

1. Romans 6-8 is a wonderful passage on the life of a Christian: he is dead to sin in principle and in practice. Though he is a saint he is still a sinner. The Holy Spirit delivers him from the power of the flesh, gives him sonship and assures him of future glory and victory over all enemies. It is a remarkable passage of Scripture.
2. In vs. 24 Paul calls himself and all Christians "a wretched person." What does he mean? He means that he is nothing but sinful flesh, sold under sin, vs. 14. He means that he does not understand himself because he sins against his will, 15-16. He repeats this thought in 19-20. The reason is that sin makes its home in him, vs. 17 and 20. There is a constant war between his new man and his old Adam, vs. 22-23. The sinful flesh takes Paul captive.
3. But, Paul is not saying that he and all Christians are condemned. He denies that at 8:1. He is not a slave of sin. Sin does not rule him. He is producing the fruits of faith. Paul is not finding fault with God and His Word. Paul's flesh does not have mastery over him. He is not despairing. He is not even longing for death. In fact he knows that the Lord Jesus has already delivered him from sin, death and the devil. Vs. 25. He is a man of triumphant faith.
4. But he calls himself a wretched person. "Sold under sin" does not denote slavery to sin but that sin makes its home in the Christian. It hampers the Christian. He does what he does not will and fails to do what he wills. This is what Luther meant when he said: "A Christian is simultaneously a saint and a sinner." He is holy in the sense that he is forgiven and, by faith, Christ lives in his heart. But at the same time he admits: "In my flesh dwells no good thing." The sinful flesh is the Christian's inevitable burden until death. Only death will remove this flesh once and for all.
5. In vs. 15 Paul and all Christians say: "I do not understand what I am doing." How true! A Christian is a mystery to himself. He grieves over the fact that he is fleshly, vs. 14. He grieves because he sins against his own will. He grieves that sin makes its home in him. He grieves because evil is always with him. Vs. 21. He grieves because his flesh makes war against his new man. Vs. 23. He must come to realize that his new man serves God's Law but that his flesh serves the law of sin. Vs. 25. This is not an excuse but only an explanation. In vs. 17 he said: "It's not I who am doing this but sin that makes its home in me." That is NOT an excuse. It is only an explanation.
6. Jesus once said: "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." Mt. 10:38. The Christian's greatest cross is his sinful flesh. Every Christian has that. To bear this cross after Christ means to speak as does Paul in our text, Rom. 7:14-25. When he does that he begins to see that this is actually a blessing. God permits the sinful flesh to dwell in me to keep me humble. My sinful flesh makes me realize that I cannot save myself. The Law is holy and good but I am fleshly, sinful, sold under sin. What a humbling thought! I am like Paul at II Cor. 12. The Lord has richly blessed me by saving me by grace through faith in Christ. The Lord has richly blessed me by living in my heart and causing me to produce good works and godly living. But, lest I boast of myself, God gives me this thorn, the sinful flesh, which keeps me humble. It makes me say: "Lord have mercy on me a sinner. I am chief of sinners. I am not worthy of any of these wonderful blessings. I am a wretched person but you have already given me the victory. Thy will be done. Do with me as you wish!!"
7. Christian living is a constant struggle. Christ has conquered sin, death and the devil. He gives this victory to the believer. But the believer must struggle with his sinful flesh until the moment of death. Then, incorruption will swallow up corruption. I Cor. 15:42. Slava Bogu Edinu!!!

Theme: I DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I AM DOING Vs. 15

Introduction: Luther often said: "A Christian is simultaneously a saint and a sinner." He is forgiven and saved by grace. But he carries about with him this wicked flesh which will never improve. It will be this way until death. The Christian is a mystery to himself. But he knows his Lord Who leads and protects him. He leads a godly life. His new man is master over his flesh. Let's talk about this.

I-I Am A Wretched Person Vs. 24

A-With my new man I serve the Law of God. Vs. 25. In vs. 22 we read: "I take pleasure in the Law of God according to the inner man." (The inner man 22, law of the mind 23, and mind 25 all mean "the new man" Eph. 4:24 or "our spirit" Rom. 8:16. All five mean the same thing.) David speaks of this at Ps. 1:2 "His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night." See also Ps. 119:14. 16.35. In vs. 15 of our text "what I do not will" and "what I hate" refer to the new man in us. Likewise "to will" in vs. 18. Likewise "the good which I wish" and "the evil which I do not wish" in vs. 19. Likewise "to me who wishes to do good" in vs. 21.

B-With my flesh I serve the Law of sin. Vs. 25. In vs. 23 we read: "I perceive another law in my members which makes war on the law of my mind and takes me captive by the law of sin which is in my members." (The flesh 18, 25, another law 23, law of sin 23, sin dwelling in me 17, 20 are all the same as "the old man" Eph. 4:22.) In vs. 18 we read of this old man: "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." This old Adam, this flesh, this sin, is our constant burden until death. It is every Christian's cross which he must bear. In vs. 15 twice we have "I do." He is speaking of the flesh. In vs. 17 we find the cause of evil in our lives, the sin that lives in us. It is NOT our master but it lives in us. It's like fleas on a dog. In spite of the Christian's good works his flesh serves sin.

C-This causes a constant struggle in the Christian. That's why the text says "I am sold under sin." Sin in my life is inevitable. I sin against my own will. I do what I hate and fail to do what I wish to do. Sin is not my master but it lives in me like fleas on a dog. In Gen. 39 we read of Joseph who fought against his lusts. Peter was caught in the temptation to deny Christ. That's why Paul tells us to fight the good fight of faith. I Tim. 6:12. That's why ^{he} Paul said at II Tim. 4:7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished race, I have kept the faith." That's why we should put on the whole armor of God. Eph. 6.

II-But I Am Redeemed And Rescued. Vss. 24-25

A-Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Vs. 25. Here we thank God for what He has already done for us. He sacrificed His own Son in my stead. Therefore, now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Rom. 8:1. Through Christ I am more than a conqueror. Rom. 8:36. Nothing will separate me from the love of God which in Christ Jesus my Lord. Rom. 8:39. He promised me: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Mk. 16:16. He has forgiven and forgotten all my sins.

B-He will rescue me from this mortal body. vs. 24. We began by saying "I do not understand what I am doing." Vs. 15. The Christian is often a mystery to himself. But "The Lord knows those who are his." II Tim. 2:19. And we say: "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom." II Tim. 4:18. When I die this mortal, sinful, corruptible body will be purified. All sin and evil will be put away. And so we exclaim: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Conclusion: The Christian is both a saint and a sinner. His flesh is just as sinful as that of unbelievers. But he also has a new man which God has created in him by faith in Jesus Christ. This faith makes him master over his flesh. Now he must fight the good fight of faith until death.