



# LONG HOLLOW

BAPTIST CHURCH

H

## HIGHLIGHT: Romans 7:13-25

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, did what is good become death to me? Absolutely not! On the contrary, sin, in order to be recognized as sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment, sin might become sinful beyond measure.

<sup>14</sup>For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup>For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. <sup>16</sup>Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup>So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. <sup>19</sup>For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me. <sup>21</sup>So I discover this law: When I want to do what is good, evil is present with me. <sup>22</sup>For in my inner self I delight in God's law, <sup>23</sup>but I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. <sup>24</sup>What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself am serving the law of God, but with my flesh, the law of sin.

E

## EXPLAIN

**Leaders:** Feel free to use any of the "Explain" materials to guide discussion as it is needed or to expound on a certain area of the text as it comes up during your Life Group time, but the purpose of this section is to deepen your own personal understanding of the Word. Your members have access to all of this material as well.



For many, this passage is one of the most difficult passages in Paul's letter to the Romans. That is okay, because it deals with heavy material, like the question, "If I'm a Christian, why do I still want to sin?" We desire to obey God, yet we are still made of flesh with a sinful nature—one that wars against the desire of our hearts made new by Christ.

- v.13 This verse gives us the theme of the passage to come: Moses' law did not bring sin into the human race, but rather it *exposed* the sin in our hearts. The law, itself, is not the issue—it's our sin nature. Nygren wrote, "By reason of its relation to sin, the law becomes a destroying power—something which, in its own nature, it is not. From that destroying power Christ has saved us."
- v.14 Paul sets up a tension between "the law" and "the flesh." He calls the Law spiritual—meaning that it comes from God and is a reflection of His character. This seems like a small distinction, but it's an important one: the law was not important in and of itself, but because of the standard that it represented. Upholding the entirety of the law is impossible, which is why God implemented the sacrificial system to atone for the many ways we fall short of it.
- vv.15-20 When Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross, He did two things: He fulfilled the standard of the law, and He paid the debt we owe for not being able to live up to it. He invited us into His victory by covering us with His blood—but that doesn't mean our basic sin nature is gone. Instead, Paul expresses something called the "divided I": I am overwhelmed with the desire to obey God, but I continue sinning. I keep doing all the stuff I *don't* want to do, and I can't seem to do the stuff I *want* to do. We understand that we are citizens of Heaven, but we're still living on Earth. This is the basic struggle for all believers as they live a life of repentance and faith. It's a daily battle, one that will not be over until we see with new eyes on the other side of Glory.
- vv.21-23 Paul's language in these verses seems confused, and that is to a point: he's trying to highlight how frustrating the battle between God's Law and our sin nature is. It is helpful to see verses 21-23 as a summary of what he's said so far—he tries to sharpen the distinction between what he wants to do (obey God's Law) and what he ends up doing (falling short of the law, or sinning). The result is a war raging in the heart of the believer, and Paul finds himself taken captive to sin's campaign.
- v.24 This verse recalls Isaiah 6:5, when Isaiah glimpsed the holiness and glory of God. All of the frustration from the previous ten verses reaches a boiling point and causes Paul to exclaim, "What a wretched man I am!" He is not burdened by his inability to keep the law, but is overwhelmed by the wickedness that the law exposes inside of him. Barret noted about these verses, "The source of Paul's wretchedness is clear... it is not the conflict of a 'divided self.' Through sin, the word of God in the law has become not a comfort but an accusation. Man needs not a law but deliverance, a new creation."
- v.25 The deliverance is crystal clear and a breath of fresh air: it is the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone satisfied the standard set by the Law, and He bore the wrath meant for those who fall short of it—for anyone who would come underneath the wings of His sacrifice. He does not save us from habits, or "sins," but sin itself. We war against it, but we will not ultimately be overtaken by it—to the glory of Christ, our Savior!



## APPLY

*Your Leader Guide will have material that the member guides do not have. The **bolded** material is what the people in your group will have, the other material is only for you to help guide discussion.*

*This guide can be as strict a script or as general a resource as the leader needs it to be.*

- 1. What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?**
- 2. How have you experienced the struggle with sin that Paul describes in these verses? When do you feel most desperate to do something about the sin in your life?**
- 3. What is the difference between “sins” and “sin”? Why is that an important distinction to make?**

Sin is the sickness that has infected the human heart. Adultery, lying, and stealing are all *sins*, but sin itself is a broken relationship with God as a result of our rejecting His lordship. “It’s not *just* adultery (though it is that); it is also rebellion. Not *just* betrayal, but also treason,” writes Greg Gilbert. Sin is what happens when we reject God’s standard and insert our own in its place. For this reason, we see how all sin is equal in God’s eyes: it is all a traitorous rebellion against His lordship.

- 4. Why is it we are tolerant of some sins in our lives, but not others? How can we avoid becoming comfortable with our sin?**

As we find ourselves living in sin, our hearts become hardened to it. We stop seeing it as a big deal. We convince ourselves we could be worse, and we aren’t so bad after all. The author of Hebrews encourages us to use one another as support to keep this from happening in Hebrews 3:13, saying, “Encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.” One way to avoid repeating the cycle of sin is to constantly self-examine and live in a state of continual repentance. Another way is to find a community you can be open with who will keep you accountable.

- 5. What safeguards can you put in your life to keep you from repeating the cycle of sin?**

There are many things we can do to help: first, find accountability. If you have fellow women or men who have permission to speak into your life, they can help nip sin at the root. The more open you are with them, the easier it will be for them to help—and you can do the same for them. Second, eliminate the things you know are stumbling blocks for you. For some, that means moving the computer out of a closed room and putting it out in the open. For some, that means avoiding certain kinds of music or movies because of how they affect you mentally and spiritually. Finally, live a life saturated in the Word and in prayer. Every moment you spend focused on things of the Lord is a moment you’re less likely to give into temptation. Let the Word and the Spirit of God do work in your life.



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## RESPOND

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Challenge your group to respond either privately or corporately to this question:

- **Identify the area in which you are most tempted. Make a plan of action to avoid that temptation this week.**

Encourage one another through email, text messages, or coffee dates throughout the week to build up and encourage each other.

