**Notes for Frustrated by Feuding Forces (Romans 7:13-25)**

April 27, 2025

“If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?” -Aleksander Soltzhenitsyn

1. The law is good for exposing what is bad.

* Highlight the differences in our methodologies of dealing with small passages versus overall letter
* Earlier in this chapter, Paul asserts that the law bears dominion over the believer for the duration of his life
* However, he sees our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as redefining in our relationship with the law
* We are dead to the letter of the law so that we are free to live by the newness of the Spirit.
* Law can be frustrating and burdensome to follow and understand in each unique circumstance
* Analogy of following difficult directions v. following a person that has perfect experience
* Law is also favorite tool of the enemy for attack
* Our difficulty with the law makes it easy for us to take what is good and call it bad
* Paul reiterates that law is good for showing us what is bad

1. Believers battle conflicting natures within themselves.

* Believers have a unique internal construct as well that results in warring natures
* We are new creations marked by the new inward man
* That new inward man is coupled to fallen, corrupt, carnal flesh
* Those two natures desire and pull for different things
* Paul confesses about his personal struggles with this very thing
* Not spiritual schizophrenia as much as split-personality or Dissociative Identity Disorder
* John Macarthur said, “We as believers are not any longer dominated by sin, nor are we, in all honesty, dominated by righteousness; we are rather dominated by a conflict, a very intense one.”

1. This conflict is NOT reserved for carnal Christians.

* There is considerable argument offered about the proper assignment of the spiritual state of those that struggle with this conflict
  + Is this Paul looking back at his life with the law before Christ
  + Is this referring to carnal Christians or new believers
  + Is this indicative of all believers
* Evidences for universality of struggle
  + Change in tense of chapter 7… first twelve verses are past tense. These verses are present tense
  + Paul deals personally with his own life and his experience is that of a mature apostle
* Maturity actually makes the presence of sin more apparent to the believer
* I am personally convinced that this is every truly regenerate believer
  + Unregenerate doesn’t have problem of Spirit pulling against sin
  + Reality that redemption and sanctification is not complete yet

1. This is not an excuse to acquiesce to sin, but an exposure to an awareness of the struggle.

* Perhaps the greatest argument against the universality of this struggle is the fear that this is used as an excuse for sin
* That is not the purpose
* This is meant to encourage, edify and expose realities so that believers can be equipped to deal honestly with tendencies
* We do not continue to sin so that grace may abound. We do not take this lightly.
* Paul says, “Do not let sin REIGN in your mortal bodies”
  + We can’t help its presence, but we can influence the place it is given

1. As a believer, my desire and delight must be focused on what God calls good.

* Paul recognizes the will the do good and the simultaneous reality of sin
* His delight is on the law of the Lord
  + Our decisions about desires are of supreme importance
  + Problems come when sin becomes our desire, not an unfortunate byproduct
* Paul sees his sin as residual remnants of the fallen man, not the determination and desire of his heart
* Elementary principle, but foundational, every person must make a daily decision about who or what they want

1. Our hope for ultimate victory is not about willpower, It’s Jesus.

* In this struggle, we often thing we just need to try harder
* There is a place for resistance and repentance
  + We have a will and we must employ it wherever possible
* There are problems beyond our will
  + If we could simply choose to fix it, Jesus wasn’t necessary
* Paul is supremely pained by his condition- “O wretched man that I am”
* He is longing for some assistance and recognizes his own inability “Who will set me free from this body of death?
* Gruesome ancient practice of strapping a corpse of a dead person to the back of the person responsible for their death as part of their punishment. The rotting flesh would actually cause the flesh of the living to begin to rot. And that is how Paul saw his condition. He was a living and vibrant person with a dead corpse strapped to him. (Macarthur)
* Paul is going to fight the good fight but is looking to Jesus for his hope

If you find yourself struggling with this spiritual split-personality

1. Be honest
2. Be humble
3. Hold on to Jesus because He’s holding on to you