

“Where There’s a Will, There’s a Way?”—Romans 7:21-25

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Where There’s a Will, There’s a Way?”, is Romans 7:21-25 → *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. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

I have had the privilege of growing up in a society of freedom and seemingly endless possibilities. I remember being told that I could be anything I wanted to be when I grow up—even the president of the United States! (Although now I’m not sure why I’d aspire to such a position.) Mantras like, “If you can dream it, you can do it!” . . . “Just believe in yourself!” . . . “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!” have been placed before me as motivational ideals my whole life.

Unfortunately, as I got older I discovered that I couldn’t necessarily accomplish whatever I wanted to do just because I wanted it bad enough. I discovered that there were certain activities in which I was

talented and others that I couldn't do no matter how hard I "willed" them to be done. "Where there's a will, there's a way!" actually turned out to be not true in my everyday living.

This untruth really manifests itself when it comes to obeying the law. When's the last time you had difficulty driving a speed limit of fifty-five? When's the last time you found it difficult to obey that "Do not touch!" sign? The inability to "will" ourselves into specific behavior becomes even more evident when trying to break bad habits and take on better ones. We struggle to follow our own rules! Why is this? Our text tells us.

Our text reveals the apostle Paul being rather "transparent" as he described the struggles with sin and obedience to God's law in his life. It reveals the struggle of every person who desires to follow God's written Word, a struggle within which you can easily fall prey to despair and give up *the good fight of the faith*. (cf. 1 Timothy 6:12) As difficult as this struggle is, it is a good struggle because the struggle itself reveals your relationship with God and your need for faith in Jesus Christ.

The dictionary defines a "catalyst" as *an agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action* (Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10th ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.) While we usually think of such reactions due to mixing chemicals (such as mixing baking soda and vinegar or dropping a Mento into a 2 liter bottle of diet coke), reactions happen on relationship levels daily. Many

children find it difficult to have an objective adult conversation with their parents and wonder why they so easily get frustrated with their parents. Maybe you've witnessed a total change in a person's disposition when a spouse or family member walks into the room. Relationships, laws, situations and even thoughts about God can work as a catalyst to bring out our sinfulness **even if we didn't intentionally "will it" to happen.**

In the context Paul speaks about us rebelling against God's law because our sinful hearts react to it's demands. God's Law is kind of like a catalyst our sinfulness so that we produce rebellion. The situation is so serious that he says, *I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . 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.* (cf. Romans 7:15,18) Could this be why many people express faith in Jesus, claim to be Christians and even feel a desire to follow God's Will, yet produce behaviors which are directly opposed to God's laws contained in His written Word?

Thus, Paul concludes in verses 21-23 of our text: *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.* This sinful condition is so prevalent in human life that many animators have pictured it as the devil

on one shoulder and an angel on another shoulder, each striving to influence the individual to behave in a particular manner. While it would be easy to use such a spiritual battle waging within the heart of every Christian as an excuse for sinning, it is expressed by Paul to admit how utterly helpless he is to bring peace into His life himself. He cannot do it. Thus, his final assessment and question in verse 24 of our text: *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

Do you ever feel this way? Do you feel like the struggle is so overwhelming that you want to throw up your hands and simply give up? Yet, you don't even know how to do that properly? You're not alone. You are presently sitting in the company of not only the apostle Paul but the broken sinners in this place. This is why we begin our worship as "poor, miserable sinners" who "draw near" to God "with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness."

This is essentially Paul's answer to being at the same time a saint and a sinner in verse 25 of our text: *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Thanks? He is thankful in the midst of such a messed up condition? How can he be thankful? Because of God's working in our lives through Jesus Christ our Lord!

According to **God's work** and **His promises** you have been declared righteous, blameless and holy in His sight simply through faith in what

Jesus Christ did for you! Romans 5:19 says that *by the Adam's disobedience you were made sinners* and that *by Christ's obedience you will be made righteous*. To focus on somehow living righteously according to God's Law by some program or discipline of your own will lead you to further despair. The search for peace on your own terms will lead to further realizations of wretchedness. Rather, to trust in the perfect obedience of Jesus to God's Law; to trust in His perfect sacrifice for the payment which your sins deserve; to trust in His resurrection victory over sin, death and the devil for you—leads you to give thanks to God in hope!

Titus 3:4-7 says: *When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* Through faith in Jesus Christ God declares you righteous, not because of what you do or have done but because of what Christ has done for you!

This is why Paul could go on to declare: *So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* (cf. Romans 7:25) In the midst of this struggle with the presence of sinfulness

he still goes forward striving to obey God's commands given in His written Word. He even continues in the next verse: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* (cf. Romans 8:1)

In the midst of the struggle **you need not live in condemnation but in forgiveness!**

So what about the old saying, "Where there's a will, there's a way?" When you look at your relationship with God **totally** on the basis of His will for you in Christ Jesus our Lord, then where there's God's will, there is a way! Hebrews 10 says that *when Christ came into the world, He said to God His Father, "Behold, I have come to do Your will."* . . . *And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all.*** (cf. Hebrews 10:5,9-10) His one act of obedience was for all your sins, for all time!

God willed your redemption in the Person & Work of Jesus . . . **and accomplished it!** God willed your sanctification—that is, being declared holy in His sight and being empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a holy life—in the Person & Work of Jesus . . . **and accomplished it!** You get to live the victorious life in Christ even if it doesn't feel all that victorious many times. Thus, when you find yourself rebelling against God's Law the Holy Spirit will empower you both in repenting of that rebellion and striving to go forward **under God's Will, trusting in the way He has**

**provided in Jesus! Amen.**

*Thanks be to God,*

*Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(1 Corinthians 15:57)

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