

May 21 & 22, 2022

In this passage, Paul discusses the problem of our inside (the person we are) not matching up with the outside (the person we should be or want to be). In this case, the outside is the way that God has designed the world to work and for us to be, to use contemporary parlance, "the best version of ourselves." This is called "the law," which in Hebrew is the Torah, the most basic instruction from God. Here, God gives the vision what life should be and invites human beings into that kind of good life. At the end of the Torah we find the simple invitation: Choose life! God has given us a vision for the good life, along with the standards and rules that help us live that life. On the inside, however, is the reality of who we truly are - broken, distorted, and full of desires that push us toward pain and heartbreak - very different from that ideal or vision of the good life. When Paul reflects on the mismatch he sees in his own life, he concludes, "Wretched man that I am!" He seems like a thirsty man reaching for a glass of water but finding it just out of his reach.

Reflection:

- What are the specific ways you don't do what you want and do what you don't want?
- Consider irritations towards other that you have recently or regularly felt. What do those irritations tell you about yourself?
- "Thanks be to God." In your mind, lay your sin upon Jesus and worship God for accepting you fully.

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Please continue to pray for the elders.

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v.14 - We know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

- Sin is not just a list of bad things, but like a horrible sickness that has damaged every part of us.

v.15 - For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

- In Romans 6-7 there are two main ways that we are to normalize our perspective on sin.
 1. Chapter 6: we are to be free from slavery and offer ourselves as instruments of righteousness. Yes, we can change! The Spirit is in us.
 2. Chapter 7: we accept the fact that we are tainted by sin through and through.

v.16 - Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

- Option #1 (human way): change the law so that it suits my heart's desires.
- Option #2 (God's way): let the law reveal the state of my heart's desires.

v. 17-21 – It is sin that dwells within me.

- Martin Luther wrote, "Sin in the Scriptures means not only external works of the body but also all those movements within us which bestir themselves and move us to do the external works, namely, the depth of the heart with all its powers." (Martin Luther, preface to Romans)

v. 21-24 The conclusions: There is a great tension inside me.

- The internal tension persists for all followers of Jesus.
- "Thanks be to God!": There is acceptance in Jesus.

Application

- Hope
- Humility
- Acceptance of others
- Worship

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