

6/29/11

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Gracious God, our heavenly Father, Your mercy attends us all our days. On this holiday weekend we pray peace for our country, and the nations of the world. For your church, we pray, be our strength and support amid the wearisome changes of this world, and at life's end grant us Your promised rest and the full joys of Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Romans 7:14-25a

(For I know that nothing good dwells in me because sin dwells in me.)

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 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. **19 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.**

20 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. 21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 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. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?**

25 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.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 11:25-30

(Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.)

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. 27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

INTRO - This year, September 11, America will have been involved in a conflict against forces of terrorism and radical Islam for 10 years. Ten years!! That is longer than the Revolutionary War, longer than the War of 1812, longer than the Civil War, longer than the Civil War, or WWI or WWII, or the Korean War. Only the war in Vietnam may have lasted longer, depending on how you date it. But the point is, 10 years later and we are still involved in that conflict. Does anyone see an end? I don't.

I. Our battle against terrorism may seem like a long one, but we are all involved in a war that has been going on an immensely longer time.

A. Romans 7:22-23 say, **22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 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.**

1. You see, our battle against sin is described as a war against our mind or faith.
2. There is no end in sight for this battle.

B. This is a struggle we all know.

1. The person writing this section is Paul, perhaps the most zealous Christian missionary ever. He is considered an apostle. Jesus appeared to him. Paul did mission work all around Europe.
2. But when it come to fighting against sinful desires and living the good life of faith and love to which God calls us, Paul himself is not doing well.
3. Verse 19 says, **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.**
4. Finally Paul describes his condition in verse 24 **What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?**

C. Does this sound familiar to you? A battle against sin and sinful desires that just never ends?

1. Our nation has a struggle with substances, drugs and alcohol. No matter how much we educate about the dangers, when we deal with one problem another comes along. It never seems to end.
2. Our nation seems to have a struggle with greed. How long have we been spending more than we have, as a nation, as individuals? Is it getting any better?
3. Maybe you have a problem in one of these areas, or a problem with anger, or lying, or priorities, or pride.

II. This war against terrorism is not a new one, maybe only new to us. The people of Israel have been fighting this battle since, 1948, or maybe since Islam began in 624 A.D., or maybe since Isaac and Ishmael in 2000 B.C. We've seen Presidents and Prime Ministers and leaders come in with a desire to find peace and a desire to end the conflict, but it has not happened yet. So, as people look at this battle that has spread to America, the question is asked, "What are we going to do?"

A. What are we going to do about this struggle with sin?

B. Paul basically says in verse 24 he is powerless. There is nothing he can do on his own, **24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?**

C. The truth is that we are powerless to end this attack on us an on our relationship with God. As long as we live in this world, it will continue.

III. However, there is another example of a similar conflict. For centuries the Protestants and Catholics have fought and killed one another in Ireland. But, that does seem to be over for now. After all, both sides have to answer to the Lord Jesus Christ who instead of killing others, died

for his enemies, and who calls us to love our enemies.

A. Paul is hopeless by himself, but has hope. **25 Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

1. In the face of his own inability, Paul has hope because of Jesus.
2. This echoes Paul's words at the end of the previous chapter. In Romans 6:23 we are told. **23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
3. While we are wretched, and hopeless, and need rescuing, Jesus is victorious over our sin and over our struggle.
4. The un-defeat-able enemy has been defeated.
 - a. We may struggle and sin, but Jesus never sinned.
 - b. We may not be able to take away the fact that we are sinners, but Jesus paid for our sin by dying on the cross and forgives us as we believe in him.
 - c. We may face the defeat and consequences of sin in death, but death is not the end. Because of Jesus God has eternal life waiting for us.

B. So, as we face this battle, we learn from Paul, even though the battle continues IN THIS WORLD, we have hope and confidence because Jesus is victorious. We know we have an eternal victory, so we don't give up even when fighting a battle which is impossible for us.

- C. We don't give up fighting. If we give up Satan wins, but, actually Satan has lost.
1. We keep seeking to love even our enemies, because Jesus died for us when we didn't deserve it. God loved and still does.
 2. We keep believing, because God is faithful and keeps His promises.
 3. We keep fighting against sin and temptation, because God's victory is certain, and He even wins victories in this life.

CONCLUSION - A number of years ago Shane Woods was killed in Iraq. That is part of the long war we began discussing. A little before he died Shane told his family he was glad to be fighting for us over there. He said, "If I wasn't fighting over here, we would be fighting at home. So, he fought what seemed a difficult battle and was killed. But Shane is actually in heaven. He did not lose He won.

We all face a battle. Verse 19 says, **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.** But we keep fighting to live in faith and love, because Jesus is victorious.