

# The Law of Indwelling Sin

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Preacher: Tom Holland

[ 0 : 00 ] You might remember I ended last time talking about the enemy below.

! Talking about submarine warfare in World War II.! The greatest danger facing a nation at war is the enemy within.

Such an enemy is usually classified as spies or saboteurs. They can wreak havoc on a country if war breaks out between two nations.

This was true in World War II. There were many spies and saboteurs living in our country, Japanese but also German.

And the FBI was tasked with the duty of finding such and bringing them to justice. And in the wartime setting, justice usually consisted of execution.

[ 1 : 10 ] They execute spies. That's just a norm in warfare. Tonight we're going to start, as part of our overall lesson in pursuing holiness in an unknowingly world, we're going to start a series of messages, of lessons here, about the enemy that we have within.

And the enemy is within every believer. Every one of us has this enemy. And the battle against this enemy is real.

It's dangerous. It can be deadly. And the Apostle Paul understood this. And he knew there was an enemy lurking within every believer, including himself.

And let's face it, we would probably put him up at the top of Christian brothers. Post-salvation, of course. But he understood that there was an enemy within.

It was within him as it is in the life of every follower of Christ. And here's what Paul had to say, writing the words of the Holy Spirit, that the Spirit of God inspired.

[ 2 : 24 ] Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

That's a Christian man. Greatest Christian, in my view. So, I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

That's the Apostle Paul. My gosh, do I have any chance at all, if that's Paul. In verse 20, Paul speaks of a sin that dwells within.

In verse 21, he speaks of a law concerning evil. These are not only amazing statements, but they refer really to one and the same thing.

This is what the Puritans called indwelling sin in the life of the true believer. Indwelling sin is the saboteur that resides within each one of us.

[ 3 : 41 ] Now, the Scriptures are clear. We're at war. We're in battle. We're on three battle fronts.

War is difficult enough with one front. We've got three fronts. One such front is the enemy that we call Satan. And he has arrayed with him almost an uncountable number of demons.

Only God knows how many they are. Maybe millions, hundreds of millions, billions. We just simply do not know. But he's got demons on his side.

They're all part of his domain. The second battle front is the world. It is a world that we find ourselves in. A world that hates Christ and hates the followers of Christ.

We learn that from John's Gospel. Jesus talking. He says in chapter 15, verse 18, if the world hates you, and I understand that's really the word since, better translated, since the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

[ 4 : 59 ] That's the Lord Jesus Christ talking. God in human flesh. The world hates Christ.

Therefore, the world hates those who have become one with Christ.

They hate those that are serving Christ and worshiping Him in spirit and truth. I do remember the lady, D. Hill, a great black preacher from Los Angeles.

Dr. Hill, wonderful man. And one of the ladies came up to his church. Dr. McBride shared this with me. A lady came up to his church, and he said, oh, Dr. Hill, the devil's been after me all week. He said, the devil hasn't been after you. You've never done anything that scared the devil. And Dr. McBride said, when you're E.V. Hill, you can get away with it. You might not get into that at First Kilpan or First at Highland Park, but when you're E.V. Hill, you can do that. Criswell can do that. But he said, the devil's not afraid of you. This is what the Lord says in the high priestly prayer. You know, guys, get in your prayer closet sometime and take John chapter 17 and just hang out.

[6:10] This is the high priestly prayer. This is Jesus praying to the Father, and we're the fly on the wall, and we get to listen in. It's an amazing prayer. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

That's Jesus talking. Talking to the Father. Yours they were. You gave them to me, and they've kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

For I've given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

I am praying for them. Now listen to this. I'm not praying for the world. He wasn't praying in this prayer for the world of unbelievers.

He knew who they were down to our generation and beyond. I'm not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

[7:17] All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I'm glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I'm coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one even as we are one.

While I was with them, I kept them in your name which you have given me. I've guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of perdition, that's Judas, the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

But now I'm coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of this world just as I am not of this world.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. You sent me into the world, so I've sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth.

[8:41] Now, listen to this, guys. I do not ask for these only. That's the disciples. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

That's us. Down to our generation. Back in Romans, the seventh chapter, the Apostle Paul writes on a dwelling sin, or what he calls the sin within and the evil that is very close by.

We need to know something that's very powerful. Paul, writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, refers to this indwelling sin or indwelling evil as a law.

He calls it a law. I may not be intelligent enough to convey just how important that it is that the concept of indwelling sin is referred to as a law.

So I'm going to depend on the Puritan, Dr. John Owen, to define law for us tonight. Dr. Owen said, it is an inward principle that moves and inclines constantly to any action.

[10:06] That's what a law is. It's inward and it moves along and it leads us to action. We can be sure there are references to laws that are good and written for our great benefit.

Consider these words in the great chapter 8 of the book of Romans, chapter 8, verse 2. For the law, there's that word again, for the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

There's that word a second time. Twice in one verse. Law, law. But the Spirit of life has set us free in Christ from the law of sin and death.

So here we have Paul referring to two laws. There is a law of the Spirit of life and that sets us free. There's also a law of sin and death which is there wanting to absolutely destroy you.

I can't understate that, guys. And it's within. And it wants to destroy you. And it wants to destroy your wife and your children and your grandchildren.

[11:28] And now I can say your great-grandchildren. And it's within us. It's powerful. What do we know about indwelling sin?

We know it's powerful. And we know that it is effectual. It inclines us to commit acts that we don't want to commit because it suits the actions of sin dwelling in fallen flesh. You've got to remember we're in fallen flesh. The Apostle Paul, probably the greatest Christian I've ever lived, was so inclined. And by the way, I said we're three battlefronts. Flesh is the third. We live in fallen flesh. Here's words of the greatest Christian that ever lived. Consider what he says in Romans 7 starting in verse 13. Did that which is good bring death to me? It's talking about Christ, the Spirit of God, the Word of God. Did it bring death to me?

[12:40] By no means. It was sin. Paul says, no. It was sin producing death in me through what is good in order that sin might be shown to be sin and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

Wow! For we know that the law is spiritual. But I am of the flesh sold under sin.

It's not like a slave, does it? And then listen to this. This is angst. He agonizes here. For I do not understand my own actions.

Well, Paul, if you don't understand your own actions, I don't understand mine. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want to do, but I do the very thing that I hate.

Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law. Because I know the law is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

[14:00] For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and make me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

And listen to the heart cry of Paul, wretched man that I am. What a wretch that I am.

I looked that word up. Wretched is from a Greek word, teleporos, and there's only two meanings and they're both related. It means miserable. What a miserable man I am.

[15:27] And the only other place in the New Testament where the word teleporos shows up is in the words of Christ describing the horrid apostate church of Laodicea in the third chapter of the book of Revelation.

It's only used twice, that Greek word in the New Testament. In Revelation 3.17, for you say, this is Laodicea, you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, and you don't realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

I would say Jesus didn't cover that over. He wasn't very milquetoast on that deal. Wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

John Owen, again, our great Puritan, described the law of indwelling sin like this. There is great efficacy and power in the remains of indwelling sin and believer and that it's constantly working as towards evil.

It's in believers and it's heading toward evil. So indwelling sin is classified as a law living inside followers of Christ.

[17:00] It's in believers. Now, I want to split some hairs here, but it is not a law to them, in them, but not to them, and I hope I can adequately explain that.

I haven't adequately explained it to myself today. Maybe I can get through to you guys and you can help me with it. You know, what does that mean? Namely, that the law of indwelling sin, though it is in us, has been broken.

The law's been fractured. It was fractured, it was broken at Calvary by Christ on the cross. There, its rule over us was broken.

Its strength and efficacy were weakened and impaired. It's still there, but it's weakened and it's impaired. The very root cause of indwelling sin, Satan, was defeated.

I don't think he's locked onto that yet, but it happened. He's a defeated foe. But we must also at the same time recognize the fact that indwelling sin, as a law, has great force in the life of believers.

[18:27] Great force. Now we've already observed that the apostle Paul found this law of indwelling sin in himself. He really articulates that well, some in chapter 6, but really in chapter 7 of Romans.

I read it often. Never read Romans 7 without reading Romans 8. 1. And I'll tell you how I interpret that. Because in Romans 8.

1, it's like Paul pours out his heart in Romans 7, I can't do it. I don't do what I want to do. I do what I don't want to do. I'm a wretched man. And it's like in chapter 8 verse 1, the Holy Spirit says, I know Paul, I understand.

That's why there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. He reserves no condemnation for those that are in Christ.

Fantastic verse of Scripture. So Paul found this law in dwelling in himself. It's in all of us.

[ 19 : 41 ] And it's one thing to realize that it exists in others, but quite disturbing when we have to acknowledge that it dwells in each of us. when I have to get in my closet and say, Lord, I don't know how many times I've repented of this, but I'm going to do it again.

I'm sure that doesn't happen to any of you guys. The fact that sin dwells inside fallen flesh of every believer does not mean that we do not desire to do that which is good and proper.

We do want to do that. Clearly we do. We read again in Romans 7 21 though, so I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, you catch those words?

Hey, we got something on the horizon. We can do something really good and proper and right.

Then evil lies close at hand. That's when the screws are turned.

We're going to do something really good on this. Wham! That's all in one sentence. When I want to do right, evil is close at hand. Just focus on those words.

[ 20 : 54 ] When I want to do right, that can be both the desire and it can also be the plight for the true believer. We want to do right, but evil is lurking close by.

The reason it is close is because it is inside us in our fallen humanity. we walk around with the temple of God in us.

The Holy Spirit of God resides in us. But guess what else resides in our fallen flesh? It's evil. We want to do right, but evil is lurking close by.

The reason it is close is because we have it in fallen flesh. And we're still in this world. We're still here. I think I told you about the lady that joined our church and got baptized one Sunday.

Dr. McBride was here. And the next day, no, that night, she got robbed at her apartment. I pulled a gun, robbed her.

[ 21 : 57 ] Came in Monday morning, saw Dr. McBride, and says, what happened? I became a Christian yesterday, and then I get robbed last night? And Mike said, you're not in heaven.

You're still on earth. She said, I don't want any part of this and walked out. We never saw her again.

She wasn't any part of it. At our worst, as believers, we are still better than unbelievers at their best.

They have sin in them and to them. But it is a law in us, but not to us. The will of an unbeliever is under the power of the law of sin.

And we see that played out every day, don't we? As an unbeliever, it is never taken away from them. Never taken away unless the Lord saves them.

Only then. Unbelievers do not choose good because they know this is the will of God in their life.

Sin is always there. It's always there.

[ 23 : 11 ] Sometimes it's out front. Other times hiding in the shadows, but it is there. Now, I want to be clear on something. No confusion. I'm not suggesting that unbelievers are incapable of doing anything good at all.

Of course they are. Of course they are. simply not true that unbelievers can't do any good things. I think of Dr.

Salk, who most of you never heard that name, but he invented the polio vaccine. You guys of a certain age, maybe we went down and had to get those polio shots and the needle was about that long.

My gosh. And we all went down and lined up. I think we had to get three of them. and I think they came out with the oral polio thing just about the time after I got my third shot.

But Dr. Salk created that vaccine on his own. Saved billions of lives from polio, from the iron lung.

[ 24 : 14 ] Some young guys may not want to know what an iron lung is. Had to spend your whole life in an iron tube that breathed for you. That was Dr.

Salk. Died an unbelieving agnostic Jew. Never came to Christ that we know of. But unbelievers can do some good things.

It would be like saying, well, believers are incapable of doing anything bad or evil. That's not true either. And we all know that. But in the life of an unbeliever, sin is in control and ready to pounce. Even the best efforts of an unbeliever have sin lurking in the shadows. It's always there somewhere. Now, there's some very good news for followers of Christ.

Though we have within us the law of sin, we also have in us the desire and inclination to do good. Paul says, I want to do good. I want to do what's right and proper.

[ 25 : 30 ] When God bestowed grace upon us, He sovereignly changed our will to be able to do what is good. This is part of our new nature.

We're going to be talking about new nature, new creation in Christ Jesus. Not tonight, but in the future. Two things happen when God grants us a new nature. First, we now are inclined to do what is good, both morally and spiritually.

Second, when we fail at this, and we must admit there is frequent failure, we are convicted of that sin.

Now, all of a sudden, we've got conviction. Why is that? Holy Spirit taking up residence in you. And we're convicted of sin and driven to our knees in our closet of confession.

A person that can sin repeatedly without conviction doesn't bother them. No desire to confess that is not a follower of Christ.

[ 26 : 40 ] They may have come forward and raised their hand and said some words, and they may have gotten wet. But I'm telling you, that happens when the Holy Spirit takes up residence.

To balance this out, I would also say that a person who claims that he has no sin in him is not a believer. The opening chapter of the Apostle John's first epistle makes that abundantly clear.

1 John 1. 8. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Well, that's pretty starting.

That's scary. And I've had two or three times in my life, guys that claim to be followers of Christ, that they've arrived at a place of sinless perfection.

The first time that happened, I got in a discussion and a debate. When I was through, that guy hated me. He had lost his salvation. I mean, he thought he was doomed. He was so mad at me. But it says that.

[ 27 : 44 ] And if that's not enough, you can skip down a verse, two verses, to 1 John 1.10. If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar.

God says we're sinners, and you just said you're not a sinner, so is God lying or are you lying?

That's what that says. And if we make God a liar, then His word is not in us.

His word is not in us. Those are powerful verses. What should our response be to the sins we commit? How do we respond to known sin within us?

Well, 1 John 1.9. Right in the middle. If we confess our sins, and that's homologo, that's name it, that's see sin with God's eyes and acknowledge that, yes, that's sin.

I see it with your eyes, Lord. if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[ 28 : 53 ] I had one guy preaching on that passage and he said, when we confess our sins, He not only forgives us that sin, but then He goes further and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

And this guy said, those are the sins we've committed, either didn't realize we committed them or forgot that we committed them. And He cleanses us of all unrighteousness.

When Dr. McBride was our pastor, he gave us some very good counsel. He said this, keep short accounts with God. Keep short accounts.

When you sin, you go to the Lord. you go to the Lord. Now let me tell you this, you can't say, Lord, I'm going to commit this sin tonight, but then I'm going to confess it to you.

That's antinomianism. We'll talk about that sometime. That's false theology. No. When you sin, you go to the Lord. Keep short accounts with God.

[ 29 : 58 ] There's another point I want to make here on this opening lesson on indwelling sin. This is in the life of the believer. another quote from Dr. Owen. Indwelling sin is particularly active in rebelling and inclining to evil when the will to do good is particularly inclined to obedience.

He's sort of like saying, hey, Lord, I'm getting up here at six in the morning and I'm going to have a wonderful quiet time with you and I really want to be obedient today. I'll be obedient to you.

And then it's like the whole world crashes in on you, you know. And you go to bed and say, it wasn't a good day, Lord, I would have. Again, we appeal to the Apostle Paul, when I would do good, evil

is present with me.

He's already told us that. This is how Paul expressed it a few verses earlier. That was verse 21 in Romans 7. Listen to this in verse 18. This is Paul.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

[ 31 : 21 ] Wow. Wow. So we have a battle raging within us. we want to do good.

That's a product of grace. And the law of sin in our fallen flesh jumps into the fray and says, no, no, no, you're not going to do good. Paul explained this to us in the book of Galatians.

I mean, the explanation for that doesn't get any clearer than Galatians 5.17. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit.

And spirit there is capitalized. Indwelling spirit. And the desires of the spirit are against the flesh. I mean, the spirit and the flesh are at war.

Where's the battlefield? It's in us. For these two things, spirit, flesh, are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

[ 32 : 35 ] That's Paul. Galatians 5.17. So in our lesson tonight, we've seen two principles that are at work. And they're working within us.

There is the inclination to do what is good and proper. That is planted in the life of the believer. God intends that to grow throughout our Christian walk.

It goes by the name of sanctification. And whether you know it or not, but the last several years in here, we've been in a process, I hope, of being sanctified.

Of growing in Christ. Of knowing more about the Lord. This growth goes by the name sanctification. There is also the inclination to do what is sinful or evil.

That is the sin that indwells our fallen flesh. And I can't stress any more than to say it again, they both live inside us.

[ 33 : 40 ] That's why the battle is so joined. Since this is true, we must be thoroughly familiar with them. And I mean thoroughly.

if we intend to glorify God and walk with Him in this life, we must know what dwells within us and what's going on inside us.

There is the Spirit of God within us and there is the enemy of God within us called indwelling sin. Let me give you a closing quote from Dr.

Owen. Very instructive. Wake up all of you in whose hearts is anything of the ways of God.

Your enemy is not only upon you as is the case of Samson in the old book of Judges but is actually in you. He is at work by every kind of force and cunning.

[ 34 : 47 ] If you desire not to dishonor God and His gospel, not to scandalize the saints and disgrace the ways of God, not to wound your consciences and endanger your souls, not to grieve the good and Holy Spirit of God, the author of all your comforts, but rather to keep your garments undefiled, to escape the wretched temptations and pollutions of the days in which we live, to be preserved from adding to the number of apostates in the latter days, rouse yourselves to a right estimation of this cursed enemy, the source of all these and innumerable other evils and also the ruin of all the souls that perish in this world.

Unbelievers perish because of sin in them. We battle because of sin in us. Well, we could end there, but it's kind of depressing. Why don't we end with an encouraging note?

How would you like to do that? 1 John 4.4 Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Much greater.

And guess how I ended? Thus endeth our lesson tonight. I broke into old English. I can't believe you're doing that. But I did.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your great love for us, for all that you mean to us, Lord. Thank you that you've taken up residence in us.

[ 36 : 33 ] And not only are we involved in battle, but you'll fight for us. Lord, we want to walk with you. We want to do those things that are good.

We know there's an enemy. We know you're more powerful than that enemy. We know that you're returning for us because you promised us you would. We look forward to that day, and until that day, we want to occupy until you come.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.