

View From the Pew

July 9, 2017

In Romans chapter 7, Paul speaks not a motivational speech but the Word of God, and it explains quite a bit. God's word builds up Christians in the Gospels as the Holy Spirit applies to Scriptures to the heart and mind of the hearers. We've all heard the motivational speeches, some of us even paid for them. We're told Jesus wants us to be victorious Christians and here's a program for you to follow. 40 days of workouts and you can live your best life now. But then we've looked at our lives and wondered why they can never match up with what we think and what we're told we can be. Motivational speeches leave people encouraged in their emotions and self-esteem. We've all heard the motivational speeches, either in person or entertainment. The team is down in the game and the coach makes a speech that gets everyone's emotions up to overcome and win the game.

I've been baptized, and I am a child of God. I believe the Bible is the truth. I know the difference between right and wrong. I know what I should do and I want to do what is right before God. But I don't. I don't get it. Why do I say something when I know I shouldn't or why don't I speak up when I know I should? I know I should read my Bible to get to know God's word and I should pray, but I'm busy always on the go or have homework to do. It's interesting how we can make time for a lot of other things not nearly as important as God. Romans 7:15-17, "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me." We see this in Mathew 26.

After the Passover meal was finished, Jesus led his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what was about to take place. The time had come for His suffering for the sins of the world. He asked them to keep watch while He prayed, and they fell asleep. It wasn't that they didn't want to keep watch, they loved Jesus and wanted to please him. They just couldn't keep their eyes open.

When Jesus came to where he left the disciples, he found them asleep and said, "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." (Mat 26:41).

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. How Frustrating? The flesh is weak because of our sinful nature, not necessarily because of our physical body. Being paralyzed by injury or having a stroke are results of sin. It's not the same thing. In Matthew 20:40-41, Jesus is referring to temptation. "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." Our new life in Christ may be strong, but it will always struggle with our old sinful nature.

Where's the disconnect between desire and deed? This hasn't always been like this. When God made man in the beginning, He made body and soul in perfect harmony. Every single little part and piece of the universe all worked together in perfect harmony. Adam and Eve wanted to do right before God, and the actions followed effortlessly. No struggle no disappointment.

Adam and Eve were truly free to serve God. We know what they did with their freedom, they traded their freedom to the serpent for a piece of fruit so they could see what God saw. Once their freedom was gone, there was no getting it back. Adam and Eve were no longer free, they were captives to the inner desire to do what God had forbidden and not do what God had commanded. Once Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden, the happiness and love they had felt while in the Garden was gone.

Does God want us to be happy? It all depends on the meaning behind it. If happy means a prisoner of the devil, then no, there's no love. If you mean happy that God has not written me off as a loss, but purchased and won me from all sin and the power of the devil, then yes. How did God do this? The answer may be obvious, but Jesus' death and resurrection show how much God loves us. The Bible never says God is happiness, but does say that God is love. In 1 John 4:8-10, "Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love. This is

how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

This inner struggle that every believer experiences is, in itself, a sign that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and that God has not given us up. Galatians 5:17 describes it, “The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.” In Romans 8:5-9, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”

When we gather in Christ in God’s House, what’s the first thing that comes out of our mouths? We openly admit we are by nature sinners and need forgiveness.

This doesn’t always transfer into our life before God. We know what we should do, but choose not to. I personally have a hard time with that. We can’t just leave it where Paul leaves it with, “what a wretched man that I am.” “Who will rescue me from this body of death?” It’s the human way to pull ourselves up and overcome every obstacle. This is ingrained in human nature, to do things on our own. We try to overcome things on our own, but we can’t. the only way for us to overcome is through Jesus. Paul answer’s his own question in the same verse, “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

We try to overcome problems on our own because we think we should, but at some point along the way, it starts to feel like one of those parties where everyone acts like they are having a good time, but in reality, no one is. We either keep playing the game in hopes that it might get better or become disgusted and lose your faith, or you’ll hear Jesus says, “Come to me. All you who labor and are heavy laden. I will give your rest.”

I try to be a problem solver. I get frustrated when I cannot solve a problem, whether it’s mine, or one of my girls, or a friend. I have internal struggles and I’m frustrated when I cannot overcome it by myself. But the answer does not lie within us, it lies outside of us. “Not my will but yours be done, Father.” We do not have the ability to carry it out because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. So how do we overcome our problems? The answer is still Jesus. God loved us so much, he sent his only Son to suffer our death, so we may have eternal life in him. Motivational speakers can make you feel good about yourself for a short time, but God’s word builds us up as the Holy Spirit applies the Scriptures to our hearts and minds.

Even while you struggle and feel wretched now, we know for certain that we have been delivered and the last day will, once and for all, be delivered from this body of misery and death, even in your resurrected body, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Your Brother in Christ,
Sean Tietze