

The Real Me!
Romans 7:14-25
Dr. Jerry Nelson

We all identify with the Apostle Paul when he writes, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." It is every believer's problem. Earlier in chapter 7, Paul described how our sinfulness is somehow urged on to more sinfulness by the very law that tells us what to or not to do. Starting in 7:14, Paul describes the struggle even for the Christian. The law is spiritual, the will of God is good, but we still sin. The law still does for Paul as a Christian what it did for him before he became a Christian (See 7:1-13). It shows him his sinfulness and his need daily for the intervention of the Spirit of God. If we do not realize how powerful, how pervasive, and how pernicious sin truly is in our lives then we will live vulnerable to its every destructive influence. Many of us keep failing in our Christian experience because we don't take sin seriously and because we don't take sin seriously, we don't take seriously our need for the daily, even moment by moment, saving-intervention of the Lord Jesus.

Twice, in verses 15-17 and 18-20, Paul describes what he means when in verse 14 he writes, "The law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin." In Verses 21-23 Paul defines that struggle. There are two powerful principles at work within Paul and within every Christian. First, God has placed in Paul, as he places in every Christian, a new heart, a new desire to love and serve God. "But," Paul writes in verse 23, "I see another law or powerful principle at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind." This second powerful principle or influence is sin. We ought not to be fooled. Just because we become Christians does not mean that sin is any less powerful in our lives. If anything, when you become a Christ-follower, the battle with sin intensifies. Sin is still sin - even as a Christian. And when I see my sin for the evil that it is - then I will cry out with Paul, "What a wretched man I am - who will rescue me from this body of death - from this body that keeps on sinning against a holy God." In that 25th verse Paul is looking forward to his resurrection when he will have a body that is finally freed from the sin nature described in Romans 5. And he knows that it is Jesus who will do that at his second coming. Paul will talk more about that in Romans 8.

But before the resurrection, Paul wants us to understand very clearly and personally that we will never live the way God has called us to live until we recognize two things: One, we are sinful through and through and as long as we live we are in a battle - a battle against our own sinfulness. And two, we are utterly and always fully dependent of Jesus. Christianity is not a matter of believing the right things and then getting a sticker that says you pass hell and go to heaven. It does not work that way. Christianity is coming to a person - Jesus- and belonging to him. It is living each day in relationship with him. It is recognizing that I not only need him to save me from the eternal consequences of my sin (eternal damnation) but I also need him today to save me from that sinful nature that so powerfully works in me - I need him in my struggle today.

Over a hundred years ago the songwriter Annie Hawks wrote:

"Oh I need Thee,
every hour I need thee.
Teach me blessed Savior
to come to thee".