

Sunday, July 5, 2026

I Want to Do Good, Evil is Always There: Understanding Romans 7:13-25 and the Battle with Sin

Summary

We find ourselves wrestling with one of the most honest passages in Scripture: Romans 7:13-25, where Paul unveils the internal battle between wanting to do good and finding evil always present. This passage cuts to the heart of our spiritual struggle, revealing how sin operates like a hospitable environment in our human flesh. The central tension is unmistakable—we know what is good, we desire what is righteous, yet we find ourselves doing the very things we hate. This isn't about making excuses or finding a spiritual loophole; it's about understanding the depth of sin's invasion into our lives. The law, though good and spiritual, reveals our inability to achieve righteousness through willpower alone. We learn that human effort, no matter how sincere, cannot break the chains of sin. Only through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit can we find freedom. This message calls us to humility, urging us to seek help when we're caught in cycles of sin, to pursue discipleship intentionally, and to remember that our truest identity is not the sin that clings to us but Christ who lives in us. The breakthrough comes not through isolation and self-reliance, but through accountability, community, and surrendering to God's transforming power.

Key Scriptures

Explicitly Referenced:

- Romans 7:13-25 - Main text of the sermon, read in full
- Romans 7:12 - Referenced as the previous verse being built upon
- Romans 6:17-18 - Mentioned regarding believers being freed from slavery to sin
- Exodus (general reference) - Mentioned regarding God giving Moses the Ten Commandments

Key Points

- Sin leads to death, and the law reveals sin, making the law good rather than evil
- Good is never evil—we must not confuse what God calls good with what He calls evil
- Paul's "I" primarily refers to Jews under the Mosaic Law, though applications exist for Christians
- You cannot overcome sin by force of will—victory requires the Holy Spirit's power
- Believers in Christ are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6) but Jews under the law remain enslaved
- Human flesh is a hospitable environment for sin until we receive our heavenly bodies
- We must know what is good and what is evil through Scripture and the Holy Spirit
- All sinners are accountable to God; only Christ's blood absolves us of sin
- Verses 17 and 20 are not "get out of jail free cards"—they describe sin's deep invasion, not removal of responsibility
- Christians struggling with sin cycles need to seek help and accountability
- God has good work for believers to do—we should pray to discover what He wants us engaged in.

Discussion Questions

- Paul describes a cycle where he wants to do good but ends up doing evil instead. What does this reveal about the limitations of human willpower in overcoming sin, and how does this challenge modern ideas of self-improvement?
- The sermon distinguishes between being under the Mosaic law versus being under the law of Christ. How does understanding this difference change the way we approach obedience and righteousness in our daily lives?
- Paul states that the law is spiritual and good, yet it reveals our sinfulness. In what ways can something good expose our brokenness, and how should we respond when we see our own sin more clearly?
- Pastor Chris warns against underestimating sin and emphasizes that we cannot overcome it by force of will alone. What spiritual practices or disciplines help us rely on the Holy Spirit's power rather than our own strength?

- The sermon suggests that what is evil for one person may not be evil for another based on individual temptations. How do we discern our personal areas of weakness, and what boundaries should we establish to protect ourselves from sin?
- Paul writes that nothing good lives in his flesh, describing human flesh as a hospitable environment for sin. How does this theological reality shape our understanding of sanctification and the ongoing battle against sin?
- Pastor Chris emphasizes the importance of accountability in breaking free from cycles of sin. Why is asking for help often so difficult, and what does our reluctance to seek accountability reveal about pride in our spiritual lives?
- The sermon connects discipleship with knowing what is good and what is evil. How can we grow in discernment to better recognize sin in our lives, especially when culture often calls evil good and good evil?
- Paul's confusion about his own behavior reflects a deep internal conflict between desire and action. How does the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers fundamentally change this dynamic compared to those under the law?
- Pastor Chris encourages praying repeatedly for God to reveal the good work He wants us to do. What prevents us from engaging in good works, and how might persistent prayer transform our understanding of service and calling?

Weekly Devotional: Breaking Free from the Cycle of Sin

Day 1: The Battle Within

Reading: Romans 7:13-20

Devotional: Paul's honest confession reveals a universal struggle: the gap between our desires and our actions. Like the man who couldn't break free from his affair despite overwhelming guilt, we often find ourselves trapped in cycles we desperately want to escape. This isn't weakness—it's reality. The law reveals what is good, but it cannot empower us to do it. Recognition of this battle is the first step toward freedom. Today, acknowledge where you feel this tension most acutely. Don't minimize it or excuse it. Simply bring it honestly before God, who already knows and still loves you completely.

Reflection Question: Where do you most experience the gap between what you want to do and what you actually do?

Day 2: The Slavery We Cannot Break Alone

Reading: Romans 6:15-23

Devotional: "You cannot overcome sin by force of will." This truth shatters our self-reliant pride. We want to believe we're strong enough, disciplined enough, committed

enough. But Paul declares himself "sold into slavery to sin" under the law. The good news? In Christ, we were slaves to sin, but now we are free. This freedom didn't come through trying harder—it came through dying with Christ and rising with Him. Your truest identity isn't "sinner struggling to be good" but "saint empowered by the Spirit." Stop fighting in your own strength. Surrender to the One who has already won the victory.

Reflection Question: What areas of your life reveal you're still trying to overcome sin through willpower rather than Spirit-power?

Day 3: Knowing Good from Evil

Reading: Hebrews 5:11-14

Devotional: Maturity requires discernment—knowing what is good and what is evil, specifically for you. What tempts your neighbor may not tempt you, and vice versa. This isn't relativism; it's wisdom. Paul knew what was good and what was evil. Do you? Discipleship trains our senses to distinguish between righteousness and sin in our unique circumstances. This requires time in God's Word, listening to the Holy Spirit, and honest community. Ask God to illuminate the specific environments, relationships, or habits that lead you toward sin. Then have the courage to avoid them, even when others don't understand why.

Reflection Question: What specific situations or environments do you need to avoid because they consistently lead you toward temptation?

Day 4: The Danger of Excusing Sin

Reading: 1 John 1:5-10

Devotional: "It's not me doing it, but sin that lives in me"—this could become the ultimate excuse. But Paul isn't offering an escape clause; he's describing the depth of sin's invasion. All sinners remain accountable to God. Period. We cannot shrug off responsibility while claiming victim status to indwelling sin. Yet here's the hope: confession and cleansing. When we acknowledge our sin honestly—without minimizing, rationalizing, or blaming—God is faithful to forgive and purify us. Stop making excuses. Get help. Find accountability. The blood of Jesus washes away what your willpower never could. Humble confession opens the door to supernatural transformation.

Reflection Question: In what ways have you been making excuses for ongoing sin rather than seeking genuine help and accountability?

Day 5: Equipped for Good Work

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Devotional: God hasn't just saved you from sin; He's saved you for good works, prepared in advance for you to do. The same Spirit who empowers you to resist evil also equips you to accomplish good. What is God calling you to do? Perhaps you've been so focused on what you shouldn't do that you've missed what you should do. Good work isn't just volunteering at church—it's any act of love, service, and obedience done in Jesus' name. This week, pray persistently: "What good work do You

want me to do?" Then listen. Watch. Step forward when God opens the door. Your life has Kingdom purpose waiting to be fulfilled.

Reflection Question: What is one good work God might be calling you to engage in this season? How will you take the first step?

Closing Prayer: Father, thank You that in Christ we are no longer slaves to sin. Give us courage to face our struggles honestly, wisdom to seek help when needed, and power to walk in the good works You've prepared for us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. In Jesus' name, Amen.