

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 7: 14 - 25
PREACHED ON APRIL 5, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: Although 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 another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- Last week, the apostle Paul gave us an autobiography of his life as an unbeliever. He told us about the role the Moral Law of God, the Ten Commandments, played in his life as an unbeliever. The Law of God is holy, good, and righteous and it shows us how God wants us to live our lives in obedience to Him. However, instead of the Ten Commandments restraining Paul's sins, they revealed his sins and increased them. The Law also condemned him for his sins, and, lastly, it made his sins appear very sinful. Paul was never saved by keeping the Law; the Law only made him weak, wretched, and a miserable religious man by continually exposing his sins and condemning him.
- At the time of Paul, many people believed that they could be saved by keeping the Law. They held the view that God had given the Ten Commandments to Israel, and if they obeyed them or at least obeyed fifty-one percent of them, they would be saved. Obeying fifty-one percent meant the good they have done outweighed the evil they have committed, and they would be accepted by God. It was basically salvation by works, with the Law being the means of salvation, the savior. Paul, after his conversion, found out that the Law could never bring anyone into a right relationship with God. The Law cannot make a bad person good. Paul did not become a good man by keeping the Law; the Law made him worse off.
- I also mentioned that God never intended the Law to serve as a means of salvation for anyone. All that the Law can do for anyone in their unbelief was

what it did to Paul. The Law only exposes and condemns sin in every unbeliever; in their wretchedness, it drives them to Jesus Christ for help. The Law's function is to drive unbelievers in their wretchedness to the Gospel, to Jesus Christ, to receive His free gift of salvation. After they have received Jesus Christ, He then sends them back to the Law to learn how to live as God's people.

- In our text for today, Paul continues to give us the autobiography of his life, but not as an unbeliever but as a believer, as a Christian, and not just a Christian but a mature Christian. Paul continues to tell us about the role the Law plays in his life, but now as a believer. Paul no longer uses past tenses like "I was" and "I died" in his writing, as he did last week in verses 7 through 13; rather, he uses present tenses like "I am" and "I do" in today's text from verses 14 through 25.

➤ **PAUL STATES HIS NEW PURPOSE IN LIFE AS A BELIEVER**

- What is Paul's goal, aim, and desire now that he has become a believer? What does Paul want to do now, what does he long to do, and what is his purpose in life now? He tells us in several verses that he is a true converted believer, a born-again Christian whose goal is towards obedience and holiness. No unbeliever can truly say these words. Listen to what Paul says about himself.
- Verse 16: "I agree that the Law is good."
- Verse 18: "For I have the desire to do what is good."
- Verse 19: "the good I want to do."
- Verse 21: "Although I want to do good."
- Verse 22: "For in my inner being I delight in God's Law." Paul meant he was delighted to love the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and also to love his neighbor as himself.
- Verse 25: "I myself in my mind am a slave to God's Law."
- These are Paul's new purposes in life. What about you? Are these your aspirations in life? Are those your longings? Do you understand that your greatest delight comes in obedience to the Laws of God? Do you want to be holy, good, and keep God's Commandments? Paul says yes to all these, and the true believer would say the same. This is not true of unbelievers.

➤ **PAUL CONFESSES HIS STRUGGLES WITH THE LAW AND SIN**

- Paul is here using himself as an example of what the Law does in the life of the believer. He has all the marks of a changed man. Like for all believers, God has put His Laws into Paul's mind and has written them in his heart through the Holy Spirit. Paul wants to obey God's Law. There is a new power from the Holy Spirit that has entered the life of Paul, just as it has entered the life of every believer. God is working within Paul both "to will and to do of His good pleasure" according to Philippians 2:13. Paul is now a good man and has an entirely new life, an entirely new relationship to God, an entirely new purpose, and an entirely new ability/power.

- Paul knows that as a follower of Christ, his greatest delight is found in his obedience to God's Law. Paul, however, is having a struggle living the Christian life. Even though he loves and wants to obey God's Law, he is sometimes unable to do so perfectly, or in the way he wants, and he is completely disturbed by this. Listen to Paul as he narrates his occasional battle with sin.
 - Verse 14: "the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual (flesh), sold as a slave to sin."
 - Verse 17: "It is sin living in me."
 - Verse 18: "For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."
 - Verse 19: "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing."
 - Verse 21: "Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me."
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- What does Paul mean when he said that "the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual (flesh)"? It is the same thing Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount. The people at the time of Jesus had interpreted the Law superficially and applied it to their lives in the same way. Jesus says to them, "I will show you what the Law of God really means and all the areas of human life it touches." Jesus says, if you are unjustly angry with a brother or call him a fool, you have committed spiritual murder. If you look at a woman with lust in your eyes, you have already committed spiritual adultery. The Law is spiritual and when it comes in the power of the spirit into our lives and not just the externals, it exposes more and more of our sins. It exposes our sinful desires, motivations, thoughts, intentions, motives, and feelings, and it makes us to call on the Lord for mercy.
 - With all the joy that comes with being a believer, there have been times when the apostle Paul is not satisfied with himself, and he is aggrieved by his failure. He finds every attempt to do good opposed by an indwelling sinful nature. Is that not true of all of us? Evil opposes us at every stage of our Christian experience. I don't know about you, but as I was studying this part of Paul's life commentary, I concluded that Paul is rather describing me, my wife Maricel, our children, and many other believers I know.
 - Clearly, Paul's disturbing condition with himself is not unique to him but to all believers. So many believers love and want to obey God's Law, but sometimes fail to do so perfectly. I pray almost every day to be able to keep God's Law perfectly, but I have had moments where I paused to question myself why I acted in a certain way, why I said certain words, and why I had certain thoughts. I have questioned myself why I broke God's Law not too long after I had determined to keep them perfectly. I do things I don't want to do, and I don't do things I want to do. I am exactly like Paul in this situation. Knowing the Law, teaching the Law, memorizing the Law, and reading it here every Lord's Day have not prevented me from failing to keep them perfectly at times.

➤ PAUL, A CONFLICTED BELIEVER WHENEVER HE FALLS INTO SIN

- For most of Paul's Christian experience, it has been joy and victory over sin. He even wrote in Romans 6:14 that "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under Law but under grace." For most of his Christian experience, he has obeyed God's Commandments, resisted temptations, and his heart is filled with gladness; the peace of God keeps him.
- Paul knows all the benefits of being a Christian. He knows that he has been delivered from the wrath of God, from the dominion, and condemnation of sin. He knows that he has peace with God, his name is written in the Book of Life, and he will dwell with God eternally. He knows that physical death from this world is even profitable for him because of the many blessings God has prepared for him. Paul knew that he had been justified, that he was being sanctified, and that he would be glorified with a new body and no longer in the presence of sin.
- However, Paul is not happy with himself whenever he falls into sin. He gets frustrated with himself whenever he falls into sin. This situation causes the apostle conflict and unhappiness. He feels wretched the moment he sins.
- Verse 15, he wrote: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."
- Verse 18: "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."
- Verse 21: "So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me."
- Verse 22-23: "For in my inner being I delight in God's Law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."
- Verse 24: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?"

- Well, the apostle's frustration is the mark of spiritual health. The spiritually healthy Christian does not overlook his or her sins; they do not sweep them under the carpet or become insensitive to them, but they become frustrated, disappointed in themselves, and wretched for sinning. David, one of the godly men in the Bible, felt wretched when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah. In his frustration, he wrote in Psalm 51: "2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight."
- Paul felt wretched the moment he sinned, and the Law could not help him; in fact, the Law was of no use to him in that moment. The Law can't deliver him in that situation. The problem is not with the Law but with his flesh. The Ten Commandments came from God, so they are good, holy, and righteous, but they were never given to save anyone or to make any believer become free of sinful activities.

- Believing that the Ten Commandments can save you from God's judgment and hell, or to make you live a sinless life after you have become a believer, is like using the wrong tool for the job. What would you say to a cook who attempts to measure ingredients with a ruler instead of a measuring cup? The ruler is good, nothing wrong with it, but it won't work when you use it for the wrong purpose. The Ten Commandments are good, nothing wrong with them, but they must be used for the right purpose. We will soon consider the purpose of the Law.

➤ **PAUL GIVES A REASON FOR HIS FAILURE AND CONFLICT**

- Paul gives us a reason for his failure to keep God's Law, even though he delights in doing so.
- Verse 17: "As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me."
- Verse 20: "Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it."
- Verse 23: "but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."
- Paul says it is sin living in me that leads to my failure to keep God's Law. Someone might say, "How can the great apostle say this? Has he not already told us in Romans 6:14 that sin shall not have dominion over the believer? How can sin dwell in the believer? How can a true believer sin?"
- It is true that all believers stand justified in Christ, but it is also true that after our justification, we still remain in a fallen world where sin's presence is ongoing. Even the redeemed are influenced by sinful tendencies we inherited from Adam. Even after conversion, remnants of old habits persist in the believer. Our "old self" will not be fully eradicated in this world. Because of Adam's fall, humankind inherited a nature prone to sin, meaning the inclination to err remains until final glorification (Romans 8:21-23).
- Paul has said that sin has no dominion over the Christian, but that does not mean the Christian is free from sin's presence. Also, in Romans 7:4, Paul says the believer has died to the Law, but this does not mean we are perfect according to the Law's standard. The Law, therefore, continues to function in my life and in your life as a believer to expose our sins and our need, and to bring us to the point where we cry to the Lord: "Lord, I need your deliverance; I can't help myself." Paul says in verse 25, "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" We are not yet in heaven, so the Christian will find himself and herself battling with the world, the flesh, sin, and the Devil. The Christian life will never become easy; we will struggle all the way home in heaven.

- The Christian experience is a battle and a pilgrimage. We are in Christ, but we are still in Pella, Iowa, so we will battle the world, our flesh, sin and the Devil until we become the man and woman we have been made in Christ. Paul described this struggle in chapter 8, verse 23, “And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” We are spiritual beings; we have Christ living inside of us by His Holy Spirit, but we are still living in this body that was once devoted to the fleshly desires, world, sin, and the Devil.
- Romans 8:9, Paul writes, “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” So we are spiritual beings, but we still live in the flesh, which is yet to be redeemed. It is like a disease you had in childhood that still left a mark on you. The man and woman we have always been is not removed instantaneously when we become a Christian. The Law exposes the fleshly part of us when it penetrates our lives.
- The believer throughout his or her Christian experience will therefore struggle with the ongoing presence of sin and the “old self.” However, a time is coming at the return of Christ when we will be delivered from sin's presence. The believer has already been delivered from sin's penalty at our justification and from sin's power in our sanctification, but we will be delivered from sin's very presence when the Lord returns. We will be given a new body to serve God perfectly in a new earth and a new heaven. But while we are still alive, we will continue to groan like the apostle Paul for the return of Christ, where this body of ours will be redeemed with a new one that is free from sin.
- Remember again that at the point of salvation, all of our sins are forgiven. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, once and for all time, and there is nothing we can do that will keep us from heaven. All of our sins—past, present, and future—are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. However, believers still live in the flesh, and we have the presence of sin with us, and this makes Christians sometimes miss the mark by breaking God's Law. For this reason, John stated, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Like Paul, the true believer will have an ongoing struggle with sin and might sometimes fall, become wretched and frustrated, but a day is coming when we will be given a new body and delivered from the presence of sin when Christ returns.
- In verse 18, Paul said that nothing good dwells in his flesh. Why would Paul say this? Paul knew that Christ dwells in the heart of the believer, but he also knew that sin has left its stain on us, sin dwells in us, what theologians call indwelling sin. So if you are a believer, you have both Christ and sin living inside of you. Is it not amazing therefore that Christ, by His Holy Spirit, is willing and actually lives in the heart of the believer who still has an indwelling sin living in his or her flesh?
- Thanks be to God that He has given us all the resources we need to serve Him, and we have His holy spirit to lead us to have victory over the Devil, our flesh, and the world, but we will never cease to say “What a wretched man, a woman I

am!” until the resurrection of our bodies. The Holy Spirit convicts believers of sin (John 16:8) and provides power to resist temptations (Galatians 5:16). This continual help underscores that no Christian battles sin alone.

➤ **WHAT THEN IS THE PURPOSE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER?**

- When he was an unbeliever, the apostle stated that the purpose of the Law was to make him miserable because of his inability to keep it perfectly. He stated that the Law revealed his sins, aggravated them, condemned him, and made his sins utterly sinful. The Law broke unbelieving Paul and enabled him to turn to Jesus Christ for His free gift of salvation.
- It does the same for all unbelievers. He is now a believer, so what is the function of the Law in his Christian experience? Interestingly, Paul doesn't make a new argument about the function of the Law. His argument about the Law when he was an unbeliever is the same argument he makes about the Law now as a believer.
- For believers, the Law, in the same way, brings us to the point of recognizing our weakness, failure, desperation, for sometimes failing to keep them perfectly. The Law brings us to the point where we say to ourselves, “What a wretched man, what a wretched woman I am! Who will rescue me from this wretchedness?” The Law does not make us rejoice in our sins, sweep them under the carpet, wallow in them, or give up on them; it drives us to Jesus Christ for help.
- Just like it drives unbelievers in their wretchedness to Jesus Christ to receive His free gift of salvation, the Law also drives believers who fall into sin to Jesus Christ for restoration. It is Jesus Christ who cleanses us from unrighteousness; it is Christ who sanctifies us. The Law drives us to Him for His cleansing. We therefore confess our sins to Him whenever we break God's Law.
- Listen to Paul as he tells us who can change us, make us live the true Christian life, and deliver us from this body corrupted by sin. “24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Romans 7:24-25.
- It is Christ who changes us; it is He who makes us good, and we are to look to Him. The purpose of the Law is to lead us to Christ. So while believers must keep the Ten Commandments as a rule of life, our failure to keep them perfectly and occasionally breaking them leads us to Christ for our sanctification.
- No one, both believers and unbelievers, can keep the Law perfectly. The Law is not the right tool for justification or sanctification, but a tool that leads us to Jesus Christ, the person who both justifies and sanctifies and will also glorify. The Law is a schoolmaster, a guardian that makes us see our need for Christ, that makes us feel wretched, and then leads people to Christ for healing, restoration, and salvation. Galatians 3:24-26. He will give us a new body free from sin.

➤ CONCLUSION

- For the Christian, everything that makes you weak and directs you to Christ is a blessing. Anything that makes you mourn over your desperate situation and your sins, and that leads you to Christ, is a blessing. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, those who experience deep grief over their own sins, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). He is referring to those who mourn over their own sin, for they will be comforted. The more spiritually mature a person becomes, the more he or she becomes sensitive to his or her own sins, mourns over them, and sees his or her weaknesses. It is a mark of the mature Christian to be humble and mourn the most over their sins. The closer we get to God, the more we see our sins, the brighter the light of Christ shines in our lives, and the clearer we see our dirt. We are all far worse off than we realize ourselves. We don’t see more than a fraction of ourselves, but it doesn’t matter because Jesus’ blood has paid for and has forgiven all of our past, present, and future sins. He has given us His righteousness.
- The true believer lives a life that is in conflict with sin, a life of agonizing dismay at imperfection, and a life of earnest longing for glory. What happened to Paul, a righteous man, the great apostle who still fell into sin? What about David, a man considered to be the godliest man who ever lived, yet he committed several sins? What about Peter, a disciple who denied Jesus three times? What about true believers who fall into sin sometimes? Do they lose their salvation? No!
- Christ knows our hearts. He knows that the true believer is pure in heart and loves Him. Christ knows that the true Christian loves to obey Him, He knows that the true believer mourns over their sins, He knows that the true Christian hunger and thirst for righteousness, and our challenge in living the Christian life is the remnant of the sinful habit that dwells in our flesh. This should not be an excuse to continue to sin, but Paul wrote in verse 20 saying, “Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”
- Jesus foretells Peter’s denial during the Last Supper. He predicted that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crows, and it came to pass. Peter and the ten disciples (excluding Judas) loved the Lord, but at that particular moment, Peter denied him three times just as the Lord had predicted. When Peter came to his senses about his sin, he went out and wept bitterly. After His resurrection, He appeared to the disciples, and three times, He asked Peter, “Do you love Me!” Peter’s response is what every true believer would say. He said, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”
- Despite our occasional sin, the true believer desires, loves, and enjoys obeying the Lord; it is our greatest delight in life. The real part of the true believer loves the Lord and loves to keep His Law. The Lord knows and sees that part of us that loves Him and desires to keep His Law. It is the same for all true believers, even when we occasionally break His Law, the Lord knows that we love Him.