam's family, isn't

it. You are under sin, you are under the condemnation, who faced death and judgment because in Adam, we all die. But, when you are born again, the Bible says, you are in Christ, no more under the law, but under grace. You are favoured, you are accepted in the beloved. New birth, is absolutely necessary.

What about the nature of this man? Well, in the first birth, the nature of old, loves sin, he loves it. Why, because the old nature hates God, he hates God, so, he loves sin. That's its desire. Now, it may not like its consequences of sin, but it delights in breaking the law of God. In fact, we learned last week, that the law of God is that occasion, the launching pad, for our sinfulness to manifest itself. It loves sin.

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But, that spiritual life that is deposited, that evoked, that is effected by God, it loathes sin, it hates sin, it doesn't like sin, from its deepest core, he says, I do not really want to sin at all. That's the new nature and if I, was to add the last comparison, the first the results in a sinful nature, it can't do anything but sin, is totally depraved, is wrapped up in sin, but the new life, is a sinless nature. Think about it, God has placed into you a sinless nature, it's not sin less, I didn't say sin less, I said sinless, without sin.

This new nature is without sin, it cannot sin. Why? because it is eternal. In other words, it doesn't die, in other words, it doesn't sin, it is a sinless nature, that God has deposited and effected in your life.

Now, looking at this two lists, you can understand why there would be a struggle, because this two natures that are at this point, coexisting in every Christian man or woman, are in total opposite, diametrically opposite directions. One hates God, one loves God; one loves sin, the other hates sin. One can do no right, the other one can do no wrong. So when these two natures are in man, you can understand the struggle that arises within.

I like what J Vernon McGee had to say, he says, it, that is with reference to the flesh, with reference to the old nature, the nature of indwelling sin, he says

"It's never removed and it's never improved."

Of course, the context, it's as long as we are on this Earth, before the Lord comes for us.

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Whilst we are on this Earth, on this pilgrimage, the flesh, the old sinful fleshly nature, is never removed and never improved.

Therefore, with the first birth that results in physical life, being in Adam, loving sin, cannot do anything but sin as it is, in a sense, coexisting with the second birth, where there is spiritual life, where you are in Christ, where you loathes sin and it is a sinless nature, a tug of war exists and you have the struggle within, there is that tumult, there is that turmoil, there is a stirring that comes with the struggle within.

Now, what are the implications, pastor, alright, I understand now, I understand why Paul is having this dilemma, this conflict, this tension within him, but what does this mean to me, what does the understanding of the struggle within mean to you and I. Let me give you some simple applications.

I think the struggle within is an:

1. Evidence of salvation

I'll explain it as we go along, but the struggle within, is an evidence, I'm not saying it's the only evidence, or a complete evidence, but it is one of the evidences of salvation. Very simple, isn't it. Because if you do not have new life from Jesus, if you're not born again, there is no struggle. You just do what you like, you just do what you want, not knowing actually that you are a slave to sin, but there is no struggle within. Now, you may not like the consequences of sin, but you certainly don't think that sin is a problem. You don't see it from God's perspective, you don't have the inherent hatred for sin, you don't feel it, there's no struggle.

A flippant young man, came to a pastor one-day and wanted to ridicule the pastor, because the pastor had been teaching, about how man is under the weight of sin. So, the young man said, "Pastor, you have been saying to us that we as sinners carry the weight of sin. But, pastor, how heavy is that weight, 40 pounds, 80 pounds, 200 pounds, how come I've never felt the weight of sin?" The pastor thought for a moment and replied, "Son, if I were to put a 400 pounds weight on a dead man, on a corpse, would he feel it ?" The young man got the point, a dead man feels no weight, and the Bible says, we are all spiritually dead in sin, therefore, we don't feel the weight of sin. But it doesn't mean, the weight of sin is not on us, you just don't feel it. But when you're born again, God gives you that new life, that desire for

righteousness, that is in the core of your being, that's the struggle to comes ever so often.

Can I say to you, only Christians have the true struggle within and all Christians will have to struggle within. If you today, have never, you don't understand what the struggle is, I seriously have a big question over whether you have the new life or not. Because the new nature must be upset, when he sees sin in his life. He must, there must be a struggle. So, the only Christians struggle with sin and all Christians struggle within. It's got to be. And it's not just about avoidance; it's about the hatred on the inside. It's a deep, honest, holy desire for righteousness and not for sin, and it is right here.

Thomas Watson, the Puritan writer, who has a masterful work called "The Body of Divinity", he says,

A hypocrite, that is, someone who looks like a Christian, but he's really not, a hypocrite may be sin. Now, outwardly, he looks like he is leaving sin, he breaks off the acts of sin. But a hypocrite, is known, because he loves sin, he loves it, as a snake sheds its skin, but keeps its venom, but a sanctified person, a man who is born again, a man who is set apart for Jesus, a sanctified person not only leaves sin, there would be acts, that would be works that proves his faith, he loathes it, he hates it because God has changed our nature, God has given him a new life, a new nature ”

“A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it--as a snake sheds its skin but keeps its venom--but a sanctified person not only leaves sin, he loathes it. God has changed our nature:”

So, practical implication 1, if you do realize, the struggle within, then you can realize one of the evidences of salvation, there will be a struggle within. Some of us, some of you are new believers, just came to know the Lord and you have expected that now as a new Christian, your life will be smooth sailing, hey, I am a Christian, I am victorious, it's going to be smooth sailing. Let me tell you, your battle has just begun.

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The struggle has just begun. Prior to salvation, do whatever you want, but after salvation, you genuinely have a desire to live righteously and that's when the struggle begins.

DL Moody, when he was first converted; he said this or subsequent to his conversion, he said this:

“When I was converted, when I was saved, I made this mistake. What mistake? I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought the old things had passed away, that all things had become new, and as a result that my old corrupt nature, the old life, was gone. I wish J. Vernon McGee would have met DL Moody at a time and said friend, the flesh is never removed and it can never be improved. The old flesh still dwells within. So, he goes on to say, but I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the army--that there was a battle on hand.”

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So, 1, as we consider the struggle within, a practical implication, is that it is an evidence of salvation. Search within yourself this morning, has there ever been a struggle, I am not asking you whether you have left sin and outwardly, but where is that desire?

Number two, I think it's the only challenges our evidence for salvation, but he also gives us

2. An expectation for sanctification.

Wah, big phrase, pastor. Yes, but it is what is. Understanding the struggle within, helps us have the correct expectation for Christian growth and Christian life, expectation for sanctification. There is a teaching in Christendom, throughout history and even right up to now, that says, that a Christian can enter into such a crisis of faith, he can experience the crisis of sanctification, that he now is suddenly elevated to a higher spiritual plane, where he lives above sin. We call that teaching perfectionism.

If I were to tell you, who are the people who believe in perfectionism, you might be shocked. Walter Criswell, a pastor in the days gone by, he wrote in his commentary that, libraries, loads of books, have been written about Romans 7, and there are some who believe in perfectionism that they can lived a perfect life, above sin and Walter Criswell went on to add, it's a good desire to the above sin, but to think that we have arrived, to think that there is perfectionism in my life, it's dangerous. Why? Because, you might be guilty and you're likely to be guilty and I think you are guilty of committing the sins of the many sins, the sin of self-righteousness, the sin of self-

pride, the sins of the Pharisees that say, I have achieved it, thank you Lord, I am not like those men.

Sounds familiar isn't it?

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Perfectionism; there many Christians, who has set under the teachings of perfectionism, who grew up frustrated, disillusioned and depressed. I know, there are people like that, they have been told, all their lives that you should live that perfect Christian life and their tender conscience tells them I am not perfect. I have tried, I have done it many times, I have tried it, but every time I've, I've really searched within myself, I know I have not done it. And their tender conscience is so affected that they contemplate suicide. One such man, is JI Packer, James Innell Packer.

He said that he grew up in the teachings of perfectionism and when he grew up, he realized he's not perfect. He's far from it, he sees sin in his life and he was so discouraged, so depressed, that he was attempting or contemplating suicide, until he came to two great works in our church history, one, John Owens book on "Indwelling sin" and two, JC Ryle's on "Holiness". And he came to understand the scriptural teachings in Romans 7, that there is that flesh in us, there is that indwelling sin in us and that there is that struggle within.

FB Meyer, and other pastor, visited one of his members, and she was just putting out her white linen for drying and when he saw it, he commented, wow, this is really well washed, it's really white. They went into the house for a cup of tea, chat and it started to snow and when they came out, they saw the snow that is all over the land and FB Meyer says, "Your linen is why, but when it stands in contrast to the snow, it is not so white anymore." And the lady says "Yes, nothing, nothing can stand in the awesome purity and whiteness of God."

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Perfectionism is saying, "I am like God, pure, never to sin."

Oh, when you compare yourself to one and other, yah, you can look very white. But when you compare yourselves to God and who He is, you realise how ridiculous it is to believe in perfectionism. It is.

I was asked, this week, by one of our brethren, "Pastor, do you think it is possible for you or for anyone of us, to live one day without sinning at all?" I want to ask you, is it possible? (Laughter in the congregation). You all laugh, because it's very hard to answer right? If I say, is it possible for you to live one second without sin, maybe, you would say, can lah, maybe lah. I stretch it to one minute, I stretch it to 15 minutes, I stretch it to 30 minutes, I stretch it, I stretch it, I stretch it, I stretch it, but he asked me. So, I said, my personal opinion is it possible for me to live one day without sin, I said yes, but only in my sleep. I would have to wake up tomorrow, I would have to sleep the whole day.

I don't know about you, maybe you can, but in my life, I detect sins all the time. Now, it's not that I love sin, I really hate sin, I want to honour, glorify God, even when nobody is seeing my life. But I do recognize intimately, personality struggle within.

I have not arrived at perfectionism. There is no perfection until Jesus comes for us, redeems our body completely and there and then, I think it is for evermore, perfect, righteous, holy living. But till then, no, I don't think it is possible, not at all when they struggled within, when the Scripture tells us that, they change from glory to glory, there is always that greater depth for Holiness we can strive for and aim for.

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Now, after saying all this, I think you might be going away and thinking, oh, pastor says it is okay to live in sin (Laughter in the congregation), Hah, that's not bad, ah. Since I can't live a perfect life, then, let's live a defeated life, let's continue the pattern of sin. Please, don't go to the toilet at this time, alright. Tell you for sure, no, that's not what I'm saying, that's not what Scripture is saying. It's not saying that because it is a struggle, we can now live in a pattern of sin, no! it is not having a defeatist mentality, I think that whilst you desire that wholly perfect life, you've got to recognize, you can't have total, complete, consistent victory every single moment of your life, that's all. Oh yes, I desire righteousness, but, I can't arrive at the life, at that level that my inner man so craves for.

Maybe today, pastors may help you better, other pastors and I want to quote them, John Piper, he said

I do not mean we should settle in and coast with worldly living and a defeatist mentality. We should not make peace with our sin; we should make war on our sin. Defeat is not the only, or the even the main part, experience of the Christian life. But it is part of it.

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Do you get that balance? It's not the main part of my Christian life, but it is a part of it. There is a struggle within.

James Innell Packer:

“Paul is not telling us that the life of the "wretched man" is as bad as it could be (Added by Pastor: Certainly that's not what I'm trying to say), only that it is not as good as it should be. . .” (Added by Pastor: oh, I want to live that life, but I can't be as good as it should be, that's all, I've got to understand that) “and that because the man delights in the law and longs to keep it perfectly, his continued inability to do so troubles him acutely. . .”

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So, bringing this together, first of all, understanding the struggle within 1. helps us recognize the evidence of salvation. 2. It helps us understand the expectations of our sanctification.

3. The need to exhort saints

Thirdly, I think, it helps us to recognize the need to exhort saints, mutual encouragement and exhortation of Christian's brethren. The struggle within is a difficult struggle, let's admit that, it is literally I think, a beast within. Some people say, because of these verses, Paul is a golfer, that which I want to do, I do not. But I think the problem before us, is worse than golf. It's a matter of sin and righteousness, life and death. And a Christian today needs to understand that we wrestle and we struggle in a big problem and we don't have to do it alone.

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And we can encourage each other in the faith. You know, I think one of the reasons, why Christianity is struggling today, your Christian life is struggling today, is because we struggle alone and the reason we struggle alone is because we cannot let others see our real lives. We put up a mask, we guard our hearts, we watch our speech, so that people cannot really see how sinful we are. You know why, somehow, we have been influenced to think that now that I am a Christian, I am a perfect man. I'm not like you, I'm cool, I'm holy, I'm righteous. Hey, but that's not facing up to the realities that there is a struggle within. And so churchgoers go from church to church, service

to service, week after week, putting on a mask, asking superficial things. You don't talk about your lives, you don't talk about your struggles, you don't talk about these things, you talk about the peripheries and you neglect the realities that is within.

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You know what it makes us? Hypocrites. I'm saying harshly, but it is the reality, we live a life of hypocrisy. Now, please understand me, I'm not saying that, because of this understanding, you go around and you say, hey, you know, I have this problem in my life, pray for me. Hey, hey, wait, I tell you. No, I'm not asking you to broadcast your struggles (Laughter in the congregation). I'm saying, in the right environment, with people you trust, you love, and people who love and trust you, to help each other in the journey of faith.

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Authenticity is powerful, being authentic, being real, not masking up your problems, not pretending to be Mr. holy, but to realize that you have security in Jesus, I am saved, I have a new nature but I also know that there is a struggle within, so help me brothers, keep me accountable. Don't put on a mask, and guard your hearts and watch what you say all the time, so that nobody really knows who you really are and the struggle within.

You know, our fellowship is so superficial. Hey, what do you eat, ah, Wah, very nice, very nice. Wow, durian, nice, nice, yah, yah, ah, the car, nice, yah, yah. Aiyoh, nice fellowship being with you. (Laughter in the congregation). Is that fellowship? Sometimes, you eat something and you call that fellowship, that's Feilowship, but not fellowship (Laughter in the congregation).

Fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It's about the deep things of life; it's about engaging one and other. Why, because we realized there is a struggle within an authenticity is needed. Sin loves to hide in darkness. Oh it's like a cockroach, it doesn't like to come out in the bright lights. He likes to hide in the darkness and the more you give in darkness, the cover of darkness, the more sins thrives.

But, it's when we are authentic, knowing, that we are born again, knowing there is a struggle that we allow light to shine within our hearts, we allow others to come in to our lives, to help us in our struggles within. I am not trying to do an advertisement here, but, I really feel that this is important for you. Next month, just a couple of

weeks, we are going to again open up the signing up or the journey, for you to join us, in 2:7 groups, in discipleship groups. You say, why discipleship groups, I am so busy already, I've got this class, I've got this lesson, I've got this wine tasting, I've got so many things to do. (Laughter in the congregation)

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So busy! But let me tell you, what is, let me ask you, what is most important in your life? If you are really born again, there will be a desire that loathes sin and say I want to live that righteous life and let me say, it doesn't happen by chance. It doesn't happen by evolution, it's a matter of choice. To be willing to commit yourself to life change, to mutual accountability, to slay that beast with the shining of light, with authenticity, with vulnerability, with transparency. And you can do that because you don't have to be a hypocrite. We don't have to pretend that we are Mr. holy we know that there is a struggle within, so let's help each other. So that by way I hope, speaks to you, because I think, it is so scary that you can come to church, week after week after week, after week, wearing a mask, wearing a mask, wearing a mask and the beast within you is still controlling, directing your life.

Authenticity, beautiful isn't it? I love this word, you know, authenticity, not hypocrisy. It's attractive, help people see who you are.

I want to share with you a story by this evangelist, called Peter Philpott, I think he's gone on to be with the Lord, but this is his testimony, his story that he wrote in his own life, so, let me share this, with you. It's a little bit long, but it is a story, so it is easy to follow. He wrote about this blacksmith named Tom, the toughest and roughest blacksmith in the shop was Tom, we called him Big Tom. He was not only the strongest man in the shop; he was also the most wicked. Everybody feared him. He's a drunkard, he's abusive, he swears. Everybody fears him.

But one morning, Tom came into the shop, with a smile and a word of greeting for everyone. To the astonished fellas, he made the announcement that he accomplished evangelistic service the night before and had received Jesus Christ to be his Saviour. Man, I am now a Christian he said, I intend to be different, from that which you have known me to be. I want to be loyal and true to the Lord Jesus and no one dared dispute his statement. But the men looked at one another with knowing glances, so, Big Tom got religion, huh, that won't last long.

Amongst themselves, they began to lay wagers or bets that Tom's Christianity would not be until noon. (Laughter in the congregation), but it did. He was diligent in his

work, kind and gracious to all. Then, there were others who laid bets that he would not be able to go past the tavern, the pub on the way back home, but he did. As the marvel of Tom's new life continue to be shown to them, the other blacksmiths shook their heads in amazement, but secretly, they made further wagers that Saturday night, would find Tom dead drunk in some saloon. But, on Monday night, he witnessed to all in the shop about what he had heard the preacher said during the services. He was sober, he had not been to the saloon. Every men and boy in the blacksmith shop, began to believe, that Tom had but he become a Christian.

Then, one day, it happened! Tom was fashioning a piece of red-hot iron and in striking a blow, he hit his thumb as well as the iron. A tremendous string of swear words, such as only Tom could swear, turn the air blue. Said Peter Philpott, everyone of us stood stuck, still in amazement and also in sorrow, I am sure. Every eye was on Tom. He paid no attention, whatsoever to any of us. He could have made light of the situation and laughed it off. Heh, heh, heh, huh huh, you know, I shouldn't have done that. And we might have joined, timidly in that laughter.

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He might have shouted at us, shook his fist, warning us not to laugh or to be shocked. But, he did nothing of that kind. Tom fell to his knees immediately and bending over, buried his face in his hands. We heard his deep sobbing from the depths of his heart and saw the heaving of the great chest and bitter tears that flowed between his grimy fingers. For several minutes, he remained in prayer. Then he arose from his knees and wiping his tears, he smiled at us and said "Fellows, I want you to forgive me, I didn't mean to swear. The Savior has forgiven me and please forgive me men, everyone." In subdued silence, we nodded to Big Tom, and then, solemnly, we went on each to his task. It was the sight of Tom on his knees, publicly, asking the Lord Jesus for forgiveness that touched my heart so deeply, that I could not rest, until shortly afterwards, I too accepted the Saviour."

Authenticity is powerful. The devil wants you to live a double life; hypocritical life. But it is the openness, that authenticity that gives us victory in the lives of others and in our own lives.

So Paul, as he speaks of the struggle within, I hope to apply it in these ways for you. But at the end of the struggles, this is what Paul says in verse 24,

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

The word wretched here is miserable and in the original Greek, it carries along with it the feeling of extreme exhaustion. He says, I am exhausted, I have been struggling and struggling and struggling and struggling and says "oh, wretched man, I am miserable. Who shall deliver me from this body of death."

Time stamp in audio 0:43:32.9.

Commentators are quick to latch onto that phrase, body of death. It is said that during the Roman Empire, one of the most brutal ways to inflict punishment on crimes, is the body of death. If there is a murderer who has just killed someone and he is found to be guilty, what they would do, is that the soldiers would tie this body to the murderer, hand to hand, feet to feet, chest to chest, face to face and throw them under the hot Mediterranean sun for decay to set in on the corpse and for the decay to then eat into the man that is bound to this corpse. So that it literally becomes the body of death. Paul is saying, in my life, it is as if I am bound to this body of decay and death and he says, who shall deliver me from this body of death. It's with me everywhere. He says, in verse 21,

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

The word, present with me, in the Greek, literally means, right by my side. It's like a Siamese twin that is tied to me, I turned left, he is there, I turn right, he's there, he's everywhere I am, like the body of death. And so, he cries out, who shall deliver me, who can deliver me, who shall deliver me. Can the law deliver me? Oh, maybe the law can help, maybe the Commandments can help. Paul says it can't, I know this. I know that the law is spiritual; I know it is good, it's perfect, it's righteous, it's holy but it is not able to deliver me, why? Because, the problem is not in the law, it's me.

Time stamp in audio 0:45:28.7.

The law can reveal my sins, but you cannot remove my sins. I am carnal, sold under sin.

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

The law is impotent, powerless, because I am without strength. And it is as such a state, where Paul is exhausted; we stripped of all self-reliance that he now cries out, "Who shall deliver me?" He doesn't say, what can I do to deliver myself, he's tried it enough and he says, now, I give up, "Who shall deliver me?"

Time stamp in audio 0:46:05.8.

Watchman Nee, familiar with this name? Chinese pastor, he was with a group of 20 people in China, and they were bathing in the river. One of the young men, developed severe cramps in his legs and he was struggling in the water and was about to drown. He was struggling, with his head bobbing up and down, up and down, he was struggling. Watchman Nee realized and know that that is an excellent swimmer amongst the 20 and shouted to the man, hey, come, save your friend, your brother. But the excellent swimmer just stood still, motionless and didn't budge. Watchman Nee cried out louder, more passionately by this man still stood motionless, wouldn't budge.

Time stamp in audio 0:46:55.9.

And what seems like the last time, the drowning man showed his head and went under, it was precisely that point, that the excellent swimmer dives into the River and recovers that struggling brother.

Time stamp in audio 0:47:10.2.

Both were safely brought to shore and Watchman Nee now flew into a rage of fury and scolded and reprimanded the excellent swimmer, "Don't you care about your brother, why is it that you care about your life and would not save him, He went on and on and on." and when he paused, the swimmer said "If I had jumped in any moment earlier, that death grip, will make it impossible for me to save him and we would both drown. If you are to save a drowning man, you have got to wait for him to be totally exhausted. When he ceases to struggle, that's the time you go in to save him."

Time stamp in audio 0:48:01.8.

Paul is the man who bobbles up and down and he says, "Oh, wretched man that I am", I am exhausted, I am miserable, who shall save me from this body of death. Now, Paul, at this point is right and ready for God to step in. The Bible says in verse 25

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You realize, Paul didn't say, it is a set of principles that saves me, Paul didn't say, he was rules and formulas that saves me, he says, "It is the person of Jesus Christ who saves me."

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.

Have you ever wondered why is it that God doesn't take away the flesh when we trust Him? Couldn't God have done that, the day you believe in Jesus, the flesh is also removed, can He do that? Of course. But why doesn't He do so? Can I hazard a guess. I think it is this, that the indwelling flesh, is the means by which I am driven to the arms of Jesus. The flesh, is a constant driver, that causes me to go nowhere else, not to myself, but to Jesus because victory is only in Jesus. This is the incurable, in a sense, almost incurable nature of man, we are ever so self-reliant. We are always thinking of fixing things ourselves.

Time stamp in audio 0:49:44.2.

You know, the Gospel message is one that strips away self-reliance. How can I be saved? The whole world says, do good, go to do works, the whole world tells you it's by works, but the Bible says it is by faith. Salvation is not achieved, salvation is received. Now, if you are a Christian, you understand that. But, isn't it true that after we become a Christian, we become self-reliant again. We think that holiness, we think that righteousness, we think that sanctification is by works. No, it is by faith. Sanctification likewise is not achieved, it is received. 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 loves me and gave Himself for me.

God has never intended your life to be lived independent of Him. You need to abide in Him, you need to believe in Him. I like this quote, I'll shared this with you. How frequently we throw works out the front door of justification and invite them in the back door of sanctification. True? Absolutely true. But it is only when you have despaired of self-effort, strip away all self-reliance that now you can say with Paul, it is Jesus who will give me the victory.

Time stamp in audio 0:51:33.4.

I close with this illustration. I read recently about a pastor, of our times, who admired a Christian man, 15 years his senior. That Christian man had impacted his life deeply and he saw in that man, a deep walk with God. He longed to have that deep walk with God and so, he came to the older man and said, "How is it there seems to be such a depth of walk with God. You seem so dead to self, you seem so dead to the world, you're just are not interested about what others think about you,

you're not interested in impressing the world, you're just so dead. How do you get there, how do you get there?"

The older man then asked the pastor a question, "Do you do push-ups?" Yes I do, I do it everyday, every morning. What's the maximum you can do? He quoted a number, is that really your maximum? Yes that's my maximum. If it is your maximum, it must be really hard isn't it? Yes, it is really hard.

Now, suppose you have just done your maximum number of push-ups and I come to you and say, "I would give you \$1 million if you could do just one more, do you think you could do it?" Well, I think I probably could, with all the adrenaline rush thinking about the \$1 million, I think I could." And so, uugh, uugh, uugh and you arrgh, he manages to squeeze out one more, just for \$1 million. Now, if I were to come to you again and say, if you could do just one more, I would give you \$5 million. At the slightest bent of the arm, your chest would collapse and hit the floor. Now, the pastor has no idea why is he talking about push-ups and about collapsing on the floor, but the older man says, "It is right there, when your chest is on the floor, but you know that you can't, that's where God steps in."

That's a great picture, you see. I'm afraid, too many of us think that we have the willpower, we can, I am capable, I have the ability, I am good and that's where we fail. But it's when our chest is on the floor, when we know we can't, that God says alright, here I come, I am going to give you the victory through my son Jesus Christ.

The struggle within, is only possible, to be conquered, in the victory found in Jesus alone, let's bow for a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you today, for the amazing work of grace in Your children. Not only did You give us a new nature that seeks after You, but can you give us Your Spirit to live within us. I pray today for friends were here, we do not know You as yet, would you open the front door of salvation, that they would cease from self-effort, that they would turn from their sins and come to Jesus for forgiveness and life. I pray today for my brothers and sisters, wearied, exhausted, in the life of struggle in their own strength. Bring us Lord, to that picture right there, chest on the ground, knowing that we can't and we look to Your Spirit, in us, to spiral us to victory. We thank you for the victory in Jesus, that day by day, He is spiralling upwards to God's glory and there will come that day when we will be totally, utterly, completely delivered from this body of sin, to be with You henceforth for evermore. Till then, dear Lord, keep our

eyes, on You, drive us to the arms of Your Savior, because we ask these things humbly, in Jesus name, amen. God bless.