

Romans Session 95

The Believer and Indwelling Sin 6

Romans 7:21-25 (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.*

²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

²⁵ *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.*

Paul has been giving us 4 laments of His condition, giving us the proof and telling us of the source.

Each time Paul defines his condition he gives us real life events that shows and stands as evidence of that condition.

And he has done that with this last lament at well.

The first lament :

¹⁴ *For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. "Rom. 7:14 (NASB)*

The Condition

Romans 7:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ *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.*

The Proof

Romans 7:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ *But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.*

¹⁷ *So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

The Source

The second lament:

Romans 7:18a (NASB)

¹⁸ *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh;*

The Condition

Romans 7:18b-19 (NASB)

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

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

The Proof

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.*

The Source

The 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 Condition

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 Proof

Romans 7:23b (NASB)

²³ *and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.*

The Source

So that brings us current and the last point here is the source which we have yet to study.

As Paul has already mentioned in the first part of this verse, the source of his sin is no longer the inner man, which is now redeemed and being sanctified.

Like all believers while they are in this earthly life, Paul found himself sometimes to be **a prisoner of the law of sin**, the principle that evil was still present in him (**v21**) But now **sin** was only in the **members** of his body, in his old self (**Eph. 4:22**), which was still "dead" because of sin (**Rom 8:10**)

It is not that Paul's salvation was imperfect or in any way deficient from the moment he receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the believer is completely acceptable by God and ready to meet Him.

But as long as he remains in his mortal body, in his old unredeemed humanness, he remains subject to temptation and sin.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (NASB)

³ *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,*

⁴ *for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.*

In other words, although a Christian cannot avoid living in the flesh, he can and should avoid walking according to the flesh in its sinful ways.

Now that brings us to Paul's **final lament**.

Romans 7:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

²⁵ *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.*

Now Paul's final lament is more intense than the others. He cries out in utter anguish and frustration.

Wretched man that I am!

Because this person describes himself in such negative terms, many commentators believe he could not be speaking as a Christian, much less as an apostle.

If Paul was speaking of himself, they argue, he must have been speaking about his pre-conversion condition.

But the Scottish commentator Robert Haldane wisely observed that men perceive themselves to be sinners in direct proportion as they have previously discovered the holiness of God and His law.

In one of his penitential psalms, David expressed his great anguish of soul for not being all that he knew the Lord wanted him to be:

Psalm 38:1-4 (NASB)

¹ *O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath, And chasten me not in Your burning anger.*

² *For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me.*

³ *There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; There is no health in my bones because of my sin.*

⁴ *For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.*

Another psalmist expressed distress over his sin in words that only a person who knows and loves God could say.

Psalm 130:1-5 (NASB)

¹ *Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.*

² *Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications.*

³ *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?*

⁴ *But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.*

⁵ *I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope.*

Paul is here asking a question to which he well knows the answer:

"who will set me free from the body of this death?"

He again makes clear that the cause of his frustration and torment is **the body of this death**.

It is only a believer's **body** that remains subject to sin and **death**.

Rhuomai (*set free*) has the basic idea of rescuing from danger and was used of a soldier's going to a wounded comrade on the battle field and carrying him to safety.

Paul longed for the day when he would be rescued from the last vestige of his old, sinful, unredeemed flesh.

It is reported that near Tarsus, where Paul was born, a certain ancient tribe sentenced convicted murders to an especially gruesome execution.

The corpse of the slain person was lashed tightly to the body of the murderer and remained there until the murderer himself died. In a few days, which doubtless seemed an eternity to the convicted man, the decay of the person he had slain infected and killed him.

Perhaps Paul had such torture in mind when he expressed his yearning to be freed from **the body of this death**.

Without hesitation, the apostle testifies to the certainty of his eventual rescue and gives thanks to his Lord even before he is set free: **"thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** He says later in the epistle he further testifies:

Romans 8:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

As frustrating and painful as a believer's present struggle with sin may be, that temporary earthly predicament is nothing compared with the eternal glory that awaits him in heaven.

Because Christians have a taste of God's righteousness and glory while they are still on earth, their longing for heaven is all the more acute:

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.*

2 Corinthians 5:4 (NASB)

⁴ *For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.*

On that great day, even our corruptible bodies will be redeemed and made incorruptible.

1 Corinthians 15:52-53 (NASB)

⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

⁵³ *For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 (NASB)

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;*

⁵⁷ *but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul's primary emphasis in the present passage, however, is not on the believer's eventual deliverance from sin's presence but on the conflict with sin and torments that every spiritually sensitive child of God experiences.

He therefore ends by summarizing the two sides of the struggle:

"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."

In the poem Maud (x.5) one of Tennyson's characters yearns, "Ah for a new man to arise in me, that the man I am may cease to be!")

The Christian can say that a new man has already arisen in him, but he also must confess that the sinful part, his old man, has not yet ceased to be.

Now we get into chapter 8 and we find that description of life in the Spirit.

So now we will begin that study from Romans entitled:

**LIFE IN THE SPIRIT PART 1
THE SPIRIT FREES US FROM SIN AND DEATH
AND ENABLES US TO FULFILL THE LAW**

Romans 8:1-4 (NASB)

¹ *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

² *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*

³ *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,*

⁴ *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.*