

Who Shall Deliver Me?

Romans 7

Pastor John Miller

Paul had answered two questions in Romans 6, and I want you to see them. In Romans 6:1 he says, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The answer is no, God forbid. He answers that in verses 1-14. The second question was in verse 15, "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Now it's the second question that he asks in verse 15 that he continues to answer in chapter 7. I want to make this as simple as I can, so in order to be simple I want to be quick, short, and to the point in order that we might get through the chapter as well. I think if you get bogged down in too much detail, you're going to miss the message of Romans 7. If I were to summarize the seventh chapter, this is how I would summarize it: You cannot be sanctified by the law. That's what Romans 7 says. We are not saved by the law, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God..." you scared me, I didn't think you were going to answer me there. I thought, "Where have you been the last couple of years?" "...it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Praise God! We're saved by grace through faith.

Sometimes people think, "Well, we're saved by grace, but we're sanctified by works. Now that God saved me, I gotta roll up my sleeves and I gotta be good! I gotta be holy. I gotta be a righteous person. I gotta be a good Christian." Anytime a young Christian says, "Pastor John, I'm going to live for the Lord! I'm gonna be a great Christian! I'm gonna serve the Lord!" I want to cover my eyes and say, "I don't wanna watch," because after I hear the CRASH and the "Help," I know that they haven't achieved the goal that they planned they would. Have you discovered that's true? "I'm gonna love You, Lord! I'm gonna serve You, Lord! I'm gonna follow You, Lord!" Then, boom we fall on our face, right? It's because we need to take our eyes off of ourself and we need to get them on Jesus. You've heard that a million times, but it's theologically correct, and we're going to see that tonight in Romans 7. Get your eyes off yourself and get them on Jesus. If you look to yourself, you'll be depressed. If you look to Jesus, you'll be blessed, right? If you really want to be bummed out, go home tonight and spend some time just looking in the mirror—ingredient for depression. I'm kidding. But if you look in introspection too much at yourself, you're not going to be able to walk in victory as to who you are in Jesus Christ.

Romans 6 deals with the subject of license. "We're not under law we're under grace, so let's just live however we want. It's a license to sin!" No it's not. The opposite of that is legalism. Now we have to be good. We have to keep rules. We have to keep regulations so that God will love us and so we can live a holy, sanctified life." We're not to be living in license. We're not to be living in legalism. We are to be living in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free and not be entangled in the old yoke of bondage. Someone called the way we should live as, "Law fulfilling free people preserving the balance of rejoicing in our freedom from the law for justification in sanctification." Freedom for what? To fulfill the law which is all covered in Romans 8, so don't miss it. We finally reach the apex of this epistle—how God takes sinners

and makes them saints both positionally and practically.

Moving into chapter 7, we find the relationship of the believer to the law. There are three things that we are going to discover in Romans 7 and in this outline tonight, it is very important for you to note. I want you to follow with me in your Bibles and perhaps if you're taking notes, write this down. The first thing we see in our relationship to the law is that we are released from the law as believers. The moment you were born again, you were free from the law, from its penalty, and from its power, verses 1-6. The first point, we are released from the law, verses 1-6. (Rather than me reading verses 1-6, I want to give you the subpoints that will cover each and every verse.) In what way are we released from the law? First of all he gives us the principle (write that down). The principle is in verse 1, follow with me in your Bible. Paul starts with, "Know ye not..." remember that was a key word in chapter 6, "know," "reckon" and "yield." The Christian life is not lived by ignorance. It must be lived by knowledge and knowing who you are in Christ. "Know ye not, brethren," speaking endearing to the Christians, "(for I speak to them that know the law,)" it could be that he is referring to Jewish believers or more so just Christians that understood the Old Testament law and the law of God. "...how that the law..." notice verse 1, "...hath dominion..." or authority "...over a man..." or a person "...as long as he liveth?" That's the principle, verse 1, that as long as a man is living the law has dominion or authority over them.

The first principle that Paul lays down is that principle that law has dominion over us as long as we are alive. You say, "What do you mean by that?" If I break the law, and I'm found guilty, and I'm going to jail but I die before I go to jail, guess what? I'm not going to go to jail, so don't get any ideas. "I can rob a bank and then if I die, I don't have to go to jail." Yeah, but you won't get to enjoy the money you robbed from the bank either. Duh! Years ago, when they had the big Enron scandal, that big company went bankrupt and ripped off money. Some of the big executives were brought to trial and sent to prison. One of the leading guys in the Enron scandal was sentenced to many years in prison, but he died before he went to prison. Now, they're not going to drag his corpse to the prison, open a cell, and throw a dead man in a cell. "You're gonna rot in there!" The minute he died, guess what? All the charges were dropped. They couldn't prosecute him. The imagery there is that we are going to die to the law so that it no longer has dominion over us.

The second subpoint (write this down), is in verses 2-3. Paul uses a marriage metaphor. Remember in chapter 6 he used a metaphor of a slave and the master? He used a metaphor of we're slaves to Jesus. We were slaves to sin, then we became slaves to Jesus. Now, the metaphor is that of marriage, verses 2-3. A lot of people misunderstand the usage of this metaphor. Notice verses 2-3. He says, "For..." here is the rationale, the reason behind it. He gives a metaphor to explain the principle. He says, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead..." don't get any ideas, Ladies, "...she is loosed from the law of her husband." Some of the wives go, "Praise God!" No, I'm kidding. Verse 3, "So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." I want to again

make this very simple and clear. What is Paul doing? Let me tell you what he's not doing, and this is where people make a mistake. He is not teaching about marriage. This is not a passage on marriage. You go, "Well, we just read it. It's about marriage." He is using marriage as an illustration of our dying to the law. That's all he's doing, and to use this passage by itself in isolation to other verses on marriage is a big mistake. Some people do it this way. They say, "Once you're married, the only way you can be not married is if your spouse dies." Now, it is true that if you're married and your spouse dies, you can remarry. That's perfectly true. You're free from that commitment in the marriage, obviously. That is derived from what Paul is saying here, but if you want to understand everything the Bible says about marriage and divorce, you've got to go to Matthew 19, and you find that infidelity is a basis for divorce, not a command, but it's a divine concession to human sin. God allows that. Then you have to go also to 1 Corinthians 7. You must thoroughly read the section there about divorce and an unsaved spouse, and of not departing unless they are unwilling to live with you, you can depart, you are not under bondage in those cases. So, basically, when you are interpreting a passage, you need to take everything the Bible says about that subject to interpret it. Don't isolate a text from the rest of the Bible, then it becomes a pretext. I say all that because people have abused this portion of scripture in saying, "The only way, once you're married, to get in another marriage or to be free of the marriage," better yet, "is if your spouse dies," not taking into account sexual immorality and abandonment that Paul brings into the picture in 1 Corinthians 7 and Jesus mentions in Matthew 19.

What is Paul doing here in this marriage metaphor? He is basically saying that when someone dies in a marriage the other person that is alive can remarry. He is basically using this as an image here of how as believers we are going to die to the law so that we can be free, so to speak, to remarry another, Jesus Christ, but he switches it around a little bit. In the metaphor, it is the husband who dies and the living wife who remarries. In the spiritual application, it's we who die and then we come back to life in the resurrection of Jesus and we remarry, so that's how it changes. The point of the passage is that death brings release. Death brings freedom from the commitment of the marriage relationship. Someone once asked Ruth Graham, the wife of Billy Graham, have you ever thought about divorcing Billy? She said, "Divorce, no. Murder, yes." Obviously, that does break the bonds, but he is just using it here as a metaphor.

Here is the third point, verses 4-6. Paul makes the application. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ..." remember we are united to Christ. We died when He died. We rose when He rose, so we died with Christ and we can be "... married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5 For when we were in the flesh..." that "in the flesh" is a reference to our old sinful life before conversion. It's not talking about a time when we were actually in a body and now we're out of body. It's talking about BC days, before Christ. He says, "...the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now..." here's the contrast, "...we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit..." I think that word "spirit" should be capitalized because it is a reference to the Holy Spirit, which is the whole theme of Romans 8, so that we can walk and serve God in newness of Spirit. He goes on and says, "...and not in the oldness

of the letter...,” or of the law. First, Paul lays down the principle, verse 1, he gives the metaphor, verses 2-3, and then he makes the application. Here is the application: We died to the law, verse 4, but we didn’t stay dead. Remember, Paul in Galatians said, “For I am crucified with Christ...,” right? What else did he say? “Nevertheless I live; yet not I...,” but now I live by the Spirit. I do not live in the flesh, but I live in the Spirit, and I go on to serve the Lord and love the Lord. So, we died with Christ and we were resurrected with Jesus Christ, and we were delivered from the law, verse 6.

Let me read verse 4 in the New Living Translation. It goes like this. “So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.” Then, in verse 6, “But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.” We move from we can’t be sanctified by the law, chapter 7, but we can be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, Romans 8. The results of this disillusion of our marriage to the law is that we serve the Lord in a new way, in the Spirit. Instead of despair, there is joy. Instead of bondage, there is freedom. Instead of death, there is life. No longer do we belong to the law, but now we belong to Christ. That’s the first section.

I want you to follow me, verses 7-13. We now move to Paul’s defense of the law itself. Now, this is a very important section where Paul is explaining that the law, in and of itself, is not a bad thing. We don’t want to develop a bad attitude toward the law. That’s what’s known as anti-against, nomianism, which means the law. There are some Christians that magnify the grace of God to the point where they are anti-law. The law, we’re going to see, is God’s law, so it’s holy, it’s just, it’s good, but the question is, good for what and good to do what? We’re going to learn that in this section. I’m going to give you four reasons that the law exists. First, verse 7, the law reveals sin. It’s like a mirror, and it reveals sin. Why did God give us the law? To show us that we are sinners and we need Jesus Christ, notice verse 7. He says, “What shall we say then?” Notice that this is another anticipated question or argument against Paul’s teaching. “Is the law sin?” Someone would argue and say, “Well, Paul then you’re making the law a bad thing. You’re making the law an evil thing.” He says, “God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Notice first he says “lust” in my King James translation, and then he says “covet.”

Covetousness is the 10th commandment, thou shalt not covet. Paul says that was the law that really slew him. He read, thou shalt not commit adultery...check one for me! I’m okay. Thou shalt not murder...check two for me! I got that one down, no problem. Thou shalt not lie...check three! I’m not a liar. Whew! I’m on a roll! Thou shalt have no other gods before me...I would never think of such a thing! Check, check, check, check. Paul goes down the list, he has nine, “Oh man! I’m looking good! I’ve got 9 out of 10!” Then he had to come to number 10. “Man, couldn’t it be the nine commandments?” What is the 10th commandment? Thou shalt not covet. What’s the first thing we are not to covet? Thy neighbor’s wife. Is there any wonder that the word lust is used there for that? Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, or his donkey,

or his manservant or his maidservant, or his house, or his Porsche, or his Ferrari, or his Mercedes Benz? Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's. When Paul read that he thought, "Oh man! I've gotten the first nine. I was doing good." Then he said, "The law slew me." He said, "Sin revived and I died." You know, Jesus picked up on this didn't He? He said, "You have heard that it was said...Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Jesus said, "You've read in the Old Testament, it says thou shalt not murder, but I say unto you that if you have anger in your heart toward somebody, you've already murdered them in your heart." I'll stop right there. I won't to tell you about some of my experiences this week. My wife actually had to say, "John, here's the keys. Go out and sit in the car, just calm down." It's like, I lived Romans 7 this week. Don't laugh. You live it every day too. The things you want to do, you don't do. The things you don't want to do, you do, right? Oh wretched man that I am! Thank God there's a Romans 8. Amen? That the whole Bible isn't just chapter 7, Oh wretched man, but we know that Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit, can help us live a life that pleases Him. So, we find that the law was given to reveal sin.

How about the rich young ruler? He said, "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "You know the commandments, keep them." He said, "Yeah! I am! I've done it! I've kept 'em." This dude was awesome. He was rich, he was young, and he was a ruler. He was like the ultimate catch for any gal. The ultimate bachelor. The dude's rich, young and a ruler. I don't know, he might've been ugly on top of it, but I guess you can be rich, young, a ruler, and ugly, but I don't know about that. Who cares, he's rich though. Right? So, he had everything going for him, and then Jesus said, "Okay. There is one thing that you do need to do. You need to sell everything that you have, give it to the poor, and come follow me." The guy went, "Bummer! Man," and he turned and went sorrowfully away. Jesus said, "Oh, how hard it is for those who are rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Covetousness. Take all the ten commandments and if you break the 10th commandment, guess what? It will lead you to the breaking of the rest of those commandments. If you have covetousness, you're gonna lie, you're gonna steal, you're gonna murder, you're gonna commit adultery, you're gonna have other gods before you. Covetousness can lead you to breaking the other commandments. Just read the story of David and Bathsheba. It started with his covetousness, that led to adultery, that led to murder, that led to lying and hypocrisy. One sin does often lead to another. The law came to reveal that we are sinners and to show us that God looks at our hearts.

Here's the second point (verses 8-9), that is, the law arouses sin. When I say second point, I mean second subpoint under my second main point, which is, Paul defends the purpose of the law. So, the purpose of the law: 1. It reveals sin. 2. It arouses sin, or it provokes sin, or stirs up sin. Notice verses 8-9. He says, "But sin, taking occasion...", or using as a base of operation, "...by the commandment...", so, the sin in me uses the commandment, "...wrought in me all manner of concupiscence," or evil desires, "For without the law sin was dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." What the law does is that it stirs up sin. In John Bunyan's famous spiritual allegory Pilgrim's Progress, there

is a scene in the book where the interpreter shows the difference between law and grace by showing a room that had dust in it. A guy came in with a broom and just started sweeping the room. All the dust filled the room, and it was just horrible. Everyone was freaking out because of the dust in the room. The dust couldn't come out of the room, it just filled the room. Another person came in with water and sprinkled a little water on the dust in the room. Then, they took a broom and swept the room. All the dust came out of the room. You see, the picture is the law stirs up sin. It doesn't eliminate it. Grace actually comes and removes sin from our lives. So, if we are operating in the sphere of law, all it is going to do is stir up our sin and make us painfully aware that we are bigger sinners. In Romans 3:20, "...for by the law is the knowledge of sin." In 1 Corinthians 15:56, "...the strength of sin is the law." So, notice the little phrase in verse 9, "sin revived." In the Greek that would literally be sprang into life. The law is like gasoline on a fire. Have you ever been barbecuing and the fire starts to go out. You take the lighter fluid and when you spray it on Whoosh! You lose your eyebrows in the process. So, the law is like gasoline on a fire. Grace extinguishes the fire, and the law stirs the fire up.

Thirdly, I want you to notice that the law kills, verses 10-11. Write that down, the law kills. Follow with me as I read, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." That which I thought could bring me life, the law, literally produced death. Remember that. "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." Basically, what he is saying in verses 10-11, and I can make it very simple, is that the law does not bring life. The law brings death, and sin, by the commandment, stirred up and slew me. In Galatians 3:21, "...for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." If we could be saved by being good, do you think Jesus would've died on the cross? Do you think when Jesus said in Gethsemane, "Let this cup pass from Me," that He would've had to go to the cross, suffer and die? I think not. Jesus died for our sins, and we died to sin. We also died to the law, and when we rose again with Christ we're free to be married to another, even to Jesus Christ. Now, there are dangers to the church that becomes legalistic and practices legalism. I love what Warren Wiersbe said. He said, "This explains why legalistic Christians and churches do not grow and bear spiritual fruit. They are living by the law. Because the law does produce death, it doesn't bring life. The law always kills. A few things are more dead than an orthodox church that is proud of its high standards. It tries to live up to them in its own energy. Often the members of a church that are legalistic start to judge and condemn one another, and the sad result is a church fight and then a church split that leaves the members in anger and bitterness." We need not walk under the law, but we need to walk under grace, and we're free from the law which kills.

Let me give you the fourth purpose of the law. The law shows the sinfulness of sin. Don't miss that. It not only shows our sin, but it shows the sinfulness of sin. I think one of the problems in the church today is we don't really believe that sin is sinful. We don't believe in the sinfulness of sin. You're never going to appreciate the grace of God unless you understand the depth of your sin. The Bible says the law was given to show us the sinfulness of our sin, verses 12-13. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." That's because God is good, and it's God's law. God can only give what is good. His law is good. The law is not bad. But wherein lies the problem? The problem lies with us, verse 13. "Was then that

which is good made death unto me? God forbid.” No. The problem was sin, “...that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good;” that’s the law, “...that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” Basically, the law not only showed me my sin, but it also showed me how sinful my sin really is. What we need to understand is that we have a sinful, crooked, perverse nature that we inherited from Adam. Theologians differ on this point, and that is whether we describe the ability of a believer to sin as the sin nature, or we just describe it as an essence of sin or sin in our flesh. I believe they are one in the same.

When we think of nature, we are not thinking of personality or person. We are thinking of capacity. When the Bible says that we have a sin nature, it’s basically saying that we have the ability to sin, we have the capacity to sin. Have you discovered (don’t raise your hand) that since you became a Christian you can still sin? Right? Don’t leave me hanging here. You’re like, “Huh! Pastor John! Not me! I glow in the dark!” I want you to save on electricity, but it doesn’t happen. “Yeah! I’ve been born again, now I don’t think evil thoughts. I don’t do sinful things. I’m a man of God. I don’t do anything wrong.” People have come up to my wife and said, “It must be awesome to live with Pastor John!” She responds, “Yes. It’s quite wonderful. You try it!” If Paul the apostle, and we haven’t gotten there yet, but this kind of encourages me. Who I call the greatest Christian who ever lived...if Paul the apostle ends this chapter, “Oh wretched man that I am,” it makes me feel pretty good because I’ve cried that so many times, “Oh wretched man that I am.” Don’t forget...that’s your practice. Don’t forget, you’re in Christ, and your position is perfectly righteous. It never changes, and God sees you as perfectly holy. Now, that’s not a license to sin. That’s not an ingredient for, “Whooo! Let’s go live however we want.” The goal of the Christian life is to bring your practice up to your position. The goal of the Christian life is to bring your practice up to who you are in Christ. You are a saint. You say, “No I ain’t.” God sees you as a saint in Christ, but in our practice, sanctification, the goal is to walk in the Spirit not to be trying to do it by the energy of the flesh or by the law, and we can bring our practice up to our position.

As we grow as Christians, we become more painfully aware of the sinfulness of sin. I actually believe that the longer you walk with the Lord, you do sin less and sin less and sin less and sin less, but let me tell you something. You also become more sensitive to sin, and even in your attitudes—you get convicted, your thoughts—you get convicted, the things that didn’t convict you years ago now convict you. Did you ever notice that you can’t sin and enjoy it anymore now that you’re a Christian? Remember in your BC days? You could go out and kind of enjoy your sin. Then you go and get saved and it messed everything up! It’s like, “I can’t get drunk anymore! This is no fun!” I’m kidding, but it’s true! “Man, I used to be able to think those thoughts, now I can’t. The Holy Spirit is convicting me!” That’s good! That’s an indication that you’re growing in sanctification. We need to be careful because when we sow a thought we can reap an act, and when we sow an act we can reap a habit, and when we sow a habit we could reap a character. It’s not okay to sin with your thoughts. It’s not okay to sin in your heart and attitude. “As long as you don’t do it it’s okay,” no. Jesus said if you look lustfully or if you have anger in your heart, God looks at your heart. The depths of our sin, the sinfulness of sin, the law stirs it up and shows me how sinful I really am, but there is a balance to this. Be careful. Some Christians have made the mistake of being too introspective. They are always

performing spiritual autopsies on themselves. Sometimes I have people come to me, "Oh, John, I'm such a wretch! I'm such a miserable sinner. I did this, and I thought that! I can't really believe that I actually kicked my dog! Please pray for me!" I'm thinking, "Really?" We become so sensitive to sin, but we don't want to be over introspective. Never forget who you are in Christ, and don't let the devil tell you otherwise. Again, realize that you want to live a life that pleases Him. You want to bring your practice up to your position.

There is one last point I want to make, and we won't have to tarry on it, verses 14-25, is the weakness of our flesh and the law, the relationship of the two, what the law cannot do. Let's read it, verse 14. He says, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal..." see that's the problem. The law is not bad. The law is holy, just, and good, verse 12. The problem isn't the law. Don't get mad at the law, the law is not the problem. The problem is me. For the law is good. It's spiritual, but I am carnal. The word is fleshly. "...sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Now, this is actually hard to read, let alone quote and expound upon. In verse 16, he says, "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,)" my sinful, carnal nature, "...dwelleth no good thing." When you are able to say that and believe it, you're on the right road, the right steps to living a holy, godly life. When you can honestly say, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." As long as you think you've got something to offer to God, you're in trouble. He says, "...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." I'm going to ask you to quote that after church. "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man," I love God, and I want to live for God, and I want to serve God; the inward man, the new man in Christ, the spiritual man, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Here it is, verse 24, "O wretched man that I am! who..." notice that he didn't say "what." He's not looking for a seminar. He's not looking for a new cassette series, Ten Easy Steps to the Sanctified Life, "...shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Unfortunately, the chapter breaks right there, and we're going to have to leave ourselves, "O wretched man" for a whole week. So, you're like, "Man, I gotta come back next week and figure out how this 'O wretched man' can be delivered from the body of sin and death?" Well, let's peek at it. In Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Whew! Praise God. Amen? There is hope in Jesus Christ. We don't have to be caught in this struggle and in this war.

Now the law, verse 12, is holy, just, and good. But, good for what? Well, not good to change you, verse 14. The law cannot change you, and the law cannot enable you, verses 15-21. The

law cannot enable you to do good. Then, in verses 22-25, the law cannot set you free. You got that? A lot of people like to explain these verses away by saying, "You know, this is before Paul was saved." I believe that Paul was saved when he wrote these words. I believe he was describing his saved condition when he wrote these words. I don't believe that Paul was describing his pre-converted days. There are some branches of Christianity that do not believe that if you're a Christian there can be any carnality in you. They don't believe in what's called a carnal Christian. I think that this is the description of one right here, that Paul is saying, "O wretched man that I am! In my heart I want to serve God. The things I want to do, I don't do."

Do you ever get up in the morning and say, "I'm not going to sin. I'm not going to sin. I'm not gonna..." You psyche yourself in the mirror. You look in the mirror, "I'm not going to sin." Then, "O man," an hour later, "Gosh! I sinned! It didn't work." Or, you get up in the morning, "I'm gonna pray! I'm gonna pray!" You psyche yourself up and say, "I'm gonna pray!" Then, you fall flat on your face and you don't pray all day. So, the things you don't want to do, you do, but the things you do want to do, you don't do. Can you relate? I can. You guys are going to be praying for me all week! "Oh God! Save Pastor John!" Paul was just as human as we are. I am just as human as you are. I thank God for Romans 8:1, "There is...no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." My heart condemns me, but Jesus doesn't condemn me. I've been justified, and I've been declared righteous and now my heart's desire, my heart's passion is, "Lord, let me live a life that pleases You. Lord, let me live a life that honors You." I realize I can't do it in the energy of my flesh. The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do. O wretched man that I am! I think that in your Christian life, a lot of times we just need to experience defeat, and in our defeat we become strong. In our weakness, we're made strong. It's in our weaknesses that it drives us to dependence upon God. "Lord, I can't resist this temptation. Lord, I'm having struggles with these covetous thoughts or lustful thoughts or angry thoughts. Lord, I need Your help. Lord, I pray that You'll please help me." Then you get up every day, and throughout the day you say, "Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Lord, give me victory today. Lord, guide me today. Help me today." You don't write down things that you're gonna do.

Now, in this passage that I just read, you go home when you get a chance and make note of all the times Paul uses the personal pronoun, "I." It's 27 times. The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I do. Do you know what the problem is? It's "I" trouble. The unholy trinity—me, myself and I. Instead of looking to God, he was looking to himself. Some of us here tonight are struggling with sin because we're thinking that we have the ability to walk in victory. We do not, and the sooner we come to the place Paul is, where it says, "I know that in me there is no good thing," the soonest we come to the place where we say, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" and we look outside of ourselves and we look to Jesus Christ. In Romans 6, grace does not encourage us to sin. In Romans 7, the law does not enable us to do good. In Romans 8, the Spirit empowers us to live righteously. So, Romans 6, we are not encouraged to sin. In Romans 7, we are not enabled to do good. In Romans 8, by the power of the Spirit we're able through Jesus Christ to live a life that pleases Him. I love that promise that Jesus made in the Gospels when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you know who He was talking to? He was talking to

legalists. He was talking to religious people who were legalists, and He wanted them to come with their burden of self effort and failure. He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Are you burdened tonight thinking you've tried? "I've tried. I can't live the Christian life." Good! You're a candidate for godliness. It's true you can't live the Christian life. The Christian life is impossible to live apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. You can't live it on your own, and you need to come to that realization. Someone put it in a poem:

Do this and live the law commands

But gives me neither feet nor hands.

A better word the gospel brings

It bids me fly and give me wings.

Amen? Let's pray.