

Worship 11_28_2021s

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21:19

Thank you, Kristin, for that offertory we are going to get a little more deeply into God's Word together now. So as I invite you to do each week, I hope that you will have a copy of scripture out and open with you if you have a personal Bible or Bible app that you like to use, and invite you to open that if you need something, there are red ones in all of the pews. And we will once again this morning be in the New Testament in a letter

21:56

My guess is that there was something with which you struggled this past Thursday, perhaps it was something fairly minor, like, I probably shouldn't have that 34th helping them dessert, but you did. Or maybe it was something a little bit more significant. Like I probably shouldn't bring up this volatile topic with that person. But she did. Or maybe it was something a lot weightier. Like I probably should seek reconciliation or restoration with that person. But you didn't. There's a struggle with which each and every single Christian is engaged is something that happens not just on Thanksgiving, but throughout the course of a lifetime. It's something that Paul brings up in the section that we're going to look at here in Romans and we have been studying this letter here together, if you've been with us throughout the fall, you've been working through this with us here. This is an incredibly influential and significant portion of Scripture full of rich and deep theological truths. Ones, the however, that everyone should know, they're not just for those who have progressed to a certain point in our Christian faith. But this is setting out the very heart of the matter for us, and all of these different areas. So we're gonna get back into that once more. And before we do that invite you to pray with me. Great and gracious God, we thank you for this time that we have to be here together today, Lord, quiet, are distracted minds, calm are distraught hearts, let us hear what it is that you have to say to us. And let us respond then in ways that demonstrate our love for you and our love for others. And Father, I pray that the words of my own mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts would be acceptable in Your sight. For we pray this in the matchless name of Jesus. Amen. shared with you most weeks that although we are looking at little sections of this letter as we go, it's a part of a larger hole. And I know that seems like an obvious point. But Paul really has a sustained train of thought as he goes throughout this letter. So it's good to always have that context in mind, as we were looking at it. This was a letter that he wrote to the Christians in the ancient city of Rome, he had not been there. He didn't know this group himself, but he did know about them. And they were a rather diverse group of believers there. Quite a number of them had come out of some ethnically and culturally and religiously Jewish backgrounds. Quite a number of them that come from an ethnically and culturally and religiously Gentile background. So they understandably had a lot of questions like, Does God relate to all of us in the same way? Or are there different ways that we're supposed to connect to God? What about the times that we don't see eye to eye on things? And as he addresses them at the beginning of the letter, he says right up front, the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes everyone Jew, Gentile, everyone. nods, good news, because everyone, Jew, Gentile, everyone is accountable to God. And none

have fulfilled his righteous commands. There is no one who is righteous, everyone has sinned and fallen short of that. So you can't earn that you can't make that up through your efforts. We're not made right with God through our works. It's not about what You perform. It's about what God has promised as a free gift. He talks about it often it's a free gift. It comes by grace through faith. And Paul been preaching the gospel for years, we've been planting churches. And so he knows the kinds of misunderstandings that that teaching can open itself up to he knows the kinds of questions that come up. In this middle part of the letter, then he goes through this series of three rhetorical questions where he addresses ones that come up a lot misunderstandings that people have today, we're in the third of those three. So I just wanted to give you that little context before we look at this, this is beginning in chapter seven, verse seven, and this again, is the word of the Lord. What then shall we say? That the law is sin, by no means? Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known the sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had said, You shall not covet. But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment produced in me all kinds of covetousness for apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law. But when the Commandment came, sin came alive. And I died. Very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me for sin, seizing an opportunity, through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and righteous, and good. Did that which is good, then bring death to me, by no means it was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment, might become sinful beyond measure. We know that the law is spiritual, but I am on the flesh sold under sin. 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, there's no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

27:00

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. For I do not do the good I want the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now, if I do what I do not want it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand, For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. 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, wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I myself serve the law of God with my mind with my flesh, I serve the law of sin. Paul's very obviously talking about a struggle that is going on here. And although it may seem obvious on the front, what I'd like to do with you here is make sure we understand what struggle he's talking about. What's the struggle that Paul is talking about? And then look at why that happens. What what's the reason for that? Why is that struggle there in the first place? That'll give us then an opportunity to think, Well, how do we approach it? How are we supposed to approach this, when we find this happening in our own life? Paul here is talking about a struggle that is happening within an individual's life. And we're gonna talk about who that person is in just a moment here. But this once more is the third of these rhetorical questions that he brings out people hear the gospel, they hear that God's grace abounds, doesn't matter how much you see, in God's grace, always a bounce. And the first question that he brings up is back at the beginning of chapter six, he knows that people will say, Well, if it doesn't matter how much sin there is, there's always more grace than the way to get the most grace is to send even more. And he says, no, no. And then he knows that people will hear the good news of the gospel, which says, It's not about what you do. And they'll say, well, then it doesn't matter what I do, does it? And he says, No, it does. You need to offer yourself up in service to righteousness. And the third question is right here in verse seven, then when people will say, well, then what is God's law? Is it good? Is it bad? What is it? Is it the problem? Is that where the problem comes from, from God's law? And here again, he says, by no means I pointed out to you that each of those expressions, he uses that as a response each time is the strongest way possible in the Greek language that you can say, No, it's a kind of rare grammatical formulations, the strongest possible way that you can say no, here he's saying, No, that's not the case. God's law is not the problem. Now when you see law in this passage, I just point out a couple things here most every time that you read the word law or hear it in this passage, and it was there a lot, most every time it is referring to what we would call the Mosaic law. That is

the moral commandments that God gave to the people of Israel. They're summarized in the 10 commandments. You heard those read just a little bit ago, from that passage in Exodus, they say this is what righteousness should look like. This is how you should live, as my people God gives those to us. Most of the time, this facet Das was referring to there are a couple times in verses 21 to 23, where it has a slightly different nuance hang on to that thought, I'll come back and explain it. But when you hear it, that's what he's getting at most of the time. And the question he knows is people say, Cummings and saying, well, there seems to be this conflict within me. There seems you're telling me that God's law is good, but there seems to be this conflict. So maybe it's not good. Maybe it's the problem. And Paul says, No, that's absolutely not it. He's talking about this war that wages within that you hear him use that phrase, this war that wages within, well, Who's he talking about here? This is actually a quite important thing to understand this passage properly. Who is who is he speaking about with this?

30:50

There are a number of different interpretations that people have offered up there are three main ones because people will say, Well, no, he's getting a different things here. One position, it's a minority position, a minority view, we'll say that Paul is talking about he is speaking kind of on behalf of the nation of Israel as a whole. So he is kind of in himself personifying the whole fullness of God's people all throughout the ages. It's a way of him saying Israel knew what they were supposed to do. But they didn't do it, and knew what they weren't supposed to do. But they did that. And theologically, that is possible. But for Paul to use first person pronouns for all, that's a very unusual way to do that. So that's not most people don't hold that view. It's a rather minority one. There's another perspective, though, that says, Well, no, Paul is talking about an unregenerate person, that is, someone who has not yet had the Holy Spirit work in their hearts to bring them to faith in Jesus Christ. Maybe Paul is describing his own experience before he became a believer. But that would again be unusual, because he's using present tense verbs for all of it. So maybe he's just using a general case study, you know, the person who knows that something isn't right. They feel some sense of guilt. They feel like something isn't quite right. But they don't know what to do about it, because they're not yet a believer. Many people do interpret the passage that way. But that the major the biggest difficulty with that is it scripture consistently says that apart from God working in our heart, we don't have any desire to do what is good. Apart from God working in our heart, we don't even recognize what God has said to be good. Apart from God working in our heart, we have no ability to carry through on those things. So it doesn't seem like that's the case, it seems then to be speaking about a believer. So why is that significant? is significant because it shows us that this is an experience that we have in the Christian life to wrestle with these things. This is someone who the Holy Spirit has been working in their heart has brought them to faith in Jesus Christ, and yet they are still wrestling with those things. In fact, it seems to be Paul's own personal experience. That's an obvious way to treat that when Paul says, I struggle with something he means it is the obvious way to read this passage. And this is Paul, somebody who had had a face to face encounter with Jesus Christ is still saying, Yeah, I find that there is this battle going on within me. Now, the difficulty with that position is some of the times he talks about us still being under sin. I'm going to come back to that in a moment. But that's again, the best way I think, to understand as fast as you can, why does that matter? Why did I take a moment of that, because I want us to see that this is showing us that struggling with the sin in our life is common to the Christian life. That's a point that doesn't usually require a whole lot of convincing. Sometimes when I'm trying to show people stuff from scripture or teach things from the Bible, I've got to give all kinds of evidence and show all kinds of proof and argue for hours and hours on end, it doesn't take much convincing to say, you know that things aren't totally right in your life, I know that I don't need much convincing to know that the things I'm supposed to do aren't always the things I do. And the things I'm not supposed to do are the things I do more than I should you don't have to convince me of that in my life. I doubt that I have to convince you of that in your life. If I need to, we can meet afterwards. We'll talk about it for a little bit. But here's all kinds of examples of what this looks like. He's talking about the person who says I have heard what God has said, I know what God has said. But that's not what's going on and there's a war that's waging within. So this is the struggle that happens when you devote all of your attention, your adoration, your love to something that is not God, despite knowing that we have no other gods before him. This is a struggle that happens when you place your relationship with God on the back burner

because your schedules too busy despite knowing that we are called to set aside time to regularly commune with God through worship, and prayer. This is a struggle that happens when you are harboring resentment in your heart towards someone despite knowing that Jesus said we are to love even our enemies, and that hate filled hearts are no different than violence filled hands. This is the struggle that comes from knowing that you're going back and back to that website or video location despite knowing that Jesus said lust in your heart is the same as actually committing adultery. This is a struggle that happens when we are continuing to tell half truths or full lies despite knowing the Goddess said you should speak with honesty and integrity. This is a story What happens when you find yourself scrolling through Zillow to see who is living more lavishly than you are despite knowing that God has said you shall not covet what your neighbor has? My point here is not to guilt review. My point here is not to bring up painful places of shame or just activate your defense mechanisms. The intent is to acknowledge that the struggle is real. And if we understand why it is there, and why this is happening, then we can see the right way to approach it.

35:27

So I want to talk about the reason for our struggle what Paul is getting at here. The reason for it is our sinful nature, and how it interacts with God's law. That's what he's talking about here. The reason for this struggle is the way that our sinful nature interacts with God's law. And I'll point on just three quick aspects of that to you here. First, when our sinful nature is encountered by God's laws exposed for what it is, God's law exposes our sin. That's what you hear in verse seven. Listen again to that. We said yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin, For I would not have known what it is to cover it if the law had not said, You shall not covet. God's law exposes the sin that is there. You heard that even in the passage from Exodus that Emily read a little bit ago, right after the 10 commandments, what was the first thing? How did the people respond? So they were terrified. They said to Moses, you you can talk to us, but God can This is too much. Because we now see what's going on in our hearts. illustration, I think I've offered to you before is, if you're traveling on a road that you've not been on before, you don't know what the speed limit is. All sudden you see a speed limit sign you realize I'm going way faster than I should be. God's law exposes our sin. That's the first thing that it does. The law is holy, it is good. It says I'm in verse 12, you see that the law is holy, the commandment is holy and righteous and good God, God's law is not the problem. It shows us what the problem is. It exposes the problem. The second thing that happens is that our sinful nature is provoked by God's law. You see that in verse eight, when it said sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment produced in me all kinds of covetousness. We know what this looks like. What's the surest way to get a toddler to sneak a cookie before dinner? Tell them no not allowed to have a cookie before dinner. God's law provokes our sin, we hear what this is. And sin has corrupted our hearts, our minds, our wills so thoroughly, that seizes an opportunity. That's a powerful phrase, it seizes an opportunity to push back in defiance, always seeking to satisfy itself and rejecting anything that says otherwise. So it's provoked by God's law, and then it generates conflict with these commands. This is the conflict Paul is talking about, generates this conflict. Now I want to come back to verses 21 to 23, I told you, there was a little bit of a nuance there. So I do want to take some time, we can understand those verses properly. Here they are, again, he said, So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand, For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. 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. There are some slightly different nuances that he's using here to that word, which is I wanted to point out there the word law in verse 22, versus the law of God, that is clearly a reference to God's moral commands, that's the same as it's been in all the other parts of it. The other sections when he's talking about the law of my mind, the law of my body, these kinds of things, it has just a little bit broader of a sense meaning something like a principle, or something, which is always true. So I want to just paraphrase that for you. So we can understand that I think is in the best way possible to be paraphrase that section like this, he is saying, I find it to always be true, that when I want to do what is right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight to see the righteous commands of God in my inner being. But I see in myself another principle, my sinful nature, that wages war against the principle of my mind is understanding of what I know to be true about God and His ways. And that war is being waged makes me captive to this principle of sin. And yet, this is a challenging part of this particular

section. Paul is talking about this battle that is raging there, he's talking about this war that is going on even says at the end, he feels like he's captive to sin. And if you've been here, you're looking at this letter, you might think, How can you say that? When you've already said that Jesus has delivered us? How can this be the case if you've also said that Jesus has set us free from these things? I want to point out to you just some stuff that's very important to understand when we speak about our sinful nature, in light of Jesus work on our behalf. These are important things to understand. We're talking about our sinful nature, in light of Jesus work on our behalf. Here again, are three just brief observations, things to point out to you. The first is that the penalty of sin has been removed. Through what Jesus has done, the penalty of sin has been removed. We are all accountable to God. This letter isn't saying there's not a single person who's righteous. There is a just judgment that God will hand down against Sin However, Jesus has taken that judgment upon himself. The consequences of our sin have been fully totally finally dealt with through His death, and resurrection, the conviction that we should expect to hear announced from the judge has been taken away. In fact, we've been declared in the right we have been justified before God, this is the free gift that Paul was so often talked about. So the penalty of sin has been removed, the power of sin has been emptied.

40:27

Because we've been called before the judge and the judge himself is the one who says we are innocent and the power of sin to stand against us and accused us has been taken away. The greatest weapon that sin can deploy is death. And the resurrection of Jesus demonstrated the ultimate power of sin has been emptied, because the grave has been emptied. So its power ultimately has been emptied. However, the presence of sin is in the process of being overcome. The presence of sin in our life is in the process of being overcome, the penalty has been removed, the power of sin has been emptied. Nevertheless, our sinful nature and just fate does not just fade off quietly into the night. You know, on a basic level, just old habits die hard, right? That's true for almost every area of life on a deeper level. It's the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to renew us and remake us in the image of Jesus Christ. And that's a work that goes on throughout our life that is an ongoing process. So as Paul is speaking of the sin that is dwelling within him, he is saying that it is there it is being overcome, there are still remnants of it still shows itself more than it should. The classic illustration that people use for that is this last night, we got a little bit of a dusting of some of our first snow of the year that the illustration that people most often use is this, if you were to go outside and take a snowball, pack that and then bring it inside to a nice warm room and set it on a table, the decisive movement has been made, we all know what's going to happen. The the outcome is inevitable, that snowball is gonna melt eventually, depending on how dense and how big it was, it may take a little time, but the decisive movement has been made, even if the outcome is still being worked out. So you see that it's kind of a similar way to think about this. Our sin has been dealt with, the penalties been removed, the power of it has been emptied. But the presence of it is something that is being overcome throughout our life. This is an insight that came out of the Protestant Reformation, this one in particular from some of the work of Martin Luther, it's acknowledging that there is this paradox. There is this paradox because we have been justified we are declared in the right before God. And yet our sinful nature is this lingering presence. It's not yet fully gone. Nor will it be until we are fully in the presence of Jesus either when we die or when he returns. Somebody like the theological terms, Luther called this SEMO Eustace at Peck guitar means we were simultaneously justified. And there's sin there both of those things. And if you're wondering about that, Scripture says the same thing. One of my favorite verses in all of Scripture is Hebrews 10:14, which says this For by a single offering He has perfected for all time, those who are being sanctified. Talking about the work of Jesus by single offering his death and resurrection He has perfected for all time, we've been justified, we are right with God, those who are being sanctified. There's an ongoing process of being made holy, both of those things are true. Both of those things are true. It's incredibly important to understand that, because then it helps us to see why this struggle was still there, what it looks like and how we're supposed to approach it. The struggle is real. I don't think I have to convince you of that again. But how are we supposed to approach that if we know what Jesus has done for us, and we know what this actually looks like, in our life here, just couple exams, a couple points of application, I guess I'll give you as we wrap up here. First is this just it's okay to acknowledge, in fact, it's good to acknowledge No, that the struggle is real. So

when you have those times of regret, don't think that all is lost. When you wake up with shame, because the choice is the night before know that all is not lost. If you somehow think that a real Christian would wrestle with the things you're wrestling with, that's a lie. Don't believe that. Even Paul, the apostle who had this face to face encounter with Jesus said he found himself constantly doing the things he shouldn't be doing, and not doing the things that he should be doing. This doesn't make it okay. And this is not an excuse to just continue on in those things. But just know that this is a part of what it looks like. As you in fact, as you draw closer to the Lord, you become more and more sensitive and aware of these things in your life. So if it troubles you, if you sin in your life troubles you that in and of itself is actually a sign that your heart knows what it's supposed to be longing after, which is a good thing. And yet the struggle is there. It's real. But when you experience it, don't despair. Second thing to remember, though, is that we can't climb our way out of it. Just through sheer effort or determination. That's what he's been getting at so many times in this letter. That's not the response. We do that we try to double down on our own efforts, but more and more stock in ourselves to see our way through this. One of Paul's main points all throughout this letter is that you cannot attain righteousness through our actions.

45:04

Just the other day I saw one of the current internet challenges, it's trending out there. And for liability purposes, I should probably say, Don't go do this afterwards or something like that. If you seen as though there are people who are going out and they're standing in the open space in their yard, they're taking maybe like an eight or a 10 foot ladder, which is closed, it's flat, and they'll stand there, they'll see how many rungs they can run up before it falls over on them. Right? And nobody gets to top and even if you did, you didn't get anywhere, right? More often, an iron is gonna fall on your face or on your back, probably get a serious injury there. That's what it's like thinking that you can use God's law to get yourself out of the problem. Even if you couldn't get to the top, which you can, you're gonna fall on your face and hurt yourself at the end that doesn't get you anywhere. That's not the response. The response is not to try harder, to be better thinking that we can make ourselves right with God that we can eliminate this stuff through just our effort is like that. What we do then, is we rest in the sufficiency of our Savior. Paul says at the end of this chapter after he's building up and he's sharing what's going on in his own heart, he says, Who could possibly deliver me from this was his answer, not Paul the Apostle. He says, Thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that this happens, he's the only one that can remove the penalty of your sin. He does that through His death and resurrection, he's the only one that can empty sin of its power. He does that through His Spirit which is dwelling in you and he is remaking you then in his image. So when the struggle to bear witness to the new life that we have been given in Jesus shows itself in your life, I don't know when the next time for that's going to be maybe it will be this afternoon. But whenever it happens, also think of this. As First Corinthians 10:13 says, No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man, God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, he will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it. The way of escape is the one who has set us free. So turn again to Jesus in those moments know that what he has done is enough, even as that is being worked out in your life over time. It's probably a good chance that some of you've been wondering how this sermon or this passage has anything to do with advent. And if you weren't wondering it before, you are now since I brought it up, but it's simply this. The only one who can deliver us from the body of death is God Himself. And admin is the good news that it's gotten himself in the person of Jesus Christ, who has come to do that very thing for us. advance also about training our hearts to wait with eager anticipation at a time when He will come again. So a passage like this, in Advent reminds us that the way forward in our times of struggle is not to turn further within and hope you can find some untapped reservoir of strength. Neither is it to pretend that there is no struggle or that we have no sin. And neither is it to resign ourselves to defeat because we think nobody could possibly deliver us instead. adven reminds us that the one who can deliver us and see us safely through has come and he's coming again. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, only you can rescue us from the war that rages within and deliver us from our sin that continually sets itself in opposition to you and to your ways give us life in your ways. enable us to rejoice in your provision, and protection. Amen.

