

**This is the Day the Lord has made, let s rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.**

<sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do.  
<sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> 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.  
<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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.  
<sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?  
<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! **This is God’s Word.**

**Dear friends,**

Have you ever seen one of these cartoons or maybe even a TV show where one of the characters is trying to make a decision and they have a little good angel sitting on one shoulder and a little devil sitting on the other shoulder and each one is trying to give the main character advice. The little angel says, “Don’t do it – you’ll regret it” and the little devil says, “Go on. It’ll make you feel better.”

That picture of opposing wills is what Paul is talking about in our text. Only he’s not talking about a little angel and a little devil, something outside of us, that sit on our shoulder and talk to us. Rather, he is talking about a battle within us. A battle between the new person of faith and our old sinful nature. As we consider these words of Paul then we want to look at the **“War that is within us.”** The Apostle Paul will help us to see, **“What that War is,”** and then **“How is it Resolved.”**

**I.** Have you ever thought, “Now that I am a Christian, everything will be good. I can follow God’s will and I won’t be as sinful as other people, especially unbelievers?” But then you run into problems and you do things you know are wrong, but you just can’t help yourself and you get frustrated because you want to live a Christian life and be perfect but it is hard to do. Sometimes life, as a Christian, can get pretty frustrating. I wonder if Paul was frustrated when He wrote, **“I don’t understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, that I do.”** Paul knew what was right. He knew what was God-pleasing and as a Child of God, that’s what he wanted to do, but he wasn’t always able to do them.

I’m sure when Paul was brought to faith he thought things would be different and they were! But he still had those old sinful desires and at times he followed those temptations instead of God and that is what was bothering Paul. His big question in this portion of scripture is, “Why do I do what I don’t want to do?”

He follows this up by telling us, “When I’m doing all this stuff I don’t want to do, God’s Law is Good!” It’s good, because it shows me how I have failed to follow God’s Word. It’s good

because it shows me how I need a Savior. We all recognize that we have the same need. We too, fail to follow God's Word and it is God's Law that shows us our need of a Savior also. But why do we keep on sinning?

Paul helps us with that question. In verse 17 he says, **“As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.”** We have what you might call, “an unwelcome squatter,” living in us. It is like having a bad roommate that you just can't get rid of. A roommate that wants to do all the things you know are wrong and wants you to do them with him. That roommate causes you all kinds of problems and is what we might think of as a “roommate from hell,” but more realistically it is a roommate that is trying to lead us to hell. That is what our sinful nature is like. It is always there and we can't get rid of it completely this side of heaven.

Not only do we have our sinful nature, but Paul also says, **“When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.”** That evil comes in the form of Satan prowling around like a roaring lion looking to devour us. When we try to do good, Satan is right there trying to convince us to do something else.

And if that isn't enough, we have the influence of friends and co-workers and society in general trying to make us a slave to sin. Influencing us to follow humanistic logic rather than God's Word. That's what brings about that war within us. That struggle that we have every day to do what is good and God-pleasing.

Paul describes that struggle in verse 23 where he wrote, **“but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind.”** The other law at work is the law of the world and the influence of our sinful flesh – the law of sin. The law of my mind is God's Law and so the struggle I have is which one do I follow? The answer seems so easy, but it is so hard to follow unless we realize our condition.

When we look at ourselves and our condition we would like to say. “I'm a beautiful person. I'm a good person. I'm not so bad. People like me.” But Paul points out our real condition. We're not so beautiful. Sin makes us somewhat ugly. Paul says, **“What a wretched man I am!”** We are worse than ugly, sin makes us like a rotting corpse. That is the real picture of what sin does to us and sin likes to dwell in us and continue the decay. Satan wants to keep us dead in our sins like this corpse and that is certainly the condition we were in when we came into this world, but it was God's plan to bring us to life. To change our condition.

The Holy Spirit created a new person within us when he brought us to faith through God's Word and the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Paul describes that new person as our “inner being,” and he points out, **“In my inner being, I delight in God's Law.”** The new person within us wants to follow God's Word. The new person within us helps us to realize our sad condition and helps us struggle against that unwanted squatter we call our sinful flesh. That new person within us looks to God to help us in this struggle.

For it is God's grace that has brought us to faith – God's undeserved love for us miserable sinners, that prompted God's mercy. It is God who helps us with this daily struggle we have. Our Gospel lesson encourages us to come to our Lord and Savior when we are weary and he will give

us rest. He gives us rest by first lifting the burden of sin from our shoulders by assuring us he has paid for those sins. He gives us rest by defeating the devil for us on the cross and assuring us that all we have to do is point to God's Word and tell Satan, Away from me – you have lost." He gives us rest by continuing to come to us in Word and sacrament to strengthen our faith.

It is our Lord and Savior who changes our condition from a wretched sinner to a saved child of God. That's why we proclaim our thanks along with the words of Paul **"Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!"**

**II.** That short sentence says so much. It not only proclaims our thanks but it also tells us how the struggle within us is won. The phrase, "Jesus Christ our Lord!" speaks volumes. The words, **"Through Jesus"** – points to the God/man Jesus who came into this world for us. Jesus who lived the perfect life for us – who was tempted just as we are, yet was without sin. Jesus who kept the Law perfectly for us.

The phrase, **"Through Christ"** points out how Jesus Christ was the anointed one. Anointed to fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah whom God had promised His people. Anointed as our high priest to make the perfect sacrifice for our sins on the cross and in that way to redeem us. Anointed as our king to defeat Satan for us on that very same cross.

The phrase, **"Through our Lord."** Points out how Christ is now Ruling for the benefit of all believers in heaven and ruling not only in heaven but in our hearts. This is Paul's Savior and this is our Savior!

How do we win the struggle going on within us – only by looking to our Savior for help. By laying our sins on his shoulders and exchanging our sins for his perfect righteousness. Only by looking to God's Word which tells us I can do all things through him who gives me strength.

The war within us will continue for as long as we live on this earth, but we can survive that war and win some of the battles with the help of Jesus our Lord and Savior until he calls us home to heaven where we will finally find everlasting peace.

Don't fear the war that is within you, but rather arm yourself with God's Word. For it is the power of the Gospel that will help you with those struggles we all have. It is the power of the Gospel that will bring you peace now and forever. Amen.