

Our Struggle with Sin (*Part 4*)

Romans 7:21-25

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: The conspiracy between sin and our sinful nature is an overwhelming force that we cannot conquer by willpower alone, but deliverance is possible through the empowerment of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (As our Savior, Jesus Christ sets us free from the penalty of our sins and as our Lord, He delivers us from the power of our sinful nature).

In Romans chapters 6, 7 and 8, Paul is discussing the matter of Sanctification, how we may grow in holiness and Christlikeness:

Chapter 6 – we have been set free from the tyranny of sin.

Chapter 7 – we have been set free from the condemnation of the Law.

Chapter 8 – we have been set free to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 7, Paul explains that, because we have died to the Old Testament Mosaic Law, we are no longer under the authority of the Law; it no longer has any power to condemn us before God. If we try to sanctify ourselves by keeping the Law, we will find that it only serves to increase our sense of guilt and will actually stimulate us to sin even more! But the problem is not the Law; the problem is our sinful nature. Used correctly, the Law:

- 1) Reveals and defines what sin is.
- 2) Reveals how exceedingly sinful our sinful nature is.
- 3) Reveals our need for a Savior who can save us from the penalty of our sins.
- 4) Reveals our need for a Sanctifier who can deliver us from the power of our sinful nature.

In Romans 7:14-25, Paul focuses on the struggle between his old fallen sinful nature and the new nature he had received when he accepted Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior. The conspiracy between temptations to sin on the outside and our sinful nature saying "Yes!" to sin on the inside is overwhelming. Paul does not deny personal responsibility for his sin but it's as if a powerful, savage beast has overwhelmed him and taken control (cf. Genesis 4:6-7). From the very beginning, God has warned us of our need to master sin and our sinful nature. Other-wise, we are doomed to destruction!

In Romans 7:21-25, Paul takes us to the depths of despair in the bondage of our sin and then instantly transports us to the top of Mt. Nebo where, like Moses, we are able to see into the Promised Land of God's deliverance (Romans chapter 8).

21 So I find this law [this principle] **at work: When I want to do good** [when I want to do what is right and pleasing in God's eyes], **evil is right there with me.**

- **This law.** Not the Old Testament Mosaic Law but a principle, a compelling and overwhelming power that made him (and us) a slave to the dominion of sin.
- The conflict between the old sinful nature and the new righteous nature is a battle which only believers in the Lord Jesus Christ can experience.
- "The law, or principle, at work here is the reality that evil is within us, even when we want to do good. In fact, it is when we most want to do good that we become most acutely

aware of our propensity not to do so." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

- **Inner being.** The new nature that God implanted in Paul (and us) when he was spiritually reborn through faith in Jesus Christ.

23 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.

- **Vs. 21 – law.** A principle, a compelling and overwhelming power that Paul had observed and experienced in his life.
- **Vs. 22 – God's law.** The Mosaic Law of the Old Testament; the rules, regulations and commands that God had given to Israel.
- **Vs. 23a – another law at work in the members of my body.** Rom. 6:6 – the "body of sin"; his body under the control of and used as an instrument by his evil sinful nature; virtually identical to the "law of sin at work within my members" (vs. 23c).
- **Vs. 23b – the law of my mind.** His new nature; vs. 22 – his "inner being" living under the control of and in submission to the Holy Spirit.
- **Vs. 23c – the law of sin at work within my members.** His evil sinful nature expressing itself through his body in rebellion against God and disobedience to His Word; that compelling, overwhelming power that brought him under the domination of sin; "the tyranny of indwelling sin" (*F.F. Bruce, Romans, p. 157*).

24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? [Who will deliver me from his tyrannical sinful nature that continually takes control of my body and uses it to fulfill its evil sinful desires?]

- "What could be more wretched than exerting all your energy to try to live a good life, only to discover that the best you [can] do is still not good enough!" (*Wiersbe, Be Right, p. 92*)
- No amount of knowledge of the truth, no amount of desire to do the right thing, no amount of willpower, is sufficient to give us victory over sin and our own sinful nature, without the aid of the Holy Spirit!
- **The body of death.** The "body of sin" (Rom. 6:6); the body indwelt by the old sinful nature and used as an instrument to indulge the evil desires of that nature.
- When we give in to and allow the evil desires of our sinful nature to dominate and control us, it's like enduring a living death. It's like being tied to a dead, rotting corpse!

25 Thanks be to God — [deliverance comes] through Jesus Christ our Lord!

- "...Without Christ's help, sin is stronger than we are... That is why we should never stand up to sin all alone. Jesus Christ, who has conquered sin once and for all, promises to fight by our side. If we look to him for help, we will not have to give in to sin." (*Life Application Study Bible, pp. 2418-19*) (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:57-57).

So then, I myself in my mind [my new nature as it is controlled by and in submission to the Holy Spirit] **am a slave to God's law** [the revealed Word and will of God], **but in the sinful nature** [which I inherited from Adam, I am] **a slave to the law of sin** [my old fallen sinful nature].