

Wretched but Welcome

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[0:00] Church, we are going to jump right into it this morning. Take your Bibles, if you would, and turn to Romans chapter 7. We're continuing on in our series on when in Romans, going from the back of Paul's epistle to the front.

Romans chapter 7, we're picking it up in verse 7. So we covered the first six verses of Romans chapter 7 last Sunday, and we celebrated some incredible news that Jesus has activated the death clause.

We are no longer bound by sin and death. We're no longer under any legal obligation. To the law of sin and death, and instead, we now belong to a living Savior.

And that was the good news from last Sunday. We're going to pick it up here in verse 7. And the first few verses, down through verse 13, this revelation that we are free from the law of sin and death raises a natural question.

So if we're dead to the law, and the law could not fulfill the mission of bringing us to Christ, then does that mean that the law is bad?

[1:12] Let me just ask y'all. Church, is God's law bad? Good. You passed the test. Good job. If anybody was unsure of the answer, just listen to what the person next to you said. They were right.

Is the rule book evil? Of course not. Absolutely not. So let's pick it up here in verse 7. If you're able to, would you just stand with me for this first reading of Scripture, Romans chapter 7, verses 7 through 13.

Romans 7, 7 through 13. Paul says, Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not.

In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said you must not covet. So you see, the law itself is holy.

And its commands are holy and right and good. Now, if you would, skip down to verse 13. Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation.

[2:18] So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands or law for its own evil purposes.

Would you bow your heads with me? Lord Jesus, I pray that you would enlighten us to what Paul was writing to this church in Rome so many years ago. Apply it to our context here today in 2026. God, just teach us what your spirit would have us to understand from the Scriptures. And prepare our hearts to remember you and your sacrifice by observing the Lord's table today.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Thank you for standing. Amen. Amen. So Paul is explaining that the law is like a clean mirror. Doesn't lie.

Reveals exactly what it's seeing. If you walk into the bathroom in the morning, anybody walk into the bathroom and look in the mirror sometimes early in the morning? How many of you just love what you see looking back at you?

[3:19] Yeah. Probably not too many of us. Look, if you don't love what you see, it's not the mirror's fault, right? You don't get mad at the mirror. So the law is a mirror to reveal the truth about us, sometimes the hard, maybe ugly truth, right?

The mirror didn't put the image there. It just revealed the image. Then, man, it gets heavy. As Paul says, once that command came or the law came, sin used those good commands to trip us up, to show us how we could never obey them, how ugly it really is.

That's where Paul leaves us at the end of verse 13 there. He leaves us staring into the holy mirror of Scripture, completely exposed, realizing just how dirty we are.

Now, before we go any further, can we pivot for a minute? How many of you have heard of the imposter syndrome? Anybody heard of imposter syndrome?

Anybody want to venture a definition? No, that's all right. I have one prepared. It is a psychological term for the nagging, exhausting fear that you don't measure up, you aren't good enough at whatever you're doing.

[4:40] You aren't actually as qualified or as smart or as prepared or as good as people think you are. Maybe in your job. Maybe in a relationship.

Maybe in some kind of status or honor that's been bestowed upon you, and you think people just haven't quite figured out yet. That you're not actually equipped for this at all.

It's the constant anxiety that any day now, people are actually going to figure it out. They're going to find out the truth about you. They call this imposter syndrome in psychological terms.

And it starts out with a project or a piece of work, for instance. And then it goes to anxiety, self-doubt, worry. And then there's usually two responses that can come out of that. You either procrastinate because you don't have the motivation to actually prepare.

You don't think that you're really good enough and the work you're going to do isn't really going to work anyway. Or you over-prepare. And you do so much work because you think that you're not really good enough and you don't really know what you're doing.

[5:40] And either way, you somehow accomplish it. And then a feeling of relief comes in. And then you get some positive feedback. Whew, I got through it. I got past it.

But then what happens? Either through effort or through luck, you accomplished it. But then it gets down to you ignore or you push away the positive feedback you got because you don't think you really earned it.

You don't think you really deserve it. And then you get up to feeling like a fake. You doubt yourself. Sometimes that can trigger depression or anxiety. And then it just starts the cycle all over again.

And a lot of people live that way. Maybe some. I'm not going to ask for a show of hands, all right?

You don't need to reveal that about yourself right now. But maybe some of you have struggled with that at certain points in your life.

You know what can trigger that in the life of a church? Taking communion. Taking the Lord's Supper. Keep imposter syndrome in the back of your head.

[6:43] Then would you flip over, hold a finger, put your little Bible ribbon marker that you're not sure what to do with. Put that right there in Romans chapter 7. And let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

1 Corinthians chapter 11. We will get back to Romans 7 in just a minute. But let's take a little detour over to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Look down at verse 27.

While you're turning there, we're about to read a terrifying warning from Paul about the Lord's Supper. Everybody look up front.

See the nice looking silver communion trays here. They're laden with the bread and the juice. We're going to pass out in just a little bit. But the Moors work tirelessly on that whenever we have Lord's Supper time.

We appreciate the service they do for the church. 1 Corinthians 11. Paul gives us a terrifying warning about the Lord's Supper. This passage has made me feel like an imposter sometimes.

[7:47] It might have made you feel like an imposter. Maybe you didn't have that word for it. But you sit there in the pew knowing you're about to take communion. Knowing your week was sinful.

Unless you're lying to yourself. Your week was sinful. Just like mine. Maybe your morning before church was sinful. Anybody get in a fight on the way to church this morning? You don't need to raise your hand. It happens.

Sometimes the devil likes to put the squeeze on on Sunday mornings when you're trying to prepare your heart for what God is going to do when gathering with the body of Christ at the church house.

You realize why you might be fooling the other people sitting next to you or sitting near you and they think everything's fine. You know that everything's not always fine. And yet here it comes.

Lord's Supper time. Communion time. What are we going to do? Let's look at 1 Corinthians 11 down in verse 27. So anyone, watch this. Anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily.

[8:48] That's the big scary word. Are you worthy of it? If you eat or drink unworthily, you are guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord Jesus.

Anybody want to sin against the body and blood of Jesus this morning? I don't think so. That scares the fire out of me, right? For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of

Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.

That's terrifying, y'all. And then he goes on to explain it a little further. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some of have even died.

Can you imagine sitting in the room in Corinth when the letter from Paul is being read? And they're looking over at sister so-and-so who's been having some health problems saying, I bet you that's why she's having health problems because she took the Lord's Supper unworthily.

We don't need to fall into that trap. We have no idea why God allows our brothers and sisters in Christ or sometimes us ourselves to go through certain trials. But Paul said this could be one of the reasons.

[10:05] Unworthy. That's a heavy word. God's judgment. That's a scary thought. It's no wonder we can sometimes feel like imposters sitting in the pew getting ready to take the Lord's Supper.

So what does he mean? Does he mean that if I eat this cracker with sin in my life, I'm drinking damnation to my soul? Is that what he means?

Let's go back to it. You're right. It's not what he means. Good job. He's ahead of the game. Romans 7. Let's go back to Romans 7 now. Romans chapter 7. We got down through verse 13.

Let's pick it up now in verse 14. And we're going to go down through 23. We've got two simple truths to take away here. Number one. We will always struggle with sin.

Now, I'm sorry if that's not the news you wanted to hear, but it's the truth. And if we're being honest with ourselves, we probably know that about ourselves. We will always struggle with sin.

[11:13] Sin is a defeated enemy. When you got saved, like the choir sang about, by the way, it's one of my favorite songs. I love that. So, whosoever idea that was, Greg, that was awesome.

Thank you for that. Wonderful song, and they did a great job on it. When you get saved, meaning you're saved from the captivity of sin, you're saved from being bound by sin, and you're saved from the ultimate punishment for sin or consequences of sin.

And God rescues you, brings you into his kingdom. He's, you're one of his children. That's what we're talking about when we say getting saved. And it's only possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So, when that happens, you are freed from sin. You're freed from the bondage of sin. But guess what? Sin is still around you. Right?

We don't have our perfect, glorified bodies that God promises someday that's going to live forever, and we're going to be free from sin, and everything's going to be happy and wonderful forever. We don't have that yet.

[12:16] We're still bound by this flesh. So, sin is all around us, on the outside, and guess what? Sin is still on the inside, too. Because your mind is still sinful.

Your heart, your desires are still sinful. And that's why the Bible says the heart is deceitful, wicked. Nobody can truly understand its desires.

It'll lead you astray. Okay? So, little side note, when the Disney movies say just follow your heart, not the best advice in the world. Okay? Not the best advice.

Follow God changing your heart. It says he wants to capture your heart. Change the way you think. But that's a process. That's a journey over time.

He's going to walk this road with you, and he's going to change you little by little. During that time, you're going to struggle with sin. It's going to happen.

[13:16] Galatians chapter 5 and verse 17, Paul writes about it this way. He says, the spirit and your desires are enemies. They ain't friends. They ain't friends.

They don't get along. The Holy Spirit of God and what you want are not simpatico. They're not working together. They're at odds with each other. They're always fighting each other.

They're keeping you from doing what you feel you should. What the spirit himself reveals to you that you should do.

But your sinful desires get in the way. It's a struggle. Paul paints this as a struggle right here in chapter 7. What does he say in verse 15?

I do not understand what I do. You ever been there? I don't understand what I'm doing right now. I've been there more times than I'd like to admit.

[14:17] He says, the things I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, that's what I do. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

You see, the trouble is not with the law. Back it up in verse 14. The law is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me. I'm all too human. I'm a slave to sin.

I don't really understand myself. I want to do what's right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I'm doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good.

How would you know that what you're doing is wrong if there was no law? If there was no rule, you wouldn't know you were breaking it. So the law was good. It was necessary to show us what was wrong, to show us what was right, to show us what was wrong, to bring us to God.

He says, so I'm not the one doing wrong. Verse 17. It's sin living in me that does it. What does he mean? I'm not the one doing wrong. Is he trying to pass the buck?

[15 : 23] Is he trying to get an escape clause here? He said, well, it's not really me. He can't get mad at me. It was sin. Because he's learned he has a new identity.

The new him is not the one doing this. It's the old flesh. You see, Paul believed in a unique way that God had changed him.

God had made a new Paul. He went so far as to change his name. He went from Saul to Paul. He said, this is a whole new me, y'all.

This is new birth. And the new me is not the one doing these things. It's the sin of the old Saul that's still living with me.

It's a struggle. So this is where you and I live. We struggle with sin. This is the raw reality of the Christian life.

[16 : 24] We try to paint ourselves as good, upstanding, moral, ethical people. Truth is, we all struggle with sin. Often, we all struggle with the same sins.

And then you have this sinful culture because of it, right? But Paul is describing a violent inner civil war. His mind loves God.

God is changing his heart. And the spirit in him loves God and is driving him towards God. But his old life, his old habits, his old sinful flesh keeps pulling him back, dragging him backwards.

And Galatians talks, kind of fleshes this out for us. So Paul realizes he's a walking contradiction. Anybody ever heard church people called hypocrites before?

Yeah. It's because there's a struggle going on. We know what's right. We just don't always live it, you know? It is a contradiction. And we pray for God to continue to change us, to make us less hypocritical, less contradictory.

[17 : 32] And we don't need to paint the picture for others that we're above all that. Be vulnerable. Be transparent. Say, yes, it is a struggle. No, I don't always practice what I preach.

No, I don't always do what I know is right. I will always struggle with sin. But God's helping me.

God's changing me little by little. And the more you're around me, the more you'll see it, right?

So if you feel that way, if you've got sin that you just can't shake, if you've got problems that seem to be weighing you down and you can't seem to just give them over to God, you're in good company. Paul was there too. He lived there. If Paul struggled with that gap between what we know we should be and who we are in Christ and then what we actually do and think and say, and there's a gap there, that struggle doesn't mean you're not a child of God.

That struggle does not mean that you're not a real, genuine follower of Christ. It means you're struggling when you follow. And you go look at the followers of Jesus, those 12 disciples and the others who would travel along with him, you'll see them struggling too.

[18 : 45] It means you're alive and God's working in you. If you didn't care about it, if you weren't bothered by it, that's when you're worried. That's when there's cause for concern.

But when the struggle is going on in your heart, you know that the Holy Spirit is in there saying, no, no, no, no. That's not the real you. That's the old you. Come live this way with me.

Number two. Let's go back to Romans 7. Let's skip down to verse 24. Oh, what a miserable person I am.

Isn't that great? Paul had a way with words, man. What a miserable person I am. Let's back up to verse 23. There's another power within me that is at war with my mind.

This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Now you understand why he's calling himself miserable. Oh, what a miserable person I am. Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

[19 : 49] How many of you love to see your favorite sports teams dominate? How many of you actually get to see your favorite sports teams dominate? It's hard, right? Yeah. Back in the old days

when we were Dallas Cowboys fans, those were fun.

It's been a long time. Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Sin and death is winning down here.

That's what it feels like. Feels like they're everywhere. Feels like the darkness just swallows up the light. But the opposite is true. The light will always pierce the darkness.

That's why that war, that struggle inside us as light bearers, as human torches, as the candles and the candlesticks, as the lamps, as the city on the hill, as the salt of the earth.

There's all these illustrations and examples of what God calls his people and how we're supposed to be different in this world. That's why it's so important, that struggle within us, that we learn to let Jesus win.

[21:00] That we learn to let the Spirit win. That less and less we get pulled back. We're always going to struggle. But you can win more victories than you lose.

You can win more battles than you lose. Jesus already won the ultimate victory. And God does change people. Can we just get a testimony about that?

How many people think through your life, think through those whose testimonies you've heard, whose stories you've heard, and you believe in your heart that God can change people?

Would you just testify that by uplifting hand? You can put your hand down, then God can change you too. He can. If he can change them, he can change you.

And if he can change you once, he can do it again. If he can change you in one area, he can do it again. So point number two is this. Jesus makes us worthy.

[22:03] This brings us right to the climax of this entire passage. The power that makes me a slave to sin is the sin that's still in me.

It's so miserable. Who's going to free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

Everybody look. Every eye down in the Bible, if you would. Verse 25.

Thank God. The answer is in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Who's going to free me? I'm miserable.

I'm being dominated. I'm getting run out of the gym. I'm getting run off the field. I'm losing the battle over and over and over and over again. Who's going to free me?

Who's going to win the victory? Thank God the answer is in Jesus Christ, our Lord. So you see how it is. In my mind, I really want to obey God's law.

[23:03] Because of my sinful nature, I'm a slave to sin. But listen, what did Jesus do? He came to set the captives free. He came to break the chains. He came to end the slavery.

He came to liberate us. He came to free us. That's why all this freedom language is all throughout the Bible. From the Old Testament prophets in Isaiah, all the way up through the New Testament, ultimate prophet of Jesus himself.

Saying, I came to bring freedom. Why? Because you are a slave to sin. It will always be a struggle. But I hold the keys to your chains. I can free you.

And because of that, you're worthy. You're worthy not because of yourself. Not because you freed yourself. Not because you kicked the bad habit. Not because you finally figured out how to make people like you.

Not because you finally figured out the solution to your marriage. Or you figured out some middle ground where you and your kids could live in peace. Not because of any of that. You're free because I freed you.

[24:04] You're not a slave anymore because I came to set the slaves free. So I make you worthy to take the Lord's Supper. I make you worthy to remember me and honor my sacrifice.

Not because of you, but because of me. He shouts the answer. Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And then over in Colossians, Paul writes about it again. He says, the Father, look at this word. I love this. The Father has, what's that highlighted word right there? The Father has qualified you.

Anybody ever felt unqualified? Yeah. Anybody ever felt unqualified to take communion? I have. I was a preacher's kid growing up.

I was in church more nights than I wasn't. Seemed like during the year. Practically lived at the church house. But I knew I was unqualified.

[25:09] The Father qualifies us. Because of the Son. The Father has qualified you to share in his inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of God.

God, you can take communion if you're a child of God. Your heart might be pulled away by the things of the flesh and the world and you're struggling.

God, I failed some battles. But you've got to come in as a humble child of God and say, it's not about me. It's about Jesus. You know what can unqualify you?

What can disqualify you? If you're coming in thinking you're worthy of it. You're coming in thinking you're qualified. I lived a pretty good life this week.

Boy, I've come a long way. I've arrived. You know what Paul said? I've not arrived. I've not been made perfect. I'm not complete. I'm a work in progress.

[26:10] How many of you can testify that you're a work in progress and God's still working on it? Yes. Good. Good. That we're in the same group here. We're in the same boat. All right? And that's what qualifies you for communion.

That's what qualifies you for the inheritance of God. So you might have thought that examining yourself to see if you're worthy means reviewing your week to see if you lived well enough to earn a seat at the Lord's table.

You might have thought that your inner civil war was too messy, too intense. You're losing too many battles. So you let the plate pass you by. You don't want to eat and drink judgment on yourself.

But when we take that warning from 1 Corinthians and we lay it next to the further information Paul gives here in Romans 7, we see it actually means the opposite.

In Romans 7, Paul examines himself. He finds out he is a wretched man. Did you see that? He said, I'm a wretched man. I'm a miserable person.

[27:17] I like that word wretch. You know what it makes me think of? Amazing grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

And that's why we've saved it until now to reveal the title of this sermon to you. If you want to take the Lord's Supper with us in just a moment, if you want to take communion with us in just a moment, you've got to be wretched but welcome.

You've got to recognize you are wretched, but you are absolutely welcome at God's table. I'm thinking of that verse. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound.

Doesn't say it saved a stand-up church member like me. Doesn't say it saved a pillar of the society like me. He said it saved a wretch like me. That's who Jesus came for.

He came to seek and save those who were lost, not those who had it all figured out. What does that word wretch mean? Probably hard to see that, but it says an unfortunate or unhappy person, a despicable or contemptible person.

[28:28] I think at some point, if not all the time, you and I have been unfortunate, unhappy, despicable, contemptible.

If you don't realize or acknowledge that about yourself, you're deceiving yourself. That's what a wretch is. Paul said, I am a wretch.

Trust me. I know what's going on in my heart. I'm not just talking about my past when I was killing Christians and trying to stamp out God's church. When I was Saul working hard against God.

I'm not just talking about that. He said, I'm talking about now. When I don't do the things that I know I should do. And I find myself doing all the things I know I shouldn't do. I'm a wretch. But Jesus makes me worthy.

I can stand before God because of Jesus. Luke chapter 5. Jesus said this. Healthy people don't need a doctor. Sick people do. I have come, Jesus said, not to call those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.

[29:35] I'm not going to have you raise your hands, but how many of you know you're a sinner this morning? How many know there's been sin in your life, in your heart, and you're in need of a Savior? Every day of our lives, child of God or not, we are sinners in need of a Savior.

The only difference is the children of God, they have access to the Father. They have that Savior. He's ready and welcome at any time. The ones who have not yet received Him, they're not the children of God yet.

He's calling them. He's extended the invitation. And that might be some of you this morning. You might be sitting there while God has extended the invitation to you, and He's still calling out to you and saying, come to me.

And you're still thinking, well, I've got to get my life in order. I've got to be faithful to church. I've got to quit cursing. And I've got to quit going out and drinking or whatever my bad habit is.

I've got to clean this up before I can come to Jesus. And He says, no, I need wretches. I need those who don't have it put together. I'm going to help you through the struggle. Your whole life is going to be the struggle.

[30 : 33] But the good news is Jesus wants wretches. Would you bow your heads with me? We come to His table. Not because we're good enough.

But because He's made us worthy. Because He's qualified us. We come to His table.

Not because we earned it this week. But in the middle of our wretchedness, we know where to go for forgiveness. And His sacrifice, His death, His resurrection, His offer for cleansing, for new life, for being made new.

That means so much to us. We've got to pause as a church and honor Him. Remember Him. Say, God, thank you for this. It's everything to me. Your body that was broken for us.

Your blood that was shed for us. It means everything to me. That sacrifice, I couldn't live without it. I couldn't make it with you.