

July 3, 2011
Sermon for The Third Sunday After Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Romans 7:14-25a

Romans 7:14-25a (ESV)

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ...

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Have you ever seen an assembly line in action? It's a really neat process. Whether it be cars, or whether it be a candy factory. An assembly line is really a cool process to watch. If everything works as it's supposed to work, a perfect little whatever is produced. Raw material goes in and a finished product comes out. These machines are designed to where the bolt goes in just the right spot. To where the rubber part is put on just right. To where the engine is dropped into the chase or the product is crated up with the right amount included. So everything will fit. All the bolts will match up. Everything works. In theory anyway.

At one time or another all of us have had to take something back to the store or have taken our vehicle back for a recall. For that matter all of us have had to have our vehicle worked on. No matter how perfect the original design is, when man is involved, there is always going to be a flaw, not enough fries in the happy meal, no matter how automated the process is, man can still bring in mistakes. Because as many of you know, we are not perfect.

Looking at our text, we see Paul talking to himself as well as his audience, saying. *"I do not understand my own actions"*. He's beside himself. What's going on here? *"For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."*¹⁶ *Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good."*

Paul, just like every one of us, every one of us human beings are flawed.

A perfect design put forth by God. One man, one woman,...a perfect creation.

Then man got involved by exercising the free will given to him by God. He ate from the tree that he was not supposed to. And then sin came into this world. God's perfect design ruined. Still a perfect design, but through the human process, flaws arise and imperfect product come out. Flaws begin to show up and get worse and when all hope of ever seeing perfection again is lost, then here's the perfect man. Some call Him the second Adam, that's Jesus Christ sent down to this earth. Sent down among us to give us the good news of the Gospel.

That good news, that yes, He has come to fix mankind. To take care of all those recall notices. He has come to fix us. And He did ... on the cross, Jesus paid for all of our sins. He payed for the problems that we brought upon ourselves. Our Savior payed for the broken design that comes from us. That comes from man's free will.

Looking back to Paul again. He knows his Savior Jesus Christ. He knows the wonderful things that Jesus has done for us and then he looks at what he does. Oh my goodness. My goodness. Look at what we do.

We know that Christ has died for our sins. We know the awesome, powerful price that was paid for our sins. And what do we do with this perfection that has been granted us? We continue to sin. We continue to look inward. We continue to see the sin that lives within each and every one of us everyday and we continue to sin. Not a very grateful people are we?

It's beyond our comprehension, it's beyond our understanding. We look to

Christ, and His wonderful, glorious resurrection that assured our salvation in heaven and we still don't love our neighbor as ourselves...we praise God in church on Sunday and then live like a Pharisee the rest of the week...and like Paul, we too say, "I don't understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. We want to do the best. We want to be the best that we possibly can for Jesus. We want to do the things God has told us to do. We want to reach out to our neighbors. We don't want to be "holier than thou". We want to share the Gospel as we are told to do in Matthew 28. To go, make disciples, teach, Baptize, yet, still...we fall down on that too. Again, we are driven back to the law. Looking at the law, and seeing how we fail.

But we also see something else. A bright spot in that law. Because looking at the law, drives us to the cross. Looking at the law, drives us back to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But even here, we fall short.

In our human nature we look and think like Adam and Eve. Hey, we can do this on our own. I can be good enough. Jesus showed me how, I can cover it now. I can earn my own way into heaven. And in our own sinful nature, that sounds good to us. And we begin to rationalize how we can do it.

Looking beyond our failures and thinking well, our intentions were good. We meant to do our best. We meant to make it to church every Sunday this year. We meant to share the Gospel with our neighbor. But you know good intentions, no matter what we tell ourselves, just don't cut it.

A popular saying that does sort of ring true. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" because we take our eyes off of Christ and start to depend on ourselves and

what we do ourselves. So again, back to the law.

And our text again we read, *“I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.”* The apostle Paul shows us right here, clearly by saying “I know that nothing good dwells in me.” But then there’s these two words in the middle of that. “That is”. Simple words, that is. But it is followed by “in my flesh.” *I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh*” When we’re faced with the fact that we are going to sin... With the fact that we are going to fail... With the fact that we are not going to be good enough, we can cling to this. Because nothing good lives in our sinful flesh. But something good does live within us.

Later on in our text we read, *“I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,”* In our inner being. We delight in God’s law. Not because it beats us down. Not because it tears us down and shows us “Hey, you can’t do it!” We don’t delight in God’s law because the devil throws it in our face. We delight because the law drives us once again to God’s mercy on the cross. To God’s mercy through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is what lives within us. He is what lives within us. Giving us salvation through faith in Him.

In the closing portion of our text from Romans this morning. Paul looks once again at himself. Himself alone. Himself as God would see him without Christ. And he looks to himself and sees what a wretched man I am. But he doesn’t stay there. Immediately he cries out: *“Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* Who will do it?

I can't do it on my own. Who will rescue me from this body of death?

And friends, our bodies, our sinful bodies apart from Christ are condemned to death. Because we have nothing in us worthy of earning salvation. And Paul answers himself immediately. *"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* That's who rescues us from this body of death. That's who cleanses our soul. Pure and white. Robed in Christ, we are worthy because Christ died for you, each and every one of you. Robed in Christ and only by Christ are we worthy.

As you approach His table this morning, to receive the true body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, examine yourself. Look at yourself. See the blackness. See the sin that lives within your human nature. And receive the assurance. Receive the assurance that at His table, as you repent and turn those sins over to Christ, you receive the true forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Him, He has given and shed His body and blood for you, for the forgiveness of your sins. And as He tells us in Matthew in our Gospel this morning. "Come to me. All you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

This rest, this peace, comes from knowledge—the knowledge of your forgiveness—the knowledge of forgiveness of all your sins.

Wonderful gracious loving gift. The forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ. And again from our Gospel lesson. *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* The free gift of salvation. Given through faith in Him. As we go forth today, carry the yoke of Jesus Christ with you. Not for the forgiveness of

sins, that's already been paid for...not for that quote unquote, "earned ticket" into heaven. But as a wonderful response for the gifts that have been given to us.

The gift of Holy Communion, the gift of the Holy Spirit—of forgiveness of sins through Holy Baptism. And the gift of His life to give us salvation through faith in Him and find rest. Rest in the knowledge, the secure knowledge of that forgiveness.

Amen.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your heart and minds through faith in Christ Jesus.

Amen.