

The Struggle
Romans 7:15-25a

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the Word of God this day. Amen.

The other day I was driving through town and I noticed on the street corner a man having a conversation. He was talking and his hands were moving and his face was getting very emotional. You could see waves of anger and frustration just by a glance at his facial expressions. But the thing that caught my eye was that the man was alone –he was the only one there talking so expressively. Well maybe, I thought, he had one of those blue tooth ear buds and he was talking this way on a cell phone that no one else could see. But it just looked odd, when you drive by and catch a glimpse of this man arguing loudly by himself. It reminded me of my time back working at Faith Mission in Columbus, Ohio. There we would always be one or two men in the mission that would sit alone along a wall or in the corner of the mission and talk to themselves. Now they didn't have a phone in their ear – they were just simply having a conversation – and sometimes their conversations with themselves got quite loud and heated. Now these men had a mental disorder, a form of schizophrenia, that caused them to not be able to judge real from unreal, imagined from reality. Have any of you seen this type of behavior before, if not around town then probably on TV.

Hollywood loves this sickness, lifting up the split personalities and such. Within the last ten years there was a sci-fi movie where Will Smith fought against aliens and one of the aliens passed as human, but had this one particular difference – he had a second small head that came out of his neck. One was a normal head and one a deformed grotesque mini head of itself – and being a comedy adventure, this alien was always debating and arguing amongst itself on what they should be doing. Or if you go back to the 80's Steve Martin did a movie where he shared his brain with Lilly Tomlin – two minds in the same brain and they fought between them for control of the body – which led to the jokes and the funny hijinks of that movie. But that is nothing new, the famous writer Robert Louis Stevenson, wrote in 1886 "The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" which has been made countless times in many ways into plays and movies, displaying the inner fighting of one being with two distinct personalities, one good and one evil – and it makes for a great story.

And yes these examples are just that stories, great overblown examples, beyond reality, over the top examples used for entertainment. I mean we all know that there are no aliens walking around New York that have two heads, or one human that can possibly live with two

brains in it or even a doctor that runs around being meek and kind while also being evil and violent. No those are all just stories. But yet they are based a bit on reality, because each one of us here knows what those characters is going through, that's why we can laugh at them, feel for their pain, be sad for their loss- because deep down we are no different.

"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate....For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer, I that do it, but sin that dwells within me." St. Paul understood this very human nature that is part of all of us. In a almost comical way – he illustrates the doings of our own psyche, of all human nature. We know what we should do, and yet we do what we don't want to do over and over and over again. We make promises not to do something, we will be nicer, we will not lie, we will not cheat, we will eat healthy, we will not smoke, we will not drink, we will not gamble, we will not curse, we will not abuse a loved one, we will not...whatever and then we end up doing that very thing we said we are not going to do. There is a battle going on inside our own brain. It is as if we had two heads, two brains in our mind, or that we had two personalities, the one nature that tells us that it is wrong, that we know it is wrong, that we should refrain from it, and the other base sinful nature that tempts us into doing it anyway.

Sigmund Freud based his core psychological system on this very human nature. He developed a system that all humans have three parts – the Id, the Ego and the Superego. The Id is the thing that we are born with. It is our core human essence that empowers us to get our needs met based on pleasure. When you're hungry get food to make you happy. When you're tired get sleep to make you happy. When you're cold get a jacket to make you warmer. When you want this or that the Id kicks in and make you take it and use it for your own pleasure and desire. Then of course as a human grows in years, Freud stated that humans develop by realizing that we have to meet the needs of others and the Ego is born to allow us to work and care and relate to others based on shared needs. The Superego according to Freud is the part of the brain that controls our morals and ethics, the part that guides us in knowing right from wrong, and guides us to do good. The Ego is the part of the brain that balances the Superego the moral "do gooder", from the Id, the base "desire fulfiller", and allows us to live in a balanced state taking a little from both sides. Thee part of our brain according to Freud is part of all people and is apart of how we all think and operate and relate throughout our entire life.

In other words, what Freud is saying is that our Id wants to do things for the pure pleasure of it. But our Superego tells us not to do those things that the Id wants us to do. And so we live in that struggle with our Ego telling us not to do the things our Id insists we do, while at

the same time not doing everything our Superego is telling us to do, and so we live in the Ego fighting between slipping between the Id's desires and the Superego helpfulness.

You see Freud's explanation of our human eternal struggles was right here in Paul's letter to the Romans centuries before Freud defined them. Paul understood this complex human nature that Freud defined in our modern era, but has been plaguing mankind from the very beginning. From the first moment that man and woman stood at that tree knowing they should not eat of its fruit because the Lord told them not to, but at the same time their other brain was telling them it looked good, delicious, and eat and enjoy. The fall of humanity our sinful nature has been a curse to all generations, we know what we are to be about and yet we turn away from God and seek our own pleasures, dreams, wants, desires.

The battle rages in our own heads, just as much as it does to those Hollywood characters or mentally unstable people we see on the street. But the problem is they are fictional characters and we have to live within this battle. So which side is winning? The evil is part of us, the sinful nature was born into us, none of us are purely good. Paul realizes this and goes on in his writing to say that he delights in the law of God in his innermost self (that is the baptized new Adam) which he talks about throughout this book of Romans. The old Adam, the one that is fallen dwells within us, and causes us to fall into sin, and temptations, to fall away from the will of God. But the new baptized Adam, baptized in Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit gives us the joy of seeking the very law of God in our innermost self. That is as Christians we delight in seeking to do God's will. And that struggle is there to live in our baptismal promise. We struggle for this and yet Paul realizes that that evil self, that self serving ID will always be there also. Finally he confirms it and says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul knows that he is in a struggle from good and evil, the ways of man and the ways of God, the ways of the ID and the ways of the Superego. It is a reality for all of us. And in his frustration with that battle raging, he finally in his lament, falls upon the one answer that helps, that saves, that gives life and hope. Wretched man that I am, I know the law of God, and I know what is evil and yet I do it, how can I be saved. Who can save such a one who can not follow the very loving laws of God.... Jesus Christ our Lord. In just those few words, Paul tells us exactly how this struggle between the two selves, the two heads, the ID and Superego, the struggle over good and evil, is won. It's through God's Son our Lord, Jesus Christ, who suffered for all our sins. It is Jesus, who went into our heart and took the controls away from our sinful nature to pull us away from God and instead connect us

once and for all to God the Father in his heavenly kingdom. Jesus is the answer for this mortal struggle that rages inside each of us.

So which head is winning in your life? Which do you listen to? Which do you have controlling you, when you are faced with temptations, problems, instances of life that are troubling, do you fall into that battle or do you turn and rely on Jesus Christ. Because thanks be to God we know one day that battle will end and the victory will be in Jesus Christ. And until that time give thanks as Paul did, in the one who loves us, forgives us, and redeems us. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

May the Grace and Peace of God be with you today and throughout the week to come.