

Romans 7:7-25

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Preacher: Ty Brunet

[0 : 00] Please take your copy of God's Word and turn to Romans chapter 7 with me.! Romans 7, verses 7-25.

What then shall we say that the law is sin? By no means. Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.

For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, You shall not covet. But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness.

For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.

For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

So the law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

[1 : 10] Did that which is good then bring death to me? By no means. 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 all measure.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

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

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, I keep on doing.

Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

[2 : 23] 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 making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I myself serve the law of God in my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Pray with me. Father, we thank you that your word is powerful, and it cuts through joint marrow to the intentions of our heart. And as we consider our wrestling with sin and holiness in this life, help us, Lord.

Convict us where we need to be convicted. Lord, let us stand and abide upon your truth, and let our hope be in Jesus Christ who will rescue us.

In Jesus' name, amen. So last week, our sermon text was Romans 7, 1 through 6. In Romans 7, 1 through 6, the main idea was that in Christ, we have been set free from the law so that we can serve by the Spirit.

[3 : 40] We saw that unbelievers are under the rule of the law. When we're in Adam, the law held us captive to its holy and righteous standards. Under the law's dominion, we're required to give exact obedience, and if broken, we received its penalties.

Galatians 3.10 says, Cursed is everyone who does not keep all things written in the book of the law. James 2.10 says, To break one part of the law is to break the whole law.

So under the law's rules, our sinful passions were aroused, and we did works that produced bad fruit. We broke the law, and we deserve the penalties of it.

Jesus Christ came and set us free from the law. As our federal head, he represented us. He lived and died in our place. To fulfill his covenant and provide us redemption, he himself went under the law and took its consequences.

Jesus perfectly obeyed the law, fulfilling it for us. And Jesus sacrificially took the consequences of the law becoming a curse for us and removing our curse.

[4 : 51] Jesus represented us in keeping the law, enduring the curse. We've been freed from the rule of the law and its penalties. We now belong to another. We belong to Jesus Christ.

The Son has set us free, and we are free indeed, brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit then takes this work that Jesus did and unites us to Christ.

He gives us new hearts and puts the law within us, causing us to walk in his ways. So now we serve by the way of the Spirit. We live to please God and to bear fruit for him.

You are no longer under the law, but you are under grace. Now, as we come to Romans 7, 7 through 25, I'd like to introduce our text by revisiting Martin Luther's life for two reasons.

Tuesday was Reformation Day, as we consider Martin Luther's stand and the other reformers as they worked to help remove us from, or remove themselves from, the dominion that they were under and the false beliefs of the gospel.

[5 : 55] As they stood on the gospel and justification by faith alone, through grace alone, and Christ alone. So I'd like to revisit that. The second reason is because his struggle that he had with temptation that he called *infectum* is a really good introduction to our text today.

So as last week, I told you that Luther struggled with the temptation that he called *infectum*. He describes the struggle as dread, as anxiety, as foreboding doom.

At one point, Luther said, there is not one corner in him that was not filled with the most bitterness, the most horror, the most fear-dollared, and all these things, this dread, this anxiety, this bitterness, seemed eternal.

At the rustling of dry leaves, it seems as if the universe was going to collapse on him. This struggle led unbelieving Luther to the cross and to embrace a biblical understanding of justification by faith alone.

But for Luther, this spiritual struggle, this temptation, is not merely momentary. For the rest of his life, he struggled with subsequent experiences of temptation that made him feel dreadful, made him feel sad and depressed, that brought great anxiety in him.

[7 : 14] Luther once said, temptation and experience certainly teach us that faith is a really difficult art. Luther contended that faith and theology are wrought on the anvil of temptation.

For Luther, his commitment to be holy and to kill any sin within him produced this rich and steadfast faith, this unshakable faith that stood the temptations to be free from his struggles, that stood the temptations to be living and not be condemned and suffer death from the Roman Catholic Church. We may not struggle with the same experience as Luther, or we may, but for most of us, I don't think we have the intensity of this spiritual conflict. But we do all experience temptation of sin.

And we all have a warfare where we wrestle with sin. There's ill thoughts and desires in our hearts, but we want to be holy. We want to follow God. We want to please God.

So my hope today is as we come to Romans 7, verses 7 through 25, that we see while we have been freed from the dominion of sin and while we've been freed from the law, there remains a war with sin until Jesus Christ rescues us.

[8 : 34] So if you have your bulletin, I provide an outline for this morning. And I'm going to read the three points on that outline. Point number one. We were sinful beyond measure.

Point number two. We experience a war in the inner man. And point number three. We will be delivered from this body of death. So point one.

We were sinful beyond measure. In verses 7 through 13, Paul describes his experience as an unbeliever. And we see this because all the verbs that are used are in the past tense.

Communicating a past action. Something that's happening in the past. After verse 14, or after verse 13, Paul begins using a present tense. So the text is very clear that he's talking about the past.

And then we get into verse 14. It becomes the present. He starts talking about his current struggle with temptation. Verses 7 through 13 go to explain for us verse 5, which says, for while we are living in the flesh, our sinful passions aroused by the law, we're at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

[9 : 50] And then Romans 7, 7 through 14, describes how the law aroused sin while remaining holy and righteous. How does the law remain holy and righteous but in the same sense arouse sin, incite sin within the unbelieving heart?

And we'll see that the law is good and the law is holy and the law is righteous but we are sinful beyond measure. It is the law that reveals our sin and sends us to the gospel for justification. So verse 7, we see another question posed to challenge our thinking. And then Paul provides us with the answer to the question to clarify this truth, to hone in on it so we have a good understanding of what he's communicating.

So the verse says, what then shall we say? Is the law sin? Since the law arouses sin, is the law itself sin? By no means, Paul responds.

And then he spends the next four verses explaining how the law is not sin. And he concludes in verse 12, the law is holy and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

[10 : 56] So Paul's conclusion is the question, is the law sin? Is that no, by no means, the law is not sin. The law is a reflection of God's perfections.

What the law is doing in the unbeliever's life is exactly what it was purposed to do. It reveals the unrighteousness of the unbelieving heart. It reveals what sin is and it points people to Jesus, points to one who fulfilled the law for him, who took the curse.

The law tells us what it is to be righteous, holy, and good. But it not only tells us what it is to be holy, righteous, and good. The law itself is holy, righteous, and good.

The law comes from God and it reflects his character through its commands. To call the law sin would to accuse a lawgiver of being sinful. Paul explains that the law cannot be sin but because it reflects the giver's perfect being.

It reflects God in its commands. So we see here that the Ten Commandments themselves are righteous and they show righteousness. They are holy and they show what it looks like to live a holy life.

[12 : 07] And they are good and they show what it is to be good. And the law ultimately points to God, the one who is supremely righteous, who is supremely good, and supremely holy.

So in the following verses we're going to see the law's purpose in revealing sin. We see that the law exposes sin by delineating right from wrong. It's a perfect standard.

It shows what God expects and shows what right is and what wrong is. For verse 7, it says, Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.

For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, You shall not covet. The law defines what sin is. It is like a lighthouse that shines into our hearts and exposes the sin within.

It defines what it is to be contrary to God. What it is to be against God and His ways. So while God is chief good, God is holy and He is righteous and He is good, the law is the chief evil.

[13 : 07] It's a rejection of Him and His ways. Jeremiah Burroughs called the law or called the sin the evil of evils. Sin is a rejection of God and is lawless.

Sin is heinous and it is a monstrosity. It should not be. Sin is pure evil and a grievous thing. Sin is a willful rejection of God and His sufficiency and who He is.

It's a rejection of His holiness. He is righteous and sin is unrighteous. Sin loves the creature more than the creator.

Sin exchanges the glory of God and enthrones idols. And the law reveals what this sin is. It delineates right from wrong. In the sinful passion of our flesh, apart from Christ, the understanding of the law aroused sin.

In verse 8, Paul says, but sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Here, Paul is portraying sin at work.

[14 : 13] Sin is an action. It's doing something. And the word for opportunity portrays military advancement, a military operation. So it's as if sin saw a weakness and through that weakness staged an assault.

The commandment to not covet was the base of operations or the way in which sin attacked Paul and incited in Paul all types of covetousness. So the commandment that said do not covet then in the sinner aroused what it is to covet and to do more covetousness.

It aroused sin. You can probably think of a time in your life when you were told not to do something and in being told not to do something it then provoked in you to do that thing that you're told not to do.

Parents, you've probably seen this in your kids. As you tell them not to do something and then they do what you tell them not to do. Sin takes advantage of the law to stir in us more sin. In the depraved heart the commandment becomes a production factory where sin is mass produced and from it comes all kinds of covetousness. Paul describes a time when he was alive apart from the law.

[15 : 21] You see in the next verse it says I was alive apart from the law. He does not mean that he was not aware of the law. Paul was raised in law. He knew the Torah at a young age. He knew the commandments.

This is talking about a time where Paul lived without an awareness of God's righteousness. Without an awareness that he was under judgment from the law and condemned by it. This is when we could call Paul a happy pagan.

He lived self-righteous and self-assured in his pharisaical life. He lived as he would say that I was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He lived in this way that he enjoyed the world and the pleasure within.

And we can also probably reflect on this time when before we came to Christ we lived in our sin unaware of God's law and we reveled in it. We enjoyed sin.

It was our delight. But Paul goes on to say that when the commandment came it penetrated our hearts. It penetrated his heart. When the commandment came sin came alive and I died.

[16 : 25] When he grew an awareness of what sin is of his own wickedness the law brought conviction. It exposed him and in doing so he produced more sin but his sin continually was exposed.

He continually felt this weight of conviction. Once he was alive apart from the law now he's dead according to Romans 7. Once he was alive but the law came and the sin deceived him and he was killed.

Sin exposes to us or the law exposes to us sin. And sin deceives us and it kills us. It shows our inability to be righteous. It shows that we cannot live by the law but we live under the law in a poor state because we can't fulfill the commandments.

We have no ability to keep them. So then Paul raises another question. So the law exposes sin.

The second question Paul raises is did the good law bring death to me?

And he responds again by no means. The law did its job. It exposed sin and made it known. It demonstrates our wretched state. It demonstrates that we could not be righteous and it said that from this exposure from the sin being made known to him that he was sinful beyond all measure.

[17 : 48] So Paul got to a point in his life where he was sinful beyond all measure but then came the gospel. because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection Paul was set free from his great sinfulness and God has done the same work in us.

If we apart from Christ look at the law it will show us how we can't fulfill it. It will show us all the places that we have broke it. It will show the times that we did not worship God.

It will show all our array of idols. It will show the times we did not love our neighbor as ourselves.

The times we covet and the times we lust and the times we steal. But Jesus Christ came he fulfilled the law and he took the curse for us and we have been set free from the rule of the law.

We are now free in Christ. So after Paul explains his former sinful state he seeks to explain how sin still remains within us though. We have been freed from the dominion of sin we have been freed from the rule of the law but we still experience sin today.

There is a battle between our new nature our new man and between our old nature and our old man. This battle has been won in Christ. Christ has defeated sin and death but until he comes again or until we die we will still experience this battle and one day we will be freed from this flesh and sin will be no more.

[19 : 14] So point number two we experience a war in the inner man. In verse 14 Paul goes from speaking in the past to now speaking in the present and Paul is speaking of himself and his current experience.

There is much argument much discussion among people about whether this text is speaking all about Paul's past life or if as Paul being a mature man this is a current experience for him.

I think because he was speaking in the past and now he's speaking in the present it's clear that he's talking about his current life that he is writing to the Romans explaining that now he struggles with sin now he's waiting to be free from this body of death and I hope to show that as we continue.

So all Christians struggle with sin until we will be home with God and free from this sinful nature. This is what Paul communicates in verse 14 when he says Paul expresses attention here that he knows the law is spiritual but he still wrestles he's still in the flesh still under sin he still is sold into sin he's free from his dominion but it's still within him and this brings us to the question of how do we understand man for us to properly understand sex we need to have a biblical lens by which we see man how do we understand Paul's struggle and how does that help us understand our struggle so in describing man often the scriptures talk about inner man and outer man it talks about a physical bodily faculty this outer man and it talks about an inner faculty this spiritual emotional intellectual part of man that we call the inner man while the scriptures define inner man and outer man a physical body and a spiritual self that has emotions and intellect and desires these two cannot be fully separated the bible extinguished them but the body influences our soul and our soul influences our body what we have called this what this has been called is the psycho somatic union and basically that is saying the soul and body union or like what biblical counselors call it the embodied soul in the scriptures the inner man which is our spiritual state the intellectual our desires our thoughts all that stems from our inner man and often times this is talked about as the heart proverbs 4:23 says keep your heart with all diligence for from it flows the spring of life so i say all that to say when we get to romans 7:14 through 25 paul is exposing his inner man he's talking about the way he struggles inside himself the battle within his heart and i think as we get into this you can relate you can relate to how you struggle with sin and feel paul's tension so in romans 7 it's as if paul takes a surgeon's scapel and opens his heart to express a war that is occurring within himself within his heart in romans 7:23 we read but i see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members in romans 7:23 there are two laws there is the law of sin and death the flesh and then there's the law of the spirit and there are two laws are waging war against one another we have often called this the old man and the new man the flesh and the spirit in romans 4 that's what paul calls it in romans 7 it's our new heart with renewed desires and it's our flesh with indwelling sin the law of the spirit of life and the law of sin and death but these laws he's talking about are not perfect standards they're not rules that are put before paul he's now talking about inward influences he's talking about principles that are in him there is a principle by which the spirit is in him producing life there's a principle by which indwelling sin is in him and influencing him and we see this in romans 7 john owen explains this a little bit further he says that these influences the spirit and the flesh constantly moves and inclines us towards any action these two laws within us are powerful and they're affecting us seeking to move us to good or to evil to righteousness to please god and love him or to sin and to follow the ways of our flesh so let's look at each principle separately the first principle the spirit of life this is the holy spirit that has given us new hearts the bible says when we become christians the holy spirit comes in us takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh the spirit gives us new hearts and puts the law of god within us causing us desires to follow him and do his will he has changed within us our desires to live for ourselves to live the old life that paul was talking about in the earlier parts of romans 7 and now we want to do good there's a desire in us that we want to please god we want to love him and to delight in him and his commandments the spirit is at work in the inner man causing us and working on us to love god and to delight in his law and we see this in romans chapter 7 verse 16 says i agree with the law that it is good verse 18 i desire to do what is right verse 22 i delight in the law of god in my inner being in verse 25 i myself serve the law of god with my mind the holy spirit is in us now and he is doing a work of renovation over the span of the christian's life the spirit is changing us changing the man and making us more like jesus our lives are being conformed now to the image of christ we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another by the work of the spirit we call this work this transformation this renovation of the spirit where the new man is growing and helping us love god more progressive sanctification philippians 2:13 through 14 say therefore my beloved as you have always obeyed so now not only as in my presence but much more in my absence work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is god who works in you to will and to work for his good pleasure see as even now we desire to do right and do good we desire to love god to keep his commandments and we do this working it out with fear and trembling but in the end there is this new man the spirit that is working and willing in us transforming us and conforming us more into christ and one day we will escape the flesh romans 8:2 says that the spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death the law and sin and death have been killed in our union with christ we're free from the law of sin and death the old man is experiencing a lingering death while

the new man is experiencing progressive life do you see that that our flesh is slowly dying and one day we'll be gone and our spiritual side our spiritual man is continually growing and progressing as we look to be holy and look more like god so that leads us to the bulk of this text the second principle which is the influence the principle of the law of sin and death this is the old man this is what paul calls his flesh this is the sin that remains in us so let's look at how romans 7 talks about this law this influence of the flesh verse 14 i am of the flesh sold under sin verse 15 i do not understand

[28 : 02] my actions verse 15 i do the very thing i hate verse 17 sin dwells within me verse 18 nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh verse 18 i do not have the ability to carry out good verse 19 the evil i do not want is what i keep doing verse 20 sin dwells within me verse 21 evil lies close at hand verse 23 indwelling sin is making me captive to the law of sin in verse 24 we live in a body of death and finally verse 25 with my flesh i serve the law of sin it is clear that this condition this flesh that we have is active and that while we do good evil lies close at hand there's this tension between the spiritual nature and the old man new man and old man and our indwelling sin has powerful influence on us it's seeking to capture us to captivate us and to lead us into more evil we do not understand the extent of the influence that's in us by this sin or always how it is working but while we are in this body we're experiencing its poisonous effects its influence upon us james 1 13 says that our flesh entices us and drags us away in romans 7 our flesh deceives us this inward influence is so deep that paul says that he cannot understand its depths of its influence in fact he says he does the very thing he hates because of its effectual influence on him the effect of indwelling sin is so deep in us that we do right but evil is close at hand and while we live in this body everything we do evil will always be close by us trying to sway us trying to entice us into sin the flesh wants us to follow its desires so in

John Owen's work that he calls indwelling sin he says this regarding the tension and regarding the law of sin wherever you are whatever you are about the law of sin is always in you in the best that you do in the worst men little consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them when they are in company when alone by night or by day all is one sin is with them there is a living coal continually in their house which if it is not looked after will burn up in fire and it may consume them oh the woeful security of poor souls how little do most men think of this inbred enemy that is never away from home how little for the most part doth the watchfulness of any professors answer the danger of their state and their condition brothers and sisters our inner man is always waging war within us between living in the spirit and living in the flesh and there is great application here this comes home to us this goes into our daily experience and what we learn is that the greatest enemy is not outside of us it is not our spouse it is not our friends it is not our children our jobs our health or our vices the greatest enemy that we have is within us it is sin that dwells in us our greatest problem is not outside of us but within us it is the sin that dwells in you the enemy is a dangerous companion that is always close at hand this enemy is always seeking to seduce you and sway you by its power indwelling sin is a siren call seeking to lead poor souls away to its lusts and desires think dear believer of the times your heart is easily tempted of speaking ill of others think about the times that poisonous words come in your mind of gossip or slander or come out of your mouth towards others think about how quick a wayward thought comes into our mind and entices us with its lust think how deceptive our flesh is at forming idols in us when we don't even know! and then we see them and we work to get rid of them brothers and sisters look after this burning coal of indwelling sin when the siren call is sounding plug your ears tie yourself to the mast pluck out your eyes cut off your hands do not fall into the grips of the enemy do not let sin lead your life and entice you with this I'd like to offer five points of application number one be watchful we are much more sinful and viler than we think our sin and satan are seeking to snare us it says that the devil is scheming schemes and temptations to catch us we need to be sensitive we need to have a sensitive conscience to sin our conscience is God's gift to us it's God's deputy of our soul it's God's court for our lives a sensitive conscience knows God's law and it examines our thoughts our motives and our actions by it and if they contradict it it seeks to kill that sin it watches to see if our words are

God honoring it checks to see if our motives are God exalting and it searches our desires to expose any self exalting self pleasing impulse so labor brothers and to yield the law as an instrument of your conscience and expose sin and kill it verse 21 says even when we seek to do right evil lies close at hand the most holy sin to sin to to sin to sin!

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[34 : 43] to press on humility is an antidote to pride because it depends on God and not oneself and we see this in the saints in the Bible Paul calls himself the very least of all the saints Job says that he despises himself David calls himself a worm in the following quotes by Thomas Brooks I believe will encourage us this morning those who are most highly valued and esteemed of by God are lowest and least in their own estimation the believer who desires to walk in humility views themselves through the lens of Christ who bore the cross in shame and disgrace to purchase salvation for sinners a humble heart serves a humble heart loves a humble heart recognizes that not even a crumb of mercy is deserved and finally oh labor every day to be more humble and more low and little in your own eyes point number three for application be quick to repent to give a little of sense influence provides a breeding ground for more sin do not be captivated by its influence do not walk back into your old master cell do not listen to the siren's call you are no longer under sin's dominion john bunyan warns take heed of giving thyself liberty of committing sin for that will lead to another then you'll be in an ill custom and it will come natural to sin to begin a sin is to lay a foundation for a continuance of sin number four sigh and cry!

We need a desire to eradicate every thought and motive that is sinful Thomas Watson says a godly man does not indulge himself in any sin though sin lives in him yet he does not live in sin we need to abhor and hate sin and the effects it has on us we need to hate what it does to our relationship with God we need to hate the harm it does to our relationships and we need to hate it itself sin is tragic lastly for points of application rest in Jesus Christ indwelling sin should lead us to rest in Jesus while we will war against sin our whole lives Jesus has defeated sin and death and he has provided us victory he has done all the work so come rest in his grace today enjoy the cool springs of calvary and the warm embrace of your father because he worked for you so finally that leads us to our third point and the shortest point number three we will be delivered from this body of death we see the power and effects of the law of sin and death in our members the text says this evil we do we do not want to do and the good we want to do we do not do we do the very thing we hate sin dwells in me and evil lies close at hand this leads

Paul to lament you see the lament in the text he says wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death and then he ends with hope hope that in his grief of his sin in the devastating effects as his emotion bubbles up of his own wretchedness that there's hope in his lament and this hope is Jesus Christ thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord Jesus has defeated sin and death on the cross the influence and effect of sin on believers is temporary it will be done away with one day and because Jesus conquers on the cross the believer lives in victory when Jesus comes back we'll escape this body or when we die we'll escape this flesh we will be with Jesus and sin will be no more and this is what Paul's longing for I long for the day where I can love God I can enjoy God and I have no evil at hand there's no temptation no sin in my heart but pure joy delight and love in my father that's

Paul's longing armor because when this life is over we will leave our sin natures we will escape this body of death the war will be over and sin and death will be defeated so wage war against sin against the devil and against the world put on your armor gird up the loins of your minds and set your hope fully on the grace that will be revealed to you take every thought captive to Christ wage war now because there comes a day when the war will cease Jesus is coming and we will be delivered from this body of death oh how we await the day when sin is no longer a thought and right now as we await that day there remains a battle a war until Jesus rescues us so in closing I want to read the hymn on the back of your outline oh church arise and hope this is an encouragement for us to push forward to wage war and to set our affections minds upon

God it says oh church arise and put your armor on hear the call of Christ our captain for now the weak can say that they are strong in the strength that God has given with shield of faith and belt of truth we'll stand against the devil's lies an army bold whose battle cries love reaching out to those in darkness are called a war to love the captive soul but to rage against the captor and with the sword that makes the wounded whole we will fight with faith and valor when faced with trials on every side we know the outcome is secure and Christ will be the prize for which he died an inheritance of nations come see the cross where love and mercy meet as the son of God is stricken then see his foes lie crushed beneath his feet for the conqueror has risen and as the stone is rolled away and Christ emerges from the grave this victory march continues till the day every eye and heart will see him so spirit come put strength in every stride give grace for every hurdle that we may!

[41 : 19] run with faith to win the prize of his servant good and faithful as saints of old line the way
retelling triumphs of his grace we hear their calls and hunger for the day when with Christ we stand
in glory will you pray with me