

(13) 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.

(14) For we know that the Law is spiritual --- but I am of 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 Law --- that it [i.e. the Law of God] is good.

(17) So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 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, but 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.

(21) 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!

(24) 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, but with my flesh I serve the Law of Sin.

Think on These Things:

- 1) Do you think you can simply summarize today's lesson?

Christian living is a tough struggle. We desire to do what's right in God's sight, but we soon learn that we don't have the ability to always do this. Our mind --- our inner being --- delights to live pleasingly for the Lord! But our flesh and body --- our focus on ourselves with its wants and needs --- is at war with our minds and good intentions! This leaves us torn inside, and we don't understand why we struggle so. Failure to do what's right, or avoid doing what's wrong, can lead to inner conflict, self-loathing, and despair.

- 2) From v. 13, does God's Law bring death to people? How prolific is sin among people?

No, the Law of God does not bring death. It is SIN, using the Law's decrees of right and wrong, that brings condemnation leading to death. The Bible teaches that all have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Everyone's "flesh" is infected by this curse!

- 3) When you become a Christian, what happens with your mind (see Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10)? Does this happen to your body? How are we describing any difference?

Romans says our minds are transformed. Across time, 2 Corinthians says our inner selves are being renewed day-by-day (...though our body is aging). Ephesians states that we are to put off our old selves and that the renewal of our minds creates a new self in the likeness of God. Colossians adds that renewal through knowledge shapes us into the image of our Creator.

The body, on the other hand, is aging and wasting away. The dynamic is simple: we grow and expand in our knowledge and relationship with God through renewal of our minds (inner beings), while physically we gradually weaken to the point of dying.

- 4) What is the conclusion of v. 21?

We discover a new law (principle): When we want to do right...evil is right there, too! Paul expounds on this further in v. 25; he declares that he serves the Law of God with his mind, but with his flesh he serves the Law of Sin. What can we say? With every opportunity to do or say the right thing, there will also always be a “wrong” way to do or say it...!

- 5) The application of this truth in self-discovery leads Paul to describe himself as what? Where does he see a solution to his self-loathing sinfulness?

As early as v. 17, Paul acknowledged that ‘nothing good dwells in me.’ By v. 24, he describes himself as a “wretched man.” Then in v. 25 he thanks God that deliverance and victory are available through Jesus Christ.

- 6) The debate on this passage is not that Paul saw a battle with yielding to sin within himself. It is whether he is describing his life before or after becoming a Christian. Based on your own walk with the Lord, where would you weigh in on this debate, and why?

This is calling for a personal response from class members. However, many Christians can identify with the truth that once they became Christians, temptations and sinning did not “stop.” Thus, they should be able to relate that problems (and sins...) did not go away after they got saved. In many ways, it seemed like becoming saved brought on new conflicts!

Based on such experiences, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul’s discussion of such a struggle is a personal testimony of his own challenges early on in his faith journey. We can all be comforted by his openness about struggling in Romans 7, as well as accept his conclusion that deliverance and triumph are available through Jesus.

- 7) Can you share with the class what works for you personally when facing temptations to sin? How do you earn victories over sin?

Personal response. This is a chance for those present to discuss how they struggle with and sometimes overcome temptations. No one is perfect and always overcomes. But there are things we can do in the midst of temptations to not “yield.” Perhaps a quick prayer or short Bible reading. Maybe recalling scriptural memory verses, or remembering someone close to them who has faced a similar challenge and overcame. Let’s hear what works for people!

People and situations I want to pray for this week: