

**“Timeless Classic Doctrine #6 - Sinner Saints”**

Back in 1886, Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson published a short novel entitled “Strange Case of Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde.” The short novel is about a good, social, and helpful Dr. Henry Jeckyll who would drink a serum that would transform him into the evil Henry Hyde so he could indulge his sinful, self-indulgent, and uncaring behavior. Even if you have never read this timeless classic, “Strange Case of Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde,” you have been impacted by it because the expression “Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde” has become a part of our English way of speaking. Sometimes we find ourselves describing someone having an unpredictable Jeckyll/Hyde personality. One moment they are outwardly nice and good and the next moment they are shockingly mean and evil. Long before Robert Louis Stevenson wrote his short novel, the Apostle Paul wrote in Scripture about how every Christian is really like Dr. Henry Jeckyll and Mr. Edward Hyde. The timeless classic doctrine that is the focus of our sermon today is how every Christian is a sinner and a saint at the same time. Romans 7:15-25a.

**<sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> 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.**

**<sup>21</sup> So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

Last week you exited church reminded that Jesus took up his cross, THE Cross of Hell and eternal punishment, as your substitute. You left here reminded that through faith in Jesus your sins are forgiven and it is unnecessary for you to feel unworthy, guilty, and ashamed. You went home last week reminded that Jesus perfect cross bearing covers over your life of imperfect cross bearing in the sight of God so that God now considers you to have perfectly carried all your crosses in life and to have perfectly acknowledged that Jesus is Savior to others. Last week you left here spiritually rested, refreshed, and recharged and then THIS week happened. 167 hours outside of the safety and security of God’s house and your church family dealing with the schemes of the devil and the other evil angels – the **“spiritual forces of evil”** (Ephesians 6:12). 167 hours of dealing with the people of this world, many of whom Peter warned us about in his Pentecost sermon when he said, **“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation”** (Acts 2:40). 167 hours of dealing with your own sinful nature and its **“sinful desires that war against your soul”** (1 Peter 2:11). As you read through Scripture God uses military language to describe the enemies that threaten us daily from within and without. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh are powerful enemies.

Their threat to our Christian freedom and our eternal security is real and exhausting. And one of the biggest weapons our enemies use against us is the weapon of shame and discouragement because even as Christians we struggle with sin...STILL. I thought I had forgiven that person, but anger and bitterness still got the best of me when they pushed my buttons again this week. Vulgar words still slipped out of my mouth even though I know better. Lust still entered my mind, even though I try to fight it. I know I shouldn't laugh at those jokes, but part of me thought they were funny. I know the Lord has blessed me richly, but yet I still struggle with being completely content with what God gave me and at times I'm very covetous of how he has blessed others. I promised God I wouldn't worry about it this week and I would entrust it all to him and yet worry remained my unwanted companion. I committed myself to being happy this week as I focused on God's blessings and it worked at times, but unhappiness and depression still reared their ugly head. I set my mind to being humble toward and respectful of others this week, but arrogance and disrespect still showed its face again. Note the frustration in Paul's voice, **"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing"** (Romans 7:15,18-19). Paul masterfully describes the turmoil that is going on inside every Christian. Each of us desires to be Dr. Jeckyll, but Mr. Hyde keeps crashing the party! How bad is it? **So I find this law at work: When 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 the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members"** (Roman 7:21-23). Our spiritual enemies try to get us to buy into the lie that we are still prisoners to sin and heading to Hell. Our enemies try to get us to believe that we haven't been freed to spend eternity in Heaven and freed to live a holy life on this earth. Our enemies try to convince us that we are only sinners not Christians, only Mr. Hyde and not Dr. Jeckyll! What can we conclude from this spiritual turmoil? **"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. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. 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"** (Romans 7:16-18,20). The conclusion is that even though I am a Christian (Dr. Jeckyll), the law is right when it convicts me as still being a sinner (Mr. Hyde). Finally, how does this daily Dr. Jeckyll/Mr. Hyde struggle leave us feeling? **What a wretched man I am!** (Romans 7:24). We all know what that feels like all too well, don't we Christians? What a wretched person I am. What a disgrace I am to the name I bear - Christian. How embarrassed God must be when he looks at my life. And that's exactly what our enemies want us to feel like – ashamed, discouraged, and ready to give up the Christian/sinner, Dr. Jeckyll/Mr. Hyde, struggle and just give up on the Christian faith and eternity in Heaven.

In Robert Louis Stevenson's famous short novel that is exactly what the main character, Dr. Henry Jeckyll/Mr. Edward Hyde did. He was so frustrated by the struggle between good and evil and felt so wretched about it that he just gave up and committed suicide. Thankfully the Apostle Paul offers us a much better alternative to unbelief and even suicide. **"Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!** (Romans 7:24b-25a). Jesus himself said to weary Christians like us, **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28). Yes, it's true that each of us is still a sinner, with the proverbial monkey on the back of a sinful nature, and that won't change until Jesus returns. But it is equally true that we are also Christians, enjoying the blessing of a Christian nature working inside of us that we received when we were brought to faith in Jesus as Savior. We are Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde at the same time. Or you could put it this way – each Christian is a sinner and a saint at the same time. Martin Luther once wrote: **"Christians are**

**righteous and sinners at the same time, holy and profane, an enemy of God and a child of God”**

(Luther’s Commentary on Galatians 3:6, AE 26:232). And even though the reality is that each of us is a sinner/saint at the same time, Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde at the same time – God the Father only sees us as saints (Dr. Jeckyll) because **“There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 8:1). The Biblical definition of a saint is not someone who has earned the title because they have lived such good lives on this earth. If that were the case, then no one could ever be granted the title of saint. The Biblical definition of a saint is anyone who trusts that Jesus Christ is their Savior thus allowing them to enjoy the blessing of Jesus holiness covering their sin from God’s sight. Even though the reality is that we are sinners and saints at the same time the good news is that God only views us as saints. Weary ones, be refreshed and reenergized by this good news so that you can continue to embrace the timeless classic doctrine that we are sinners and saints at the same time. Amen.