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*Wretched man that I am!
Who will rescue me from
this body of death?*

-Romans 7:24

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Ever found yourself feeling overwhelmed or having had it up to your neck? How about feeling like you have been treading water so long that you are almost paralyzed? Apparently this is what the Apostle Paul felt when he was writing to the church at Rome. He was writing to a people who in many ways had everything going for them.

Rome was thought to be the capitol of the world at the time of his writing. The empire was at the top of “its game” if, an empire can be so spoken of. The entire world bowed before Rome. Rome had imposed their brand of culture upon the nations and

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PASTOR'S *Perspective*

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the world. They even sought to shape the way people thought about religion as well. To be Roman meant that you had privilege. It meant that your rights were to be respected anywhere you went. As a Roman one could also make certain demands and get others to deny themselves just to accede to those demands. Because of all of this privilege and pedestal positioning, the Romans felt that they could get away with any type of lifestyle or behavior. They engaged sin over and over with impunity.

Paul had a different idea. Using himself as example he implored the Romans to an understanding of the inner conflict that humans experience in the quest for right styled living and relationship with God. So he sets into motion a discourse in the 7th Chapter of Romans on the law and sin and then allows the discussion to progress to the struggle humans have inwardly with sin. In fact Paul declares that the struggle is so great that as humans we do not even understand ourselves and our own actions. He further declares that he does not do the thing he wants but instead engages the thing he hates. That thing is of course, sin. He says it is not he that does this but the sin that dwells within him. Imagine that, we don't do it; instead it is the sin that dwells in us that causes us to turn from that which is right and aligned with the way of God. This is a powerful implication for the human

condition. This means that we are prone to wander away from God and sin! It also means that the flesh is flawed to the point that even though we 'will' to do the right thing, we still fail in doing it! And finally, even though we would do good we become overwhelmed by sin and thus can't do good, at least not of our own volition.

How are we to get out of this vicious cycle? How are we to break this ever widening and deepening conundrum? In verse 24 of this chapter Paul refers to himself as a “wretched man.” Who will rescue me from this body of death? Sounds like Paul is looking for or hoping for a way out. Or perhaps better stated a bail out! That word is a familiar one to all of us as of late. But we think of it in terms of the economic conditions that we now face. What about the need to get us out of the sinful proclivities that permeate our nature? What about the way out of our often debauched and diabolical leanings that too often result in our living at variance with God? For Paul the answer is Jesus Christ. The bailout comes in the form of the abiding presence of Jesus Christ as our choice and in choosing Him we gain the power over sin's grip that only can come from Him. His is a power that can harness our misplaced desires, lusts and sinful inclinations and release them to His will and purpose for our life. Bailout needed? It is available and waiting for you, no strings attached!