

Fighting The Body of Death
Romans 7:14-8:1
Berean Baptist Church
Pastor Skylar Bernick

INTRODUCTION

A Christian is a sinner saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus' death for their sins and resurrection to rule the world. A sinner saved by grace walks in two worlds.

If you are in Christ, then you are already in heaven with God because...“He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6-7).”

But we also walk in the world of the dead and find ourselves bound to everything that we wish we could escape; “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death! (Rom 7:24)” The good news is that this soul-splitting pain is nothing new, even Paul felt it and God used him to show us the answer to the problem of sin clinging to a saint.

Christian, be strengthened against sin by knowing that you are NOT your sin nature! Look to Jesus to free you from your old nature and from God's condemnation!

Romans 7:14-16 The Struggle Within

There is something about us all, saved and lost, that is at war with God. It would be wonderful if, when we repent of our sin it has no place in our lives anymore, but that is not Paul's experience with grace...

Vs 15 Paul speaks very personally. The idea of “**allow**” is both in understanding and permission; 'Saint' Paul sometimes does things that leave him full of confusion and shame.

Vs 15-16 “**for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.**” The problem here is worse than just understanding. Sometimes Paul does what he actively hates. He consents to the goodness of the Law but does not find himself strong enough to follow it - even though he wants to. Sometimes we do what we hate and comfort ourselves with the blindness of hypocrisy but this is even worse. This is doing what you hate and hating yourself for doing it!

Christian, as you struggle hard with sin, know this: *you are not alone! Your infuriating, hateful weakness against sin has been shared by everyone that receives God's grace. There is a help, but in order to find that help you must own up to your weakness like Paul does here.*

If you haven't accepted Christ, *get a real view of evil and grace from these verses. A mature Christian has no “holier than thou” delusions, and God's grace is not some cheap comfort that numbs our heart.*

If you want real help and true freedom you will find them in Jesus as the Bible reveals Him. But if you want illusions of superiority and someone to enable your harmful behaviors, that's not biblical Christianity!

Romans 7:17-18 The Key to Victory

Vs 17-18 A Christian has two natures: the sin nature (some times called "the flesh" or "the old man") and the holy nature that came into being when you were born again and is forever connected to the Spirit of God.

Christian, yes, you struggle with sin. *But you must begin to see that you are not your sin. Even when you feel weak and powerless in the face of your sin, know this:*

You are separated from sin by death, and “your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col 3:3-4).”

And you are separated from your sin nature by death...

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Rom 6:6)”

If, and only if, you are in Christ then you are spiritually alive. And your sin nature, which once truly was you, is now as dead as a man who has been crucified.

Christian, your entire identity, everything that is genuine and enduring in you is your new life in Christ. You may be weak and immature, you may not know how to fight against sin yet, but by the Word of God that has reborn you to entire life: your sin has no part in who you really are, and will have no part in the person that God is growing you to be.

Think of yourself as the new, good person that Christ is forming within you; do not identify with the sinful old nature!

Romans 7:19-24 The Help We Need

So, in our struggle with sin, it is essential that we remember that we are not our sin. However powerful the old man may be compared to the new man at this moment, the old man will die and the new man will live forever. But that does not make the struggle easy...

Vs 19-20 In order to fight the enemy, we have to stop identifying with the enemy.

Vs 21-22 “delighting in the Law of God” is impossible for the sin nature to be at peace with God (Rom 8:7-8). To truly delight in the Law of God including its internal requirements is evidence of the grace of God working in a life.

Vs 23 “warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin”

Christian, the old man is at war with you trying to bury you (the new man) under sin. Victory comes from God but He wants us to have a part in the fight.

So, how do we fight? *The point of Romans 7:19-24 is that resistance against sin must start with the realization that sin has no part in the true identity of a Christian!* From this starting point the LORD our strength instructs us in war (Psl 144:1)...

Galatians 5:16-18 "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

Intentionally live according to the new man (the one connected with the Spirit) and be ready for hardship!

1 Thessalonians 5:6-9 "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,"

Diligently put on faith (an informed trust in Jesus), hope (the confident expectation that you will see the goodness of God), and love (the decision to put the good of others first) as a soldier puts on armor!

Ephesians 6:10-18 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

Militantly pray for yourselves and all the other saints taking your stand against evil!

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."

Go on the offense in your own life by using faith and the Word to bring your thoughts into the obedience of Christ

James 4:6-7 "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Humble yourselves, submit to God, and resist the Devil!

Vs 24 "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This is the sincere cry of someone who is sick of failing; sick of sinning, of disappointing himself and dishonoring God.

The "two dogs in the fight analogy" is really not accurate, the Christian's relationship to the sin nature (the body of death in Vs 24) is more like a living person (the Christian) that has to live handcuffed to a dead body (the sin nature).

We have a lug this horrible, stinking, thing around. It constantly reminds us of our own shame, it keeps us from doing what we want to do, and it generally makes us miserable. But however much harm that body of sin does, if you are in Christ, it is not you and one day you will be delivered.

Seek Jesus' help to be free from the sin nature that you are bound to! And fight against it in Jesus' name!

Romans 7:25-8:1 Our Deliverance: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"

Vs 25 This is the answer to Paul's heart-broken plea in Vs 24 **"who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"** Jesus delivers!

Paul had spent his entire life trying to master himself through the discipline of God's law. No one could find any fault in his outward obedience (Phil 3:6) but the evil born into his nature would never allow

Paul to be good enough. He had to die to sin and any hope of self-righteousness so that he could be saved. But even this death and new life in Christ did not totally free him from the sin nature.

If you are still in your sins, look to Jesus to make you alive! And as long as we still bear the weight of the sin nature and battle against it, we thank God that we are delivered from sin and that the sin nature is no longer who we are!

Vs 25 “So then with the mind I myself...” Paul's statement “I myself” is very emphatic as he declares that because of Jesus' deliverance “the true Paul” (“I myself”) serves God according to his renewed mind where the Holy Spirit is dwelling.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom 12:1-2).”

Jesus has the power to deliver through His Spirit which He gives to all believers, give Him authority over your entire self and seek the work of His Spirit to begin freeing you from the dead weight you carry around!

Vs 25 “but with the flesh the law of sin” Sin still has real power in his physical body but just as Paul's mind is being renewed now, his body will one day be made new.

CONCLUSION

Here at the end of the passage, some things have not changed. We are still in a desperate struggle with sin, and we still have to carry around this humiliating, hateful body of death. But the truth shows us the reality of our condition so that we move forward to liberty.

Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Christian, yes you struggle with sin, but you are not that sin. *Whatever evil is in you will die away as God remakes you. So, don't despair and don't sympathize with your sin – stand up to it and fight it using the principles of spiritual warfare we covered!*

If you are in Christ, you will live forever in the goodness of God. And your sin nature will pass away like a bad dream does in the morning. *See yourself as a Son of the Day that God is making you be (1 Thes 5:5). However small and weak you are now, abide in Christ and you will grow into a mighty light. Your sin has nothing to do with your future!*

But there is no hope outside of Christ! If you are not alive in Christ then you are dead in your sins. Being shackled to a dead body is a hassle, being that dead body is a much bigger problem. If you are dead, then you need a living savior to revive you; the dead cannot raise the dead.

Trust Jesus' death for your sins, resurrection for your salvation, and return for your immortality and He will make you alive; as is right, for He is the life (John 14:6).

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