

I am a Wretched Man

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the book of Romans, chapter 7. Romans chapter 7. We're going to read verses 7 through 25.

! Romans 7, 7. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not. Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law, for I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, do not covet.

But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.

Once I was alive apart from law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

[1 : 20] Did that which is good then become death to me? By no means. But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.

We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do.

And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

I know that nothing good lives in me that is in my sinful nature, for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do.

No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

[2 : 38] So I find this law at work. When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being, I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

So then I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature, a slave to the law of sin.

Well, let's hear what Jesus has to say to us. In our present series on the Christian's identity, we're simply coming to the Bible to have God remind us of who we are.

Because according to God, knowing our identity affects how we live. So far we've seen, I'm a human being, a descendant of Adam.

[3 : 59] I'm chosen by God. I am in Christ. I'm a new creation. I'm a believer, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I'm a Christian. I'm a temple of the living God who dwells within me. I'm a sheep in Jesus' fold who watches over me.

And then most recently, from Romans chapter 6, we saw that I am a freed slave of sin. No longer in bondage to sin.

But that I am now a slave of Jesus Christ. Now today we move on into Romans chapter 7. And in verse 24, we learn, I am a wretched man.

Paul says, what a wretched man I am. Now isn't that just the shot in the arm that you needed this morning? You've just come through another difficult week trying to get back into the routine of

things.

[5 : 08] You're probably more tired than you are because of all the lack of sleep. And only to come to church and to have your pastor tell you, you're a wretched man. You're a wretched woman. Thank you, pastor.

I needed that. Well, I know you did. So you're welcome. You're not like those who gather around them a great number of teachers to tell them what their itching ears want to hear. But you're here because you want God to tell you from his word what you need to hear. Amen. And I'm very aware of that.

And according to God, we need to understand this part of our present identity. That though we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, we still have reason to say with the Apostle Paul, I am a wretched man.

Now, this is clearly something God wants us to know about ourselves. It's here in Scripture for our edification, for our building up.

[6 : 16] It's profitable. It's good. It's helpful for us. So let's dig in and see what God has to say to us. Just a few things by way of introduction.

First of all, let's realize that this is an identity statement. I am a wretched man is as much an identity statement as these other identities that Paul has been talking about.

I am a slave of Jesus Christ. I'm a temple of the living God. I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. Now, to be sure, wretched man is not all that I am.

Yet, nonetheless, it is part of our identity and something important for me to know about myself. And then, let's be clear, this is not Paul telling us about himself before he was saved.

I was a wretched man. We have that kind of statement in John Newton's famous hymn, don't we? Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

[7 : 26] A wretch like me. What's he saying? He's saying, before I was saved, I was a wretch and God in grace came and saved me.

Wretched, immoral, blaspheming, sailor that I was, slave trader that I was. I once was lost, but now I'm found.

I was blind, but now I see. He's speaking of his past wretchedness, isn't he? But that's not what Paul's talking about here. Earlier on in Romans 7, he does talk about his past life, his BC life, but now he's speaking as a Christian, one who has been found by grace, one who now does see and yet is still wretched.

Now that should grab our attention. That should make us sit up. What is this wretchedness? That the Christian, Paul, Paul, after his conversion, after he's been born again and received a new heart, fully justified, totally forgiven, with the Holy Spirit living in him, Paul is teaching us something about his present identity as a new man in Christ.

And he doesn't say, what a wretched man I was, but what a wretched man I am. And this is no half-baked professing Christian speaking to us, is it?

[8 : 59] It's somebody that's happy just to have a form of religion, just the outward trappings, but lacks the power of godliness.

No, this is one of the greatest Christians ever to live the Christian life. And he tells us, I am a wretched man. And that's not feigned humility.

He's not putting on errors to try to make us think how humble he is. This is the heart-wrenching cry of one who wishes it were otherwise, but finds by sad experience that this is the truth about himself. Oh, what a wretched man I am. Furthermore, this identity is not something unique to the apostle, but it's true of us all who are in Christ.

It is a genuine and a universal statement, identity statement, of all true Christians. So we come, then, to this identity statement explained, and we're going to let Paul tell us in his own words and explain it to us.

[10 : 07] What do you mean you're a wretched man, Paul? We'll look first at the word itself, and then we'll look at the surrounding context where he gives the reasons for using this of himself.

First of all, the word, the Greek word here for wretched means to be miserable, to be distressed, afflicted. It's a strong word.

In fact, it's so strong that many people have taken it out of Newton's hymn, Amazing Grace, that saved a wretch like me. They don't like wretched. It's too strong. So it is a strong word.

It speaks of a miserable condition that one is in. And it's only used twice in the entire New Testament. In our text here, in Romans 7, 24, by the apostle Paul. But then again, in Revelations 3, 17, by our Lord Jesus in his letter to the church at Laodicea. Interestingly enough, Jesus uses it there to correct an identity problem, pointing out the vast difference between what this church thought of themselves and what Jesus knew them to be. [11:23] He said, you say, I am rich. I have acquired wealth. I don't need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, naked.

And as he heaps up words, we get a sense of the misery of these people. What it means to be wretched is to be in a miserable state, a state to be pitied because of such distress that they are in. So that's the word that Paul uses to identify himself. What a wretched, miserable man I am. Now why? Why this word?

What is it that makes him wretched? And he explains his pitiful condition to us in these verses that precede his use of it. I've broken it down into three points, but it's really just one thing that's distressing him.

It's indwelling sin. The flesh, another term for it, which the NIV, I think, poorly translates sinful nature.

[12:35] It's the flesh. It's not so much the outward sin, the deed done, but it's rather this inward, active law or principle that's operative on his inner being.

That's his problem. That's what makes him a wretched man. Puts him in a wretched condition. He's wretched because of indwelling sin.

Now, the three points. First of all, because of its constant conflict. Notice where the enemy is found. This enemy is found inside him.

He complains in verse 20 of sin living in me. That's where we get this idea of indwelling sin. Where is this sin that he's complaining? It's inside of him.

It lives in there. And that's what makes it so treacherous. We have a traitor within the very control center of our personality. And it's not just sitting there inactively, minding its own business.

[13:39] No, it's powerfully active and working its evil. Exerting its evil power and pressures, its temptations, its evil desires and will to sin.

And it opposes anything holy. It sets itself against every holy thought, every holy desire, every holy intention, plan, choice, decision that we could make.

There is this indwelling sin, active fighting against it. If God's for it, indwelling sin is against it. It desires what is contrary to the spirit.

And so Paul says in verse 21, I find this law at work. That when I want to do good, evil is right there within me. And so Paul says and it's as much against the good as God is for it.

Always there, always resisting every good intention for verse 22 in my inner being, I delight in God's law.

[14:50] Now, no unconverted person can say that. This is a, this is a new man, Paul, with a new mind, a new heart. It's this new heart given at the new birth that delights in God's law.

We heard about it in Sunday school. By nature, we don't love God's law. We hate it. And we refuse to submit to it. But this is the newborn Paul with newborn desires that delight in God's law.

And his new mind affirms that this law is holy, it's righteous, and it's good. This is his new heart, his new mind, and his new affections and will.

They're all in agreement with what God's word says and commands. So does God say, seek my face? My heart says, your face, Lord, I will seek.

God's law then finds an inner echo in the heart of his child. a matching desire in the renewed heart to match the outward command of his law.

[16:01] So God, so Paul wants to do what God commands. That's his new nature. But that's not the only desire and thought that Paul finds inside.

He goes on to say in verse 23, but I see another law, another principle that's at work in the members of my body. Not just my new nature, my renewed mind and heart and affections and will, but another living principle at work and it's waging war against the law of my renewed mind and it makes me a prisoner of the law of sin at work in my members.

So there's this other part of me that still loves sin, that still finds temptation appealing and desirable and that hates God's law and finds it unacceptable, totally unacceptable and these two can never get along.

Think of that. Think of being married to someone who everything you're for, they're against. that's what's going on inside of Paul.

This constant conflict. My renewed heart and indwelling sin are opposites and are never at peace. [17:26] It's a conflict so heated that Paul compares it to warfare. We often dramatize and glorify war but some who have been there know differently it's ugly.

It's a horrible thing and that's what Paul has found going on in his heart and that's what makes him say I'm a wretched man.

If I'm ever going to do the good and the right there's going to be a battle with the flesh. It's going to mean that there are sinful thoughts and desires that I must kill. I must trample on them.

The resistance is so strong from this traitor within that there's not a step of progress in holiness without it being upon the necks of indwelling sin.

It's thoughts. It's desires. So your renewed heart wants to pray. I know it does. So I have one too. And I'm commanded to pray and I need to pray and I know that and I want that.

[18:43] And so do you dear Christian. But as you consider it you suddenly remember two other things that you need to get done. and they crowd your mind and your thoughts and soon there's four things to do and it's anything but pray that's crowding your mind.

But if you soldier on and begin you find it's almost impossible to continue as your thoughts go hither and yon distracting you with thoughts and cares of life that press in even trifles insignificant things little things so that if you are to pray dear child of God it will mean all out warfare the serious work of killing those distracting thoughts and competing desires how rarely is prayer uninterrupted by indwelling sin or you're mistreated by someone somebody did you wrong and it stings you and it hurts you and you're offended but your renewed heart wants to overlook an offense you know that it's to a man's glory to overlook an offense because that's what the renewed heart wants to do to not harbor malice and revenge but try as you might your mind just keeps bringing up the offense and you replay it over and over and over again what she did what he said so if you're going to forgive as the Lord forgave you you're going to have to kill those thoughts you're going to have to wage war against those feelings and desires and it's the same with all the other commands of scripture all of our other duties we're to control our tongues to control our eyes our appetites our minds we're to be content we're to be unselfish to consider others better than ourselves we're to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness we're to love our enemies we're to go the second mile we're to be patient and each step of progress in holiness will be on the neck of sins opposing thoughts and desires irreconcilable war between indwelling sin and the good inward desires of the new man and it's this constant conflict that is so exhausting and so discouraging why does doing good have to be so hard

Paul's tired of it he wants to be free from this struggle and that struggle and that constant conflict rings from the battlefield a cry from Paul's heart oh what a wretched man I am but it's not just the constant conflict that distresses him it's more than that it's secondly also the it's spoiling effects it's spoiling effects because indwelling sin not only is constantly hassling me it is actually keeping me from doing what I want to do it causes me to do things that that I don't want to do that I even hate and this is a form of bondage that I want to be free from I wish it were otherwise it's against my better will it's against my renewed nature he tells us about it in verses 18b through 20 for I have the desire renewed heart to do what is good but I cannot carry it out for what

I do is not the good I want to do no the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing and so he traces it all right back to the source why is this it is sin that is living within me indwelling sin that does it so so here's his distressing frustration here's his wretchedness he's unable to produce what his renewed heart wants to do it's the frustration of unfulfilled desire isn't that often what causes us distress in life that we have a desire but we can't reach it in anything so much more so in the Christian's life we have these renewed desires but we can't reach them not yet he's talking now about his actual performance that he's always falling short of his newborn desire and all because of this indwelling sin that keeps pulling him down he says in

Galatians chapter 5 and verse 17 for the flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit so I have the spirit of God in me and he's pulling me this way but I've also got indwelling sin the flesh in me and it's pulling me in a way that's contrary to the spirit they are in conflict with each other Galatians 5 17 such conflict that I quote so that you do not do what you want you see he's talking now about the effect the results of this constant conflict the result is you don't do what you want to do and what the believer wants to do is to love and please God perfectly to not sin at all against the God that we love

that's the desire born within us in the new birth the desire of the new heart for which we were made and recreated in Christ Jesus but not only does the flesh within put up a fight it actually hinders us from ever in this life loving and pleasing

[25 : 05] God perfectly so that even our best deeds have something to be repented of our best obedience come short of the perfection that we owe and that we desire and that we were made to give to this God for I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out do you sense the frustration unfulfilled!

desires of the new heart and its and its indwelling sin that is keeping him from carrying out those desires its like you're wanting to and trying to draw a straight line but as you do and that's your life as you're living you're wanting to walk the straight narrow you're wanting to draw a straight line! but as you're drawing indwelling sin is constantly bumping you so that the result is that you've got a line with squiggles in it.

All of our obedience, all of our good works have these defects and imperfections of sin. Now these imperfect good works are works that God the Father receives with joy and gladness when we do them unto Him.

We do them by faith in Jesus Christ and for the sake of His Son and His blood. He delights in those good deeds even though they are not perfect. But it is terribly frustrating to the Christian to have the flesh constantly hindering every motion of my renewed heart so that my accomplishment comes so far short of what I desire.

[26 : 49] John Newton found indwelling sin to be his worst enemy. Indeed, Newton himself, who wrote Amazing Grace that saved a wretch like me, will also complain that he's still a wretch on this side with the Apostle Paul.

Indwelling sin, his worst enemy, with as many lives as a cat, he says, can't wipe it out. It just keeps hopping back up on his feet. And so as a mature minister, he writes this about his indwelling sin with him.

It is more than 25 years since I hoped it was nailed fast to the cross. But alas, it is alive still, mixing with and spoiling everything I do.

That's the sad effects of indwelling sin. It mixes with and spoils everything I do. Like a contaminated jar or container.

That everything you put into it and then drink from it or pour out from it, it bears the contamination of the vessel. Or like a bird that has a weight tied to its foot.

[28 : 05] It's ever exerting that downward pull. So yes, the bird flies. But not like it would without that weight. It would love to soar effortlessly on wings as eagles.

But it's got this weight and so it's hard business getting off the ground and staying up. The down drag of our indwelling sin.

We're never in this life free from it. And because of this, we cry out, oh, wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this?

But there's a third cause of Paul's wretchedness and our wretchedness. Not only the constant conflict, not only that it spoils our results and our accomplishments the way we perform and live the Christian life, but thirdly, it's relentless refusal.

Indwelling sin never improves and it never leaves. It refuses to leave. First, it never improves. Paul says to us in verse 18, I know that nothing good lives in me.

[29 : 22] Now, he immediately qualifies that. He must. Because he's a Christian and he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. The good spirit. And so he can't just put a period there.

I know that nothing good dwells in me. He'd be lying. He also has a new heart. That's good. New desires, new thoughts, new will. So he immediately qualifies what he says.

Verse 18, I know that nothing good lives in me that is in my flesh, in my indwelling sin. As for that part of me, that indwelling sin within, it's pure evil.

There's not a good thing about it to be said. And this is Paul after being a Christian for 25 years. And though he's grown as a Christian and he's progressed in holiness, his flesh, his indwelling sin, has not made an iota of improvement.

It's still as rotten and filthy and corrupt as it was on the day on the road to Damascus. Still just as dead set against anything that God is for.

[30 : 41] It never improves. And that's one cause for distress, but it is especially because of its relentless refusal to leave. In other words, it doesn't belong there.

This is the temple of the living God. What's indwelling sin doing in there? Doesn't belong there. It's worn out its welcome long ago.

Paul would like it to be gone, but it refuses to leave and he can't get rid of it. It's like what Dr. Bob Martin said, like an unwelcome boarder.

Talking about a tenant. You rent out a room in your house to this tenant and they prove to be an unwelcome guest. Disagreeing with all of your house rules, whatever you're for, they're against. Always arguing with you. Constant friction. Leaving their dirty dishes in the sink, their dirty clothes lying around the house. And you ask them to leave, but they refuse.

[31 : 45] You tell them to leave and they refuse. And you can't kick them out. Indwelling sin is that tenant, that unwelcome tenant that refuses to leave.

It's lived with you all of your life since the day of your birth. It's been in there. In fact, before your new birth, it used to be the master of the house.

It called the shots. It had its way with you. And whatever it said, you did. And when it said jump, you jumped. And it had you with a hook between your nose and it led you about wherever it wanted.

It had its way. It ruled. It reigned over you. That's what Paul's been telling us in Romans chapter 6. That we were slaves to indwelling sin. It was our master.

And we yielded obedience to it. Oh, but what did Paul tell us in Romans 6? Christ has dethroned it. Christ has come to our hearts by his spirit.

[32 : 45] And he's kicked sin off the throne. It is no longer ruling. It has no power to reign over the Christian. He set us free from its ruling power.

But it still hangs around. It still works its evil, hindering, spoiling, trying to reassert its rule.

Trying to bring you back under its mastery to frustrate every holy desire in your new nature. And Paul wants him gone. But he refuses to leave.

And Paul has no power to kick him out. And that's what squeezes this distressing cry out of him.

What a wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from the body of this death?

He longs for deliverance, but cries, I can't do it. Who will? Now we'll consider the answer next week, Lord willing. But for now, a few closing applicatory thoughts.

[33 : 53] Do you understand this part of your identity as a Christian? What a wretched man I am because of indwelling sin's presence and present work.

It's constant conflict. it's spoiling effects on all I do and it's relentless refusal to leave. Now, to be sure, Paul is sounding a missing note in the choir of the church today.

Most of Christianity today is far too chipper and upbeat to take to themselves this identity of Romans 7, 24. In fact, as I thought of it, what if the Apostle Paul would come back in our churches today and preach Romans 7 to the churches?

And he got in the pulpit and he said, what a wretched man that I am. And if you're in Christ, you too are a wretched man, a wretched woman. People would wonder, what's wrong with that guy?

Somebody needs to correct him. Give him a book on the happy Christian, right? David Murray. We had a good series on that. We'd tell him to cheer up, to chill out.

[35 : 16] This guy needs to get a book about joy. Now wait, this is the Apostle Paul. Didn't he write a pretty good book about joy? I think it's called Philippians.

About a joy that he had that could exist right alongside a desperate, wretched condition?

That even a wretched condition could not steal this joy? Yes, this is Paul. He knows all about happiness and joy in the Christian life, but there's still this identity that is also true.

And the church finds no room in their theology or experience for anything like this or for little like it at least and has a hard time identifying with the Holy Apostle.

But let's be honest with ourselves, brothers and sisters. Does this not explain your experience as a Christian? or do you actually accomplish all that your renewed desires want to accomplish?

[36 : 33] Paul didn't. I don't. And neither do you. And do those shortcomings of sin, do they bother you and cause you distress and misery?

Don't you regard indwelling sin as your greatest problem in the Christian life? We got financial health problems, relational problems, all these problems. But don't you consider indwelling sin your greatest problem in the Christian life?

Is it not your greatest grief in life that you still sin against the Lord Jesus that loved you and gave himself for you? You have no trouble, I'm sure, understanding Paul's words, what a wretched man I am.

Expresses your feeling perfectly. Expresses your condition exactly. God is such a being of holiness, goodness, and love that I ought to love him with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength and all my mind all the time.

and that's what my renewed heart wants to do. I want to love him that way. But my indwelling sin keeps me from doing so entirely and perfectly wretched man that I am not to love the lovely God all the time with all my heart.

[38 : 10] Someone filled in the cry of Paul and his wretched condition this way, Dear Lord, and shall I ever live at this poor dying rate? My love to thee so cold and thine to me so great.

Wretched man that I am. It's the unfulfilled desires, the frustrating reality that I cannot achieve what I want. I want to love God with all that I am all the time.

and he's my master. He's bought me with the blood of Christ. I owe him all my obedience, perfect obedience, wholehearted obedience.

I want to serve him as he deserves and as I was originally made to do perfectly without any sin. But there's this battle and I can't reach that.

And that bugs me. It more than bugs me. It distresses me. Oh, what a wretched man I am. And I want to praise this God. He is so praiseworthy.

[39 : 17] Our hymnal. Lord, with glowing heart I praise thee. How do you want to praise him? With a glowing heart. A warm heart.

Why? For the bliss that thy love bestows. For the pardoning grace that saves me. For the peace that from it flows. But Lord, if you don't come and help this week endeavor, if you don't raise this dull soul to rapture, it won't happen.

You must light the flame or never, never can my love be warmed to praise. Now, what's with that? He is praiseworthy.

Unless he works and operates on my heart this morning as I sit here and take my hymnal to sing his praise, it's not going to happen. I might sing tenor, but I won't sing with a glowing heart of love.

When it's the only rational thing that should be happening. Praise my soul, the king of heaven. to his feet thy tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.

[40 : 32] Who like me is praise should sing? But it won't happen unless he comes with present grace and stirs my... What's with that?

Oh, wretched man that I am. And then there's this backwardness to pray that we just spoke about. What's with that?

Thomas Shepard was a godly minister. He was the founding pastor or the founding president of Harvard University, a school that began for the training of men for the ministry. And Shepard said, there are days I'd rather die than pray.

And I know that you feel that way too. Backwardness to pray to such a kind heavenly father who loves me, who delights to give good gifts to his children, who gave his one and only son that my sins might be forgiven, that the wrath that I would have been enduring forever and hell might fall on him, that I might enjoy God's favor and love forever.

That he welcomes me to come and pour out my heart to him, to tell out my troubles to him. And I would have trouble talking to him.

[42 : 02] What's with that? Oh, this indwelling sin. What a, what a wretched man I am. And why is it so difficult to forgive others who've offended me when I have been forgiven so much by Jesus Christ and I'm sinning against him every day in thought, word, in deed, in motive.

And he just keeps forgiving me, forgiving me. But if somebody else does me wrong, oh, I have a hard time with that.

What's with that? Oh, wretched man that I am. And why am I such an ingrate that I would find it easier to complain than to give thanks?

Me, whose every meal is mercy and every breath is grace, who every day is pursued by God's goodness and mercy, and then heaven forever.

And I find it easier to complain than to give thanks. Oh, wretched man that I am. That I would not always trust him who is completely trustworthy.

[43 : 22] trustworthy. He's always been faithful to me. Perfectly faithful. And faithful to his word. We just sang it this morning.

He whose word cannot be broken. That's this faithful Lord. And still I worry and doubt his word. And doubt his promise. And have a hard time taking him at his word.

Not really sure that he'll do what he says with me. What's with that? Oh, wretched man that I am. And when I come and sit before his word, this is God speaking to me. The living God, the God that made me, the God that saved me through Jesus Christ, the God I will stand before in the day of judgment.

He's speaking to me. Whether I'm at home in my personal devotions or in the public worship where it's read and preached, God is speaking to me. And I have trouble paying attention to him.

[44 : 28] And I get tired and drowsy and my thoughts go here and there. Do you know if I treated you in conversation the way I sometimes treat God when he's speaking to me, you know what it would look like?

So here we are and we're talking and I talk to you and then you start talking to me and I just start walking over here and I just start fiddling around with a plant.

You're talking to me. That's offensive to turn one's back and walk away while someone's talking and yet I do that with God when he speaks to me through his holy word.

What's with that? Oh, wretched man that I am, that such should ever be true of me. So this passage on indwelling sin explains my life perfectly.

It expresses my feeling of distress that there should be such shortcomings and defects and mixtures of sin in all that I do. That I should love him no more than I do.

[45 : 35] That I should serve him and worship him no more gladly than I do. That I should not seek his glory more zealously or trust him more fully or obey him more consistently.

I have no trouble taking Paul's identity statement to myself. When I see all of that I say yes. What a wretched condition to be in.

Now some professing Christians come to Romans 7 and Paul's words here and they go away feeling better about their sins.

It's this careless cavalier attitude that's they who think of sin but lightly nor suppose the evil great. I mean it can't be that big of a deal look everybody does it even the apostle Paul.

Didn't he just tell us that what I do is not the good I want to do. No the evil that I don't want to do this I keep on doing. So our shortcoming these sinful things no big deal.

[46 : 34] People will always pervert the word of God to their own destruction. No big deal. This was Paul's heaviest burden.

This was the reason he cries out oh wretched man that I am. who will deliver me who will rescue me from this condition.

Now he's going to answer his own question. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Though indwelling sin is a part of our identity here and now and it's a come accompanying wretchedness is part of our identity here and now it will not always be so.

Rescue is on the way through Jesus Christ our Lord because what he has done has secured the total obliteration of all our indwelling sin.

And the end of indwelling sin will be the end of our present wretchedness. There's a day coming. This will not be part of the Christian's identity.

[47 : 56] And it's all because of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Now next week we'll see more of the positive applications then of our identity as wretched and why it's important for us to know that.

Why is it important for us to know this aspect of the Christian life? Remember the way we think about ourselves affects our living according to God.

That's why identity is such an important theme in the scriptures and he tells us here of our identity.

Why is it so important to know that this wretchedness is a part of the normal Christian I said it and I'll explain it next week the normal Christian life here and now.

Why? Because it delivers us from chasing after many false teachings and many wrong expectations about the Christian life. it will keep us from trusting in anything of our own performance because we come to realize that they're all shot through and spoiled and mixed with sin.

There's nothing here to trust my salvation to. It will point all of our faith onto Jesus Christ his perfect obedience his perfect love for the father his perfect love for neighbor.

[49 : 12] Oh what a what a blessed result of this wretchedness to point me to Christ it will urge me to constant watchfulness in prayer against this constant enemy within that makes me thankful for the help of the Holy Spirit who fights against this enemy with me.

I don't fight alone and it focuses our hope and oh this is a precious theme of scripture it focuses our hope on the grace to be given us when Jesus Christ is revealed and when seeing him as he is we are made like him without any indwelling sin without any wretchedness forever and ever and ever. That's our hope that's our expectation and that's enough to raise a joyous cry of thanksgiving to God in the midst of the battle in the midst of the wretchedness rescue is coming thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord hallelujah what a savior don't you love him let's sing to him let's tell him we love him number 547 547 let this be our response to the truth that we've heard my Jesus I love thee sing it directly to him even as it's written number 547 let's stand as we sing let's pray holy father thank you for your word for its honesty its truthfulness it's saying things that we might not even like to hear we might not understand but we thank you that it's truth and that when we do come to understand it we find it exactly suits us in our present condition but how thankful we are that out of love you sent your one and only son to die for us and to purchase for us a redemption a salvation that is so great that it will not only free us from the penalty the endless penalty of our sin and its bondage and rule over us all of our life but it will one day free us from the actual presence of sin and no more will there be this inward fight thank you Lord for loving us first thank you for all that your patience and grace puts up with us in this part of our Christian experience that is life and thank you that one day when we see you it will be endless joy and we'll worship you with unsinning heart and praise and love you as we were made to and for all eternity now receive our thanks our trust our love and our plea to help us and to forgive us and strengthen us and to keep our hope set firmly upon that rescue that Jesus Christ is bringing us we pray in his name amen amen amen