

Theme: The “Jekyll & Hyde” Christian

1. The “Monster” of Our Sinful Flesh

2. The “Antidote” of Our Savior

Text: Romans 7:15-25a (NIV)

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!

A few years ago I had the privilege of going to the musical stage performance of “*Jekyll & Hyde*,” a play that is based on the famous Robert Louis Stevenson story “*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.” In the story, a man named Dr. Henry Jekyll was experimenting with separating the two distinct sides of men - the good side and the evil side. He believed that if he could separate the two, he could liberate mankind from its “evil side.” In his experiments he succeeded in making a potion that he supposed would do the trick, but upon drinking it he transformed into Mr. Edward Hyde (his evil side) and began to commit horrendous crimes. When he discontinued use of the drug it was already too late as Dr. Jekyll began to become unable to control his transformations into Mr. Hyde. In one of the most memorable scenes near the end of the musical, the actor, playing both Jekyll and Hyde, does a terrific job “transforming” back and forth between the two during one song in which he sings about his battle between his good and evil side.

Doesn't that sound a little bit like our text for today, where we read of a similar “battle” between the “good side” and “evil side” of a Christian? Was the Apostle Paul (the writer of our text) some sort of “mad scientist” who had concocted some sort of potion that uncontrollably turned him into a “monster” at various times in his life? Was he perhaps afflicted with “split personality disorder”? No. He was just like you and me. That's the scary part! These words from Romans chapter 7 are some of the easiest to relate to in the Bible: **“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... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:19, 24).** Who hasn't experienced this struggle?

The “monster” that lives inside each one of us that our “new man” of faith must battle each day is of course **1. The “Monster” of Our Sinful Flesh.** Paul says in our text, **“As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 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” (Romans 7:17-18).**

The bad news is there is no “potion” that we can drink that will separate us from our sinful flesh. We'll never be able to split ourselves into two and escape our sinful nature—at least not in this life. This can be a very frustrating and frightening thing, as is evident in Paul's words in our text and in our own life experience. As Christians we want to please our Lord. We desperately do not want to fall into the same spiritual traps over again. Frustration, and maybe even despair, creep into our lives because it seems that the moment we are gaining some ground on our walk with Christ we go backward and find ourselves caught up in a sin that we were sure we'd never commit again: the movie or TV show that we know we really shouldn't have watched, or the explicit website we promised we'd never look at again; the spending spree we gave into after we told ourselves we didn't need to max out any more credit cards; losing our temper and blowing up at our spouse or kids when we told them we'd get our anger under control from now on, or any other bad habit that we can't break, or “pet sin” that we can't seem to let go of. C.S. Lewis once wrote, *“No man knows how bad he is until he tries to be good.”* That's true, isn't it? Martin Luther famously described the Christian as both “saint and sinner” at the same time. The Apostle Paul was living proof of that. So are we.

Ironically that struggle and frustration is a good sign. If you don't feel like it is a struggle to walk with God, if you don't feel week by week and day by day a frustration in your life of sanctification, then there's a problem. That means your new man is not putting up much of a struggle against your sinful flesh.

That leads us into the "good news." The good news is that, like Paul, we all have the "antidote" for this "monster" that lives inside each one of us. In the story of "Jekyll and Hyde," Dr. Jekyll drinks an antidote potion that transforms him from Mr. Hyde back to his usual self as Dr. Jekyll. No, there is no "antidote potion" we can drink to chemically or magically get rid of our sinful nature. But there is an "antidote" that frees us from the chains of our sinful nature and our slavery to the "monster" of our sinful flesh. **2. The "Antidote,"** is of course, **Our Savior, Jesus.** After lamenting over his own sinfulness, Paul rejoices in this cure found in Christ in the last verses of our text: **"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25a).**

It's true that while we are alive on this earth we will always have our sinful flesh clinging to us, battling with our new man that God's Spirit has created inside of us through faith. But Paul tells us in this same letter to the Romans that this sinful flesh of ours does not need to frighten us or harm us any longer because of the "antidote" we have in Christ Jesus. First of all, because by His death and resurrection Jesus has freed us from the terror of eternal death that our sins had earned for us. He writes in the very next verse of Romans, **"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).** Because of Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the dead we are free from the "monster" of our sin's guilt and from its power to control us. If we turn back one chapter to Romans 6 we read, **"If we have been united with [Jesus] like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--because anyone who has died has been freed from sin...For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:5-7, 14).**

The "monster" of your sinful flesh may be terrorizing you right now in your life. Frustrating you. Wearing you down. Causing you to fear or leading you to despair. You might be thinking to yourself, "I'm so tired of trying. I'm so tired of failing." We've all been there! Even the Apostle Paul had been there! Maybe it's time to stop "trying" and time to start trusting! The conclusion that Paul had come to was this: I cannot defeat the "monster" of my sinful nature, but Jesus can! I will never win this battle against myself, but Jesus has! I will not rely on myself for perfection, but instead I will rely completely and entirely on the work of Jesus. Jesus can pull you out of that ditch. He pulled you out of the "ditch" of death—and even hell itself—when He paid for your sins on the cross. By that death He also gave you *power* over sin. We can depend on Him or depend on ourselves. The result is either freedom or frustration.

The story of "Jekyll and Hyde" does not have a happy ending. Dr. Jekyll eventually kills himself in his own laboratory in a desperate attempt to also kill the "monster" that lived inside of him and prevent Mr. Hyde from emerging again and doing any more harm. Because Jesus sacrificed Himself for us we can look forward with full confidence and joyful hope that our end will not be a tragic one of despair in which we are defeated by the "monster" of our sinful nature. But rather that our last day of life will mean the *death* of our sinful flesh forever and we will live in the perfect bliss of Christ's presence in heaven. Paul himself wrote of that glorious resurrection day in his first letter to the Corinthians, **"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality...54 then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."** (1 Corinthians 15:51-57 NIV). That's how our story will end: Victorious. Happy. Forever. With Him. **"Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25a). Amen.**