Romans 7: 21-25 21So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is present with me. 22I certainly delight in God’s law according to my inner self, 23but I see a different law at work in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin, which is present in my members. 24What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Over the years the media has adequately and perhaps quite unaware, pointed out the reality of what this text says. We don’t necessarily grasp that it is teaching Biblical truth we just see it and accept what is before us as the reality. Let me share some examples of what I mean.

There is the classic book, and numerous movies on Dr. Jeckle and Mr. Hyde. That book is about the good side and the bad side of a person but in this case, the two sides from time to time simply take over the person so that he is only good or only evil.

I have seen our Biblical truth most often in the older cartoons of my generation, you know, before the trend became the save the planet with rangers or the environmental warriors who battle evil polluters. I think of the many times a character like Bugs Bunny has a decision to make and all of a sudden there pops up on his shoulders two miniature selves. The difference is that one has wings and a halo, encouraging the right thing while the other has horns and a tail and this one encourages the bad thing to do. I am sure you recall seeing those kinds of cartoons or even a modern show or two has done it. Most people will tell you that those mini-selves represent the conscience. But I would then ask: “Why are there two of them?” We only have one conscience. Fact is, there are two of them because that cartoon is a reflection of Christian truth, the battle of the Old Adam and the New Man. I don’t know if you realize it or not, but in the Christian faith a proper understanding of this reality of our lives is essential for grasping our faith and the battle that rages within. Our theme will be: **WHO WILL RESCUE ME?**

Ever since the fall of mankind the world has had a serious problem. That problem is known as sin. Sin has two sides to it. If you are talking actual sin then we are referring to either a sin of commission (when we do what God forbids) or a sin of omission (when you don’t do what God commands). The other side of sin is what is behind actual sin. In Christian theology we call it “original sin.” Original sin is the force, the drive behind actual sin. Original sin is the reason the world is no longer perfect and holy as God created it to be. Because of original sin we need to grasp that the world now has a dreadful and terminal disease. Sin, original sin is the reason that the world has all the problems it does and of course that original sin tempts to actual sins.

Did you know in the scientific world one of the laws of science reflects this fact of sin. It is called the Second Law of Thermodynamics. It is a scientific law that basically says that all things go from order to disorder. That’s why soil erodes, earthquakes shake, volcanoes erupt, candles burn and cars rust. All of these things are signs of the sin that infects our world, signs of things going from order to disorder. In Romans 8 we read of how our physical world of creation is impacted: **“For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption.”** That’s the impact of sin in the world: slavery to corruption.

And yes, even mankind has been infected with sin. Actually, he was the cause of sin. We are not talking about a loss of innocence here. We are talking about the fact that mankind has now become exactly the opposite of what he was created to be. Let me quote for you Luther’s description of sin. *“But what, then, is original sin? According to the Apostle it is not only the lack of a good quality in the will nor merely the loss of man’s righteousness and ability (to do good). It is rather the loss of all his power of body and soul, of his whole outward and inward perfections. In addition to this, it is his inclination to all that is evil, his aversion against that which is good, his antipathy against light and wisdom, his love for error and darkness, his flight from and his loathing of good works, his seeking after that which is sinful. Actual sins essentially consist in this that they come from out of us. But original sin enters into us: we cannot commit it, but we suffer it. We are sinners because we are sons of a sinner.”*

Listen again to a portion of that definition. “*It is rather the loss of all his power of body and soul, of his whole outward and inward perfections. In addition to this, it is his inclination to all that is evil, his aversion against that which is good, his antipathy against light and wisdom, his love for error and darkness, his flight from and his loathing of good works, his seeking after that which is sinful.”* Here is the true nature of man. It is for this reason that parents must devote so much time to teaching children to do right, because they are born to do wrong. It is for this reason that we are inclined to ignore laws and rules we do not want to do. It is for this reason that we think we are smarter and more wonderful than we are to the point that we can lie to and cheat on ourselves without a twang of conscience. The sinful nature of man, what we call the Old Adam, is lurking right there in all of us just waiting for the chance to break out.

You can see that truth in the events of our world. Look at what happens in mob rule. Consider all the protest out there that break into riots and destruction. You see it happening. People loot, steal, wreck, and even savagely beat other people. We are told that these protests are protests against injustice and they may start that way but it doesn’t take much for lawlessness to arise. The majority of people out there are doing whatever they want because there is no one and nothing to stop them. Here is man when his true nature arises. Here is our Old Adam in control and when that is true we are not concerned with right or wrong or justice but sin rules and lawlessness breaks forth. And how can lawlessness ever, ever bring justice?

Yet understand. Each one of us has an Old Adam. We are infected people. We are people who would rather not be good. We are by nature sinful. We are enemies of God by nature. We are a people who need help.

How wonderful it is that I don’t have to stand before you and guess at what kind of help we need. God has shown us what we need and God has supplied us what we need. God has given His Son Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin. Jesus came to correct the problem of sin and what sin has caused. We need to understand the role that Jesus plays.

Jesus actually came to deal with one specific aspect of sin first and only later, when he returns, will he deal with the second aspect of sin. The first aspect of sin that Jesus came to deal with is the death that sin brought into the world. Death in this case is both a physical and a spiritual thing. Physical death is happens because of sin but in Jesus there is a future hope for this physical death. Jesus through his resurrection showed us that he has conquered the problem of physical death. As Jesus had the power to raise himself from death, we are assured that he also has the power to raise us. This is hope of eternal life found in Jesus. For now, this promise is our comfort and joy, our sure and certain confidence of life after death. It is a foundational promise of Jesus. **“Because I live, you also will live.”**

Most important though, for now, is the fact that Jesus came to take care of the problem of spiritual death. Spiritual death is mankind’s total separation from God. Spiritual death is the fact that we sinners have no power to do that which is good or even think of the good. Spiritual death could be described as our fall. We are falling into the fires of hell. We can’t stop it. We can’t prevent what is happening. We can’t do anything but fall, we are by nature falling into eternal death.

The good news is that Jesus came to stop that fall. Jesus by his righteous life and innocent suffering and death caused us to be caught and stopped from that dreadful fall of sin. Because of Jesus and what he has done we now rescued. We have a spiritual chance. A chance to be something other than just lost and condemned creatures. Because of Jesus and his work of redemption we now have a new life, indeed, we have been given the call to be the children of God, heirs of eternal life. Jesus gives us the New Man. Jesus provides us with a new heart and mind created to do good works in love. Such is the power and wonder of Jesus.

All of this because Jesus served as our substitute. All of this because God so loved us. All of this because God in grace and mercy reached out to prevent our sure and certain fall to eternal death. I can’t even begin to recount to you the debt of love we owe to God.

So here we are: Christians who struggle with sin. This is the struggle the Apostle Paul so wonderfully and accurately portraits in our text. We have an Old Adam. We have in Christ a New Man. We know what that brings. Galatians 5:17 puts it this way: **“For the sinful flesh desire what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful flesh. In fact, these two continually oppose one another.”**

So Paul tells us the struggle we will have. **“21So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is present with me. 22I certainly delight in God’s law according to my inner self, 23but I see a different law at work in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin, which is present in my members.”** Paul tells it right. All too often there is the good, the godly, what we know we should be doing. We don’t do it. We know what we should not be doing, but that we still do that anyway. All too often even when we do the right thing it is with scarred intent or selfish expectation. Here is the battle within. Here is the struggle we endure as the children of God.

Yet rejoice. This terrible struggle and spiritual battle that we fight every moment of our lives marks you as a child of God. The unbeliever doesn’t have this battle nor does he care. Only true children of God endure this fight against sin out of the love that God has given us. So I say, rejoice. Rejoice that your conscience bothers you when you callously skip church or when you decide that this week you don’t need to be exposed to the means of grace. Rejoice that it bothers you when sin arises and you do fall. Rejoice that you can turn to Jesus and seek forgiveness and He grants it because of his love.

Dear people, the battle is real. We are in the battle. Who then will rescue us? Who will bring this horrid battle to an end? Thank God for Jesus. Jesus has won the battle. Jesus promises that for each of us, the time will come when the battle will be over. It is when we will find ourselves in the arms of God’s eternal love, when Jesus comes to take us from this vale of tears to himself in heaven or when Jesus comes to restore perfection to the world. We will find ourselves in God’s arms because Jesus will place us there. He has won the battle and helps us fight our daily battle with the Old Adam.

Here is the true marvel of Jesus. No wonder Paul gives thanks for Jesus. His thanks wasn’t just for the eternal life Jesus gives us when called from this world but his thanks is for the strength of Jesus to live our everyday lives to the wonder of Jesus. In other words, Jesus tempers our wretchedness. Jesus is the one who makes life’s struggles and trials bearable. Jesus is the one who calms our fears, soothes our hurts, binds our wounds and anoints us with his love. In Jesus the path is made smooth. In Jesus the dark is given light. In Jesus our trembling knees find strength to stand. This is so important to grasp. The thanks is not just for the future gift of heaven, the thanks is also for the daily, hourly support that Jesus gives in this great struggle of faith. No wonder Paul so awesomely exclaims: **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”** He thanks God because of his rescue!

May you give that same thanks! May the wonder and joy of this Christian faith, the promise of forgiveness and eternal life by grace just because of Jesus be yours! It is true. The struggle is real, a war is certainly being waged. Without Jesus we are left with being “miserable wretches.” But with Jesus we are rescued now and eternally. Amen.