

Victorious – “I” Problems

10/5/25

Romans 7:14-25

Sunday AM

As we get started today, I need to do something that honestly, might make some of you uncomfortable – yet it needs to be done. After 14 yrs of pastoring this church, I need to out a member who’s been the bane of my existence. This man has given me more trouble than any person I’ve ever met – and he’s made my life miserable so many times I’ve lost count. And since I know he’s here today, I’m going to ask him to stand up, b/c he knows who I’m talking about. So, bane of my existence... Stand up! Don’t be shy! Oh...it’s me!

The guy I have more trouble w/ than anyone else is my wife’s first and only husband... ME! DYK why? It’s b/c I truly want to be a great husband, a great dad, and a great pastor – but too often, my performance doesn’t match my desire – and my attitudes, appetites, ambitions, and actions get me in trouble w/ myself.

The issue is I’m a recovering sinner w/ an “I” problem. And if you’re a Christian, you are too! Admit it. We all have a struggle w/in us where we want to honor God and yet our flesh wants to honor itself, but the Big “I” keeps getting in the way. And if you’re sitting here thinking you don’t have a similar struggle – you’re either in denial – or else you’ve learned something that neither Paul or myself have learned.

BTW – I’m sure glad no one else stood up!

In **Romans 7:14-25**, Paul openly shared about His “I” problem – I think to help us w/ our “I” problem.

We know the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I don’t understand what I do. For what I want to do I don’t do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I don’t want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself doesn’t dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I don’t do the good I want to do, but the evil I don’t want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I don’t want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but its sin living in me that does it. So, I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there w/ me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work w/in me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me thru Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. 7:14-25

Paul is saying that while God’s law is good/helpful, sin living in our fallen nature (flesh) hijacks our desires. So, even when we want to do right, too often we find ourselves doing what we hate and don’t want to do b/c while the Spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

This is b/c our struggle isn’t just w/ the physical, it’s a spiritual war being waged in/around us – and this inner tug-of-war we experience daily exposes just how powerless we are to free ourselves in our own ability and ingenuity – b/c the spiritual life can only succeed thru the H.S. in us living thru us. In short, Paul says sin enslaves, the law reveals, self can’t save, and Christ delivers – setting up the freedom of Romans 8.

I dawned me this week that whenever we have an I-Problem (point to heart) it leads to eye-problems (point to eyes). Think about it. The 1st (4) commands in the Law are about the our I-Issues – that is, will God sit on the throne of our lives or ourselves. If we don’t get this right, then we’ll have a problem w/ the 2nd (6) commands (honoring authority, valuing life, being faithful, taking what’s not ours, not telling the truth, and wanting what others have) b/c of an eye-problem.

Now – before I jump into this passage, I want to go back and discuss a truth that I shared last week about a believer’s **position** and **practice** in salvation. I want to share an example that I believe illustrates this truth extraordinarily well – and is applicable to today’s text.

To refresh your memory, a believer’s position refers to our legal status based upon the point-in-time moment we believed/received Jesus as Savior. In that very moment, our status changed from *lost* to *found*, from *orphaned* to *adopted*, from *sinful* to *justified*.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption thru His blood – the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14

Our **PRACTICE** refers to the day-to-day condition of our intimacy w/ God based on our trust, surrender, and obedience to His Word, will, and H.S.

*Since you’ve been raised w/ Christ, **set your hearts** on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds** on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden w/ Christ in God.* Colossians 3:1-3

This week in one on my GROW Groups, one of the men offered probably the best explanation I’ve heard on our **position** and **practice** in salvation.

He likened it to when Kate Middleton, a commoner, married Prince William back in 2011. On that day in Westminster Abbey, she walked the aisle as Catherine Middleton, but left as the Her Royal Highness – the Princess of Wales b/c in one covenantal moment of saying “I do” – she went from a commoner w/ no access to the king – to a royal w/ immediate access. She emerged w/ a new name, a new family, a new home, new access, and a new inheritance – never again to ever being a commoner – and none of it was earned, but granted – and it was immediate, not gradual.

But the wedding was just the beginning. She then had to be discipled to learn how to be a royal. She was given a new wardrobe, new priorities, and a completely new calling in life. And now – every day, she awakes w/ a new purpose in life and a new responsibility to honor the king. And amazingly – on the days she stumbles or wants to revert back to act like a commoner – her title can’t be annulled.

Similarly, we all come to Jesus as common sinners – empty handed/needy. Yet b/c of faith in God’s gift of grace, immediately, our position/status change. We’re given a new name, a new family, a new home, new access, and a new inheritance – never again to ever being a common sinner. We’re given a new wardrobe and purpose in life – to go and live like a King’s kid. Where we once had no ability to enter into God’s presence, now we have immediate access – and our calling is to live for the agenda/mission of the King.

Then, once saved, the long process live in God’s grace starts w/ the H.S. beginning the slow renovation of renewing our mind, reshaping our desires, and teaching us to put off the old self to put on compassion, humility, purity, and love that befit our new identity. This is a 3-steps forward, 2 steps backward journey where some days we’ll walk intimately w/ God, while on other days we’ll wrestle w/ life. But stumbles call for coaching, not disowning – and confession restores fellowship; it doesn’t revoke our inheritance as we grow into what we already are – King’s kids!

If someone were to ask us to explain this reality, we could do worse than to say – we don’t bow/curtsy to become princes/princesses; we bow/curtsy b/c we are one. Our position is a gift; and our practice is its echo.

Enter Prince Harry. He’s a king’s kid not acting like a royal – BUT he is a royal. Nothing can change this reality. He can turn his back on it, abdicate it – and make a mockery of it – but he’s still a royal and always will be – yet He’s choosing not to be who He really is.

Too often, we do the same thing. We're King's kids not acting like King's kids, but as sinful commoners. We don't lose our royal status, but we do miss out on the blessings, benefits, and calling of being a royal.

Which brings us to our text today. Paul confesses that even though he's a spiritual royal, it doesn't make his flesh disappear. Instead, he has to struggle w/ the old nature (flesh) at war w/ the H.S. now living w/in him.

It's like the **Dennis the Menace** cartoon when he disobeyed his mom and was put in time-out. As he sat facing the wall, he said, "Do you know my problem? I'm not good at being bad. I'm just bad at being good."

Is this not the actual problem w/ which we all struggle? We give in to the temptation and defy God's will even when we don't want to give in. Instead of acting like the prince/princesses we are – we're acting like Prince Harry's! Royalty acting like sinful commoners.

Paul isn't saying we're incapable of doing right/good that honors God, but that too often ***our desire to obey is greater than our ability to obey*** – and we fall short.

See – our problem isn't the Law's lack of clarity or the H.S.'s presence to help – but our flesh's lack of ability.

So today – I want to talk to everyone who's ready to get honest w/ themselves – to the ones of us who love Jesus but also know the tug-of-war inside our own lives. We delight in God's Word, but then one afternoon we get short w/ our kids, we click where we promised we wouldn't, we replay an insult w/ an insult and stew ourselves into bitterness wondering why we can't do the very things we want to do?" Well ... in Romans 7. Paul addresses this ache. Not excusing sin; but exposing a familiar pattern so we'll run to Jesus.

I The **STRUGGLE** We Must Admit

Paul starts w/ an honest confession – *the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh*. He's saying that God's law isn't the problem – but instead, the problem is in us – that is, in our **flesh** (*sarx*). Our flesh is a stubborn, sin-bent operating system still lingering in our lives even though our position has changed.

Paul says, "B/c of my *sarx* (flesh), I struggle w/ my actions – so, I don't do what I want to do and I do the things I hate to do." This is b/c a war is being waged w/in me b/w my flesh and the H.S.

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict w/ each other, so that you're not to do whatever you want. Galatians 5:17

Understand – the problem Paul is referring to isn't the Law that reveals our sin, but our flesh that craves sin.

The law is like an MRI. It's a machine that can probe every inch of a person's body to reveal things inside of us that aren't right that otherwise we'd never know. It's literally a life-saving machine as people have discovered an actual issue while addressing another. In fact, this recently occurred w/ Pastor Craig. He went in to get an MRI on his back and the doctors found a blockage in his heart – and it likely saved his life.

An MRI isn't to blame for any trouble w/in us; it simply reveals the problem. This is what the Law does for us spiritually. It doesn't create sin, but it does reveal the sin in us. It exposes the struggle in our flesh.

Until we admit this battle, we're going to struggle b/c there's a war being waged and we're the battlefield.

II The **SLAVERY** We All Experience

This is where it gets technical. Paul used the phrase – ***sold under sin***. *The phrase evokes a slave-market purchase whose effects are still binding*. IOW – I'm saved, but my flesh is still wanting to enslave me.

This is why Paul said – *I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out*. Paul is describing this corrupted power w/in us (flesh) that only wants to enslave us b/c it gratifies us – yet it is actually at war w/ the H.S. who indwells/fills us.

I think of the tractor beam in a sci-fi movie like Star Wars. Once the tractor beam locks in, it's seemingly impossible to escape. When the flesh locks in on sin, all it wants to do is give into temptation. Now this isn't to say that we have to give into sin – we don't; but we will not be able to defeat sin thru our flesh.

Paul calls this drag – *the law of sin*. The bad news is that so long as we live on this earth, we're going to have to deal w/ this tractor beam known as our *flesh*. The good news is that in salvation, we have the H.S. now living w/in us so that when we feel the *pull* of the flesh – we can overcome b/c *greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world*. (1 John 4:4)

SO – the solution to sin isn't trying harder or doubling-down in our determination to be better b/c that'll never work – that only tightens the strongholds/habits.

So, what is our solution – what is God's solution?

III The SAVIOR We All Need

God's Solution is Jesus. In his death, we were bought w/ a price and transferred to a new Master/Owner.

*Do you not know that your body is the temple of the H.S., who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **you were bought at a price**. So, honor God w/ your bodies. 1 Cr. 6:19-20*

Whereas, thru Adam we were transacted into sin, thru Christ, we've been bought back to freedom.

WTM – notice Paul's statement in Romans 7:24 – *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* Paul doesn't ask **WHAT** will deliver him – it's not a technique, hack, or checklist. He asks **WHO** will deliver him. And that's **ONLY** Jesus!

deliver (*rhyomai*) to rescue from danger or to snatch out of a threatening situation – an active intervention.

Deliverance is always personal before it's practical – and it's a Person before it's a plan. Jesus ¹ lived the life we couldn't, ² died the death our sins deserved, ³ arose to break sin's penalty/power, and ⁴ gave us His H.S. to dwell w/in us to give us victory over the flesh today.

SO – what can we do to win this battle w/in us b/w the H.S. and our flesh?

1. **Start Every Day Surrendered** – “Lord, You are the object of my affection and my righteousness – guide me today to victory over my flesh.
2. **Name the Battle – Name the Promise** – Dig into Scripture hiding it in your heart and pairing your struggle w/ a specific truth from God's Word.
3. **Phone/Text a Friend Before You Fail** – Ask them to pray now b/c you're being tempted. Bring the darkness into the light.
4. **Practice Replacement** – don't just say “no” to sin; say “yes” to an alternative habit. Take a walk. Serve someone, Worship. Pray the Psalms for 5 min.

5. **Confess Quickly and Keep Walking** – when you fall (and you will), confess *specifically*, receive *freshly*, and resume following Jesus *immediately*. Not penance – just repentance.

Legend has it that Harry Houdini once accepted a dare to escape from a small-town jail. As he entered the cell and the door clanged shut, and he went to work to pick the lock. But before he knew it, minutes stretched to hours as he tried every trick he knew. Nothing. Frustrated/exhausted, he finally slumped against the cell door – and it swung open. The door had never been locked. His own striving had kept him captive.

Too often for the Christian, the prison isn't a locked door, and our white-knuckled attempt to force it open fail. It is b/c freedom comes when we trust in and lean on the One who's already opened it. The struggle is an I-problem that requires a He-solution.