

"The Doctrine of Sanctification"

Romans 5:12-8:13

Part 17

Introduction: In our study of Romans tonight we have come to a very controversial portion of Scripture.

Notice Romans 7:14-25

The controversy among many Bible students concerning this passage is the question, "Is this referring to a believer or an unbeliever?"

I believe this is very clearly referring to a believer and if we look closely we can see the evidence of this.

Notice Romans 7:18-19, 22, 24

In these verses we see several points:

1. This person sees no good in their flesh.
2. They see their sin as evil.
3. They deeply desire to live in obedience to God's Word.
4. They delight in the Law of God.
5. There is a battle raging within them.
6. They describe themselves as wretched.

There is no way this perspective can be reached by an unsaved person. Unsaved people live under the deception of sin and see themselves as righteous in their works. There is no battle between two natures within the unsaved person for they have only one nature and that is the sin nature. The unsaved person does not delight in the Word of God for he or she cannot understand the Word of God. So, I believe it is very obvious that Paul's description here is of a saved person.

There is then another question, "Is the person described here a "new" believer or are they a "mature" believer?" I raise this question because there are many who are divided on this very issue also. My answer to this question would be in agreement with others who insist the believer described here is a mature believer. I believe the passage makes that very clear to us in several ways.

1. The person described here fully understands how far short they are of perfection as they measure themselves against the Law of God. We can know from this that the person described here is certainly not a legalist. A legalist will fail to see the

depth of their own wretchedness but will be quick to point it out in the lives of others.

2. The person described here has a deep understanding of why this battle is raging within them. I point this out because this is not the knowledge of a new believer. A new believer sets out on his journey after he or she is saved and does not go very far until they encounter this battle and they fall into sin. This usually leaves the new believer very discouraged because they believed that once they were saved all sin was behind them. Notice the words of Newell on the new believer:

"Here is exactly what the new convert does not know! Forgiven, justified, he knows himself to be: and he has the joy of it! But now to find an evil nature, of which he had never become really conscious, and of which he thought himself fully rid, when he first believed, is a "second lesson" which is often more bitter than the first-of guilt!"

There is yet a third reason why I believe this is a description of a mature believer. It is the verbs which Paul uses in this section.

Notice Romans 7:15-18

The verbs here are in the present tense. The passage which is before us is a personal testimony of Paul. Notice the words of MacDonald:

"Up to this point the apostle has been describing a past experience in his life—namely, the traumatic crisis when he underwent deep conviction of sin through the law's ministry. Now he changes to the present tense to describe an experience he had since he was born again—namely, the conflict between the two natures and the impossibility of finding deliverance from the power of indwelling sin through his own strength."

Notice the words of Warren Wiersbe:

"Having explained what the Law is supposed to do, Paul now explains what the Law cannot do... Our nature is carnal (fleshly); but the Law's nature is spiritual. This explains why the old nature responds as it does to the Law. It has well been said, "The old nature knows no Law, the new nature needs no Law." The Law cannot transform the old nature; it can only reveal how sinful that old nature is. The believer who tries to live under Law will only activate the old nature; he will not eradicate it."

What we shall see in the passage before us is what happens when a believer is placed under the Law. We have previously looked at how the Law stirs up sin with a person's heart.

Notice Romans 7:7-8

The Law stirs up sin in the heart of anyone who is placed under it. This is one of the purposes of the Law in the life of the unbeliever. When sin is stirred then the unbeliever

is awakened to see how sinful they really are and thus come to the place where they see their need of the Savior.

But we who are saved are dead to the Law. We are not to be under the Law, whether it be a denominational law, a law made up by man or the Mosaic Law. A believer who is under the Law is a legalist and this person has been deceived into thinking they can bring the flesh/sin nature into submission. That will never happen!

Let us now get to the passage that is before us.

"What the Law cannot do."

Notice Romans 7:14

This verse has caused problems for many people, so I want us to take the time to understand what Paul is saying here. Many people look at the word "carnal" and they see this as a description of a weak immature believer. They will reference back to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

² *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.*

³ *For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

The word "carnal" here is the same word and it has the same meaning, but the context of the writing must determine how it is to be applied. The word "carnal" means "fleshy". It is a reference to the sin nature within the believer. The point which Paul is making here in 1 Corinthians 3 is that the Corinthians were being controlled by the sin nature and not by the Holy Spirit. They were allowing the flesh/sin nature to control them and so there was strife, envy, and division.

In our text in Romans Paul is not saying that he is controlled by the flesh, but he is making the statement that he still has the sin nature. He is "fleshy" in the sense that the sin nature has not been eradicated from his life.

Notice Romans 7:14 again.

This verse could be used as a title for what is to follow. He also points out in this verse that the Law is spiritual. The point which Paul is making here is that he still has the sin

nature as we all do, and the Law is spiritual and so when the two come together there is going to be a major conflict as we shall see. You see, our flesh despises anything that is spiritual and no matter what we do we cannot make our flesh accept that which is spiritual, nor can we even bludgeon the flesh into submission of that which is spiritual. I believe there are pictures of this throughout the Bible and for that reason the Holy Spirit presupposes we already understand this as we approach this passage. Let me show you a few pictures.

Genesis 25:

²⁰ And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

²¹ And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

²² And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

²³ And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

²⁴ And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

²⁵ And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

²⁶ And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

Esau being the firstborn is a picture of the sin nature. He loved the world but saw no value in his birthright which was spiritual. He then is seen as a picture of the sin nature and his rejection of that which is spiritual. This picture continues throughout the Scriptures. From the line of Esau came a group of people known as the Amalekites.

Exodus 17:8

⁸ Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

Israel is a picture of the new believer who is following God and from behind they are attacked by the Amalekites who are a picture of the sin nature. From the Amalekites can a man known as Haman.

Esther 3:1-6

After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

² And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

³ Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

⁴ Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

⁵ And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

⁶ And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

Mordecai was a Jew, so we can see him as that which is spiritual. Haman is a picture of the sin nature and Haman hates Mordecai and this is a picture of how the flesh hates that which is spiritual.

Notice Romans 7:14 again.

Paul also says that he is "sold under sin". What does he mean here? This is a statement that we all need to understand. He is not saying that he sold himself into a life of sin. He is simply stating in all that he has said, that he is not in the flesh for he is saved, **but the flesh is still in him**. In other words, Paul is making a statement that every believer needs to grasp. We are saved which means we are justified, and we are forgiven. Our position is that we are now IN CHRIST and IN CHRIST we are complete.

Colossians 2:8-10

⁸ *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

⁹ *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

¹⁰ *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

In our position we are perfect but, in our practice, we are not. The reason is because we still have the sin nature and we must understand that we all have the potential of falling into the worst of sins. This also means that in our lives we are going to need the cross to bring the flesh into submission. Every one of us has a conflict.

Only we who are believers can understand this Truth. An unsaved person cannot grasp this for they do not see themselves as sinful and sold under sin. They live their lives as though everything is fine. This is a Truth that only a saved person can grasp.

Conclusion:

We must understand that when we were saved we were forgiven of all our sin, but sin still stays with us. The potential for a fall is only one choice away.

1 Corinthians 10:6-12

⁶ *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

⁷ *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*

⁸ *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*

⁹ *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

¹⁰ *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

¹¹ *Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

¹² *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*