

"The Doctrine of Sanctification"

Romans 5:12-8:13

Part 19

INTRODUCTION: In our study of Romans we are currently in a passage in which Paul has recorded a discovery which he made in his life after he was saved. The discovery was that now that he was saved he had within him a desire to live in obedience to the Word of God but the harder he tried to do so the more he found himself failing.

Notice Romans 7:15-20

Now there are some who disagree that Paul is speaking of himself in this text and there are some who say this is not the description of a believer's struggle. Notice the words of a Bible teacher whom I do not agree with:

"It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the Church, or prevailed there, that "the apostle speaks here of his regenerate state; and that what was, in such a state, true of himself, must be true of all others in the same state." This opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully, not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character. It requires but little knowledge of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the scope of this epistle, to see that the apostle is, here, either personating a Jew under the law and without the Gospel or showing what his own state was when he was deeply convinced that by the deeds of the law no man could be justified."

This man refused to accept that what is described in this passage is the struggle in the life of the believer. Now let me show you the words of **S Lewis Johnson** pertaining to this passage:

"It is difficult to imagine an unsaved man diagnosing his case so perfectly or affirming such things of an unsaved person. He has a clear view of himself (Ro 7:18, 24). He has a noble view of the Law (Ro 7:16, 19). In three ways he is a saint. He hates sin. He delights in the Law of God (Ro 7:22). He looks for deliverance to Christ alone (Ro 7:25). John Stott comments, "Now let me repeat that anyone who acknowledges the spirituality of God's law and his own natural carnality is a Christian of some maturity."

The struggle which Paul describes in the verses which we are looking at is a struggle which every believer goes through and God uses this struggle to free us by allowing us to see that we cannot live the Christian life in our own power. The failures and the struggles which we have with the sin nature make this truth known. It helps us to see we need the

power of the Liberator/Jesus Christ. In the section which is before us Paul is describing how his victory over the sin nature ONLY came in realization of defeat.

The very same is true for each of us. The failures which we experience in the Christian life are used by God to bring us to complete dependence upon Jesus Christ. The failures accomplish several things.

1. **They make us long for righteousness.**

Matthew 5:6

⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

This hunger is the strongest in the believer after he or she fails in their walk.

2. **They help us to see how weak we are in our own power.**

Let me show you the words of Miles Stanford from his book "The Complete Green Letters":

"As long as we depended on our own resources, all we produced was sin; we hungered for life, and brought forth death. But in the midst of our wretched attempts to be delivered from the "body of this death" (Romans 7:24), our faithful Father was teaching us what we had to know for our freedom in Christ: self is our greatest enemy, Christ is our only hope. "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21).

3. **They draw us nearer to Jesus Christ.**

Let me remind you of the invitation given by Jesus Christ:

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

After months and years of failure as a believer, in our battle with the flesh, we are ready to accept this invitation offered by our Lord.

This is what Paul learned and God in His grace allowed Paul to record the struggle and his deliverance so that we too can see the Way of victory is only through complete dependence upon Jesus Christ. Let us remember the theme of Romans:

Romans 1:17

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Notice the words of **Spurgeon**:

"I went to that same Primitive Methodist Chapel where I first received peace with God through the simple preaching of the Word. The text happened to be, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "There," I thought, "that's a text for me." I had got as far as that, when the minister began by saying, "Paul was not a believer when he said this." I knew I was a believer, and it seemed to me from the context that Paul must have been a believer, too. Now I am sure he was. The man went on to say that no child of God ever did feel any conflict within. So, I took up my hat and left the place, and I do not think I have frequented such places since."

Now let us get to our study of the passage again.

The Struggle

Part 2

Notice Romans 7:18

We looked at verse 18 last week but I wanted you to notice it again because it reinforces what I have been stating; Paul had to come to know by experience that in his own power he could not keep the Law. He had to come to the place where he was made aware that even after salvation he needed the Liberator. This could only be accomplished through the experience of failure and so here he has recorded for us what he had discovered and that was he was still sinful and was powerless in the flesh to resist sin.

Notice Romans 7:19-20

Here in these verses Paul makes it very clear that our problem is not external but internal. Indwelling sin is the problem. A long time back I gave you an illustration that pictures this perfectly.

Quite a while back I shared a story with you as told by Jim Berg and it is fitting to be reminded of it here again:

If we place a tea bag in a cup and we pour in hot water and we let it set. Then we pick up the cup and we sip the tea and it is bitter and not to our liking, it is NOT the fault of the hot water. The hot water only revealed what was inside the tea bag. If we do not like the tea because it is bitter, then we must NOT blame the hot water, but we must change the ingredients in the tea bag. Now here is the application; as we go through life God allows "HOT WATER" experiences to come into our lives. It may be a sickness, job loss,

rebellious child, pressure at work, temptation or many other things. As the "HOT WATER" is poured into our lives it then reveals what is in our hearts. If there is a bitterness that comes out of us it is NOT, the fault of the "HOT WATER" but it is the manifestation of what is in our heart. It shows that we are controlled by the flesh and not by the Spirit.

Luke 6:45

⁴⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

I share this with you to remind all of us that we have an internal problem. It is the sin nature and if it is not kept upon the cross it will manifest itself in each of our lives with sin.

Romans 6:11-13

¹¹ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

¹³ Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Getting back to our verses, Paul is stating that sin is the problem he must deal with.

Notice Romans 7:21

The first two words of the verse, "**I FIND**" reveals that what we are about to see is a discovery which Paul had made.

Paul has discovered that there is within him a law or a principle. The more he tried the stronger the sin principle became within him. Notice the words of Guzik:

"Anyone who has tried to do good is aware of this struggle. We never know how hard it is to stop sinning until we try."

C. S. Lewis agrees with this very thought:

"No man knows how bad he is until he has tried to be good."

Paul's frustration is the very same frustration which all believers experience, when we are so determined to do what is right evil seems to be sitting right on our shoulder ready to

manifest itself the moment we try to do what is right. This brings to my mind something which God said in Genesis.

Genesis 4:6-7

⁶ And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

⁷ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

Cain was a self-righteous unbeliever. God invited him to do what was right by bringing a lamb to show his dependence upon a blood sacrifice and then he would be accepted. But if he continued in his self-righteousness, sin was like a lion crouching at the door and it would pounce on him and control him. God told Cain if he continued in his self-righteousness he would need to master sin which was completely impossible and that is what he needed to come to understand.

Notice Romans 7:22

The inner man here refers to the new man or the new nature. This verse affirms that the struggle here is in the life of a believer. The unrighteous person has no love for the Word of God. The sin nature/flesh despises that which is spiritual.

Jeremiah 6:10

¹⁰ To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

In Romans 7:22 we see one of the signs of being truly born again. When we are truly born again we will joy in the Word of God and that is because when we are saved we are given the Holy Spirit and He longs for the Truth of God.

Notice the words of the Psalmist:

Psalm 119:10-19

¹⁰ With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

¹¹ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

¹² Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

¹³ With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

¹⁵ I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

¹⁶ I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

¹⁷ Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

¹⁸ Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

¹⁹ I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

The Psalmist longed to walk in the Truth of God's Word and so will every person who is truly saved.

Notice Romans 7:22-25

Paul had now come to the place where he needed to be. He had a clear picture of how sinful his flesh **STILL** was even after salvation and that he was in desperate need of the Liberator constantly in his walk. Notice the words of **Wiersbe**:

"The believer has an old nature that wants to keep him in bondage; "I will get free from these old sins!" the Christian says to himself. "I determine here and now that I will not do this any longer." What happens? He exerts all his willpower and energy, and for a time succeeds; but then when he least expects it, he falls again. Why? Because he tried to overcome his old nature with Law, and the Law cannot deliver us from the old nature. When you move under the Law, you are only making the old nature stronger; because "the strength of sin is the Law" (1Cor. 15:56). Instead of being a dynamo that gives us power to overcome, the Law is a magnet that draws out of us all kinds of sin and corruption. The inward man may delight in the Law of God (Ps. 119:35), but the old nature delights in breaking the Law of God. No wonder the believer under Law becomes tired and discouraged, and eventually gives up! He is a captive, and his condition is "wretched." (The Greek word indicates a person who is exhausted after a battle.) What could be more wretched than exerting all your energy to try to live a good life, only to discover that the best you do is still not good enough!"

Conclusion:

I want to leave you with the words of **Stedman** on this text:

"There are teachers who teach that this passage in Romans 7 is something a Christian goes through once, then he gets out of it and moves into Romans 8 and never gets back into Romans 7 again. Nothing could be further from the truth! This is a description of what every believer will go through again and again in his experience because sin has the power to deceive us and to cause us to trust in ourselves, even when we are not aware we are doing it. The Law is what will expose that evil force and drive us to this place of

wretchedness that we might then, in poverty of spirit, cry out, "Lord Jesus, it is your problem; you take it." And he will do so."