

Romans Session 94

The Believer and Indwelling Sin 5

Romans 7:18-20 (NASB77)

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

¹⁹ *For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.*

²⁰ *But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

In his first lament, Paul speaks of his condition, the proof of his condition, and the source of his condition.

His condition is that he is sold into bondage, he is of the flesh.

The proof is that he does that which he does not wish to do, he does not do what he wants to do. He is controlled by sin.

And the source of that activity is sin dwelling in his flesh. Corruption in the flesh. Sin dwelling in him.

Now to our study this evening, we have the second lament in the following verses;

Romans 7:18-20 (NASB77)

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

¹⁹ *For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.*

²⁰ *But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

This lament follows the same pattern as the first; the condition, the proof, and the source.

First the Condition:

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; (7:18a)

In order that his readers will not misunderstand, the apostle explains that the **me** in whom **nothing good dwells** is not the same as the **"I"** he has just mentioned in the previous verse and which referred to this new, redeemed, incorruptible, Christlike nature.

The part of his present being in which sin still **dwells** is his **flesh**, his old humanness, which has not yet been completely transformed.

Again he points out;

Romans 7:5 (NASB77)

⁵ *For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.*

Romans 7:14 (NASB77)

¹⁴ *For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.*

That the only residence of sin in a believer's life is his **flesh**, his unredeemed humanness. As noted above, the **flesh** in itself is not sinful, but it is still subject to sin and furnishes sin a beachhead from which to operate in a believer's life.

Then we have the proof:

Romans 7:18b-19 (NASB77)

¹⁸ ***for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.***

¹⁹ ***For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.***

Paul had a deep desire to do only good. The **wishing** to do God's will was very much **present** within his redeemed being.

The **me** used here does not correspond to the *me* of the first half of this verse but to the **I** in verse 17.

Unfortunately, however, the perfect **doing of the good** that his heart wished for was **not** present in his life.

Slightly paraphrasing the same truth, he says, **For the good that I wish, I do not do.**

Also, as noted in regard to verse 15, Paul is not saying that he was totally incapable of doing anything that was good and acceptable.

He is saying that he was incapable of *completely* fulfilling the requirements of God's holy law. He explained this to the Philippian Church.

Philippians 3:12-14 (NASB77)

¹² ***Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.***

¹³ ***Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,***

¹⁴ ***I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***

As a believer grows in his spiritual life, he inevitably will have both an increased hatred for sin, and an increased love for the righteousness. As desire for holiness increases, so will sensitivity to and antipathy toward sin.

The other side of the predicament, Paul says is that **I practice the very evil that I do not wish.**

Again, it is important to understand that this great inner struggle with sin is not experienced by the undeveloped and childish believer but by the mature saint of God.

David was a man after God's own heart;

1 Samuel 13:14 (NASB77)

¹⁴ ***"But now your kingdom shall not endure (to Saul). The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."***

And he was honored by having a Messiah named the Son of David.

Yet no Old Testament saint seems a worse sinner or was ore conscious of his own sin than David.

Especially in the great penitential psalms, 32, 38, 51, but in many other psalms as well, David agonized over and confessed his sin before God.

He was so near the heart of God that the least sin in his life loomed before his eyes as a great offense. So this experience reveals the proof of his condition of being incapable of fulfilling the Law of God.

That brings us to the Source;

Romans 7:20 (NASB)

²⁰ 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.

Paul repeats what he said in verses 16 and 17, with only slight variation.

"if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, he argues with simple logic, then it follows that "I am no longer the one doing it."

The apostle again uses the phrase **no longer**, referring to the time before his conversion. Before salvation it was the inner I who sinned and agreed with the sin.

An unsaved person cannot truthfully say he is not doing it. He has no moral or spiritual "no longer"

There again we have the condition, that no good thing dwells in my flesh, and the proof is that again I find myself doing what I do not wish to do, and then the source, it is sin in my flesh acting out the sinful results.

But then there is a third lament;

Romans 7:21-23 (NASB)

²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

²³ 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.

The third lament is very much like the first two, both in substance and in order.

The condition;

Romans 7:21 (NASB)

²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

The continuing presence of **evil** in a believer's life is so universal that Paul refers to it not as an uncommon thing but as such a common reality as to be called a continually operating spiritual **principle**.

Lingering sin does battle, with every **good** thing a believer desires to do, every good thought, every good intention, every good motive, every good word, every good deed.

The Lord warned Cain when he became angry that Abel's sacrifice was accepted but his own was not;

Genesis 4:7 (NASB)

7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Sin continues to crouch at the door, even of believers, in order to lead people into disobedience.

The Proof:

Romans 7:22-23a (NASB)

22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind

The first part of Paul's proof that sin is no longer his master and that he is indeed redeemed by God and made into the likeness of Christ is his being able to say;

Romans 7:22 (NASB)

22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

In other words, the apostles justified **inner man** is on the side of **the Law of God** and no longer on the side of sin, as is true of every unsaved person.

Psalms 119 offers many striking parallels to Romans 7.

Over and over again in a multitude of ways, the psalmist praises and exalts the Lord and His Word;

Psalms 119:14 (NASB)

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

Psalms 119:47 (NASB)

47 I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love.

Psalms 119:77 (NASB)

77 May Your compassion come to me that I may live, For Your law is my delight.

Psalms 119:105 (NASB)

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Psalms 119:140 (NASB)

140 Your word is very pure, Therefore Your servant loves it.

It has been always true that the godly persons delight in the law of the Lord

Psalms 1:2 (NASB)

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Paul's inner man, the deepest recesses of his redeemed person, the bottom of his heart, hungers and thirsts for God's righteousness

Matthew 5:6 (NASB)

⁶ *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

³³ *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Although our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day;

2 Corinthians 4:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

Paul prayed for the Christians at Ephesus that they would be;

Ephesians 3:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,*

¹⁵ *from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,*

¹⁶ *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,*

The second part of Paul's proof that sin is no longer his master and that he is indeed redeemed by God and made into the likeness of Christ involves a corresponding but opposite principle;

Romans 7:23 (NASB)

²³ *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.*

There is a different law, which does not operate in the inner person but in **the members of the believer's body**, that is, in his unredeemed and still sinful humanness.

That opposing principle is continually **waging war against the law** of the believer's **mind**, a term that her corresponds to the redeemed inner man about whom Paul has been talking.

Paul is not setting up a dichotomy between the mind and the body but is contrasting the inner man, or the redeemed New Creature with the flesh.

That remnant of the old man that will remain with each believer until we receive our glorified bodies.

Romans 8:23 (NASB)

²³ *And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

Ok time is up we will continue this not next Sunday but the following Sunday.