



Romans 7:14-8:4

A Saint's Struggle with Sin

A great liberation has come to the believer in Jesus Christ. We have been emancipated and set free. Sin no longer has to dominate and master the believer. The Christian has the freedom to have an intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ. I speak to many believers who still think they are slaves. They do not know that they have been set free to love and serve Christ. "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

OUR POSITION IN CHRIST (7:6)

Let's review for a moment where we have been in our studies in Romans chapters three through six. Paul is writing to believers in the church at Rome.

- We have a *new standing* with God. By God's grace we have complete acceptance with God in Christ. We are at peace with God; God is at peace with us! "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (5:1-2). We have a new relationship in which we are reconciled with God. The result is we experience His peace.
- We are members of a *new family*. The disobedience of Adam brought death. All men die in Adam. However, we have a new head of the family who is Jesus Christ, and He gives eternal life. "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (5:17).
- We have a *new identification* in Christ. We have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. We have died to the old life, have been buried with Christ and have been raised to new life in Him. We are now identified with Christ. We are as men who have been raised from the dead. "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (6:4).
- We also have a *new master*. We are no longer slaves to sin. We now have a choice; we do not have to obey sin any longer. "For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification" (6:19b). Our new master leads us in God's righteousness. Sin has a payday and death is its wages, but Christ gives us life every day.

We have a *new love*. Our old husband died and we have married Christ. We now have an intimate

- We have a *new love*. Our old husband died and we have married Christ. We now have an intimate abiding love relationship with Jesus Christ. A new relationship demands my love, my loyalty, my obedience. We obey Him because we love Him. "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God" (7:4).
- We have a *new motive* of service. "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter" (7:6). We have been set free from the bondage of the Law and are now free to serve Christ. I am a free person, united with Christ, free to serve Him (Galatians 5:1; Romans 6:11-14; 7:4, 6).

In spite of all that God has done for me in Christ I still have a problem. How do I translate my eternal position in Christ to my every day practice? How do I live Christ in my daily life? We still have a daily struggle with sin. We are called upon to make daily decisions that effect our relationship with Christ. In most situations, we do not make a long analyzed decision whether to sin or not to sin. We don't get up one Monday morning and decide we are going to throw away our Christian life. It is usually quick, flash of the moment of poor judgment and the deed is done.

In the paragraph before us the Apostle Paul feels condemned, hopeless, trapped and tired. He is sensitive to the pull of indwelling sin. Robert Haldane wrote: "The more sensitive we are, the more do we feel pain; and the more our hearts are purified, the more painful to us will sin be. Men perceive themselves to be sinners in proportion as they have previously discovered the holiness of God and His Law."

Paul discovered there are two principles at work in the believer. "In every believer, and in no one else, there are these two principles, sin and grace, flesh and spirit, the law of the members and the law of the mind . . . It is the experience of every Christian," observed Haldane.

OUR DAILY PRACTICE IS A CONTEST WITH SIN (7:14-24)

I have a problem.

In spite of all that God has done in His grace I have a problem. I am fleshy, "I am of flesh, sold into the bondage of sin" (7:14). Paul uses the present tense from verse 14 to the end of the chapter. He is describing the daily battle of the Christian. Moreover, he uses the plural "we" to remind his readers that all believers face this problem. He is talking to the regenerate, born again believer. Paul describes for us something that every believer will go through again and again for the rest of his life on this earth. Paul opens his heart and shares with us his own personal feelings. It was not something Paul went through only once and would never have to face again. It is not like he moves on to Romans 8 and never goes back to Romans 7 experiences. Paul went through it again and again in his life because sin has the power to deceive us. Only true believers go through what Paul speaks of here. The unbeliever does not because he is a slave to sin. He is dead in trespasses and sins.

sins.

The Law is not the problem; it "is spiritual" (v. 14). It is the product of the Holy Spirit because it comes from God. It always does its job. Every time I sin, I prove the law is spiritual. I prove it true (v. 16). The Law exposes the evil drive within us that still makes the wrong choices. The deception of our nature's response to sin is still a present reality. Sin has the power to deceive us and cause us to trust in ourselves. The Holy Spirit uses the Law in the believer's life to cause us to see the wretchedness of our current situation and to cry out to the Lord Jesus for help. Here is the only way of deliverance for the Christian. We still need the Law. We need it because sin deceives us and causes us to choose to respond to its pull. Like Paul we can say in verse 22, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man . . ."

However, remember the Law does not deliver us from sin. It doesn't have the power to do so. Its job is to cause us to see our true selves and bring us to Christ who can deliver us. Sanctification in this passage is not a once and for all thing. Positionally we are set aside to God once and for all. That is what we have been studying in Romans chapters five and six. Sanctification is also a daily practice. Paul also speaks of progressive sanctification. Sin dulls my spiritual perceptions and it takes the Law to open my carnal eyes. The more sensitive I am to the Holy Spirit working in my life the more sensitive I am to sin present in my life. Therefore, the Law does its work under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

The problem is "I am of flesh." "Flesh" is the material from which our human nature is composed. It is the weaker element in human nature (Matt. 26:41; Rom. 6:19; 8:3). The apostle Paul also describes it as the unregenerate state of men (Rom. 7:5; 8:8-9). The "flesh" is that weaker nature within us that responds to the downward pull of sin. It is in opposition to God and all that which pleases Him. It is the unregenerate state of man.

The Apostle Paul says, "I am sold under sin" (KJV, NIV). The NASB reads, "I am sold into bondage to sin." The word for sold [*pipraskomai*] is a verb to sell. It is perfect tense emphasizing the state of completion, or condition. It has been sold. A. T. Robertson notes, "Sin has closed the mortgage and owns its slave." Indwelling sin pulls, like a master demanding servitude even though the mind longs to be free.

The Law fulfills its spiritual purpose because it reminds me of a daily war. I am a believer, but I am not perfect. See if you can't identify with what Paul is saying here. "For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good" (vv. 15-16). We are saints who sin.

I fail to do what I know will please God (v. 15, 19a, 22). I want to do what is right and I don't do it. In my inner man, I want to serve Christ. "I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*." In verse 19a, "For the good that I want, I do not do."

I do the very thing I hate (vv. 15-16, 19b-23). "I am doing the very thing I hate." "I practice the very evil that I do not want" (v. 19b). In my flesh I want to serve self. I want to please my selfish desires. I want to make myself look good.

The problem of indwelling sin (vv. 17-20).

Look at Paul's analysis of what is going on.

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"The sin which indwells me" makes me do it (v. 17-21).

"So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me" (v. 17).

"Nothing good dwells in . . . my flesh" (v. 18).

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not" (v. 18).

"Flesh" is that capacity to serve and please self and leave God out of my life. It is the desire to please my own wishes, and exclude God. I glory in self instead of God. My flesh responds to sin's pull.

"For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me" (vv. 19-20).

Can you identify with Paul? I sure can.

The principle of evil present in me (vv. 20-24)

"I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (vv. 21-23).

"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (v. 24).

The closer you get to Christ the harsher the reality of ever-present sin. Power, position, pride, passion, etc. comes clearly in focus. Our sin problems boils down a simple formula: I, ME, MINE = SELFISHNESS.

"O Wretched man that I am, Who will set me free from the body of this death?" This is a cry for help. It has the emotional pain of wailing in anguish of spiritual poverty. It is the miserable, distressed cry of every Christian who reflects on his own real condition under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. .

This is the passion of Isaiah when he cried out, "O woe is me!" He is a man under conviction." Isaiah acknowledged his sin crying out, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"(Isaiah 6:5).

The Hebrew Psalmist declared, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18). And in 139:23-24 another Psalmist confesses: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."

Jesus gave a promise to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). This knowledge and awareness of our spiritual poverty is essential if we are to come to the place where we realize that we can not live the Christian life in the power of the flesh. We have to come to the end of ourselves and cast ourselves upon Christ alone. If left to ourselves we fight a losing battle.

Have you come to the place where you are tired of everything the flesh produces? Are you getting tired of techniques, programs, conferences and meetings? Have you come to the place where you cast yourself

techniques, programs, conferences and meetings? Have you come to the place where you cast yourself unreservedly on the all sufficiency of Christ and cried out "O wretched man that I am"? You have to come to the end of yourself before the Holy Spirit can take over. You have to come to the end of the flesh. "I am sick and tired of trying to live the Christian life in the power of the flesh."

It is a sense of spiritual poverty. The immature Christian is characterized by self-confidence. We never move on to spiritual maturity until we come to this sense of poverty in the spirit. In the flesh dwells no good thing. Carnal believers always have an arrogance about them, an obsession with power, position, praise, pride, passion etc. The Holy Spirit honors that which exalts the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

There is only one solution. "God alone through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thanks be to God!" (v. 25a, New English Bible).

OUR POWER FOR DAILY CONQUEST OF SIN (7:25-8:4)

Only God can deliver you and me (7:25; 6:11; 8:1).

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin" (v. 25).

The duality remains and the war goes on until Christ returns. Therefore, it must ever be a daily reckoning on Christ for His grace. "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11).

"There is not even one bit of condemnation" because of my perfect position (8:1). The opposite of condemnation is justification. The condemned person is under judicial sentence awaiting the execution of the order. No so the believer in Jesus Christ. He has been acquitted and set free! There is no waiting for the punishment for us because our punishment has already been paid in full by Jesus Christ.

Works says that we must perform and then God will be impressed with us. Legalism is obsessed with trying to impress God. But God is not interested. Grace and grace alone enables us to live the Christian life. Grace sets us free.

Satan works hard to convince you that you are a good-for-nothing, worthless, unacceptable, sin-sick person who will never amount to anything in God's eyes. In contrast, God says to every believer, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). That is how God sees you. Accept it. Reckon upon it. Believe it. Act upon it. Live the Christian life depending upon that great truth about you.

We have been set free from the law of sin and death (8:2).

Do you feel trapped? The old nature prefers to be in a box. It is so comfortable.

Who set us free? The "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (8:2). God sees His Son, and then He sees me in the beloved. I am accepted because I am in Him! A missionary friend of mine in Colombia weaved a beautiful desk mat for my office that reads: "GOD + ME = A WHOLE PERSON." That says it all!

"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3). The Law was powerless to deliver us from sin. It could only convict us of our wrongdoing. It could not come to our aid and give the strength and power to overcome the very sin it convicted us of doing. It could not lend us a hand. It

give the strength and power to overcome the very sin it convicted us of doing. It could not lend us a hand. It could not deliver us.

However, what the Law could not do, God did by sending His Son to die for us. The second person of the God head became man, in doing so became our representative and died in our place on the cross. Jesus was sinless. He was made in the "likeness of sinful flesh." He never experienced personal sin, but He was willing to take the responsibility for our sins. He paid the penalty of our sins and died in our place on the cross. He bore our penalty as our substitute. He became a sin offering on our behalf. "And as an offering for sin, He condemned (*punished*) sin in the flesh." [Emphasis mine]. Jesus was our sin offering. The LORD God condemned our sins in the sinless flesh of His Son who bore them on the cross at Calvary.

I am free to be habitually dominated and controlled by the Holy Spirit (8:4).

Paul adds, "so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (8:4).

Because Jesus Christ satisfied the justice of God, the Holy Spirit now resides at the control center of my life. He lives in me to produce the very things the law demanded but could not produce. The Spirit controlled believer fulfills the requirements of the Law. The carnal person will never be able to produce that which will satisfy God. The believer is under the control of the Spirit who produces the sweet fragrance of righteousness.

Yes, the war fare goes on, but the victory is won. It is ours. Beginning with Romans eight there is no further talk of defeat. Christ is the victor. We win with Christ.

This new inward principle of action by the Holy Spirit operates as a law in the believer who yields to the Spirit. That principle always works. You can depend on it. He never fails. This new principle of action which the Spirit of Christ has opened up within us sets us free to live the Christian life. He empowers us and sets us free to serve Him. We overcome sin by abiding in His presence. We do the impossible by yielding to Him.

Are you tired to trying to live the Christian life by yourself? Yield to the Holy Spirit. Let Him live through you. Let Him take charge of your life. Someone said, "The flesh couldn't do it before Calvary, and it can't now." Only Christ in you can do it. He fulfills in us what we can not do for ourselves. "God helps those who help themselves," is the most pagan statement you can find as a Christian. God helps those who *depend* upon Him. And no where is it more true than in the Christian life.

The requirement of the Law is fulfilled in us who walk according to the Spirit (v. 4). Just think of it. As you yield to the Holy Spirit you produce "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). That is when living the Christian life becomes something utterly amazing and beautiful.

Christian holiness is the life of the Holy Spirit producing His fruit in my life. He reproduces Himself in us. He reproduces those graces which were seen in perfection in the life of Christ. Take a long hard look at Jesus Christ and you see the fruit of the Spirit. Only when we walk in the Spirit do we fulfill the Law.

We are set free from the Law as a way of acceptance with God. However, it is still our standard of conduct.

Some Abiding Principles and Practical Applications

1. When you believe on Christ as your Savior God gives you perfect peace and there is now no condemnation. Do I write to someone who is still living in the bondage of sin? Do you carry a burden of guilt? I invite you to come this very moment and claim the shed blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse away all your sin. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in you" (1 Jn. 1:9-10).

If you have never believed on Christ as your own personal Savior I invite you to come to Him right now and believe that He died for you on the cross and rose from the dead. Ask Him to be your Savior. For more information on how you can come to Christ read [How to Have Peace with God](#).

2. When you are set free by the Holy Spirit to live Christ, He gives you the power to make daily choices that will please God. Under His leadership, you do that which is pleasing to God. Will you consecrate your life to Christ right now? "I choose to please you Lord, Jesus." "I choose righteousness." "I choose to put Jesus Christ and God's righteousness first in my life." Make it a once and for all commitment to live a life consecrated to God. Will you act on that commitment today? Because I have a new nature I have the freedom to make that choice.

3. When you choose daily to allow the Holy Spirit to control your life, you choose to live. I choose daily to allow the Holy Spirit to take control of my life. I choose to submit to Him and let Him live His life through me. It doesn't happen automatically. I pray that you will do likewise.

4. When you submit to the control of the Spirit, you gain victory over sin in your daily life. As you practice your position in Christ and reckon on Him you gain the victory over sin. Only the Holy Spirit can subdue the flesh. "We do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (8:4).

The Holy Spirit must implant in our hearts new energies, new directions, new motives, desires, tastes and tendencies. It is the work of progressive sanctification. All that the Man Jesus was, He was that we may become. He demonstrates the possibility and the loveliness of a life that pleases a holy God.

5. When I am walking in the Spirit, I am habitually dominated by the Spirit. Christ dwells within us by His Spirit. We receive His power and presence as we yield to Him. It is the only way to victory.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey College, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey College, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras.

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