



Sermon Growth Guide

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Inner Peace | Romans 6:12-23

April 26, 2026

Key Verse: Romans 7:24-25 “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord”

Big Idea: The fact that there is a war waging within us is not a counsel for despair but an encouragement that the law of God is at war with the law of the flesh within us.

Foundations

Paul has just said that we are dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ (Rom 6:8-9). If this is the case, then why do we still struggle with enslavement to sin? Wouldn't one think that dead to sin means that we no longer deal with sin in our lives? Many have urged us to believe that when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior we die to sin and are alive to Christ; our old sin nature is gone and we are free to grow into the sanctity of new life. Some in the holiness tradition even believe that we can progress into full perfection this side of our physical death and resurrection.

Paul in Romans 7 puts this perfectionism doctrine to rest when he describes what he calls a war (Rom 7:23). His conclusion is that the new believer is both “a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to sin.” With these two forces waging war within us we have a choice to fight it out on our own or throw ourselves onto the mercy of Jesus Christ (Rom 7:25).

Understanding God's Word

Quite a few believers wonder why they still struggle, go to war, with sin if they are now dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ. Many in fact interpret Romans 7 as the “pre-Christian” Paul. Others in our Reformed tradition see Romans 7 as the normal Christian life. The latter is I believe the proper interpretation of these verses.

Applying God's Word

We know that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is alive in us by the very fact that there is a war going on inside of us. If we were still in our sins, there would be no war. Sin would have won. Now, though, we have the Spirit of Christ within us that battles against our sinful nature. Many call this sinful nature our “false self.” That false self is not the true image of Jesus Christ within us. Martin Luther would say to the Devil when he approached him, “Get away from me, I have been baptized!” Luther witnesses that although he has died with Jesus and has been raised with him in baptism, he must choose to live in the new self, the new image of Jesus Christ.

Witnessing God's Word

We witness that in some ways there is no full inner peace this side of our bodily resurrection. We now have the down-payment, the seed, the new image of Jesus in our sinful bodies. This can be our inner peace, that Jesus will win the inner battle as he has already won the outer battle over sin and death.