

Honesty while in Adversity # 23

Romans 7: 14-25

If one were to consider the giants of the faith, the Apostle Paul would certainly rank very high on that list. He was used mightily of the Lord and experienced great success in ministry even though he was greatly opposed. We admire his commitment to the Lord and his great boldness in the faith. He was without human equal in discernment of the Scriptures. Paul stands as a great example for all believers.

Our text today is a bit different than most of Paul's writings. Here he opens his heart and shares the difficulties he faced. Paul admits, that like all believers, he continued to struggle with the flesh. There can be no doubt that God had His hand on Paul and yet the flesh presented daily temptations, which Paul struggled to overcome.

We all struggle with the flesh continually. Often we allow the temptations we face to overcome us and result in defeat. Christ doesn't want us to live defeated lives, but these struggles are part of inhabiting a body of flesh. Hopefully our study will help us as we continue to battle daily temptation. I want to consider the [confessions](#) Paul makes as we think on: [Honesty while in Adversity](#).

I. Paul Speaks of a Conflict (14-20) – Here Paul admits the conflict he continues to face. Notice:

A. The Origin (14) – [For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.](#) Paul discusses the source of this great conflict. The law of God, His infallible Word is spiritual in nature. By living in obedience to the Word, we grow spiritually and conform to the image of God. However there is a problem: we live in flesh that is prone to sin. Paul admits there is a continual struggle between the spiritual nature of man and the carnal nature of the flesh. The body in which we live continues to have the same desires and tendencies. As long as we live, we will face conflict.

B. The Opposition (15-16) – [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.](#) Paul is very honest here. He admits there are times when he doesn't even know why he behaves as he does at times. The word [allow](#) in [V.15](#) simply means to "know." He states, "I don't know why I do what I do at times." He longs to live for God and please Him, but before he knows it, he has sinned and come short of God's desire for His life.

- Paul is speaking of that continual struggle we all face. He admits there is a part of him that wants to please the Lord, but it is always opposed by the flesh that longs to satisfy itself. Our carnal nature continues to behave contrary to the Spirit. We too want to please the Lord, but often we fail by giving in to the lusts and desires of the flesh.

C. The Opportunity (18-19) – 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. Here he speaks of the opportunities he has on a daily basis and the choices he too often makes. He knew there was no goodness in his flesh; and he genuinely desired to serve the Lord, but often he found himself giving in to temptation and sin. There were two natures with totally different desires presenting opportunities to him.

- I am certain we all can identify with Paul. Those who are saved have a genuine desire to please the Lord. We feel bad through conviction when we fail, and yet we continue to do the things we know are contrary to the Spirit.

D. The Observance (17, 20) – Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.^[20] Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Paul does not make excuse for his failures, but he knows they are the result of his sinful nature and the desire to please the flesh. He is well aware of the constant struggle and readily admits it.

- We too struggle, but often we don't want to admit our need. We all deal with temptation, and we all fall short, but that is no excuse for sin. We must never assume that sin is acceptable even though the world around us continues that path. Sin is never acceptable even though we are continually tempted to engage in it. We must do as Paul and admit our need while seeking a closer walk with the Lord to overcome!

II. Paul Speaks of a Compulsion (21-23) – Now Paul addresses his constant compulsion to engage in sin. Notice:

A. The Enticement (21) – I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. He admits a difficult truth: every time he desires to do good and follow the Lord, evil is present to distract him. The enemy is always near seeking to defeat those who walk with the Lord. The devil will do everything he can to present every temptation and obstacle imaginable in our way. We face a determined adversary who seeks our defeat. When we try to serve the Lord, opposition is there. When we try to please the Lord the devil will present an alternative that pleases the flesh.

B. The Endearment (22) – [For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.](#) This is not a statement of self-righteous arrogance; Paul genuinely desired to serve the Lord and please Him. Although he battled the flesh daily, the desire of the inward man, the spiritual man, longed to please the Lord. Paul is expressing his displeasure and grief over the defeat he suffers.

- The same will be true of every born again believer. Although we struggle with the flesh, the inward man is compelled to serve the Lord and honor Him. We delight in the things of God even though we fail Him. There is an inward longing for fellowship with the Lord. Our hearts are broken when we engage in sin and disappoint our Lord. Those who face these struggles actually show their desire for the Lord and conversion. A lost man cares nothing for the Word or ways of God. I am not advocating sin, but those who struggle with it have the Spirit working within.

C. The Entrapment (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.](#) Although he longed to feed the spiritual man and serve the Lord, the attacks of the enemy were unrelenting. When he gained victory on one front, the enemy would attack from a different angle. There was no rest from the battle, facing an enemy who continually sought to bind him in captivity.

- We can never become complacent and let our guard down. We may gain victory over a particular sin or struggle in life, but there will always be another one to face. The enemy will not rest as long as we live. His sole purpose for existing is to seek any means possible to bring shame and reproach on the Lord. When he entices us to sin and we take the bait, he succeeds in our defeat and hopes to expose that in order to bring reproach on the Lord.

III. Paul Speaks of his Conviction (24-25) – Paul certainly was not seeking to condone or encourage sin. He was deeply convicted by his failures. Consider:

A. His Frustration (24) – [O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?](#) His sin and failure brought a sense of deep frustration and agony to Paul. Although sin pleased the flesh, he was in anguish of soul over it. He longed to finally be set free from the body of flesh that longs for sin and ends in death.

- Paul's deeply personal admission reveals the heart of a mature saint. He readily admitted his sin and desire to overcome. The longer he served the Lord the more he realized his failures and need for continued growth. Our maturity often depends on how we deal with sin in our lives. Those who acknowledge it and deal with are able to grow in the Lord. Those who ignore it will continue to engage in sin and live in defeat. We ought to be more aware of our sinfulness today

than we were the moment we were saved. The longer I serve the Lord the more I realize the inner depravity that continues to work in my life.

B. His Focus (25a) – [I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord](#). This statement may seem a bit out of place, but it is right where it needs to be. It reveals profound truth. Paul had discussed at length his need and failures, but he kept his focus on Christ. Even though he failed and came short, he served One who would never fail. While Paul was weak in the flesh, he enjoyed and Anchor of the soul. He was settled on the Rock of his salvation! He sought to focus on the Lord and draw strength from Him while he was being assaulted in the flesh.

- That too must be our focus. The truth is we will never overcome in our flesh. The battle is too intense and the enemy is too strong. However, we serve the Lord. He overcame sin and death as He rose triumphant. We do not have to live in defeat. Look to Jesus for strength to overcome!

C. His Fortitude (25b) – [So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin](#). As he closes these thoughts, Paul makes a summary statement. In his heart and mind he longed to serve the Lord, but the flesh longed to sin. Some might see this as a resignation to defeat, but I see it as an act of fortitude. Paul simply admits his struggles, and yet in doing so he doesn't resign to defeat. He knows that the battle will rage again, but he is determined to press on for the Lord. He refused to allow his struggle with the flesh to remove Him from serving the Lord.

- Our struggles will continue as well. You will not escape the temptation of the flesh while in this life. The opportunity to sin will be there every day. At times we will give in to temptation, engaging in sin, but we must not allow sin to remain and defeat us. We too must determine to press on for the glory of our Lord in the work He has given us!

Conclusion: I am certain we all can identify with Paul. We all have struggles with the flesh and are prone to sin. Are we willing to admit our sinful tendencies and address them? Are we willing to seek the Lord to strengthen us or do we continue in sin as if nothing is wrong? There is help for us in the Lord. He alone can provide the strength and wisdom we need to overcome, but we must seek Him.

If there are needs in your life, look to Jesus. If you have never been saved you don't understand the struggles we have discussed. Your conscience may bother you, but you don't have the Spirit within. If you are unsaved, I urge you to seek the Lord and respond to His gracious offer in salvation!