

In this lesson Paul continues to wrestle with the question of the role of the law. Although the law is good in principle, without God's saving act in Jesus, it only produces more sinfulness. Paul feels two strong and opposing tendencies within his being. Without the new relationship of faith through Jesus, the regulations of the law only cause the tendency to break the law to grow stronger. Paul speaks of this as a tendency of his flesh, by which he means all within him that does not seek faithful obedience to God.

Listen now as I read this passage from the book of Romans.

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although 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 me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature<sup>[b]</sup> a slave to the law of sin.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

In our gospel lesson Jesus compares his generation to capricious children, equally displeased by the austere message of John the Baptist and the inviting message of Jesus. Yet God's wisdom will prevail. Jesus bids all to come and find that the yoke of his teaching is easy to bear. The disclosure of the divine will comes as God's gracious gift, not through human knowledge. Especially intimate is the relationship between the Lord of all life and Jesus – that of Father and Son. Although he is the Son, Jesus is humble of heart and gentle.

Hear now these words from the gospel of Matthew.

“To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

“‘We played the pipe for you,  
and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge,  
and you did not mourn.’

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Liturgist: This is the gospel message of our Lord and Savior

**All: May the reading and the hearing of Your word inform our minds, comfort our souls, and guide our feet.**

