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Romans 7:15-25  
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## Sin-Full

Good morning Church.

Today we have a text that is usually understood as a self-help text. A “woe is me” text about how I don’t have the willpower to follow God. This could also be understood as an AA text, where Paul is helpless under the power of addiction, which he calls sin. However, today, I want to focus on the life of Paul and reflect upon my experience at the convention. Please pray with me.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you. Our firm foundation an ever-flowing stream. Amen.

I’ve spent my years of seminary thinking about what sin is anyway? Is it when we break holy rules laid down by God? Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not lie. If that is true, all I need to do is read the bible, find the great laws, and obey them. However, when I read the bible, I find things like not wearing clothing with two types of cloth, do not eat pork, and keeping slaves is normal. Jesus talks about divorce being an option of last resort, and my parents are divorced. Paul mentions women not being able to teach men, but I grew up with women preachers. A few verses talk about same-sex relationships, and my pastoral mentor is a gay man. I realize that my whole life, the world I live in is different from the world imagined in the Bible.

So what do I do? Do I pick and choose what laws make sense to me? That feels disingenuous to me. Or do I question if this Bible is a rulebook at all?

Paul lives in a different world than his old understanding of the Hebrew Bible. One interpretation of Paul’s agony here is that he remembers when he was a Pharisee, perfect before the law, except that he was persecuting his fellow Jews for believing differently from him. Paul thought that he was doing good, following the law, or at least an understanding of the law from powerful people who had a lot to lose if people started following Jesus. However, Paul’s good intentions led to evil results. So when Paul talks about the law of sin, I believe he remembers the old way he used to believe.

This convention the quote that has stuck in my soul is. “God is far less interested in us having the right theology and far more interested in us being healed.” I am convinced that we struggle with figuring out what God wants us to do. That the rulebook will fall flat either because it does not match the world we live in or our failures. So this text inspires me to focus on healing one another.

I've found solace in Jesus's two greatest commandments, Love God and love your neighbor. That is the entirety of the law, the rest is commentary. I've taken solace in the words of Paul as he sets aside a rulebook faith, casting aside circumcision and diet to focus on the love and teachings of Jesus. I wonder where you all are at with this question. Do you know what is good? Maybe you've studied some of those troublesome passages in the Bible and found a new way of understanding them that aligns with God's command to love our neighbors.

The good news is that God is always transforming us. Teaching us from the mistakes of our past, renewing us so that we can love our neighbors and seek their healing rather than our own rightness.