

August 14, 2010 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church  
Romans 7:1-8:17 Jekyll & Hyde; The War Within by Andy McDonald

Before I preach today's message I want us to pray. Our human egos, a long religious history of truth mixed with error, a culture that glorifies human accomplishment, the ease with which we even unknowingly adopt idols, all combine with other aspects of fallen humanity to seek tiny and monstrous means of self-justification, so I want us to pray. Just a moment between you and God.

Specifically I want us to pray for three things.

1. I want us to pray for the Holy Spirit to fill our lives and this place of corporate worship.
2. I want us to pray that the Holy Spirit will open our ears and our understanding.
3. I want each of us to pray for ourselves and those sitting to our right and left, that together we can lay aside our preconceived ideas so we can hear and understand God's word to us today.

Let's Pray. (Silence) Father, you are the God of all understanding. You are able to simultaneously hear the prayer of each of our hearts and yet relate to each as if it were the only prayer. Collectively we have prayed for the Holy Spirit and for the opening of our ears and understanding and right now we seek to hear and understand a word from you so I ask that you will not let me get in the way but only serve as a channel for your word to your people, In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Do you ever frustrate yourself? I mean really sort of drive yourself crazy? Do you just hate who you are sometimes?

I don't mean that you get stuck there into some constant pattern of self-loathing that demands some therapy, I'm talking about those moments in time when we disappoint ourselves.

We are just about 7 ½ months into 2010. Last January how many of us made some decision, maybe we called it a resolution, to get in better physical shape in the “New Year?”

Maybe it wasn't to become the ideal human specimen but just drop a few pounds, lower our cholesterol, reduce our blood pressure, just become a bit more fit; so how are you doing?

Some of you super disciplined folks, about ½ of 1% have made charts and graphs and checked off each day, but for the other 99% of us how often have we disappointed ourselves?

Now I know ice cream isn't the most healthy cuisine for me to include to keep my resolutions to drop a few pounds so I tell myself on a hot Sabbath afternoon that I'll indulge but I'll only have one scoop of that Blue Bell Mint Chocolate Chip! But it is highly likely that after I've finished the one scoop that I'll go back for another, and then another, and my promise to myself that I'd only have a modest serving is shot all to pieces as I soon polish off the whole pint!

I have a goal, a plan, a desire but the flavor, the pleasure of that cool sweet minty taste overpowers my plan with a new plan as everything in me seems to scream for ice cream!

That's pretty simple and if indulged on rare occasions it may add a little extra fat I could do without...but what if instead of ice cream it is alcohol, or drugs, or porn, or pride, or outbursts of anger, or gossip. We tell ourselves, “I'm never going to do that again.” You fill in the blank for you. “I'm never going to \_\_\_\_\_ again.”

How's that working out? Do our broken promises to ourselves create some self loathing?

Writing about this risk in the book Steps to Christ, Ellen White uses these words to explain: “You desire to give yourself to God (Him), but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the

habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections,. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you.” SC p 47

From ice cream to alcohol, from pride to pornography, from too much salt to gossip do you find your resolutions and promises are like ropes of sand?

You aren't alone. Paul had the same dilemma.

Open your Bibles. I'm reading from the New Living Translation.

Romans 7:14-24 **14** So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. **15** I don't really understand myself, for **I want to do what is right**, but I don't do it. Instead, **I do what I hate.** **16** But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that **I agree that the law is good.** **17** So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

**18** And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. \* **I want to do what is right**, but I can't. **19** I want to do what is good, but I don't. **I don't want to do what is wrong**, but I do it anyway. **20** But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

**21** I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. **22 I love God's law with all my heart.** **23** But there is another power\* within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. **24** Oh, what a miserable person I am!

For centuries Theological debate has swirled around these words penned by Paul. The debate centers on is this pre-conversion reflections or post-conversion experience? Strong opinions exist on both sides. Those who tend toward thinking of Jesus as our example—who are vocal about us “overcoming sin” believe that these must be pre-conversion remembering not Paul's experience as an Apostle.

But other minds, seeking to just deal with the text and not ideas they bring to the text find evidence in these very words to suggest that this is Paul the Apostle a converted follower of Jesus writing.

Notice the evidence that the writing is that of a believer's experience

- Vs. 14 he calls the law both spiritual and good (something more likely for a believer than a non-believer to say)
- Vs 15 He wants to do what is right (like a believer)
- Later in vs 15 he equates doing wrong as doing what he hates but the unconverted don't "hate" sin.
- Again in vs 18 & 19 I want to do what is right....I don't want to do what is wrong,
- In vs 22 this desirer of good and doer of wrong writes, I love God's law with all my heart—obviously the testimony of a believer.

It seems clear that Paul is writing that a person, a human being "in Christ" still sins!!

Why? Because they are a sinner who is saved by grace!

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote about this war within in his classic, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde".

In the story Dr. Jekyll comes to realize that he has these two sides within him, that he is, in Stevenson's words, "an incongruous compound of good and evil." He believes his bad nature is holding his good nature back. He wants to do good things but he cannot follow through. He comes up with a potion that can separate out his two natures, and his hope is that the good nature will come out during the day so that he is free from his evil side and he can do his worthy goals.

One night he takes the potion and his bad side comes out and Mr Hyde is more evil than he expected. In the story he says: "I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more

wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; Mr. Hydes's every act and thought centered on self."

As Dr. Jekyll realizes his capacity for evil acts, his Mr. Hyde side, he resolves to clamp down on his self-centeredness and pride. He determines to devote himself to charity and good works to smooth out his selfish nature by acts of unselfishness.

One day he's sitting on a bench in Regents Park thinking of all the good he's been doing. Here's his testimony

"I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. You know how earnestly, in the last months of the last year, I labored to relieve suffering; you know that much was done for others...but as I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active good will with the lazy cruelty of their neglect...at the very moment of that vain-glorious thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most dreadful shuddering...I looked down...I was once more Edward Hyde."

I'm concerned that with a misunderstanding of the glorious doctrine of Justification we might come to think that our only choices are Dr Jekyll or Mr. Hyde! Our only option being to try and do enough good to counter the evil within.

A misunderstanding that justification means we become sinless, perfect.

Here's at least part of the confusion. When we are justified it is in God's eyes. We believe in and accept Jesus as our savior and God for Christ sake sets us right with him. Jesus justifies the sinner. Jesus covers over me the sinner so that from God's perspective I am absolutely perfectly sinless! When God looks at me he sees Jesus! All of Jesus righteousness, all of his goodness, all of his absolute perfection is chalked up to my account and I am justified, brought into oneness

with God. Christ righteousness covers all my sin and all my sinful choices before and after that moment until the day when I am changed in the twinkling of an eye and put on sinless immortality at the second coming of Jesus.

Some of you are saying NO, NO, NO this can't be true.

Well think about Peter. At the upper room the night before the crucifixion Jesus wants to wash Peter's feet. Do you remember his response? It is recorded in John 13. When Jesus tells Peter, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me," Peter jumps in whole hog. "If that's the case don't just wash my feet wash my hands and head too."

Jesus calms Peter down saying, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean."

Peter is clean. Peter is a child of God that night, and that night he loses it and cuts off the high priest's servant's ear.

Peter is clean and before the rooster crows in the morning will 3 times deny Christ. "I don't know Jesus!" That's no little bowl of ice cream kind of failure—he denies Jesus—three times!

Peter even after the post resurrection breakfast on the beach where Jesus encourages and reinstates Peter, we later find him being a racist and Paul in Galatians calls him a hypocrite.

Why does he lose his temper and chop off that ear?

Why does he deny Jesus?

Why is he a racist?

Why is he hypocritical?

Because he is a sinner.

Like Paul, and you and me his behavior messes up and continues to mess up but God's view of EVERY believer changes, instead of seeing

me and my bad choices and my fallen behavior God sees Jesus.  
Hallelujah!

Our choice isn't to cave to the Mr. Hyde in all of us nor to attempt to counter the Mr. Hyde by doing good stuff as Dr. Jekyll attempted. Our choice isn't immorality or morality our choice is Jesus substitutionary death and substitutionary life that he gives to us.

David Achata has a saying he's used in his teaching of our youth it goes like this: In Christ you are as free as if you were dead and In Christ you are as loved as if you were Christ.

Romans 8:1-12 Paul says that there is no condemnation in Christ. That God has destroyed sin's control over us. That we don't have to be captive to sin. Vs 10 tells us that "we have been made right with God."

Vs 12 "So dear brothers and sister, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live."

Listen YOU CANNOT TURN FROM IT! But through the power of the Holy Spirit growth can happen. Give God your will, choose to be a Christian and let God take the wheel of your life and know that when God looks at you at your record, at your performance, and your commitment and follow through he sees not one dropped ball, not one slipup, not one mistake you are perfect in Christ.

In the chapter "The Test of Discipleship" in the book Steps to Christ are these words. "We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God....No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness...If we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ." SC 64-65

We are messed up sinners saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. If you are familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous you know that a member of AA isn't going to tell you "O I'm past that alcohol thing." They will never get to a point where they say "I used to be an alcoholic." They may testify, "I'm Mac and I'm an Alcoholic and I haven't had a drink in 4 hours, 4 days, 4 months, 4 years or 4 decades. But not drinking doesn't make them not an alcoholic." There's growth and victory and better life from not drinking. True.

I used to sing the hymn "Higher Ground" imagining that I was gaining ground but this week I happened to sing that song in my devotions one morning and the words in the context of this message struck me.

I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining every day;  
Still praying as I onward bound, Lord plant my feet on higher ground.  
Lord, lift me up, and I shall stand By faith, on heaven's tableland;  
A higher plan than I have found; Lord plant my feet on higher ground.

We can grow. We can look back and see that today our feet are on higher ground than last year or 5 years ago. But don't imagine you are doing it! It is the Lord,. Not you, who plants your feet on higher ground.

Sure, as the song says "I want to scale the utmost height but the reality is I just pray for the Lord to plant my feet on higher ground—his work in me!!

Justification is a lot like adoption.  
It is done by someone else on our behalf.  
We don't adopt into a family the family adopts us.  
And when that adopted baby gets colic or throws a tantrum  
Or when that teenager adopted recently or years ago wrecks the car or rebels, it doesn't undo the adoption.

Paul writes "So you, (you people sitting in that building at 2800 N Orange Ave in Orlando on August 14, 2010) So you should not be like

cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him “Father, dear Father. For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. And since we are his children we will share his treasures—for everything EVERYTHING God gives to his Son, Christ is ours too.! Romans 8:15-17a

When sin tries to fool you into despising yourself, when you feel disgusted with yourself for caving to temptation seek Jesus and remember you've been adopted into the kings family. You didn't get adopted by being good you won't get un-adopted by being bad you are a child covered by the righteousness of Christ, PERFECT in Christ, a child of the king heir of the kingdom all by God's unfailing love and faithfulness.