

## The War Within

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC  
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Text: Romans 7:14-23; Galatians 5:16-26

Purpose: Raging within us are two natures that are complete opposites. There is the fleshly nature that desires the things that satisfy the flesh. If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, there is also a spiritual man within you that desires the things of God. Understanding this internal conflict is the first step to bringing it under submission and living a life filled with the Fruit of the Spirit.

One day a Christian minister was out playing golf with his church members. He drove his ball into a very deep sand trap. He picked up his golf club, broke it but didn't say a word.



Then he picked up the golf bag and tore it to shreds but didn't say a word.

He then took out all the golf balls and flung them into the woods but did not say one word.

Finally the minister said out loud, "I'm gonna have to give it up."

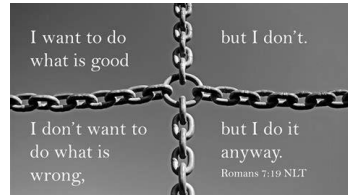
"Golf?" asked one of his church members.

"No," he replied, "the ministry."<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

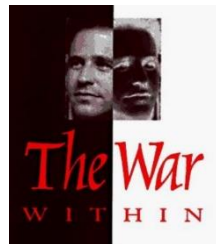
Charles Spurgeon tells a story<sup>2</sup> of how a woman came to speak with him in private. While Spurgeon talked with her about her soul, she told him that she desired to serve God, but found that there was another law working within her that kept her from doing what she knew was right.

Charles Spurgeon turned to Romans 7:19 and read to her the verse, “*The good that I would I do not; and the evil which I would not that I do!*” The woman said, “Is that in the Bible? I did not know it.”



Spurgeon could not blame the woman for her ignorance because she had no interest in the things of God. She was like so many other people, they would rather buy the latest novel and devour it instead of spending time with God's word. We spend countless hours watching television, paying bills, reading the newspaper, checking our email, and reading ANYTHING except the Bible.

One person described the warring nature that rests within us like two dogs, one black and one white, and both of them are barking at the same time and coming out of one mouth. At one moment we are just as kind to others and then in a split second we say something that we regret.



Within us there is the nature that wants to satisfy self. Those fleshly desires are present and rear their ugly head. It is all about me, myself, and I. But if you have asked Christ

to be your Lord and Savoir, then you have a nature that desires the things of God. You want to do good, but the will to do it often is interrupted by our sin nature.

## Our Text

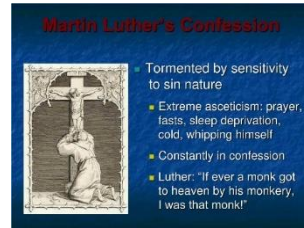
Paul in the first six chapters has laid the groundwork for us to understand we are sinners by nature. There is something within us that we have received from our first parents, Adam and Eve. Because of the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and their choice to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, we were sentenced with a nature that is in rebellion to God.



God gave us the Law so that we could measure ourselves against a perfect standard. As we honestly look at our lives and compare it to the Ten Commandments, we find, like Paul we can keep most of them. We may not love God with all our heart, or we may have made other things in our lives an idol, but when we get to the last one concerning coveting, we honestly see we fail.

Paul addresses the issues raised by comparing our lives against the standard of the Law. Some would want to get rid of the Law and live life apart from rules and guidelines. But Paul sees that Law is necessary for us. The Law that provides structure and wholeness to life, also brings condemnation because the more we desire to keep the Law, the more we realize we fail.

Martin Luther in attempts to keep the Law, found that deep in his heart resided an inescapable evil. Martin Luther even attempted to bring his flesh into submission by physically abusing his body. He beat himself so badly, that on a few occasions he needed medical attention. But as he studied the Epistle of the Romans, he found that Salvation only comes by grace. We can never bring our bodies totally under submission. As long as we live in this fleshly body, we will always be confronted with our sin nature.

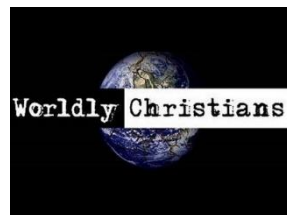


### Verse 14 – Sold Under Sin

Paul in verse 14 lays out the argument clearly for us. *“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.”* Paul admits he is a sinner caught under the trap and judgment of sin. He is captive to sin and a slave to sin. We want to think we are righteous and holy, but even the great Apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, acknowledged his carnal state.

### Fallacy of Contemporary Christianity

So many Christians today operate out of a sense of self-righteousness. I read a story this past week about a Christian that was involved in an automobile accident. As they were standing outside the car waiting for the police to come and document the accident, a man walked out of the church on the corner, walked over and gave them a gospel track. He said, “You should read this while you wait for the police to arrive.”



And then he turned and walked away. This person was not interested in the person he was only interested in satisfying his evangelistic duty.



But we need to be involved in people’s lives if we ever hope to win them to Christ. Evangelism is not telling others where the water is, it is taking them to the water and not abandoning them. It is becoming a friend to them. Entering into relationship with them. Not telling them they are doomed to go to hell, and then leaving thinking we are not guilty. We are all guilty before God. But we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. We do not need to be lulled into a false sense of security – we are only saved by grace.

### Verse 15 to 21 - The War Within

In verses 15 to 21, Paul doesn’t stop there by saying he is under sin, he continues to illustrate that he REALLY wants to do good, but every time he tries, he fails.



*For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.*

*But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*

*Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

*I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*

Paul apparently has experienced this in a personal manner. He wants to do good. He desires the things of God. He wants to say the right thing at the right time to the right person. But within him is a nature that draws him away from the things of God. In the end, he ends up doing evil, wrong, and hurting others.

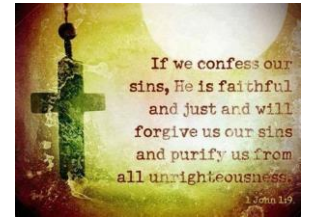


If I asked you to raise your hand today, and you were honest, you too would admit you have been caught in this dilemma. You set out to do good and instead do something evil.

It has been said that the enemy has been found, and the enemy is us. We are our own worst enemy. We set out to harm another and end up hurting ourselves with the very trap we set for the other. We may hide a gun under our pillow to protect ourselves from intruders and end up shooting ourselves accidentally. We may set a trap in the woods to catch a particular animal and end up getting ensnared ourselves. We may try to harm another with by smearing their name because of something they did to us, and end up hurting our reputation because we talked bad about them. We must be careful when we begin to attack others because we often are the one harmed.

## Coming out of the Battle – Entering into Rest

The key to coming out of this embittered conflict that rages within us is to acknowledge we are in a battle. There is sin within us that needs to be confessed. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to come in us and heal us from this penalty of death. By accepting Christ as your Savior, you allow the freshness of God to make you a new creature in Christ.



This will not eliminate the warring natures that reside in us, but it is the first step to getting out of the hopeless cycle of sin and failure.

The second step is found in another of Paul's passages, in the letter to the Galatians. In chapter 5 verse, 16 to 18 it says,



*"I say then; Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.*

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*

Paul proceeds to list the various things that are fleshly which involve things outside the body. Those that continue to walk in the flesh, according to Paul, "will not inherit the kingdom of God."

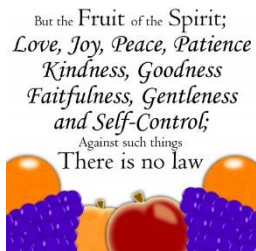


Those include: “*adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, reveries and the like.*”



The key to breaking this cycle of failure is to “Walk in the Spirit.” When you walk in the Spirit, you will produce fruit that is very recognizable to others. If you notice in verse 22, it is listed as “fruit.” This is singular – like a single clump of grapes. Each of these goes together as a group, not individually. Someone that walks in the Spirit should have all of them, not just a few.

“*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*”



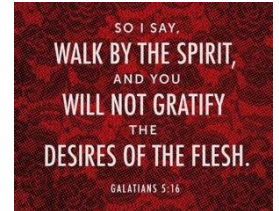
When you accept Christ as your Savior, the scripture teaches that you receive a spiritual gift, you may have one or two but rarely does a person have them all. In 1 Corinthians we are given a sampling of the gifts of the spirit which include; words of wisdom, word of knowledge, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. You may have a few of these gifts, but you will not have them all.

What Paul is saying concerning the “fruit of the Spirit” is that when we have Christ residing within us, we demonstrate all the gifts in our life – “*love, joy, peace,*

*patience (longsuffering), goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*” He even adds that there is no law against doing these things. It is as if these exceed the requirements of the law so the law doesn’t apply to those that walk in the spirit of God.

## Application for Us

If you are struggling in this area of failing to do what God has asked you to do, the solution is to “walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.” Listen to that still small voice that is calling us to do good instead of evil. We make a deliberate choice in what we do in life. We need to remember that we are children of God, and have been bought with a price. Before you can help another person, you must first take care of our own life.

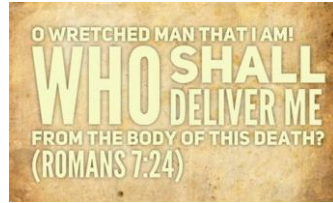


The world that we live in needs our help. They are walking around life as if they were blind men stumbling in the dark. If we see others in need of salvation, we need to go to them in love, not in judgment.

Once we begin to walk in the Spirit, then our witness will be heard by others. When you see another person overtaken by sin, you who are spiritual should seek to restore others in a spirit of gentleness. We need to be aware that we are weak and may fall for the same temptation as others face. (Galatians 6:1)

## Paul's Closing Words

Paul acknowledges what an awful person he is. “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (Romans 7:24) The



reply to this question obviously is Jesus Christ. He can break the bondage of sin in our life when we surrender to Him.

The only time we will be fully released from this body of death, is when we lay our bodies down in the tomb at the end of life. Until then, there will be a war within us. Once we die, then we will be freed from this carnal fleshly body.

Until that day, Paul would say to us that are living, “Walk in the spirit of God.” Make a decision today not to obey the lust of the flesh. In obeying God and crucifying the flesh daily, and walking in the spirit, you will have life and it



will be more abundant. The person that chooses to walk in the Spirit will be rewarded with a sweet-smelling personality that exhibits the characteristics of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

That is a goal worth striving for.

## LET US PRAY

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Practical Bible Illustrations from Yesterday and Today, page 38 No. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Mikey's Funnies, A Golf Funny, 1/23/2023