

Rescued for Life

‡ **From wretched struggle** (vv.15-24)

‡ **For victorious delight** (vv.22-25)

In the Name of Jesus, our victorious Lord and Savior, dear fellow Christians in the struggle:

What would we do without this chapter in the Bible, Romans 7? This explains why Moses was so grateful for God's Presence to go with him and the nation of Israel in the desert. The chapter right before today's First Reading the people worshiped the gold calf, and the LORD wanted to destroy them. Moses pleads for God's mercy for the sake of His Name-reputation (32:11-13), then begs for the LORD's real Presence to go with them. God relents and promises, "*My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*" (33:14) Can you hear how the Lord Jesus invites so kindly in today's Gospel? "*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest....rest for your souls.*" (Matthew 11:28f EHV) In the Real Presence of Christ's Holy Supper we receive His body and blood that gives rest to our souls!

But Paul's struggle in Romans 7, helps us realize what robs our souls of rest. The Lord's own Apostle felt **wretched** because of sin and guilt. Every Christian is in for a **wretched struggle**. How can you be **Rescued for Life**? How can you escape anxious worry for the rest of **victorious delight**?

‡ **From wretched struggle** (vv.15-24)

Can you relate to Paul? "*For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not keep doing what I want. Instead, I do what I hate. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. But now it is no longer I who am doing it, but it is sin living in me. Indeed, I know that good does not live in me, that is, in my sinful flesh. The desire to do good is present with me, but I am not able to carry it out. So I fail to do the good I want to do. Instead, the evil I do not want to do, that is what I keep doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who am doing it, but it is sin living in me.*" (Romans 7:15–20 EHV) He's disowning that sinful part of himself that just won't turn to God.

Sounds like a war raging between two personalities in the same body, doesn't it? "*So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is present with me. I certainly delight in God's law according to my inner self, but I see a different law at work in my members, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of sin, which is present in my members.*" (7:21–23)

In your own **wretched struggle**, let me first comfort you with this: The **struggle** itself proves that you are a Christian. We're all born with an anti-God sinful nature, the Old Adam. But when you receive God's gift of faith in that miracle of rebirth in Baptism or by hearing God's Word of forgiveness in the Gospel, a new person comes to life inside you. That's your New Man – always loving God, always thinking about others first, wanting to do good and right. But the Old Adam still opposes everything about God...and the war is on. Who'd believe this, except for Romans 7?

But God's rest comes in Christ even for soldiers in combat. My Granddad talked about something his son, my uncle, said when he returned from Korea. "Dad, I just kept remembering the Sunday School song, 'Thou, God, seest me.'" On the battlefield he was **Rescued for Life** and given God's peace.

At first it's terrifying to hear that God knows our thoughts before we do! But another Korean vet in heaven now, praised God's grace. A Chaplain shoved a New Testament/Psalms in his pocket, "You'll need this when the bombs go off, soldier!" God was so good to have Don Childs open to Psalm 23: "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy*

rod and thy staff they comfort me.” (v.4 KJV) God was giving rest for Don’s soul in spite of stubborn rejection, before the bullets were flying. How about the battles of heart and mind for you? The dear Holy Spirit breaks through with the brilliance God’s loving kindness and tender mercy. Hold on, dear soul, in the **wretched struggle**. God is eager that you be **Rescued for Life!** God wants you to know by experience His peace that surpasses all understanding that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus....

† For victorious delight (vv.22-25)

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13 NKJV) Paul kept forsaking his sin, but was frustrated by his sinful nature that kept fueling evil: *“What a miserable wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”* He’s being honest, admitting his addiction to his own interests and glory. It’s the desire to be “Somebody” as in our Growth Groups book, *God Loves Nobodies*. How can that be *Good News for Somebody Like Me?*¹ My lust “for credit, merit, acclaim, acceptance by others, value, and human glory” keeps me moving away from God’s help in a seductive illusion. It’s the frog-in-the-kettle syndrome where the heat is slowly turned up, as “the frog becomes more and more comfortable with warmer and warmer water until it loses its strength. Eventually, it is too late for the frog to jump to safety.”²

Before it’s too late Paul cries out again, but this time in triumph: *“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* That Name *Jesus* means *Savior*, as the angel told stepfather Joseph about his fiancée, the Virgin Mary’s son: *“You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21 EHV) All this in the promised *Christ*, the Messiah, *“anointed...with the Holy Spirit and with power”* (Acts 10:38) in His baptism. Jesus is calling you today, *“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* Just come! Receive *rest for your soul*. Discover how your *Lord* alone can bless you with peace from His miraculous cleansing deep inside your soul through His Word and sacraments. **Rescued for Life – From wretched struggle, For victorious delight.**

Remember last summer that atheistic scientist and his angry pro-choice wife? He bragged that he was “bigoted against Christians.” When I shared the nasty things he said with a brother pastor, I got a disturbing question: “Why didn’t you just admit it?” That’s true, isn’t it? We confessed guilt of all sin before God again today. We sang together, “Trusting only in your merit.” (CWH 917:3 – Entrance Hymn)

Husbands and wives, when heartache comes calling, it often comes accusing. Why not just admit it? “No admittance” signs can’t keep Heartache away. Admitting to sin, *i.e.*, confessing it, sets us up for victory. Sports teams or special forces need brutal honesty about superior opponents as a first step to overcoming them. Christ’s Gospel power of full and free forgiveness enables us to overcome our sins and weaknesses. Each husband would be the bitter, angry man he hates in himself – except for Jesus. She could become the cold heartless one who has caused her so much heartache – except for Jesus. But we’re never without Jesus. *“Surely I am with you always until the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:20)

On the forgiveness side of the cross with Paul, *“I delight in God’s law.”* It protects you from sin. Ronald Dunn wrote about a quick-draw champion who “could draw his gun, fire, hit the target, and [holster] his gun in four hundredths of a second!...[Problem is] pulling the gun out of the holster [while] cocking the hammer, your thumb can slip...causing the gun to fire before you’ve completed the draw....A .44 lead slug in the foot [means] losing a couple toes and walking with a limp the rest of your life.... Besides...it really hurts. Practicing with an unloaded gun, my thumb slipped from the hammer most of the time, so I never tried a real quick draw....I’ve shot myself in the foot...but not with a gun....”³

Rest in God’s peace. **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** Amen.

¹ Doeblner, Matthew. *God Loves Nobodies*. Northwestern Publishing House © 2022. (1-800-662-6022)

² Braun, John A. “THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER GOD GIVES US TO DO HIS WORK.” *WLQ*, Spring 2006, pp. 94, 99f.

³ Dunn, Ronald. *Surviving Friendly Fire*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001, pp. 60f.

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