

Rev. Janet Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
September 5, 2021 – Communion Sunday  
Scripture Lesson: Romans: 7:14-25

## **Sermon: The Battle We Face**

Billy Graham once told this story: “Two teenage siblings asked their father for money to go see a movie with their friends. Knowing the content of the movie was inappropriate, the father told them they couldn’t go. The teens debated their position: there were only a few curse words and one minor immoral scene, but the rest of the movie was wonderful. The father still refused.

Sulking, they retreated to their rooms until they were called for supper. When it came time for dessert, their mother set a pan of freshly baked brownies on the table. The father cut large squares for his children and said, ‘Your mother has made your favorite dessert, but there is one thing you should know before you eat it. I had her mix in some manure.’

‘How could you?’ they moaned.

‘Oh, it’s just a little bit,’ the father answered. ‘Enjoy!’

Needless to say, the entire pan of brownies was thrown out.

Even a little sin is enough to corrupt. So don’t mix it in.”

Sin is ugly and smelly and it corrupts our lives, our country and our world. During WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, and today as we remember the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 9/11 we know we are in a battle against evil. We are facing a battle. Can you see the battles we face personally, as well as a country, and in our world?

We can see everyday on the news the battle in many countries for people’s lives. Hundreds of people wanting to get on a transport plane in Afghanistan so they and their families wouldn’t have to live everyday facing the evil acts of the Taliban and other terrorist groups. The horrific acts that people can do to each other is not of God, it is of Satan. Satan is active in our world, and hatred and evil are what we fight against. We

face a Spiritual Battle everyday. The battle for souls. The battle of good verses evil. It isn't a movie we are watching; this is real life and we are seeing what happens when people follow Satan instead of our loving and forgiving God. There are some faiths that believe doing evil acts gets them to heaven. They believe in a god of war and power.

Remember Jesus came not with abusive power but in servanthood.

The battle begins when internal sin meets the Law of God that is written on our hearts. As believers in Christ we need to realize we are in a war with our own sin and sin in the world. As believers we are called to be in the world but not of the world, and this is a difficult battle each day.

Even the Apostle Paul says in Romans 7, "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For 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. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing."

Just like the battle of good versus evil in the world will continue until the end of time so it is with the battle within us. The Spirit that dwells within us when we accept Jesus as our Savior will battle the sin in our lives for the rest of our lives.

A person that has not accepted Jesus and follows him does not have this battle because they do not have opposing forces residing in them. When the Law of right and wrong inside us meets the sin inside us, the war begins. The Spirit filled believer, greatly values and honors all the moral and spiritual commandments of God.

Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you."

Paul is saying in this passage that he takes two steps forward in his faith and one step back. He knows what he should do and wants to do it but often he doesn't. At the same time, he knows what he shouldn't do and finds that it's those things he does. He doesn't understand why except to say that it is sin at work.

Did you ever feel like Paul? Two steps forward in your faith and then something happens and you take a step back.

It is true for all believers, but the important thing is to realize what is happening in your Christian walk and the struggles you are facing. Are you a slave to sin? Does sin have control over your life or does God?

Paul writes in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Paul explains that the Law of God, his commandments, are good. It is written on our hearts to give us direction and to help us know our limits, our boundaries, and to know right from wrong in a world that tells us wrong is right.

As believers we should desire very strongly to obey God's will and commands and follow Him as we live our life for Christ. We must be cautious and resist sin's subtle whispers.

Max Lucado, pastor and author, writes in his book, ***In the Grip of Grace*** (p 100-101), "Think of it this way. Sin put you in prison. Sin locked you behind the bars of guilt and shame and deception and fear. Sin did nothing but shackle you to the wall of misery. Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time; he satisfied the penalty and set you free. Christ died, and when you cast your lot with him, your old self died too.

The only way to be set free from the prison of sin is to serve its penalty. In this case, the penalty is death. Someone has to die, either you or a heaven-sent substitute. You cannot leave prison unless there is a death. But that death has occurred at Calvary. And when Jesus died, you died to sin's claim on your life. You are free. Christ has taken your place. There is no need for you to remain in the cell. Ever heard of a discharged prisoner who wanted to stay? When the doors open, prisoners leave. The thought of a person preferring jail over freedom doesn't compute. Once the penalty is paid, why live under bondage? You are discharged from the penitentiary of sin. Why, in heaven's name, would you ever want to set foot in that prison again?"

But you know, people do. We return to our old ways and sin again and again. The world keeps on sinning. The message of Jesus doesn't take hold in people's hearts. The world keeps promoting hate, and violence takes control of our cities, our families, and many countries around the world. How different the love of Jesus looks! How different our lives can be with Jesus freeing us from sin, putting others first in your life.

Paul reminds us in Romans 6:6-7, "Our old life died with Christ on the cross so that our sinful selves would have no power over us and we would not be slaves to sin. Anyone who has died is made free from sin's control."

In Brazil there is a remarkable facility. Over forty years ago the Brazilian government turned a prison over to two Christians and the plan was to run it on Christian principles. With the exception of two fulltime staff, all the work was done by inmates. Families outside the prison adopted an inmate to work with during and after his term.

Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, visited this facility and this is what he wrote:

"When I visited Humaita I found the inmates smiling—particularly the murderer who held the keys, opened the gates and let me in. Wherever I walked I saw men at peace. I saw clean living areas, people working industriously. The walls were decorated with Biblical sayings from the Psalms and Proverbs... My guide escorted me to the notorious prison cell once used for torture. Today, he told me, that block houses only a single inmate. As we reached the end of a long concrete corridor and he put the key in the lock, he paused and asked, "Are you sure you want to go in?" "Of course," I replied impatiently. "I've been in isolation cells all over the world." Slowly he swung open the massive door, and I saw the prisoner in the punishment cell: a crucifix, beautifully carved by the inmates—the prisoner Jesus, hanging on a cross.

"He's doing time for the rest of us," my guide said softly."

As we come to the Lord's Table today, know that Jesus paid the price to free you from the sin of this world that binds us, and holds us back from being all that we can be.

If we are going to face the battle of this world we must look to Jesus Christ for our strength.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Remember you are saved and forgiven of your sins, not because of what you do, but because of what Jesus Christ did to free us forever.

Let us come to the Lord's Table knowing we are forgiven and made into new creations. Also come to the Lord's Table today praying for the world and all the people that are still imprisoned in their sin.