

# “The War Within”

Romans 7:14-25

## \*\*\* VIDEO: “The Odd Couple”

*We know that the law is spiritual; but I am **of flesh**, (vs. “in flesh” – for you cannot serve two masters) sold into bondage to sin. **15** For what I am doing, I do not understand, for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. **16** But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. **17** So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

***18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh (a.k.a. sinful nature); for the willing is present in me, but the doing of good is not. **19** For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. **20** But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

***21** So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **22** For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; **23** but I see a different law at work in the members of my body, **waging war** against the law of my mind & making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.*

***24** Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? **25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, on the one hand, I myself, with my mind, am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh, the law of sin.*

## Welcome to “*The War Within*”

### The Wonder:

This is one of those “doorway” passages that reveal both the promise AND the prostitution of Gospel... some rightly use it for “light,” while others try to use it to create spiritual shadows to hide in.

*Great debate* = is Paul talking about “Pre-Christian” or “Post-Christian” experience?

Context is key... Paul is sharing autobiographically... vv.7-25 = 46 “first-person” terms

**vv.7-13** is 100% past tense... (**Paul speaking about “Saul”**)

**vv.14-25** is 100% present tense... (**Paul speaking about “Paul”**)

**We can be a mystery sometimes...** especially during our internal, spiritual, “civil wars.”

Let me **paraphrase Paul:**

God's standards are clearly from God... and while I too now belong to God and His Holy Spirit lives in me, I'm still living in this sinful body, with its sinful flaws. I know this is true because while I love the Lord and all His ways, I'm still finding myself doing some of the stuff I've come to hate. Moreover, at the same time, I'm not doing some of the stuff that I've come to love... **IT'S CRAZY! IT'S LIKE THERE'S A CIVIL WAR RAGING INSIDE ME**

Paul goes on to acknowledge his utter weakness and total dependency on God and the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ... noting that neither the Law, nor Paul's own strength can do anything to save him in this war.

He acknowledges... **"I've got nothing!" There's no good inside my flesh.**

The Christian life isn't "hard," it's impossible... without Christ & the power of the Spirit!

**The Warriors:**

One of the key points to take away from this passage, as illuminated and illustrated by Paul and his example... It is wrong to lift up human saints of any time/era.... While we may be inspired by aspects of their lives and ministries, the truth is... **the very best of humanity is still nothing more than wretched sinners outside the transformational grace of God.**

*Even giants of the faith are nothing more than tiny specks of sin on God's canvass of grace.*

**Eph. 3:16** = *(prayer) "to be strengthened with power thru the Holy Spirit in the inner-man."*

**2 Cor. 4:16** = *"Tho our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."*

**Although believers are no longer "in the flesh," the flesh is still them!**

Paul's greatest Christian strengths are revealed thru his transparency & weakness...

**He does not profess sinlessness, but rather severe struggles with sin.**

"It seems that Paul is here describing the most spiritual and mature of Christians, who, the more they honestly measure themselves against God's standards of righteousness, the more they realize how much they fall short. The closer we get to God, the more we see our own sin. Thus, it is immature, fleshly, and legalistic persons who tend to live under the illusion that they are 'spiritual' and that they measure up well by God's standards. The level of spiritual insight, brokenness, contrition, and humility that characterize the person depicted in Romans 7 are marks of a spiritual and mature believer, who, before God, has no trust in his own goodness and achievements."

- John MacArthur

Other passages where Paul reveals his maturity through his humble transparency:

**1 Cor. 15:9** = *"I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle because I had persecuted the Church."*

**Ephesians 3:8** = Paul calls himself “*the very least of the saints.*”

**1 Tim1:12 & 15** = Paul is amazed that God would use him, since he was the “*foremost of sinners.*”

Warriors are passionate people... on both sides... it’s like Jekyll & Hyde

“Men who **only believe** their depravity **but do not hate it** are no further than the devil on the road to heaven... (Moreover,) it is not my being corrupt that proves I’m a Christian, nor knowing that I am corrupt, but I know I am a Christian because I hate my corruption. It is my agonizing death-struggle with my corruptions that proves me to be a living child of God... Now these two natures will not cease to struggle as long as we are in this world. The old nature will never give up – it will never ask for a truce, nor seek a peace treaty.” - Charles Spurgeon

It’s not the absence of sin that reveals the true children of God... it’s their ATTITUDE toward sin

Again... while true Christians will never be perfect, they’re to always be passionate!

Can you imagine a Navy Seal goofing off in the midst of a mission?

Are true Christians any less “soldiers” than Seals?

Is the Christian “mission” less serious?

Again, no Seal is perfect... no Christian is perfect... but both are to be passionate 24/7!

### The BIBLICAL Christian’s Perspective on Sin...

Sin <b>grieves</b> the Holy Spirit	Ephesians 4:30
Sin <b>dishonors</b> God	1 Corinthians 6:19-20
Sin <b>hinders</b> prayer	1 Peter 3:12
Sin makes us <b>spiritually powerless</b>	1 Corinthians 9:27
Sin <b>withholds God’s blessings</b> from us	Jeremiah 5:25
Sin <b>robs us of joy</b>	Psalms 51:12
Sin <b>stunts spiritual growth</b>	1 Corinthians 3:1
Sin is a ticking <b>time bomb</b> (Esau)	Hebrews 12:17
Sin makes us <b>unfit for the Lord’s use</b>	2 Timothy 2:21
Sin <b>pollutes</b> Christian fellowship	1 Corinthians 10:21
Sin <b>endangers</b> our physical lives too	1 John 5:16
Sin <b>precludes</b> people from the Lord’s Supper	1 Corinthians 11:28-29

**T/S: There will NEVER be peace between these two combatants...**

Puritan Thomas Watson: “The breast-plate of righteousness can (and will) be shot AT... but NEVER shot through.”

“A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it; as a serpent casts its skin... while keeping its sting & venom. But, (by contrast), a sanctified person not only leaves sin, but hates it.”

*Take heed... both sides tend to take their allies into the battle with them!*

**The War:**

**21** So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **22** For in my inner being I delight in God's law; **23** but I see a different law at work in the members of my body, **waging war** against the law of my mind & making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

**Galatians 5:17** = "the flesh sets its desires against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh"

**Note:** While this passage reinforces the truth that God's Law/standard can neither save, nor sanctify... it is still good and holy. It can serve to inspire like a photo from home on the frontlines of the battle.

Misconceptions....

Like a fight between/within Siamese's twins...  
Like a heavy-weight bout between two titans...  
Like a lion vs. a tiger...

Reality...

Like a T-Rex vs. a Chihuahua  
The Power of the Creator vs. His created  
**David and Goliath all over again...**

\*\*\* At one's spiritual birth, their flesh is like Goliath...  
At one's spiritual birth, their faith is like that of young David...

Note: **God did not tame Goliath**, He cut his head off...

David was giant-slayer... AND... giant sinner!

David's Psalms reveal:

Great love of God  
Great hate of sin.

**Galatians 2:20** is a daily, hourly, moment to moment fight.

**It's personal!** There is a reason why the full **armor of God is custom fit!**

Tragically, today's Church culture is closeting that "Armor" rather than championing it...

**By contrast, most churches today are sizing people for little more than pajamas & caskets!** - JDP  
For you dear friends, I beg you... FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT...

Don't ever forget:

**“Greater is He who is in me, than him who is in the world!”**

**“I can do ALL things thru Christ who gives me strength!”**

Consequently, this passage is **no license for lukewarm living**... just the opposite!

**1 Peter 2:11** tells us that the *flesh is warring against the soul*...

*“Where the war is not fought, the soul has surrendered to the enemy.”* - JDP

*“No eagle soars as skillfully as the one thru whose feathers the winds of war have blown.”* – JDP

The war validates the faith... because the lost won't fight against sin...

**Charles Spurgeon:**

“Soldiers of Christ... to arms again!”

“If you are here today and say:  
I am not disturbed by such battles – then the grace of God is not in you.

If you say, I don't experience such inner conflicts:  
Then here me, you are living with a false peace.

If you find that the devil is leaving you alone...  
It is because you are already his.

Do not you despise the Christians around you that are in the conflict.  
Rather, despise yourself and join them.

And if you feel no pain from all this...  
It is because dead men feel no pain.

**You have been warned! You have been warned!”**

## The Way:

**24** *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

**25** *Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

*“ONLY THE TRULY WRETCHED... TRULY WORSHIP.” – JDP*

\*\*\*\*\* “Who will set me free from this **BODY OF DEATH?**” \*\*\*\*\*

“Body of death” = cultural illustration... very powerful! **Carrying corpse!**

\*\*\*\*\***Carrying carnal corpse is the cost of Christian living**\*\*\*\*\*

As for the “Who” – that one’s easy... the **ONLY** One who can...

**John 14:6** = *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

“In this life, Christians are somewhat like an unskilled artist who beholds a beautiful scene that he wants to paint. But his lack of talent prevents him from doing the scene justice. The fault is not in the scene, or the canvas, the brushes, or the paint, but in the painter. That is why we need to ask the Master Painter, Jesus Christ, to place His hand over ours in order to paint the strokes that, independent of Him, we could never produce. Jesus said, ‘Apart from Me you can do nothing’ (John 15:5). The only way we can live victoriously is to walk by Christ’s own Spirit and in His power, in order not to ‘carry out the desire of the flesh’ (Galatians 5:16).” - John MacArthur

**\*\*\* VIDEO: “The Gospel”**

**2 Timothy 1:6-7** = *I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

**2 Peter 1:3** = *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness*

**Brothers... sisters... Let us neither rest in, nor despair over our imperfections... Like Paul, we’re to acknowledge our limitations, while loving the fact that in-Christ, our limitations no longer master us. We are to accept God’s call for our pursuit of impossible perfection, while simultaneously accepting responsibility for our sinful inability to attain sinlessness.**

When asked how one is to “reconcile” these two Christian standards, Spurgeon replied:

“These are two biblical truths. They are “friends” & friends don’t need to be reconciled.”

**“The ‘either/or’ debate stemming from this passage is symbolic of the theological cancer that has crippled much of the Western Church... pushing away the ‘both/and’ biblical truth that interferes with so many personal and programmatic agendas.” - JDP**

### **CLOSING:**

**25b.** *So then, on the one hand, I myself, with my mind, am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh, the law of sin.*

NOTE: See Paul’s honest, humble transparency... **learn from this passage!**

Spiritual growth does NOT equate to a greater “acceptance” of your sin...

Rather, Spiritual growth raises a greater awareness, coupled with an ever increasing hatred of said sin. All the while KNOWING you are eternally secure in the power and promise of God’s saving grace.

**This “passionate paradox” IS the Christian life!**

### **Applicable Advice:**

**When you find yourself in the heat of battle...**

\*\*\* (Praise God because that’s right where you belong!) \*\*\*

The CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A FIGHT!  
a fight that must be fought.

**First – pray, pray, pray... “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thess. 5)**

**HIS name is Jesus... and He is UNDEFEATED!!!**

**Second – DON’T SAY “AMEN!” UNTIL YOU’VE WON THE BATTLE!**

*If we confess our sins, He’s faithful & just & will forgive our sins & purify us from all unrighteousness.*  
**- 1 John 1:9**