

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
July 27, 2014 7th Sunday aft. Pentecost
Romans 7:15-25a



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 For I know that good itself does not dwell 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 I do not do the good I want to do, but 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: Although 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 me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

One of the most interesting parts of a book store, I think, is the part called Self Improvement. I heard the other day about a book called 30 days to a perfect you! I thought, wow, that must be some book – one month and you fix, mend, remove and replace all the bad stuff in your life. Talk about your 30 day makeover! How remarkable that must be! Don't misunderstand – don't get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with self-improvement! The fact is – an essential part of being a Christian – being an adopted child of God – with faith in our ♥ is that we grow and change. Anything and everything that is alive – really alive – grows. If I heard it once – I have heard it again and again especially lately – “people *don't change!*” They do! We change all the time. When the Holy Spirit fills your ♥--change is inevitable! 30 days to a flawless you? They say you need to know about Kaizen – a Japanese word – a Japanese concept of constant never ending improvement – commitment to self-mastery – to eliminate all waste – for the good, the benefit of everyone! Baby steps! It's like What About Bob? Baby steps – I'm baby stepping! Now surely that's a lofty goal – to sleep better – not wasting time tossing and turning. To eat a better breakfast! To do a better job at work. To be a better homemaker! To be a better student! To be a better retired person – a better husband or wife or child. To be a better relative and better neighbor! But there's more to it! Today God's Word talks about very practical aspects of law and gospel. It's much *much* more than being a better person. It's about the cold hard facts of living in the light of Jesus' forgiving love! Today God's Word reminds us:

God Delivers Me Through Jesus!

I. Sin persistently frustrates~

II. But Grace completely forgives!

Again, the part of God's Word we are concentrating on – the Apostle Paul's letter to the believers in the city of Rome! Today is 6 of what will be with Jesus' permission 16 Sundays in a row reading from Romans. Romans is about righteousness – being right with your Heavenly Father by grace through faith for Jesus' sake. Two weeks ago we read how Adam ruined everything. This one man – some 6,000 years ago – literally living in Paradise with a flawless woman – literally made from one of his ribs – did the only thing in God's green garden that God told him not to do. And now we have the plague of death! There is death everywhere!

Plants die. Animals die. People die! It's horrible! Sometimes it's one at a time – in the Emergency Room – in the ICU – in the OR – beside the highway – in a bed in a nursing home – on the streets of Chicago – midst the creamy stones of the Gaza Strip – in clumps of almost 300 in the skies over Ukraine! There is death everywhere! Adam sinned and we all have sinned – fatally flawed because of our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents – all the way back to Adam and Eve. We have made countless mistakes – sometimes with premeditated malicious forethought and sometimes completely unaware – entirely oblivious to the fact we were doing anything wrong. We turned the wrong way onto a one-way street – going 40 mph in a 25 mph zone and we didn't know! We were motoring down a 4 lane separated highway – sure and certain the speed limit was 65 so we were going 71 when in fact it was 55! We sinned and Jesus suffered and died to forgive us. One Adam ruined everything. The Second Adam – Jesus of Nazareth paid for every mistake to wash them all away.

Last week we thought about the very practical argument: If there is forgiveness for every sin – and there is--**Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?** ²**By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?** ³**Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** ⁴**We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life...** I was reminded again the other day – we need to live our lives so close to Jesus that unbelievers closest to us – would want that peace, joy and contentment we have – through the Gospel. We need to live such lives of love and forgiveness for one another that even hardened unbelievers would have to know we love Jesus and love each other.

Even though Jesus has paid for all our sins – so we can go to heaven – doesn't mean there won't be frustrations this side of Heaven! The apostle Paul says, 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.** Do you sympathize with the Apostle Paul~*Saint* Paul? Do you come to Church Thursday night/Sunday morning – and say to yourself, “Starting now – starting today – things are going to change! Starting now I'm going to put my faith into practice. No more inexcusable bad behavior!” And then what happens? The same old same old! We make mistakes over and over again and again! We know things are wrong and we do them over and over again – with practiced skill! It's frustrating when you stop and realize what **I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do!** It's not I doing all these bad things – **it is sin living in me!**

²²**For in my inner being I delight in God's law;** ²³**but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.** ²⁴**What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?** What a wretched person I am! It happens every once in a while – a person makes a mistake. Last winter the guy that was running one of those little bob-cats scooping snow from a parking lot. It's a thing of beauty – the way they do that – hand levers and foot pedals – back and forth and around and around – scraped and scoop and push and pick up and dump – around and around. A guy was moving that snow – looking and looking – and all of a sudden he was backing up – and there was a lady in the parking lot – with a little baby in her tummy and he crashed into her – and she died and the baby in her tummy died too! And I think to myself – how would you ever get over that? What would you do with a terrible crushing load of guilt – that you were responsible – to blame for not just one death but two? What would you do if you made a mistake driving – pulled out onto the highway because you didn't see a car or truck coming – and your spouse – or your child – or maybe even worse than that – a grand-

child was severely injured or killed – and it was your fault? **What a wretched man I am!** Can you begin to appreciate that? You abused drugs or alcohol and someone you love died because of your sin! **What a wretched person I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?**

²⁵ **Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thanks be to God!** It's only 122 days before Thanksgiving! Before going to Uncle Marty and Aunt Kathleen's in Hales Corners for Turkey giblets, sweet potatoes with pecans on top, green beans in mushroom soup with those crispy onion rings on top, stuffing and pecan pie! Watching football with Uncle Marty – the Bears at the Lions; the Eagles at the Cowboys; and the Seahawks at the 49ers! Thanksgiving followed by getting the Schultz family Christmas Tree from the Probst Christmas Tree Farm in Beaver Dam! Thanksgiving! It's ok already to realize one Thursday in November is not sufficient to thank God for delivering us from all our painful sins and hurtful mistakes. The more aware of our wretchedness – the more we thank God for our deliverance!

²⁵ **Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!** If you read the Watertown Daily Times – if you are an older person – there is a pretty good chance the first thing you read after the headlines – is the obituaries. The Watertown Daily Times tells you who in Watertown and Creek and Ixonia and Clyman passed away. It also tells you two or three famous people who died. Tuesday's paper says Thomas Berger – the author of "Little Big Man" a witty and eclectic – that is picking the very best of everything--died in New York. In "Little Big Man" Chief Dan George says, "Today is a good day to die!" A person who knows that Jesus died and rose again to forgive us can say, "Today is a good day to die!" Today is a good day to leave this sin frustrated world to be safe in Heaven with Jesus! They say there was a young man just 11 years old – who was to be a passenger on Malaysian Flight 17 the other day. What was supposed to be an 11 hour and 45 minute flight only lasted 2 hours before the plane was shot down. The day before that flight – and the day of that flight a young man named Miguel – a 6th grader – asked his mom a whole bunch of questions about what happens when you die. What happens to your body and more importantly – what happens to your soul? What about God? If and when people ask us about such essential questions of life and death and eternal life – what do we say? We watched a little video the other day. It said what do if you want to make your sermons one of the best sermons ever! Do you know what the powerful insight was? To simply say, "Jesus died for us!" That's it! "Jesus died for us!" Profound in its simplicity! It never ever becomes dull or trite or boring! "Jesus died for us!" He paid the ultimate price to forgive all our failures and mistakes – the malicious and intentional sins and the thoughtless, careless, accidental sins. Jesus died for them all. And on the 3rd day he was alive again – just like he promised!

²⁵ **Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!** We show thanks to God – by what we say and especially by what we do. One of the self-improvement tactics is called visualization – see it happening in your mind's eyes – see it happen! They say that's what Roger Bannister did – Roger Bannister? Back in the day – when I was learning how to walk – it was common knowledge that people – Olympic runners – could not run a mile in under 4 minutes. It was simply not possible for people to go that fast. Along came Roger Bannister! He ran and ran – and saw in his head – Roger Bannister crossing the finish line just under 4 minutes. Finally, May 6, 1954 – Roger Bannister ran a one mile race in 3 minutes 59.4 – under 4 minutes! Since then – all kinds of people have broken the 4 minute mile – again and again! Read your Bible. Pray. Work hard. Be humble. Look around for all kinds of jobs for Jesus you can do to give thanks to your Savior and Lord! Amen!

To God alone all glory!