

1/10/19

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Did you make a New Year's Resolution? I don't want to discourage you too much if you did, but one-third of the resolutions made on January 1st will be broken by February 1st. And four out of five of the resolutions made in 2018 will be broken well before 2019.

What this means is that by February 1st many people will begin to regret the money they spent on their treadmill or gym membership. Others will have given up on quitting smoking or losing weight. Not only will they be frustrated, but in a short time, they will be right back where they started.

The apostle Paul knew the pain of failed attempts at making lasting change. He genuinely wanted to live to please God . . . and failed . . . again and again. He gives a window into his frustrated emotional state when he says, "What a wretched man I am!" Continually failing made Paul miserable. He felt like he was his own worst enemy. Do you ever feel that way?

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 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. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 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. Romans 7:21-25

But Paul's story didn't end with his failures. He points us to the hope he had for the future. He writes, "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" The answer to Paul's misery was not found in his own attempts at perfection, but in the perfect life of Jesus Christ.

One can sense the huge burden that was lifted off of Paul's shoulders as he focused on Christ's perfection instead of his own failures. Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus kept all of God's commands. And Jesus gave his life and traded it for Paul's life and your life on the cross. God delivered Paul through Jesus Christ and he did the same for you. The burden of trying to be perfect to please God has been taken off your shoulders forever.

Now we face the daily struggle of living a life of thanks to God. Let's be honest, it isn't easy. Sometimes we will enjoy success. Other times we will fall short. But don't live in misery. Live in peace. Christ offers you strength for the battle and hope for the future.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for giving me the victory through Jesus. Send your Holy Spirit to strengthen my faith in you and to increase my love for those in my life. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, Adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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