

The story is told of a young Indian brave who was in line to become, one day, chief of the tribe. The present chief was a legend in his own lifetime because he was such a great leader. However, he was old, very sick and lay dying in his teepee.

The young brave went to the old chief and said, "I want to be a great chief and leader of my people as you have been, but I know it takes more than just being a good hunter and a great warrior. I know you have been great because of your wisdom and your strong moral character."

The young brave continued, "When I'm faced with a decision to do right or wrong I find I have two dogs fighting within my chest, a good dog and a bad dog. When the good dog wins, I do what's right. When the bad dog wins, I do what's wrong. So chief, what's the secret of getting the good dog to win all the fights?"

The old chief didn't even open his eyes when he asked the young brave this question, "When one dog wins, why does he win?" The young brave thought for a moment and answered, "The dog that wins is the strongest dog. The strongest dog always wins." The old chief barely opened one eye and looked at the young brave. "The answer to your question then," he said, "is to feed only the good dog."

Feed only the good dog. What great advice for you and me today. But feeding the good dog can be quite a challenge because our adversary, the devil, is trying to get us to feed the bad dog. He gives us instant gratification with pleasure and never relaxes in his attempt to get us to do wrong.

The Apostle Paul talks about that challenge in Romans the 7th chapter. "I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise...the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to be bad, but then I do it anyway...Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up...I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the

end of my rope."

No doubt, if the Apostle Paul had struggles with the good dog - bad dog syndrome, you and I are going to have struggles too. That doesn't excuse our failures, but it does make them a little easier to understand. Today, we have to get the answer to the dilemma from the same source where Paul's answer was found.

"The answer, thank God, is that...with the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ."

Perhaps we forget the amazing power of God through His Spirit. Satan doesn't play softball, but neither does God. "God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all."

There is a lot more power in the good dog than first meets the eye. The bad dog offers instant gratification through pleasure. The good dog offers peace, hope, lasting pleasure through doing what is right, and according to Paul, "an unbelievable inheritance." (all scripture quotes are from The Message)

The key to that inheritance is, as the old chief said, "Feed only the good dog." Reading the word of God, praying for guidance and help, and surrounding yourself with good people are some of the ways available in helping you and me feed the good dog. We will continually have struggles, but with God's help and some good judgment on our part we will find that feeding the good dog really is the best choice.

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