

My Jesus #1 – Who Shall Deliver Me? (A Merciful Mess!)
Romans 7:18-19, 24-25

Series Introduction:

Let's begin this morning with some simple, personal questions.

- **Are you a child of God?** Has there ever been a moment in your life when you personally trusted Jesus as your Savior?
- **Do you live every day in the victorious wonder that is ours as children of God?**
- **Are you there now? Is it obvious? Do others see it?**

Or...

- **Is it possible, that though you are a child of God, sometimes it doesn't feel like it? Look like it?**

Hopefully, you're doing great today!

However, I would venture to say that, if we're honest, we all have those moments, those stretches, when we struggle.

I do. There have been some really difficult stretches in my journey with the Lord. There will be others. Looking back, I can **see some truths more clearly now** than I could in the middle of the struggle -

- 1. The (My) greatest periods of growth are almost always the greatest times of testing and trouble.**
- 2. Our God is– God.**
 - The Master potter – We are simply the clay and His to mold
 - The Gardener of all – knows when and how to prune His vines.**He doesn't ask our approval or even seek our input.**
- 3. When we come to the end of ourselves, we find Him waiting. Often, we have to come to the end to start of the life Jesus died to make possible.**
- 4. I don't know what is coming next. I probably won't like it some of it. It doesn't matter.**

In our text today, **Paul is open and candid about an incredibly difficult point in his life.**

- He cries, **"O wretched man that I am!"** He's a mess.
- And he cries out, **"Who shall deliver me?"**

Most people assume that if someone really knows God...

- if someone knows the Bible well...
- if someone is religious or even deeply spiritual...

Then **they must have their life completely together**. Romans 7 destroys that illusion.

Paul knew more Scripture than almost anyone who has ever lived. But knowledge didn't stop the struggle.

Our text today provides God's answer to Paul's cry.

Today, Who Shall Deliver Me? A Merciful Mess!

I. Clarification.

A. **The struggle** Paul describes is **not one experienced by those who are lost**. The **answers** God provides are **not available to those who are lost**.

1. The struggle revealed by Paul is not the condemnation and consequences of being lost.

Until a person trusts Jesus as their personal Savior, they are - Lost:

- **Cut off from God** which means no light, no life, no personal love.
- **No presence of God helping with the issues of life.**
- **Not just the absence of God** "*having no hope, and without God in this world*" (Eph. 2:12), but **being an enemy of God, under wrath and condemnation.**
- An eternity of unimaginable suffering

As horrible as that sounds – and it is! – **it doesn't have to be!**

- **That is the reason Jesus came, lived, died and rose again – to rescue the lost!**
- **No one has to stay lost!** No one has to face life and eternity utterly alone! **You can accept the ultimate gift of eternal life in Jesus and become God's child forever!**

****We'll talk more about that next week.**

In each person who does not know Jesus, there is

- **Guilt.** The cumulative, crushing weight of our sin. “heavy laden” Jesus describes it!
- **Conscience.** Maybe warped. Seared. But placed within us by the God who designed us to tell us something is wrong.
- **Perhaps conviction** – that work of God’s Holy Spirit to help us realize that we are sinful and lost. The drawing us from our sin to the Savior! **Our prayer for you today**, if you have never trusted Jesus, is that His Holy Spirit will convict you of your sin and need for the Savior, present God’s answer – the gospel/Jesus, and will draw you to Jesus today. In fact, that is what He *will do*. And whether you want to or not, realize it or not, you will choose to stay as you are, or turn to Jesus and trust Him as your Savior.

B. The struggle is one experienced by every child of God!

If you don’t struggle with personal sin and failure, if there is no inner conflict, **you might want to make sure you are saved!**

God’s Holy Spirit will never sit idly by in the lives of His children. He loves as we are, where we are, but too much to leave us there!

There is a battle that begins within us the moment we trust Jesus. The Spirit vs. the flesh, His light vs. darkness, Our old self vs. the new creation we are in Jesus!

The point:

- If you are not saved, you need to be! You can be! Today!!
- If you do know Jesus, **don’t be surprised when He brings to light sinfulness and selfishness.**

II. The Conflict.

Paul cries out, “***O wretched man that I am...***”

There is **incredible comfort** in connecting with the deepest struggles of some of the greatest people that have ever lived!

Paul – shared... some of those difficult times:

- Cf. Paul’s time in Asia minor- He despaired even of life (2 Cor 1)

- Cf. 2 Cor. – Paul’s great sin – worried about coworker so shut down revival in Troas
- Cf. 2 Timothy 4 – All alone. Forsaken. Cold. Abused.

Our text: **“I am wretched!”**

A. Sometimes...

- Wretchedness, misery and frustration are brought on because of **external circumstances**. Cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 19.
- The **misery we suffer is because of the mess we’ve made**. That is the truth of our text.

B. The Struggle: Paul’s misery came from within!

1. Paul was God’s child. He was serving as God’s chosen apostle to the Gentiles.

- That didn’t change his humanity. That didn’t end the daily struggle.
- That didn’t exempt even Paul from the ever-present reality of selfishness and sinfulness.

At one point Paul wrote that he was **“the chiefest of sinners!”**

The sin? We don’t know. It doesn’t matter!!

2. Paul describes the agonizing struggle: Vs. 19

I don’t want to do evil, and I do it.

I want to do good, and don’t.

I’m wretched!

C. Sound familiar?

Have you ever said or did something and then *Why did I...? What was I thinking?*

Kenna West wrote a song that resonated with me the first time I heard it. I had the privilege of recording it on my CD years ago- **“Deliver Me From Myself!”**

Jesus not only told us of our struggle but instructed us, prepared us -

- *Crucify the flesh. Take up your cross. Die daily.*
- *Give up your life to me. Lose it for my sake and you'll find it!*

The conflict continues in every child of God:

Sin, or not?

Me, or Him?

Mine, or His?

Love Him first and most, or myself?

To get us **from where we are to where He wants, God works...**

- Through circumstances
- Through conviction
- Through chastening
- ***Through our crash and burns – Wait - God can use my failures?***

Paul cried out – *"I am wretched. I am sinful. Who can deliver me?!"*

Not "what?" but "Who?!"

That cry is not the voice of a hypocrite.

It is the voice of a man who sees the truth about himself. And the strange thing is... *that cry of desperation is actually progress!*

As long as we believe we can fix ourselves, we won't run to the One who can.

Are we crying out? Are we aware of our great need?

III. The Consequence.

A. Paul's cry "Wretched man that I am!" is immediately followed by, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25).

Tim Keller, in *The Blessedness of Self-forgetfulness*, observes -

"Spiritual pride is the illusion that we are competent to run our own lives, achieve our own sense of self-worth and find a purpose big enough to give us meaning in life without God." pg. 15

When we acknowledge who we really are - before Him and with ourselves- we open the door to what we can be in Him. The end of ourselves is the starting point to the life we can have in Him.

Whether through circumstances of life, or the crash and burns that open the eyes of our hearts, God is working and waiting to provide the answer we've needed all along.

When we cry out- He has the answer!

- **Not just facts, information and truths.** There are a lot of people who *know a lot about God... but are still trapped in their mess.*
- **God's answer to Paul... to each of us...**
 - Truths experienced in the presence and fullness of the Savior!
 - ****Romans 8...**

B. The tone changes from wretchedness to thankfulness! The short answer! Vs. 25

- **"Through"**
- **"Jesus"** – My Savior
- **"Christ"** – He is the Messiah. The Anointed One. God's Answer.
- **"Our Lord"** – self-awareness and surrender!
 - *He is God' I'm not!*
 - *He is King of Kings and Lord of Lord. He can handle what I can't!*
 - *I don't have to have all of the answers. I have Him!*

When we finally reach the end of ourselves, we discover something surprising. ***Jesus has been there the whole time.***

Paul stood face to face with the truth about himself.

- He didn't excuse it.
- He didn't minimize it.
- He didn't pretend it wasn't there.

He cried out: "O wretched man that I am!"

And the moment that cry left his lips... heaven answered.

God is working, and waiting to do the same for us today!