

Enemy Within

Rom 7.13-25 ~ Jan 22, 2012

Charles Spurgeon's First Week as a Christian

- ❖ Converted at a Primitive Methodist Chapel
 - ⇒ Lay preacher said, "Young man, you look very miserable"
 - ⇒ "Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it struck home."
 - ⇒ The preacher went on, "You always will be miserable if you don't obey my text. Young man, look to Jesus Christ. You have nothing to do but to look and live."
 - ⇒ "I saw at once the way of salvation."
- ❖ But only 5 days later he was again miserable
 - ⇒ "When I first believed in Christ, I am not sure that I thought the devil was dead, but certainly I had a notion that he was so mortally wounded that he could not disturb me. I fondly dreamed that my sins would never sprout again. I was going to be perfect – I fully calculated upon it – and lo, I found an intruder I had not reckoned upon, an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."
 - ⇒ "So I went to that same Primitive Methodist Chapel where I first received peace with God, through the simple preaching of the Word. The text happened to be, "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "There," I thought, "that's the text for me." I had just got as far as that in the week. I knew that I had put my trust in Christ, and I knew that, when I sat in that house of prayer, my faith was simply and solely fixed on the atonement of the Redeemer. But I had a weight on my mind, because I could not be as holy as I wanted to be. I could not live without sin. When I rose in the morning, I thought I would abstain from every hard word, from every evil thought and look; and I came up to that chapel groaning because, "when I would do good, evil was present with me."
 - ⇒ The minister began by saying, "Paul was not a believer when he said this." Well now, I knew I was a believer, and it seemed to me from the context that Paul must have been a believer, too. (Now, I am sure he was.) The man went on to say that "no child of God ever did feel any conflict within". So I took up my hat, and left the chapel, and I have very seldom attended such places since. They are very good for people who are unconverted to go to, but of very little use for children of God. That is my notion of Methodism."
- ❖ We see here 2 references to our Romans text
 - ⇒ **Rom 7.24** ~ "O wretched man that I am! . . ."
 - ⇒ **Rom 7.21** ~ "evil is present with me, the one that wills to do good"

Xition: In this story we see 2 views of this text . . . (and there's a third)

3 Views of Romans 7.14-25

- ❖ First, Paul is writing as a regenerate Christian
 - ⇒ Classical view ~ Spurgeon's own ~ (*Augustine, Luther and Calvin*)
- ❖ Second, Paul is writing as a non-regenerate Jew (*prior to salvation*)
 - ⇒ Modern view ~ Methodist minister's view ~ Law vs. Grace view
- ❖ Third, Paul is not writing autobiographically ~ but for all fallen mankind
 - ⇒ A marginal view with few adherents
- ❖ I hold the first view (*a regenerate Paul speaking of himself*)
 - ⇒ "Many indeed are the contests about the principal scope of the apostle in this chapter, and in what state the person is, under the law, or under grace, whose condition he expresses therein. I shall not enter into that dispute, but take that for granted, which may be undeniably proved; namely, that it is the condition of a regenerate person, with respect to the remaining power of indwelling sin, which is there proposed, and in the person of the apostle himself."
 - ~ John Owen from page 5 of "*Indwelling Sin in Believers*"
- ❖ Why do people have trouble believing this was written by a Christian Paul?

Because Paul says Shocking Things

- ❖ v14 ~ "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin"
 - ⇒ How can Paul, as a believer, describe himself as carnal?
 - ⇒ Listen to what he says about carnal people in **Rom 8.7** "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."
- ❖ v20 ~ "if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."
 - ⇒ How can Paul say this? He appears to be dodging responsibility . . .
- ❖ v23 ~ "I see another law . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin"
 - ⇒ How can believing Paul say this - that he's captive to sin - when he writes to Timothy of people escaping the snare of the devil that had been taken captive to do his will?
- ❖ v25 ~ "With the mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin"
 - ⇒ Paul in effect says, "With the flesh I serve the law of sin"
 - ⇒ But to the Corinthians (**1 Cor 9.27**) he wrote, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."
- ❖ It's no wonder that people have trouble believing a Christian Paul wrote this
- ❖ But when is it likely Paul wrote them ~ what incident led to it?

Xition: We might ask when others have experienced something similar?

When Have Other People Experienced This?

- ❖ Augustus Toplady (*wrote Rock of Ages*) wrote in his diary on 12/31/1767
 - ⇒ “Upon a review of the past year, I desire to confess that my unfaithfulness has been exceeding great; my sins still greater; God’s mercies greater than both. . . My shortcomings and my misdoings, my unbelief and want of love would sink me into the lowest hell, was not Jesus my righteousness and my Redeemer.”
 - ⇒ So he experienced similar thoughts as he reflected back over the past year
- ❖ Adoniram Judson’s wife, wrote, when returning to the mission field,
 - ⇒ “O how I rejoice that I am out of the whirlpool! Too gay, too trifling, for a missionary’s wife! That may be, but after all, gaiety is my lightest sin. It is my coldness of heart, my listlessness, my want of faith, my spiritual inefficiency and inertness, my love of self, the inherent and everyday pampered sinfulness of my nature, that makes me such a mere infant in the cause of Christ.”
- ❖ James Ingliss (Editor of “Waymarks in the Wilderness”) near death wrote,
 - ⇒ “As I am brought to take a new view of the end, my life seems so made up of squandered opportunities, and barren of results, that it is at times very painful; but grace comes in to meet all, and He will be glorified in my humiliation also.”
- ❖ You might argue some of these don’t fit well into our text . . .
- ❖ Let’s go to Scripture for some examples

Biblical Examples

- ❖ Job protested throughout his ordeal, but in God’s presence (**Job 40.4**) said,
 - ⇒ “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.”
 - ⇒ And when God finished speaking (**Job 42.5-6**) Job’s last words to Him were, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”
- ❖ Isaiah was called to be a prophet (**Is 6.5**), saw a vision of God, and said,
 - ⇒ “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”
- ❖ When Daniel saw the glorious man vision in Dan 10 he said,
 - ⇒ “no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me.”

When did Paul Experience This?

- ❖ Of course, we can’t know for sure . . . But, I will float 2 possibilities
 - ⇒ As he was writing Romans (*justification – sanctification – glorification*)
 - ⇒ Paul mentioned “a man in Christ . . . caught up to the third heaven”
 - ⇒ Many commentators believe the man in question was Paul himself . . .

Xition: Let’s look at some key phrases in our text . . .

Key phrases

- ❖ **v22** ~ “**law of God**” vs. **v23** ~ “**law of my members**”
 - ⇒ Paul admits to having 2 natures ~ one good and one evil
 - ⇒ Jesus is 1 person yet has 2 natures ~ the divine and the human
 - ◆ But Jesus’ 2 natures are in harmony with one another
 - ⇒ A Christian is 1 person but has 2 natures ~ an evil one and a good one
 - ◆ But these 2 natures are at constant war with each other
 - ◆ They wrestle for control of the will and the affections
 - ◆ There is a love of God in the mind ~ but a love of sin in the heart

Two Natures

- ❖ **Read Rom 7.15-23** with emphasis upon **red** (evil) vs. **green** (good)
 - ⇒ For what **I am doing**, **I do not understand**. For what **I will to do**, that **I do not practice**; but what **I hate**, **that I do**.¹⁶ If, then, **I do what I will not to do**, **I agree with the law** that *it is* good.¹⁷ But now, **it is no longer I who do it**, but sin that dwells in me.¹⁸ For **I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me**, but **how to perform what is good I do not find**.¹⁹ For the good that **I will to do**, **I do not do**; but the evil **I will not to do**, **that I practice**.²⁰ **Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me**.²¹ I find then a law, that **evil is present with me**, the **one who wills to do good**.²² For **I delight in the law of God** according to the inward man.²³ **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**.
- ❖ Paul is distinguishing between his 2 natures at war
 - ⇒ **v20** ~ He identifies himself (“I”) with his new nature
 - ⇒ He relegates his old nature to being a law in his members / his flesh
- ❖ Paul is not denying his culpability in sin ~ He is not blaming others
 - ⇒ Nor is he saying that he always sins ~ that he never does good things
 - ⇒ But in all good that he does, there is sin . . .

Is Knowing this Important? And if so, Why?

- ❖ Knowing the power of indwelling sin is important
- ❖ We must admit the existence of an enemy before we can fight him
- ❖ JO q: “**He shall find the stream to be strong, who swims against it, though he who rolls along with it, be insensible to it.**”
 - ⇒ Those who deny the power of indwelling sin are probably at peace with it
 - ⇒ Our Christian journey is uphill all the way ~ there can be no coasting

Xition: Let’s look more closely at the nature of indwelling sin . . .

It Lives in You ~ It is at Home in You

- ❖ In **vss 17** and **20** Paul says “it dwells in me”
- ❖ JO q: “The soul is its home, there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Wherever you are, whatever you are about, this law of sin is always in you; in the best that you do, and in the worst.”
- ❖ It is always ready to oppose you ~ it never rests
 - ⇒ III: The Blob ~ Comes through vents, under doors, down the street
- ❖ In **v21** Paul says “evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good”
 - ⇒ Indwelling sin never rests ~ it opposes all good things we think or attempt
 - ⇒ It’s like a Terminator within us that targets every godly thought

It is a Storehouse of Evil Treasure

- ❖ JO q: “There are many outward temptations and provocations that befall men, which excite them and stir them up to evil. But they do but as it were, open the vessel, and let out what is laid up and stored in it. The root of all these is in the heart. Temptations and occasions put nothing into a man, but only draw out what was in him before.”
- ❖ Jesus said in **Luke 6.45**, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

It Grows Stronger when Indulged

- ❖ JO q: “The more men sin, the more they are inclined to sin. It is from the deceitfulness of this law of sin that men persuade themselves that by this or that particular sin, they shall so satisfy their lusts, that they shall need sin no more. But every sin fortifies the habit of sinning. It is an evil treasure that increases by doing evil.”

Where is this Evil Treasure Stored? In Your Heart

- ❖ JO q: “This evil treasure is in the heart, there it is laid up, there it is kept in safety. All the men in the world, all the angels in heaven, cannot dispossess a man of this treasure, it is so safely stored in the heart. . . . Here dwells our enemy where it maintains a rebellion against God all our days. . . . It is like an enemy in war, whose strength and power lie not only in his numbers, and force of men and arms, but also in the unconquerable forts that he does possess.”

Xition: Given the nature of indwelling sin, what are we to do?

What then are We to Do?

- ❖ JO q: “There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation, but by being endless in our pursuit. . . . Let us reckon that there is no way to have our work done, but by our always doing it. . . . Nothing will give security but perpetual watchfulness. It is impossible we should in this case be too doubtful, suspicious or watchful. The heart has a thousand wiles and deceits, and if we are in the least off from our watch, we may be sure to be surprised.”
- ❖ We must fight against it at all times
- ❖ We must not depend on our emotions ~ they will fail us
- ❖ JO q: “the soul had rather do any thing, embrace any diversion, though it wound itself thereby, than vigorously apply itself unto that which in the inward man it breathes after. It is weary before it begins, and says, When will the work be over?”
- ❖ JO q: “giving way to the law of sin in the least, is the giving strength to it, to let it alone is to let it grow; not to conquer it, is to be conquered by it.”

What Should Motivate us to Fight Against Indwelling Sin?

- ❖ JO q: “What consideration can be more powerful to bring us to humble walking with God, than that after all the kindnesses we have received from Him, His doing us good and not evil in all things, there should yet be such a heart of unkindness and unbelief still abiding, so as to have an aversion in having communion with Him.”

Close

- ❖ Paul in **v24** says, “**O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**”
 - ◆ Do you see this as a cry of despair? ~ I don’t . . . Frustration maybe
 - ◆ But I view it as a rhetorical question . . .
 - ◆ He asks the question only to share the answer he’s dying to give . . .
- ⇒ Paul is both relieved and euphoric to say what he says next,
 - ◆ “**I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!**”
- ⇒ Yes . . . We live in this constant tension between our old and new natures
- ⇒ Yes . . . They war within us and we must exercise constant vigilance
- ⇒ BUT . . . The battle has been won by Christ . . .
- ⇒ And when we die, Christ will claim us and eradicate evil forever . . .