

I. Introduction

- A. Beginning in 13th century, the kings of Britain began to claim the throne of France
 - 1. As one might imagine, kings of France had a different perspective on that issue.
 - a. Insults flew back and across the English Channel for years over this dispute.
 - b. The dispute erupted into war in 1337 when Britain invaded France.
 - 2. We call it “*The Hundred Years War*, ” a misnomer since it lasted from 1337-1453.
 - a. **Imagine:** Generations lived and died knowing nothing except unending war
 - b. For all they knew, that war was to be an eternal conflict that would never end
- B. You and I as Christians are embroiled in an eternal conflict as well (**Ephesians 6:12**)
 - 1. No matter how long we’ve been Christians, no matter how mature we may become
 - a. No how much we learn about God or how much we can teach about Him to others
 - b. No matter much good we can do to help other people—the battle continues
 - 1) Sometimes it’s an all-out frontal assault; sometimes it’s terrorist sneak attack
 - 2) But the enemy is relentless and the battle is ongoing. It lasts all our lives.
 - 2. And we can perhaps make one more comparison to the Hundred Years War
 - a. Hundred Years War began in 1337; Britain won first major battle at Crécy in 1346.
 - b. It wouldn’t be until Joan of Arc liberated Orleans in 1429 that France won a victory!
 - 1) French soldiers went entire career (and their sons!) without knowing victory
 - 2) Of course, without those defeats, not many French soldiers went on retirement
 - c. Like France, we don’t win many battles in our eternal struggle against Satan
- C. As we continue study of *Unashamed: The Message of Romans*, we come to Romans 7
 - 1. In **Romans 7:1-13**, Paul looks at the place of the law in our fight against sin
 - a. They are not going to survive this eternal conflict by keeping the Law
 - b. This is small group study tonight (prequel, like Star Wars I, without Jar Jar Binks)
 - 2. In **Romans 7:14-25**, Paul looks at the failure of the Law in helping overcome sin
 - a. What is broken in our eternal conflict is not the Law—what’s broken is us.
 - b. We need help. In fact, that is the precise point Paul is making in this section.
 - c. Let’s begin by listening to Paul’s famous tongue-twister (**Read: Romans 7:14-25**)

II. The Eternal Struggle: Who Is Paul Talking About?

- A. Paul uses words “I,” “Me” or “My” 45 in this section (*ranges 43-50 in other translations*)
1. The obvious question to ask, “*Who is he talking about? Who is the I-Me-and-My?*”
 2. Is Paul talking about himself? Or is this just a part he is playing to make a point?
 3. Some would argue, “***Surely Paul isn’t saying that he struggles with sin like this.***”
- B. Many offer alternative suggestions— looking at these will help familiar us with text.
1. Some see Paul speaking of unbelievers. Says he was “*sold as a slave to sin*” (**7:14**)
 - a. Church fathers like Origen saw Paul was taking on the role of an alien sinner
 - b. He says “*nothing good lives in him*” (**7:18**) and calls himself “*wretched*” (**7:24**)
 2. Other see this as Paul’s earlier life as a Pharisee. Text is centered in Law (**7:14**)
 - a. In this view, Paul reflects on when he tried to please God before he found grace
 - b. As a Pharisee, no matter how hard he tried he just couldn’t seem to get it right
 - 1) **Problem:** He doesn’t struggles other places when reflecting Pharisee (**Phil 3:6**)
 - 2) Pharisees we meet in the gospels don’t struggle; they think they’re doing OK
 3. Others seize what Paul says about “*carnal*” (KJV) or “*unspiritual*” (**7:14**)
 - a. They see Paul describing the ups-and-downs of the so-called “*carnal Christian*”
 - b. This is the believer who accepts Christ but hasn’t yet fully bought in to following
 - c. So they go back and forth. But Paul’s “I” here does fully love God law (*more later*)
- C. It’s best to see as talking about Paul! Three statements stand out here:
1. **First**, frank, self-deprecating recognition of sinfulness sounds like Paul (**7:14a, 18a**)
 - a. Unbelievers and casual believers don’t beat themselves up about their sin
 - b. Why was the prayer of tax collector heard? “*Lord be merciful to me, a sinner?*”
 - c. This is a Pharisee or a casual believer, but the chief of sinners! (**1 Tim 1:15**)
 2. **Second**, there is appreciation and admiration here of the Law of God (**Rom 7:22**)
 - a. He doesn’t let himself off the hook; has no reservation about God law good
 - b. This “I” is a slave to following that law (**7:25b**). Again, this sounds like Paul.
 3. **Third**, there is this haunting cry for final deliverance from the struggle (**7:24-25a**)
 - a. This sounds like disgust with the continued cycle of failure and forgiveness
 - b. Who would know that cycle? No unbeliever! No Pharisee? No casual Christian
 - 1) This doesn’t sound like Paul putting words in someone else’s mouth—it’s Paul
 - 2) This eternal struggle of good that desired but evil that’s done— *it’s us all*
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III. The Eternal Struggle: Application

- A. If Paul struggled like this, then we can't we assume this eternal struggle is for us as well?
1. You and I will never be so mature, so smart or so old that Satan will give up on us
 - a. Here's a sobering thought for us—the Bible says that Satan never gave up on Jesus
 - 1) When He failed miserably in his mano-a-mano cage match, he still didn't quit
 - 2) Luke ends the temptation story, "*he left him until an opportune time*" (**Lk 4:13**)
 - b. He was still skulking around looking for ideal time and technique to tempt Christ!
 - c. If the lion was looking to pounce on Jesus, do you think you and me will get a pass?
 2. If we think we're past the eternal struggle—*when we're in danger* (**1 Cor 10:12**)
 - a. **Context:** Points to Israelites of the Exodus, the chosen people of God—as warning
 - 1) You're baptized? Eat communion? Child of God? They were all that! (**10:1-4**)
 - 2) And their bones were left to bleach in the desert because they forgot God (**10:5**)
 - b. Never think that you are above temptation. Never think you are above falling
- B. Go back and look at the tongue-twister and soul-twister part of our text (**Rom 7:19-20**)
1. Remember, we're assuming Paul is talking about himself and every other Christian
 - a. I like T.W. Manson reference of this as "*The autobiography of Everyman*"
 - b. But really, this is the struggle of someone committed to doing the right thing
 - 1) Someone who does what they want when they want it—no struggle there!
 - 2) It's only a struggle if we remain committed to serving God and following law
 2. What makes all this so hard? There are three things at war within me in this text
 - a. **Flesh** (**Rom 7:18**). Sin nature. *Sarx*. Part of me that wants what it wants.
 - 1) NIV was opposed when it came out because it rendered *sarx* as "*sinful nature*"
 - 2) One church replaced KJV pew Bibles with NIV; someone defaced every Bible
 - 3) It was observed, "*Ironic they proved 'sinful nature' translation to be accurate.*"
 - b. **Inner Being** (**Rom 7:22**) Spiritual nature. Part that was created in God's image
 - 1) We are not just flesh, we're also spiritual beings—the part Paul refers to here
 - 2) This is the part Paul prayed would be strengthened by the Holy Spirit (**Eph 3:16**)
 - c. **Mind** (**Rom 7:23**). Intellect. Free will. The part of me that decides what to do
 - 1) Mind takes input from many sources and decides. *So who is responsible?*
 - 2) The problem is my mind may decide, but flesh keeps screaming at me (**7:25**)
 - 3) My mind must decide what I do, but it is distracted by these other voices.

3. There are several other voices that Paul doesn't mention here screaming at us—
 - a. **World:** The world we live in is broken, flawed, rotten to the core
 - 1) Don't get me wrong, it's also beautiful— but it's flaws can be fatal to me
 - 2) Word's brokenness to often dovetails too perfectly with my own brokenness
 - a) The materialism and greed of the culture fits to well with what's in my heart
 - b) The anger and fear of the political culture fits too will with my own insecurity
 - 3) Because of the world, there is another confusing voice screaming in my ear
 - b. **People:** This is a special part of the world, but one with its own special trap
 - 1) There's no greater blessing God gives us than the people He puts in our lives
 - a) But people can (make that will) let us down, both in small ways and big ways.
 - b) Paul faced his execution alone (except for Luke) because many friends left him
 - 2) People disappoint and disillusion; to borrow from GEICO, "*It's what they do*"
 - 3) As we deal with confusing voices shouting in our ear, add the voices of people
 - c. **Satan:** Satan is the puppet-master directing these conflicting voices. Joe Beam— "*He makes sure that we're in the right place at the right time to do the wrong thing.*"
 - 1) Don't give Satan more credit or power than he deserves. There's only one God
 - a) He isn't omnipresent or omniscience or omnipotent—those are God's attributes
 - b) There is only one God, and Satan isn't him. So don't give Satan to much power'
 - 2) But don't take him for granted. He's not a metaphor or a figurehead or a myth
 - 3) He is the roaring voice that orchestrates all those voices that would confuse us

IV. Conclusion

- A. How can we possible hear with all those confusing voices? Listen again ([7:17-20](#), MESS)
 1. I do need something more! We need help! How can I possibly make right choices?
 - a. My mind wants to do right, but I have all these voices screaming at me!
 - b. And Satan is ordering those voices so that I never seem to be at my best!
 2. We'll never win the eternal struggle in Romans 7... until we get to Romans 8
 - a. There is another voice to hear from, another voice to listen to—Holy Spirit
 - b. That is voice that makes all the difference in the world... and the world to come
- B. Let me leave you with these three thought this morning then as we close
 1. The struggle with temptation and sin really is an eternal struggle—it never ends
 2. While we will mature and getting better, we will never outgrow the struggle
 3. Ultimately we defeat sin by the Christ's and the Spirit within (*that's next week*)