***O Wretched Man that I am
RO91-01***

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Our subject today is "The Great Conflict." Please turn in your Bibles to Romans 7:21-25, the closing part of that chapter.

**Paul Does Wrong instead of Right**

The apostle Paul, in Romans 7, has been discussing the problem which he has experienced of doing the evil that he does not want to do, and finding himself not doing the good things that he does want to do. In this chapter, Paul sums up this problem three different times. He begins in verse 14. He takes the problem, and he looks at it in Romans 7:14-17. Then he backs off, and he picks up the same problem again in Romans 7:18-20. And then he backs off, and takes it up once more in the part we're looking at today, in Romans 7:21-25. At the end of each of those three sections, the apostle Paul is looking at this problem of experience: "I do wrong when I want to do right. I don't do the right that I want to do. What's the problem?" Every time at the end of each of these sections, he comes to the conclusion that the problem is the sin nature that lies within every human being – the innate inclination (the desire) to sin. How do you summarize it? You might describe it as the animal lusts that are natural within us, and the self-centered in us – that quality that makes us talk about trying to fulfill our needs when, in fact, all we're doing is indulging our wants. And that deception is very great among us as Christians.

**The Law of God vs. the Law of Sin**

In Romans 7:14-17, Paul takes up this issue first by dealing with the sin nature as a conflict between two possibilities. The possibilities are the things of God that he loves, or the things of evil that he hates. When he comes to Romans 7:18-20, he deals with this problem of the sin nature as a conflict of two purposes: the purpose that he has of performing divine good; and, the purpose that he has of not performing evil. When we get to the passage today, in Romans 7:21-25, he again is dealing with the sin nature, this time as a conflict between two principles. Principle number one is the law of God; and, principle number two is the law of sin.

So, we begin with verse 21 with the issue of the two laws. This is not an easy section of the book of Romans, but it is the foyer that finally closes everything down, and puts everything in perspective, to guide us into Romans 8, where, finally, he explains how a Christian can live in such a way that he has divine viewpoint in his thinking; that he has emotions which are honoring to God; that he makes choices according to the will of God; that he has thinking which is respectful toward God; and, that he fears God and honors Him. Many Christians actually simply take the attitude that none of this can be – that they're going to have to just muddle through; stumble through life; and, that in some frustrated way they hope maybe they'll make it out – do the best they can, and that sort of thing.

Well we can be a great deal more than that, and, of course, it is the preachers who are at fault. It is the preachers who have left the people without the critical information on how to be victorious Christians. They have given them an emotional guff. They have carried on before people in a way that is actually blasphemy and dishonoring to the Lord. But it doesn't seem so, because they fill the churches, and the gang follows and rushes to hear them, because they think that here is where it is at. Yet, that does not feed the souls of God's people so that they know how to be victorious in the Christian life.

Or else, some con artist comes along, and says, "Hey, we've got a camp up here just a few miles away. If you sign up for this weekend, we have Dr. Famous So-and-So who will give you the great secret of success. He has the key. If you come, you may have it. So, for a small sum of money, you go to a retreat. And when it's all over, that's what you've done. You've retreated from spiritual reality.

**Sin**

This is a tough area of the Word of God. We're going to plunge in and go as far as we can. But it is an area that now brings into focus what the human problem is, so that we do not con ourselves that we are something more than we are. Sin is not only those terrible violations of God's moral code that are spelled out. Sin is also all those things that you and I ought to be doing that we do not do – all those failures of the use of our life that we are guilty of – those failures with which we're going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. And how we're going to regret all the time we spent in human viewpoint thinking and human viewpoint living – all the time we spent wasting our lives instead of making it count for eternity. There are going to be some very sad moments in heaven when Christians finally get their report card.

Beginning at Romans 7:21, we have the two laws: I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." The word "find" is this word "heurisko" in the Greek language. And I give you the Greek words so that if you find something that you disagree with, you can contend with what God the Holy Spirit has said rather than contending with something that you think I have said. You recognize as the word that we get our English word "eureka" from – "I have found it." This word indicates simply an observation that Paul makes about himself. Paul says, "You know, I've been looking at myself, and I see something that is true about myself in my experience."

Grammatically, it's the present tense, which means that this is something that he continually sees about himself. It is not just a sometime thing. He says, "You know, I see this about myself all the time. And it's active voice, which means that he sees this thing alive actively within himself. He sees something about himself. The word "then" is a word that indicates that he's now drawing an inference on the basis of these two other summaries that he has made. He sees within himself a thing that he calls "a law." That's a Greek word "nomos," which is the standard word for "law." However, here it is used to express the idea of a principle rather than the Mosaic Law as such.

He says, "I see within myself a principle." A little later on, in verse 22, he is going to refer to the Mosaic Law as such – God's moral code specifically, explicitly stated. And you will see that there, in verse 22, he calls it "the Law of God," in order to differentiate it from just this word "nomos" (the word "law") as a principle that he sees operating.

The idea is this: Paul says, "I find then this principle about myself – a rule of action, something governing my conduct, that (introducing this principle) that evil is present." The word evil is "kakos." This refers to the lust patterns of the old sin nature – things which violate the rules and standards of God's righteousness. So, he says, "I find in the law that when I would do good, evil is actually there present with me. The word "present" looks like this in the Greek language: "parakeimai." "Parakeimai" literally means "to be near" or "to lie beside," So, Paul is saying, "There is something that lies beside me. It is very near to me. No matter what good thing I want to do, there is something of an evil nature that is right there, present within me. I can sense it; I'm aware of it; and, it scares me.

This is present tense, which means, in the Greek language, it's always there. It never leaves me. I'm always under the sense of this evil thing being present. And it's active in meaning here. It doesn't lie dormant. It's crouching there, but it's breathing. It's alive. it's not dead.

**A False Conception of Holiness**

There's a false conception of holiness and that's what we are talking about. And when we get to Romans 8, that's what we are going to talk about. We're interested in how to be a holy people. The conception of holiness has come out as sinless perfection, and that is very wrong. Many a sincere Christian has been destroyed by the mistaken notion that holiness means that you get to the point where you never do anything wrong.

This very word, in the way it's structured in the Greek language, tells us that that potential to evil is always there. And Paul says, "It is specifically in me." And he uses that personal pronoun in the Greek text in order to stress the fact that when he would do the good, there is evil that is present, lying there in him.

The word "would" is the Greek word "thelo." The word "thelo" expresses his personal preference. The idea is that actually he is saying, "I find then a principle, that when I (the one who would do good, and the one who wants to do what is good)." And again, it's that constantly present tense that he's referring to here. Again, it is active. Paul really does want to do what is right. And we can relate to that. And the word "do" is the word "poieo." "Poieo" refers to expressing some kind of action of one's thoughts and feelings. Again, it is what he constantly wants to do. This is Paul's personal choice.

**Paul Wants to do Good**

What does he want to do? Good ("kalos"). "Kalos" is the good that he wants to do. That refers to what is good outwardly: "I behave myself. I act by God's rules. And I do what is suited as a child of God. I am God-honoring.

So, we would translate verse 21 like this: "I find then this principle, that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good." So, Paul finds a principle which is operating within himself. We're talking about Paul, the born again person. That's important to realize. We're talking about a person such as yourself, who wants to do what is good and right before God. Paul, at the same time, however, finds in himself an opposing appeal to do what violates God's will, and the standards of righteousness.

The terrible thing about it is that he's helpless to resist it. That's what bothers him. Every Christian has discovered this same principle, sooner or later, operating in himself. When I want to do good, evil lies close at hand, beckoning me, and I find it so attractive. The appeal to do evil is so strong in human nature that you cannot ignore it, or simply overcome it by some determination of willpower.

**The Propensity to do Evil**

Paul identifies an inconsistency in the Christian whose regenerated desires are overcome by appeals from the sin nature. Paul's desire is to do God's will, but he's powerless to execute it while the sin nature readily carries him into evil, mentally and overtly. The reason is that there lies within us this propensity to do evil. We have a natural quality of sin.

So, what does that do? Every time God's word comes along and says something, we are rebels against it. When the Word of God comes along, and tells us something about what our roles are in life, whether we're men or women, we don't like it. We are rebels against it. That evil thing fights it. When the preacher stands up and says that the most important thing in your life is to be feeding upon the Word of God on a daily basis, we are rebels against it. It is when your mind is attuned to God's thinking, which it can only be through Scripture – then you become a person that God the Holy Spirit can lead along.

We pity the people who are associated with those in positions of authority in every area of our society, from the home on up through government, who are under the authority of people who have mentalities that are dominated by the sin nature, and are completely devoid of divine viewpoint.

So, this applies everywhere. We are entering a great political campaign. This is a time you've got to start thinking. You've got to start looking at people and saying, "What kind of minds are these who are asking to be responsible for our lives and our national destinies?" We too long, with our national Christian heritage, have subjected ourselves to evil men who on the surface, as you look at them, are going around supposedly, and from their frame of reference, trying to do good for people, but which is condemned by the Word of God. Have a respect for the evil of the sin nature within you, because, sooner or later, you will account to God, and the score is going to be added up.

Paul says, "There's something in me, and it's causing a great conflict."

**Paul Takes Great Pleasure in the Law of God**

In verse 23, he refers here to the love God. He begins with the word "for," which is the Greek preposition "gar." This is a word that introduces an explanation of what he said in verse 21 – the statement about the conflict between doing good and evil. He says, "This is why I say that. For I delight in the Law of God." The word "delight" is the word "sunedomai," "Sunedomai" literally means "to rejoice with anyone," or "to delight in a thing," or "to delight with others." So, we translate it as "to rejoice together." Here the word means to delight with Paul himself. Paul says, "Within myself, I delight with something," in that thing he's referring to as God's standard of righteousness. This word "sunedomai" indicates something that you do with your whole heart. Again, it's present tense. Paul says, "Within myself, I love the Word of God. I delight in the Word of God. I am eager to know it. I sense that it is of great value. I sense that it is God Himself that is speaking."

This word is in the Greek middle voice, which indicates that the benefit comes to Paul. Paul says, "My attitude of rejoicing is to my personal benefit. It is to my good. He says that his regenerated mind concurs with something. What is it that he finds such delight in? Law ("nomos"). That is that same word that we had before. Here it has, in the Greek language, the word "the" in front of it. It says, "*the* law," indicating that he's talking now about the Mosaic Law.

Before he says, "I take great pleasure in the Law of God. The phrase "the Law of God" is used to indicate that he's talking about something different in the concept of law than he had up in verse 21. There it was just the principle. Here it is not just a general operating principle. It is the actual statement of the moral code of God. And it's referring to the absolute moral standards of God, such as we've had referred to previously in this chapter in Romans 7:7-8 and in Romans 7:12.

**The Inward Man**

He says, "I delight in the moral code of God after (or according to) the inward man." "The inward" means "the within him man." The word is "anthropos." This is the Greek word for "man" that actually refers to person human being. It is not a gender-oriented word. There are words in the Greek language that mean "woman" as a female person, and that mean "man" as a male person. This is just human being.

So, he says, "Me, as a person – I have a personal delight within myself relative to the Word of God, the moral law of God.” He's referring to himself as a born again believer. And verse 23, that we will look at in a moment, identifies the inward man as "the law of my mind." So, he says, "Here, with my inward person, I delight after the moral code; after the Word of God; and, after the doctrines of Scripture. In verse 23, he connects that inward man with the law of his mind. So, he says, "My thinking is what appreciates the Word of God – the mentality of the soul, with its decision-making capacity.

Paul uses the same concept of the inward person in contrast to the outward person in 2 Corinthians 4:16: "For which cause we faint not. But though our outward man perish (the physical body), yet the inward man (the inward person) is renewed day-by-day."

You have another example of that in Ephesians 3:16. Paul says, "That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man." This is the person that Paul is talking about – Paul, the regenerated person: that thing that's going to leave the body and someday go to heaven.

So, the apostle Paul is speaking about the inward man who delights in what God has said; that is, the moral code of God. The soul of man is transformed by God's grace through regeneration so that it is responsive to God's will. The attitude is the same attitude that Paul is saying here, and can perhaps be clarified by Psalm 119:97, where the same concept is enunciated. The psalmist says, "Oh, how I love Your Law. It is my meditation all day."

Then Psalm 119:140 has the same idea again: "Your word is very pure. Therefore, Your servant loves it."

So, Paul says, "With myself, I delight, as I meditate upon the Word of God, after my inward person." Sooner or later, you, as a Christian, have sat down; you've read the Word of God; and, you've studied the Word of God, with nobody else around – just you yourself. And you've had this same experience of realizing that you're standing in the presence of divine viewpoint truth, and you are exhilarated by the fact that God has spoken to you. And in the quietness of that personal devotional moment, you have this feeling that Paul says about himself. He just goes big for what God has said.

However, there is a problem. In verse 23, Paul introduces it with the word "But" ("de"). That is a conjunction, and it introduces the idea of "on the other hand," in contrast to verse 22. On the other hand, he sees something. The word is "blepo." The word "blepo" here is the word in the Greek Bible for "see" in terms of focusing on a point. It is not looking in a panoramic view, but looking at a point. Paul says, "I see something very specifically about myself." And again, it is in that tense that indicates that he constantly observed this. It isn't just something that crops up periodically. He personally discerns this.

**The Law of Sin**

He sees in himself another law. This word "another" is the Greek word "heteros." This word "heteros" means "another of a different kind." It doesn't mean "another" numerically. There's a different Greek word that tells us when he means just another one of the same thing. He says, "I see a totally different kind of law functioning from the law of God. And he calls that "the law of sin." Again, the word "law" is being used in the sense of principle – something which controls the will. This principle is different in kind from the law of God. This is the law which is referred to as "the law of sin" here in verse 23.

He sees this law of sin someplace specific – in his members ("melos"). And that's his body: "I see, in contrast to the delight I have inwardly with the Word of God, I see a different kind of law in my physical body. I see something happening with my eyes. I see something happening with my ears. I see something happening with what I do with my hands. I see something that I do with my feet; something that I do with my mind; and, something that I do with the parts of my body.

Paul is not implying that the physical body is inherently evil, but that there is some kind of a force that is controlling it so that the parts of the physical body become the battlefield of Satan. And Satan is capable of causing us to use the parts of the body in an evil way. The sin nature simply expresses itself through our body. It expresses itself through the parts of our body. And don't forget that your brain is part of that body. Your thinking capacity is part of your physical body.

So, Paul says, "I see another different kind of law." And what is this one doing? It's making war. This is a big, long Greek word: "antistrateuomai." "Antistrateuomai" means "to make war against." Constantly, he says, "War is being made against something in me." And here it is in the middle voice, which indicates that he is the object of the attack. The principle is actively seeking to overcome and to destroy the opposition: "I delight in the law of God after myself as a regenerated person. But verse 23 says, "I see a different law in my physical body, making war against the law (against the principle of my mind.) The word "mind" is the Greek word "nous" – the mentality of the soul. Something is fighting my convictions. Something is fighting my beliefs which are in accord with the Law of God.

Paul is referring to the mind under the direction of the Spirit of God, and under the direction of Scripture. The Christian's mind delights in God's word and God's will. But there is, within the genetic structure of his body, the fiendish sin nature, seeking to counter every leading of the Holy Spirit. And that's what's making the battle. Our physical bodies, in every cell of your body, there is genetically placed the sin nature, from your human father, not from your mother. And that thing is in the members of your body.

**Enslaved by the Law of Sin**

Paul says, "I see a law (a principle) contrary to my dedication to the concepts of God, that is making war against my divine viewpoint thinking." And what happens? "Bringing me into captivity." This is the sad thing. Here again, we have another long word "aichmalotizo". "Aichmalotizo" means "to make one prisoner." It is a military word. As the result of a military campaign, Paul says, "Something comes under defeat. Something comes under control. Something is enslaved." And that something is me. It brings me down, it makes me a prisoner to another law – to, the law of sin ("hamartia"). This refers to "missing the mark of God's standard of holiness." Here it is the law of sin. This is specifically referring to the sin nature which resides in the believer. He is referring to a law which results in sin. The law of the sin nature causes Paul to do what he loathes to do, and prevents him from doing the good things that he intends to do.

He says, "Which is (indicating his status) in." This is the Greek word "en," giving you the location. And where is it? In my "melos" again – the word that he had before. That means "members," referring to the members of his human body. This is a very explicit statement in Scripture. Where is the sin nature? In every cell of my body – in the genetic structure. And he specifically says that: "This thing that's tearing me down, and that's leading me as a captive and defeating me, is to be found in my human body. The principle of the sin nature, operating in a Christian, is seeking to neutralize his physical body, so that he cannot serve God. When the human body is incapacitated, there is little active Christian service we can do. There is a deadly spiritual poison, in other words, that permeates Paul's body, as it does ours. It's the sin nature in our genetic structure.

So, Paul says, "In spite of my wholehearted concurrence with what God says, "I find myself facing this other law within my members, which is causing me to use my physical body in a way that violates the Word of God.

This is not something that we can take pride in. This is not something we can pretend that we don't do. You and I do, under certain conditions, permit the parts of our physical body to be used in evil, and we can never look back upon that with pride. We must always look back upon that with the same frustration that you see here in Paul, who recognizes that he is on God's side, but he plays the game in a different way.

Finally, what he is saying here is that he has observed that there is some kind of powerful force within him that carries on this military-like campaign, and that causes him to break. It makes him a prisoner. It takes him captive.

**O, Wretched Man that I am**

So, you come to verse 24, and you have that enormously pathetic, plaintive cry of almost like a wounded animal. He says, "Oh, wretched man that I am." The word "wretched" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "talaiporos." "Talaiporos" is a word that indicates a state of exhaustion as the result of hard labor. We have it used only one other time in the New Testament, in Revelation 3:17, about the Laodicean" church, where they're described as being wretched; that is, they are in a decrepit state. They don't think they are.

This word connotes a spirit of despair stemming from defeat in Paul in spite of hard trying. He says, "O, wretched man." And again, he uses the word "anthropos: "O, wretched human being that I am." We would translate it as: "Wretched person that I am." This is a strong emotional outburst which is brought on by Paul's own spiritual failures. He's in agony over the conflict within himself, between the desires of the regenerated man, and what he sees going on in his body members in evil.

Now, obviously, Paul was not a brazenly (what we would call gross) sinner. The fact is that he tells us that, of the people of his generation, he was head-and-shoulders above the rest of them in his personal integrity and his conformity to the law of God. It is the little thing – the thing that every one of us faces day-in and day-out. It is the little opportunity to slip a lie in; to misrepresent; to do the gossip; to undermine; to discourage; to play with the immoral thought; to look at the vulgar thing; to refuse to turn off the television set in spite of the degradation that's coming in; and, to be willing to go out and to fork over your money to support something that is degrading to the Christian life: something that is degrading to our society; something that is undermining morality; and, something that you just would not be proud to do in the presence of Jesus Christ. This is not big open stuff, but the little things that are constantly there. And in God's sight, the sin is a sin. There aren't little sins; and, there aren't big sins.

That's why we have this disgusting self-righteousness among evangelical, fundamental Christians, who aren't the terrible kind of sinners, who go around thinking that they are indeed something really super special and better. Therefore, they do not have a sense of caring for other members in the body. They do not have the sense of saying, "Yeah, you've made a mistake. I know exactly what you did. I know the poison that permeates your nature. I know that you were in a condition where your life was out of fellowship. The Spirit of God was not controlling. Your sin nature was controlling. I understand why you did it. I understand, too, that God's grace gives you a chance to confess it; to straighten it out; to come back; and, to move on. I don't condone what you did, but I would be the last to try to play some kind of a super, spiritual, godly role, and condemn you as if I were not capable of that. I'm fully aware of that. But for the grace of God, I go, and do the same things you do."

Paul bursts out: "Wretched man that I am" – the wail of anguish because of his captivity to the law or the principle of sin, in spite of good intentions. He yearns for a godly walk, in obedience to the Lord God, with all the consequent blessings of such a lifestyle. The phrase expresses Paul's sense of despair, of ever finding the power to overcome the enticements of the sin nature.

So, this is the cry of the person who is at the end of his own resources in trying to do right. So, here we have a wretchedness which is brought on by strenuous exertion. That's what the word "talaiporos" means. You've tried hard. Paul, you've tried hard. You exhausted yourself in trying hard in doing right. But Paul isn't happy. He's frustrated. He's disappointed.

Verse 24: "Wretched man that I am." Then he puts a very important word: "who" ("tis"). He does not say "what. But he says: "Who shall deliver me from the body (or this body) of death?" Paul is looking out, and asks for someone outside of himself to enable him to resist evil. Now he's on the right track. Evil less of the sin nature cannot be handled by your willpower, or by some psychological devices that somebody gives you in some emotional meeting or some special retreat that you go to. You cannot handle the evil lust pattern of the sin nature by determining that you're going to do better. Paul cries out in agony for someone to come in and carry him to victory. That's the secret. It's someone else other than yourself that you need to make it.

**Jonah**

We close today with a great illustration of this very evil from Jonah 2. This is an interesting chapter. It presents the problem of Jonah – what happened to him. And the whole chapter gives us a series of this man wearing himself out; trying; making the effort; and, then finally, at the end, he discovers the secret. In Jonah 2, he's in the fish. They've thrown him overboard. The worst has happened. Notice the series of his own efforts dealing with this problem. You must understand that this guy's head is covered with seaweed. He's walking around inside that huge fish, or at least crawling around in it. He's sloshing around with all the water that's coming in. He's in there with all the odors of digestion that has been taking place of what the fish has eaten. There's lots of seafood in there. It's the fisherman's platter special in there all over the place for him. And it's nice and dark. He tried to start a light with his flint, like he learned in Berean Youth Club summer camp. And nothing works.

So, finally he's sitting there, and he takes action: "What am I going to do?" In verse 1, he decides to pray: "hen Jonah prayed until the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." Then he decides to do something else. He decides to cry out for help, and to plead. Verse 2: "And said, I cry by reason of my affliction unto the Lord. And He heard me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice." "Out of the belly of Sheol" means that he's considered himself a dead man. He was on his way to Sheol, which was the Old New Testament Hades – the place of the dead. He said, I'm doomed."

Now he was desperate. His life was hanging by a thread. So, he cries out. He pleads in desperation for some help. Then he says, "I know what I'll do. I'll make some promises to God to do better." Boy, that old sin nature loves to do that. It just likes to say, "I'm going to clean it all up, and I'm going to promise you: I am not ever going to do it anymore."

Verses 3-4: "For You have cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas. The floods compass me about. All the billows and the waves passed over me. Then I said, 'I am cast out of Your sight. Yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'" He promises to God that he is going to look again to God temple: "I'm going to return to the Word of God. I'm going to start obeying God. I'm going to start doing things Your way. I'm going to start doing what You ask me to do." God said, "I want you to go to Nineveh, and run an evangelistic campaign." He said, "No." But he said, "From now on, I'll do what you tell me. I'm going to go back to the temple, to the place of obedience. I'm going to subscribe to Your will.” Promises, promises.

Then he decides to have a little devotional period there in the belly in verses 5-8. And he begins moralizing, and getting expansive about how wonderful God is: "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. The depth close me round about. The weeds were wrapped about my head." When he went into the mouth of the fish, head was covered with seaweed: "I went down to the bottom of the mountains." That's interesting, isn't it? He was aware of the fact that the mountains go all the way down to the bottom of the ocean floor. And that's what he meant: "I went right down to the bottom of the ocean floor. The earth with its bars was about me forever. Yet You have now brought up my life from corruption, O, Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord. And my prayer came in unto You, into Your holy temple. They that observed lying vanities forsake their own mercy." So, he moralizes about how just God is, and how he remembers God, and how he recollects all the good things that he knows about God.

Then he says, "I know what I'll do. If I can get out of this fish, I'll make a sacrifice: "But I will sacrifice until You with a voice of thanksgiving."

When Satan tried to keep Christopher Columbus from returning to the old world with the information that this godly man had discovered about a new world and a new continent, he was faced with storms that were unbelievable, and problems that were just staggering to the mind that seemed to doom the whole company. And in the effort to get back safely on three occasions, Columbus, a Roman Catholic with some disorientation of the Word of God, said, "If we get out of this, God, we will go and visit a certain shrine, and make a pilgrimage someplace, and say some prayers." Three times he did that, and three times he found that it didn't help.

That's what Jonah is doing: "I'm making promises to God. I'll make a sacrifice if only you'll get me out of here." Then he remembers how many times before he has told God: "I'll do something." You know, the two-son situation. The father says, "I want you to come and help me do this job." The first son says, "You bet, dad," but he never shows up. The other son says, "No, I've got other things to do." But he thinks it over, and he says, "I really should do it. I'm a crumb." And he shows up to do the job.

So, he thinks how many times he's vowed he's going to do things for God. All those times that you vowed you were going to help Charlie Boozer get that dug dirt out so that we could expand that parking lot. You were going to help Sean McGregor get that electrical work done so that this project is underway. You were going to help get all this sheet rock taping-and-bedding and all that tedious work finished, so that we can make our washrooms in the junior high looked like something more than a gas station stop-over. And all those vows – you never kept them.

He thinks of it. And he says, "Now, I'll tell you something else, God. I will pay that I have vowed. I'll keep my vows. I'll go back and keep my word.” In all of this, he is looking to himself. Then he makes one last move. He starts looking outside of himself; outside of his own effort; and, outside of his own merits, for his release.

At the end of verse 9, he hits it on the head. He says, "Salvation is of the Lord. He finally says, "None of this is any good. The thing that's going to save me, and the thing that's going to get me out of this alive, is God. I need someone outside of myself who is going to save me." And with that on his mind, having reached that point, suddenly, the fish gets sick of him.

And verse 10 says, "And the Lord spoken to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." Isn't that tremendous? The moment he got to who, and understood that the who was the Lord, his feet were back on stable ground. All these other things were efforts on his own.

That's what Paul is struggling with here in the book of Romans: "Wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me? It doesn't say, "What shall deliver me?" It's not all these other efforts: promises; pilgrimages; and doing things, but who. And he's going to expound on that when we get to Romans 8, and tell us who the who is, and how is executed.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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