**The Spirit Versus the Flesh**

**A picture containing text

Description automatically generatedRomans 7:13-8:8**

**(Lesson #12)**

***7:13 Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. 14 ¶ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.***

*“17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” (Ga 5:17 ESV)*

**Vs 13 -** So, Paul’s style, another rhetorical question. **So did the law bring death to me? No, absolutely not!** **It was sin**, which **produced death in Paul and in us**, and it used what was good (the law).

Now all this should show us **how sinful sin really is**. **That we might see that sin is sinful and hideous beyond measure.** The law is not the problem. Sin is the problem.

**Vs 14 -** W**e** know (Paul is including his audience in what he is about to say) namely, the law is **spiritual.**

He just called the law **holy, righteous, and good** (7:12).

**Frank Thielman:** *The law is God’s good gift and appeals to the aspect of the inner person that is sensitive to God.*

**The contrast of something spiritual is something fleshly.** Something or someone operating in the flesh, following the sinful desires of the flesh as opposed to the Spirit.

*“But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.” (1Co 3:1 ESV)*

**Here is what Paul says... I am of the flesh (present tense, indicative mood). I am sold under sin!**

Paul describes the fleshly nature as **“sold under”** sin. **In the flesh** (encased in the flesh) (Adamic nature)**,** each of us are in this sense sold under sin**!**

Again, scholars disagree if Paul is referring to himself prior to regeneration or after. Weather he is referring to the experience of lost people or of saved people, so although I am taking a position, I get the tension.

If he is talking about a lost person, we all agree. **If we are talking about a saved person, then we are beginning to get hints of the very aggressive inner struggle that goes on within a believer (one who has been justified by faith) and is seeking to walk with God (practical sanctification).**

He is waiting for his body to be redeemed (the resurrection, the redemption of the body**).**

**Vs 15 -**  ***For I do not understand*** (present tense) ***my own actions. For I do not do*** (present tense) ***what I want, but I do*** (present tense) ***the very thing I hate.***

**APPLICATION:** Regardless of what you believe about these verses, we have all experienced this!

Although **justified by faith**, although we possess a right standing before God, the **work of sanctification** is an **ongoing process**.

**We need to recognize that we must walk close with God, for this very thing can happen to us.** The internal warfare is real!

**Sin is so insidious, it is always seeking to trip us up, and it can lead us in a wrong direction.**

**Vs 16 -** ***Now if I do*** (present tense) ***what I do not want, I agree*** (present tense) ***with the law, that it is good.***

When we sin, we are not showing that the law is the problem. **We are showing that law is good.**

The problem lies elsewhere, and Paul is continuing to ensure that we understand that **sin is the problem**!

Stated differently, the very conflict within the born-again Christian, the conflict between knowing the law and failing to do the law, then, reveals that the law itself is good, indeed very good.

The Greek word translated good is **καλός** (kalos). It means **beautiful**, **handsome**, **excellent**, or **noble**.

**This is the experience of the new man, who when he sins, recognizes the problem is not in God’s good law. The problem is in ME!**

**Vs 17 -** Now **Paul highlights this dichotomy**, this **separation within himself**.

Notice, when I sin ***“it is no longer I”*** who does it. **It is NO LONGER ME doing this...**

Once, this was me. Something changed, I am not in my original, sinful condition. I have been born again. I am determined to do good. In spite of the fact that I do not always do what I desire.

**It is sin**, that is still dwelling within me, it is my flesh, it is the unredeemed part of me. **NOW, this is not an excuse to sin, he is not trying to avoid personal responsibility.** He is not saying go on and sin, it is no big deal (Rom 6:1-4).

Paul has already built the case that the **power of sin, in the life of a believer has been broken.**

**Paul is saying, I have (two wills) or two men who are at war within me. The inner man, the spiritual man, the redeemed man. The fleshly man, the adamic nature, the unredeemed part of me.**

**APPLICATION:** Prior to being saved my inner man and outward flesh all had one direction, towards evil. Now, the inner man has been renewed and I am waiting for the outer man to be renewed. Until then, this warfare will continue, and I will not always do what I want to do.

**We are now free to follow God, but we have an old nature (for now) and we should not underestimate the power of that old nature.** But when I sin, I truly desired to do something different.

**A point to Consider:**

*“36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. "” (Mt 26:36-39 ESV)*

*“40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."”*

Jesus gave a direct command to his apostles, they broke that command, according to Jesus, not because they were rebelling against him, but instead because their flesh causing weakness.

**Vs 18 -** So Paul makes a statement that seems too far, and then qualifies it for us. ***For I know that nothing good dwells*** (present tense) ***in me… That is, in my flesh.***

**Here again, Paul is showing us these two worlds, these two kingdoms. Flesh (old) Sprit (new)**

When we placed faith in Jesus Christ we were born again, we were… **JUSTIFIED**:

Spiritually, we were made alive in Christ Jesus, we were given a new heart and a new nature, and the Holy Spirit of God came and lived within us.

**At the resurrection we will receive a new body!**

Do you remember what John said:

*“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” (1Jo 3:2 ESV)*

Then Paul says: ***I desire to do what is right, but often lack the power.***

This appears to be the voice of a man, who laments that he is not perfectly walking with God. He has this desire, inner man, new man desire, to always do what is right!

**APPLICATION:** We are going to drop this flesh off in the grave and one day be clothed in a new, spiritual body, one like Jesus’s body, one that can inherit heaven.

This is the strain of the two natures. Spiritually we are alive, but we are waiting for the day we when receive a glorified body:

*“40 There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. 42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” (1Co 15:40-45 ESV)*

**But now, we are in a fight, a real battle against our old nature.** This was not possible while we were slaves to sin.

**Vs 19 -** Now Paul is not saying he never does good. But rather, he is saying there are times, when in spite of knowing what is good, and even wanting to do what is good, he instead does what is evil, the very thing he did not want to do, that is what he finds himself doing at times.

**The closer we walk with God, the more we rely on the indwelling Spirit, the less the reality of verse 19, is a reality in our day to day lives.**

**APPLICATION:** Have you every heard someone say: “I am struggling with XXXXX.” That is right, Christians should be struggling against the flesh, struggling against the old nature.

**Vs 20 -** Here, Paul points back to the issue. In some real sense, sin, still dwells “within me” that is in the flesh. Here Paul clearly shows us the source of sin in our lives is the old nature.

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***21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.***

**Vs 21 -** By law, he means an **established principle.** We use the word law in English like this.

Paul is saying this. Here is what I have learned about myself and being a follower of Jesus. **I find** (a principle that I must never forget) **when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.**

Two things about this:

1. **This language comes from Genesis:**

*“****6*** *The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?* ***7*** *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."” (Ge 4:6-7 ESV)*

1. **It is a warning for us…**

Sin is always close by, Satan no doubt often desires to sift us like wheat.

**Vs 22 -** Here Paul highlights this dichotomy that exists within him and us. **Now this dichotomy does not exist in an unsaved person, only one who has been saved.**

Notice Paul now joyfully embraces the laws of God. This is the heart of a believer. He delights, in God’s law, **in his inner, spiritual essence**.

This is language directly from the Psalms:

*“1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.” (Ps 1:1-2 ESV)*

**Vs 23 -** Having no more than completed the statement, I delight in the law of God, Paul then leads with the conjunction: **BUT…**Now, with sin still personified, the situation is presented in a much more graphic and more serious way.

**Now he looks within his own body (his members) and he sees a warfare.** It is like his fleshy fallen nature is in a free for all, with his redeemed spiritual nature.

The same is true for you and I.

**Chuck Missler:** *“The indwelling principle of sin is constantly mounting a military campaign against the new nature, trying to gain victory and control (cf. “slave” in vv. 14, 25 and “slaves” in 6:17, 19-20), of a believer and his actions.”*

**This conflict will continue until we put off this old tent.**

**Vs 24 - Wretched man that I am...** Paul’s cry for help shows that he understands **his help must proceed from somewhere else**. It cannot come from within, and it will not come from the law.

This is the death-nail of legalism and self-righteous behavior.

Who will deliver me???

**Vs 25 - Thanks be to God, thought Jesus the Messiah who is our Lord!**

By the way, the thanks is present tense! Paul is thanking God, for both a current and future deliverance.

So then, “I myself” here Paul is saying the answer to the problem is not in me. **With my mind, I serve God. My inner being who I really am.** But sometimes, my flesh leads me to sin... BUT that is not who I am!

I hate the old nature, and with God’s help, I will wrestle against it!

**Through justification** the power of sin has been broken, and I can now walk with God, I can resist the old man and his old ways. **I have been brought into the Kingdom of God and I can now resist the sinful passions of the flesh. Paul will develop this thread in chapter 8.**

**Equally,** **The Lord is coming back. One day, we will all receive glorified bodies.**

*“51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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 shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."” (1Co 15:51-54 ESV)*

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So far, in the first seven chapters, Paul has referred to the Spirit of God only four times: **Rom 1:4, Rom 2:29, Rom 5:5, and Rom 7:6.**

**Here in Romans 8, Paul is going to refer to the Spirit of God (20 times times) in 14 verses. Here he is going to actually teach on the work of the Spirit of God.**

***8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

**Vs 1 - There is therefore now...** When we see a therefore, we recognize that Paul is often drawing a conclusion based on what he had just said.

**There is therefore now no condemnation**, the Greek word is **κατάκριμα** (katakrima). It means a condemning sentence, it means a sentence of damnation. Picture it as the verdict handed down from the judge in the court of God.

This is a judicial term and involves the decision to punish the guilty. BUT, there is therefore now... (at this time) no sentence of condemnation.

**This is a reaffirmation of justification by faith. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (in the new man).**

This is a present tense statement, but the use of “now” the Greek word is **νῦν** (nun) **highlights**, **reiterates**, and event **strengthens the point**.

**There is therefore, at this time, no condemning sentence to those who are in Christ Jesus!**

**Vs 2 -** For the law of the Spirit of life has set us free...

The **“law of the Spirit”** is an ambiguous term and scholars disagree exactly what Paul means.

**Frank Thielman:** *“The law of the Spirit of life, then is the power that enables believers to break free from sin’s use of the law for its own deadly purposes (cf. 7:5, 8-11) and experience eternal life (6:22).”*

I believe Paul is saying that the **principle of life in the Spirit** has set us free, (in Christ Jesus), from the law of sin which results in death.

Now Paul’s use of the second person plural “you” “you all” or as we say in the south “y’all” is a little surprising I would have suspected “us”. Paul wanted his readers in Rome to experience this directly and personally.

**The liberating power of the Spirit of God in our lives has overwhelmed the power of sin that we were just talking about at the end of chapter 7.**

Why would Paul call the law, “the law of sin and death?” **Keep in mind what the law can do:**

1. It is a reflection of God’s righteousness and His holiness
2. It outlines God’s expectations around conduct
3. It outlines the penalty, when broken (Eze 18:20; Rom 3:23)
4. It serves as a tutor to point us to Christ (Gal 3:24-25)

**What the law cannot do:** Once broken, it has no remedy for the problem (Remember Eze 18:20; Rom 3:23)

**Paul would say it this way to the church in Galatia:**

*“16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” (Ga 5:16-18 ESV)*

This is it, we overcome sin in our life, by walking in the Spirit. This is the principle of life in the Spirit.

**Walking is the goal, stumbling in this ever-present possibility:** *“For we all stumble in many ways...” (Jas 3:2a ESV)*

**As I walk in the Spirit, I am able to overcome the law of sin** (in the old man, flesh, Adamic nature)**.**

**A discussion about the law of gravity....**

**Walking in the Spirit, requires attention, alertness, an ongoing responsibility to pay attention, or you could stumble.**

Life is a series of moments. Each moment is a chance for another step with God, or a stumble. Believers do not try to stumble, but James is correct, we do sometimes stumble.

**Vs 3 - What did we say the law could not do. It could not fix the problem; it did not contain the solution once broken.**

**The problem was not in the law, rather there is a two-fold issue:**

1. Which we have talked about a number of times, the law contained no remedy.
2. There is another issue, our tendency (since the fall) to sin.
   1. In fact, to the fallen man the law actually aggravated that issue!

So, the law, holy, righteous, and good. But it could not correct the problems. **But God...**

I must tell you I love that conjunction, but. **When the limitless God runs into one of our limitations...**

What God accomplished by the atoning death of his Son, broke the power of sin over believers and allows them, by the power of the Spirit, to begin living lives of love.

**Jesus came for sin AND He condemned sin in the flesh!**

**Think about this... This is the same word used for condemnation in verse 1. The** Greek word is **κατάκριμα** (katakrima). It means a condemning sentence, it means a sentence of damnation. Picture it as the verdict handed down from the judge in the court of God.

**Here we are told Jesus, κατάκριμα** (katakrima), pronounced a damning sentence upon sin.

God would condemn sin in the flesh, through the incarnation and sending his son, in human flesh, thus God condemned sin in the flesh!

**God sent His Son, as a human being, subject to all the limitations of being in human flesh (without sin) and thus defeated sin, in the flesh (for us)!**

**Vs 4 - Sin and death are condemned, in order that, so that... The righteous requirement of the law, might be fulfilled in us.**

Here it is from another vantage point, the righteousness of God’s law is **positionally** fulfilled in us the **moment we are saved**, day by day and moment by moment we can practically fulfill the righteousness of the law as we walk in the Spirit.

OK, let’s connect some dots...

*“"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Mt 5:17 ESV)*

The Greek word is **πληρόω** (pleroo). It means to bring to completion, to complete, to fill, to make complete, to carry through. Jesus came to **πληρόω** (pleroo) the commandments of God.

***“3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”*** The Greek word is **πληρόω** (pleroo).

**One of the purposes according to Paul, of the atoning sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ was to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law, in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

Now notice one additional thing, the righteous requirements of the law are being fulfilled in those who walk (present tense) according to the Spirit. **Again, walking is a perfect analogy of the life of faith.**

There are numerous things that could trip us up, and occasionally even the best of us will stumble. But Paul would tell us: *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Ga 5:16 ESV)*

**As you look at the direction (walk) of your life (today). Would you summarize it as waling in the Spirit or walking in the flesh?**

**Vs 5 -** Here Paul helps us answer the question for ourselves. Are we walking in the Spirit or in the flesh.

**The carnal person (lost person) lives for and seeks after carnal things. The carnal person has their focus on carnal things.**

But those who live according to the Spirit. Those who walk in the Spirit, those who stay in step with the Spirit. They are focused on spiritual things. They are seeking spiritual things.

**The Spirit, that came to live within us when we were saved governs our lives, and as we submit to God’s word, and thus God, the realities of what has been accomplished in our lives becomes more and more real and love becomes the driving motivator (love for God and love for people).**

**Vs 6 -** To focus only on the flesh is death, while to set our minds on the Spirit is life and peace.

**The flesh tilts those who follow it towards death. The Spirit tilts those who follow it towards life.**

**Vs 7 -** The mind that is focused only on the flesh is hostile against God, it will not submit to God’s laws.

**This is a warning to anyone who might imagine, well I am just a fleshly believer.**

**Paul would say, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile against God, it is not submitted (present tense) to God or his law.**

**Vs 8 - *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

Drop the mic! **God is pleased when we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. A life lived in the flesh does not please God!**

The righteous demands are fulfilled in us positionally and day-by-day practically was we walk in the Spirit.

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