

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 7:14-25

Lesson #17

Introduction

Starting back in chapter 3, verse 21 and following, and all the way to this point we're studying now, which is chapter 7, verses 14-25, the main emphasis of Paul's discussion is concerning justification being by faith alone, and not from the meritorious works of man himself. This justification involves various aspects, or elements, and Paul has been discussing those aspects and elements in these verses we've been examining. We've seen that justification involves both legal and experiential components, and both are essential to the whole. Certain legal procedures had to be accomplished, in their proper sequence, or the whole transaction would be subject to question. Paul made it clear that according to Law, both human and divine, a person may be legally joined in matrimony to only one other person at a time. And he used this as an example in chapter 7, verses 1-3. But the point of the example was that we who are appointed to be joined to the Lord must first be severed from our relationship to sin, otherwise we would be adulterers. So, Jesus Christ lived a perfect sinless life and then sacrificed Himself unto death on a cross specifically for the purpose of meeting the righteous demands of the Law on our behalf, before we could be legally joined to Himself. Do you remember when Jesus said: *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.* (Matt 5:17)

We've come to understand, from our previous studies of these chapters, that justification is not nearly as simple a matter as we might have first perceived. And it involves many diverse aspects. Of course the legal is essential, or the whole thing would be void, but the legal portion is not the main emphasis of justification. We are justified for a good reason, and that's not just so we don't perish in hell. Oh yes, that's a mighty good reason, at least from our perspective, but that's not really the main reason from God's perspective. He has a purpose for His creatures that dates back to before creation ever took place and before there actually were any humans in existence. And knowing this helps us understand the importance of the experiential components of our justification. It's the experiential components that make us what God desires from us, and why He justified us to begin with. Paul said that we now walk (meaning live our lives) in newness of the Spirit. Whatever that newness of the Spirit is, it's what God wants and expects from us, and the reason that He justified us. He did not justify anyone so that they could go right on being exactly what they were before, that would be pointless from God's perspective, and perhaps even a little questionable as to His fairness.

So what are these experiential characteristics that constitute God's desire and expectations for us? I should expect that every hand should shoot up with eagerness to publically declare that answer, but alas, I don't think that's what would happen. I fear that there would be very few who are eager to publically declare what they understand to be God's expectations of us, and the one's who do would probably think that it's to evangelize the lost. But the simple truth is that Paul has said nothing whatsoever about evangelizing the lost in his discussion of justification by faith alone. What he has said is: First, concerning the legal aspect, that God has performed Himself:

8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6:8-11) And then the resultant experiential effect of that legal transaction on the individuals involved:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom 6:12-13)

There are example after example, and they're all the same, they're about the experiential consequences of God's justification of His chosen. The experiential component is that we who are justified now walk in a whole new way of life concerning our attitude toward, and our practice of, sin in our daily lives. God provided the legal portion, and forever recorded that transaction in the Book of Life, (vv 8-11) but we are still here on earth, striving daily to make good on our experiential portion of our justification and regeneration by putting to death the old ways of life that are contrary to the desires and commandments of God. (vv 12-13) So that we both get that which we're seeking.

But this doesn't all happen at once. It does not all happen at once. And that's where all the confusion comes in. Do you remember in our previous lesson where we discussed that God told Adam and Eve that on the day that they disobeyed His command and ate from the tree that they would surely die? Well they did eat from the tree, but did they immediately die? Well, only a part of them immediately died, the spiritual part. If their physical bodies had died then we would have no humans on earth, because they had not yet produced any offspring. So their physical death was delayed, long enough to produce the planned offspring, but then they surely did die? The fall of man involved a two part process and a long time difference, and so it is with our redemption process as well. Part of it is immediate, but part of it is delayed. Both the legal, and the spiritual are immediate, but the bodily is delayed for a purpose. A divine purpose of God. (Rm 11:25; 2Pet 3:9)

Our final and complete redemption, which includes both our spiritual and bodily components, is a promise and a blessed hope for which we all eagerly await. We'll discuss this in depth in chapter 8, verses 18-25. In the meantime we are spiritually dead to the consequential demands of the Law and alive to God, both legally and mentally. With our new heart, received as a free gift of God through the impartation of saving faith, we now desire righteousness in our inner man, meaning in our conscious mind and innate heart's desires, but we are not yet entirely freed of our connection to the forces of sin. We still reside in unredeemed and unregenerate bodies that tie us to this fallen and sinful world. The legal and the spiritual portions of our justification and redemption are real and certain and as unshakeable as the word of God, but the total process, the portion that involves the body, is not yet complete, and it is this time interval between the first phase and the final completion that Paul is going to describe in the verses that we're about to examine. It's essential to understand the background context or the whole thing will be lost and misapplied. Paul is discussing the situation of a true born again believer who has not yet received the new heavenly body, and still resides in a body of flesh and blood that's constantly pulling him in a direction that his regenerated spirit and his renewed mind do not want to go.

When put in their right context these are some of the most comforting verses that the true Christian will ever read, because they explain something that torments every believer and challenges their confidence and assurance of faith. These are some of the most reassuring and encouraging verses that Paul ever gave us in all of his writings. They explain the source of the conflict that every believer faces while patiently awaiting the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And when we understand it (the conflict) then we can clearly see that the Lord knows about it, that He's planned for it in His master plan, and that He's already made adequate provisions for the full and complete remedy of it in His own time and manner. We will eventually get the last portion of our redemption, our glorified bodies, when all is fulfilled and the Lord returns to take possession of that which is His. Now, let's look at those verses that I've titled:

The Sin that still Lives in Us

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 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. 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. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; 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. 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. 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.

Romans 7:14-25 (NASB)

We very often hear these verses described as a conflict between two separate and competing natures. In fact the new American Standard Bible titles these verses "The Conflict of Two Natures." Now I understand how it could be perceived to be this way, but if considered a little deeper we realize that two separate natures would contradict the whole point of regeneration. The conflict isn't between two separate natures, both occupying the same mind at the same time, but rather between a whole new transformed mind, and the forces of sin still residing in the flesh that oppose that new transformed mind. The whole point of the preceding chapters is that the old nature has been put to death through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and a new resurrected life, meaning mind and nature has been raised up with Christ. If we say we still have the

old sinful nature we are saying that the death and resurrection of Christ, and the gift of saving faith by the grace of God was not entirely effectual at putting to death the old fallen nature of sin that we formerly possessed, and it didn't completely change our heart and mind, it simply added something else to it. But this would be blasphemous heresy, to say that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was only partially effectual. And if it was only partially effectual then what would it take to complete it and thoroughly remove sin from our new nature? We can see from these questions that inferring that we now have two natures, both the old and the new, is by necessity also implying that the death of Jesus Christ was not 100 percent effectual at putting to death the old man. This explanation simply doesn't work, it destroys virtually everything we believe about the effectuality of the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The preceding scriptures that we've been studying haven't told us that we've had an addition made to our spiritual nature, they tell us that we've died entirely to that old nature, and been regenerated by the Holy Spirit with a new and living nature that loves and agrees with God about sin and righteousness. This is the very essence of the promised new Covenant heart and mind that were prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and announced by Jesus Christ at His last supper before His crucifixion.

We can't deny that there is a residual problem with sin, but two distinct natures, the old and the new, now co-existing at the same time in the born again believers can't be the explanation; not without destroying everything we hold sacred about the work of Jesus Christ. While we can't pretend that there is no problem, nevertheless there has to be a more accurate explanation for it. And this is what Paul is providing in these verses, an explanation of the war itself, and an identification of who and what are the warring factions involved. We can learn very much about what we are and how we work as living human creatures from the study of these verses. As for the forces involved we have little problem in identification, there is the same old forces of good and evil that Adam and Eve unleashed in the beginning. But as for just exactly how these forces work within us and upon us is a more difficult matter. For instance, where does evil reside, and how does it act upon us to influence our thinking and behaviors? What is the connection between our conscious mind and our tangible bodies? We know the two are separate components, but we can't put a distinct location on the mental component, nor understand exactly how they're connected. In this day and time we are able to keep a physical body functioning (alive) long after all mental conscious activity has departed from it. But where did that mental consciousness go? Did it cease to exist, or did it simply depart from the physical bodily container? That's the question of the ages isn't it? A physical body that's void of mental consciousness is pronounced dead, and buried in the ground forever. But the body is just the same as it was before the consciousness departed, so what actually happened at that separation? The fact is we just don't know exactly how this whole union of mind and body works and we don't know how the mind influences the body and how the body influences the mind, we just know that they do. There is an invisible connection of the two that we haven't yet discovered, but we all know it exists, because we exist. Now I've said this because it's this unidentified interconnection of our mind and our body that forms the battleground for this whole conflict that Paul describes in these verses.

Our mind is a distinct entity that we can perceive and interact with, even though it isn't visible to us. In fact we would probably say that our conscious mind is really the essence of who and what we are, and our body is simply the container for that conscious entity. But a clear dividing line between the two cannot be drawn. Neither can function without the other in this tangible creation in which we live. A body will not function without a conscious mind inside, and yet the conscious mind will not function properly if the physical brain is sick or damaged. We are a complex entity that's linked together in a co-dependent bond that we still haven't figured out. And which one is actually controlling which can sometimes be difficult to tell. The physical body requires food, and it has a way to make the mind desire that food. The body requires water, and it has a way to make the mind perceive that it's thirsty. Each has a mysterious way of imposing its own needs and desires upon the other. And while we are very much aware of the influences themselves, we don't really understand how they actually work. Paul says:

Verses 14-15:

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

Well, the logical question is, why in the world is he doing it if he hates it? Therein lies the mystery. Why do we very often do what we don't want to do? Now sometimes what we really mean is that we actually do want to do it, we just don't want to pay the price that we know will come with the doing. But that's not what Paul is describing here, even though probably very many think that it is. For the unregenerate sinner, (and I'm assuming that you know what this is) there is the capacity

for remorse for their actions, because God has given man a conscience to act as a restraint on rampant sin, but the sinner can't make themselves desire in their heart not to sin. Sinners want to sin, and when they do it's what they want to do, because their heart is enslaved to sin and their innate nature loves those things that are sinful. If they feel remorse it isn't because they no longer want to sin but because the sin has caused some harm that they didn't desire to cause by their sin. This is the normal human condition that every non-believing person understands. They think that everyone else thinks and desires exactly what they desire, and that everyone really loves and desires to practice those sins just the same as they do, but just won't admit it. They believe that anyone who speaks out against sin is a hypocrite and a liar, because everybody loves to sin. This is what every unregenerate sinner thinks because they have never experienced anything different. They were born slaves of sin and they were probably raised by parents who loved and practiced it. We understand this mindset because we were one of them ourselves. Every saved person started out a slave of sin, there are no exceptions. No one is born a saint, no one is born a Christian. This is what Paul has just spent the last 3 and a half chapters explaining to us in his discussion of justification by faith alone.

Only the born again believer, the recipient of the new heart and new mind, can understand the extent of the change of heart and mind that accompanies the gift of justification and saving faith in Jesus Christ. A change that so completely reverses the likes and dislikes, the loves and hates, the desires and affections of the entirety of the human conscious mind. The desire for repentance and obedience that comes from within, by a renewed spirit, not from without, by way of rules and Laws. The Laws of God are now the expression of our very own innate loves and desires, not the old burdensome demands of a repressive "kill joy" God. We have to understand this or we won't understand what Paul means when he says *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*. Someone might argue that nobody does what he hates to do unless he's being forced or somehow enticed. Well, usually we aren't being forced to sin, but we most certainly are being enticed. But enticed by who or what? Well, not by our own mind or our own desires, those are they which hates the things being done. With our conscious mind and heart we do not want to sin. This is precisely what has changed, our innate desires and affections, but something is still causing us to sin, even when we don't want to do so and even hate it. This makes no sense to us at first, but yet we recognize the truth of it. That's why Paul continues with the explanation. He goes on to say:

Verses 16-17:

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.

If we end up doing things we don't want to do, then in essence we are mentally agreeing with the Law that says we should not be doing them, and this affirms our agreement with the Law and that the Law is good and right. And if, under this situation, we find ourselves violating the Law, the reason is not because we want to, but because something other than our heart and mind is exerting an influence upon us. And what is this mysterious invisible force that can cause us to apparently voluntarily do what we don't really want to do? Paul says that it's sin, but the really troubling thing he says is that it dwells within us. Like an invisible parasite, it feeds on us without our consent, and certainly against our will, but nevertheless there it is. It has taken up residence in our own flesh, and it has the ability to communicate its desires to our minds even when we don't want it to do so. Even when we hate what it tells us. This is a foreign intruder, it is not of us, it is not who we are or how we think, but it has a connection into our mind that we don't understand and we can't sever by ourselves. There's more than one occupant in this body in which we live, and no matter how much we wish it would leave, it will not. This parasite of sin has indwelt every human from their birth, and it was introduced by disobedience to God. It is the reason every flesh and blood body will eventually die, and it is the reason that even born again believers still commit sin.

It is not us, it is not a part of our new nature that hasn't yet been redeemed, it is something apart and separate from our spirit and our nature, but it resides in our body with us until the time of the redemption of our body and the issuance of a new undefiled glorified body. (1Co 15:50-54; Phi 3:21; 1Jn 3:2) In the reference verse from 1st Corinthians Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Why, because flesh is corrupted and pronounced unredeemable, and this corrupted flesh is what's producing sin in the believers, and this is what must be replaced entirely to complete the redemption process. This puts believers in a very uncomfortable position. We want to obey the Laws of God, but we see our bodies committing sin, so how are we any different than the unregenerate? Well, in several ways, but let's look at Paul's next verses:

Verses 18-20:

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; 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. 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 is telling us something very informative here. He's freely acknowledging that he still falls prey to sin, but at the same time he makes it clear that it's not his redeemed spirit that's the source of this sin. What we received from God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, is not a flawed or incomplete gift. The new spirit and new heart are perfect and holy gifts, they are undefiled and free from sin. The new heart and mind does not want to sin, in fact Paul said it himself, it hates sin and it always will. And this is really the essence of the difference between before and after justification and redemption. I recently read in a book, I think from Arthur Pink, where he said that it isn't necessarily the absence of sin but the attitude toward it that distinguishes the true Christian from the imposter. Every conscious living and breathing human being sins, but the believer truly hates it when he does, and is filled with remorse and shame, even if he got away with it without being discovered. (by man that is, obviously God sees everything)

The parasite of sin that lives in our flesh cannot make us change our minds about sin and righteousness, (1Pet 1:5) but it can cause us to do what we don't want to do, and this is frustrating, and tormenting, and even infuriating to every true believer. It is for this reason that we, and indeed the whole creation, groan in agony, eagerly awaiting the promised remedy from this impossible situation, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom 8:19-23) And just as sin cannot ever make us change our minds about sin and righteousness, neither can we ever convince sin to leave us alone and play nice. These are eternal cosmic opposites, and the only remedy is to separate them entirely and eternally. And this is exactly what God is doing, and in the process He's showing us first hand why it has to be this way. Sin is a destroyer of everything that is good and righteous, but it always presents itself to us as our friend. We all need to see it and understand it so that we can recognize it for what it really is and know what it will do to us. Righteousness never ever does us harm, and sin never ever does us good, but we have to learn that from experience, as painful as it may be. (Rm 8:18)

Verses 21-23:

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.

Paul says that he perceives a principle from this dilemma. He concludes that evil is present within him even though he himself wants to do good. Because he knows without a doubt that he detests evil and desires to do good and honor God, nevertheless he sees himself still committing sins. So there has to be a reason, and that reason is that evil is still present in him (and us) as long as we share this flesh and blood body. The nature of the connection of spirit and body is such that both are able to influence the other but neither is able to completely suppress the other. Both have influence but neither has absolute dominance. And such is this war, this conflict of desires and temptations and motivations that we live with every moment of every day. Our renewed mind is just not capable of completely suppressing the desires of the flesh, but at the same time the desires of the flesh are not able to overwhelm us either. We are engaged in a war of give and take. We gain a little ground and then perhaps we lose a little. We win a battle or two but then we lose one.

But having said this, the term sanctification means something. In Peter's first epistle he speaks of those who: *are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.* Yes, sin still lives in our flesh, but that is not to be seen as an excuse to let sin reign in our mortal bodies so that we voluntarily obey its lusts. (Rm 6:12) Despite the fact that we can't make it go away, we are commanded to engage it head on, and put to death the deeds of the flesh. Our weapons are spiritual not carnal. (Eph 6:10-16) Meaning this renewed mind and regenerated spirit has been given the desire to resist and abstain, and we are commanded to use these weapons and grow in their effectiveness. This is progressive sanctification, and every Christian should be learning to use them more and more effectively in our lives. We are not what we used to be, we are not slaves of sin with a darkened heart and love for sin, we are new creatures, by virtue of the precious gift of saving faith, through which we have been granted a new heart (a renewed mind) that hates sin and loves righteousness, and our ownership has been transferred from Satan to God, through the work of Jesus Christ, whom we now serve with joyful gladness and appreciation. We obey Him because we love Him, and we earnestly desire to do so beyond our capabilities. (Jn 14:15)

So, the Christian life is a battle, not so much against other people, or against economic or cultural trends, but against the sinful flesh that we still live in. It was designed by God to be this way. This world, with all its trials and triumphs, is going to completely pass away once it has served its designated purpose, and what is left is the matured children of God, who have been made ready for their eternal destiny, and this battle against the fallen flesh is a great part of that process that brings those children to maturity and prepares them to be eternal worshipers of God. Don't misunderstand, we're not implying that sin is part of the process, we're saying that the struggle against it, and the inability to conquer it by ourselves is the lesson that God is teaching us. Every eternal worshiper must know that sin is a deadly thing, and no human is equipped to handle it. Any contact whatsoever is lethal, and only God can conquer and abolish it. For this, and many other reasons, we worship Him forever. There is no place for personal pride among the worshipers of God, so we are taught our own limitations and weaknesses. Apart from God, we can do nothing but fail, miserably. Everything that is good and desirable and healthy and loving is from God. And so we worship Him, in spirit and in truth. In spirit meaning in an attitude of willingness and even desire, and in truth meaning an accurate knowledge of Who and What God really is in His very nature and essence. Now, moving on to the next verses:

Verses 24-25:

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.

When considering his condition, that he cannot consistently do the things that he wants in his heart to do, and the persistent doing of those things that he hates, Paul seems to vent his frustration with the exclamation: *Wretched man that I am!* Now please take note that this is the Apostle Paul, through whom the Holy Spirit wrote the majority of the New Testament scriptures. But he lives in a body that has been damaged by sin, and there are no exceptions. Now, just to set the record straight, it isn't the flesh and blood bodies themselves that we detest, we appreciate our bodies, but it's the sin that has infected those bodies that we detest, and for this reason we eagerly await a new one that is undefiled and incorruptible. (1Co 15:52-53) He finishes that sentence with the question: *Who will set me free from the body of this death?* This is an interesting term *the body of this death*. What does that mean? It means that the body that has been defiled must die. Elsewhere Paul said that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."* (1Co 15:50) God has made no provision for the justification or redemption of flesh and blood bodies, they must die and be replaced with immortal bodies. Being stuck in a flesh and blood body is being stuck in a container of death, because that container is defiled and infected with sin. But Paul answers his own question as to who will save him from this fatal condition with the statement: *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Paul thanks Jesus Christ because he knows this:

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Phi 3:20-21) The solution is already promised to us, whose citizenship is in heaven. The residual problem of sin in our flesh will be totally resolved when the appointed time has come. Knowing this makes the daily battle tolerable, it doesn't make it any less painful, but it does give us strength to persevere in the faith. To continue to fight the good fight of faith, because eventual victory is absolutely assured.

Paul finishes up and sort of recaps this thought with the words: *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 beginning introduction to this lesson I stated that these were some of the most informative verses that Paul ever wrote, and understanding them was an immense blessing to every Christian. Perhaps the first questions every Christian asks themselves is: if I've been saved then why do I still sin? And, can I really be saved if I still sin? It is incredibly important and valuable to know the answers to these questions, and if we've grasped this group of verses from Paul's epistle to the Romans then we have that answer, in clear and understandable terms. We will not be like little children tossed to and fro by false teachers and aberrant doctrines. In keeping with this desire please allow me to make one last example, knowing that all examples are less than perfect, but Jesus used them very often Himself.

We might consider sin to be somewhat akin to a computer virus. Like a virus it cannot enter into our computer without our own assistance in some way or the other. So it disguises itself as something good and useful, or attaches itself to something else that is useful, and we invite it in. Once in it immediately takes up residence on the hard drive and hides

its presence. It has the ability to access all the functions of our computer, just like the good programs that we want. It can use all the good things and capabilities that make our computer useful against us to do us harm. It can run completely separate from our good programs and be working behind the scenes to do harm when we don't even necessarily know that it's there. Eventually we find out, but often it's too late to avoid the damage. Our good programs are still running but the virus is also running at the very same time in a different segment of memory. Both reside on the same hard drive and both use all the same components and resources, but they are two separate and distinct entities regardless of the fact that they reside in one single computer. And their purposes are diametrically opposed to each other. One set of programs is there to help us, but the virus is there to exploit and harm us, and it does this by using our very own resources against us.

Sin in the human body works in a very similar way, in as much as it got into us by trickery, but once it was in it apparently wrote itself into the very DNA coding of our body and hides among the other codes that make our bodies function. This is how it's passed on from generation to generation, and it's why we were all born sinners. Sin, just like a computer virus, has infected the human being at the molecular level. It got into Adam and Eve and has been passed on to every human thereafter. If you copy a disk that has a virus on it then every copy you ever make from then on will also have the virus. This is what sin is, and how it got into us, and why it doesn't go away. Now, I'm sure I'll get some objections to my analogy, so let me say that I am by no means trying to assert any dogma or delve into biology, I have proposed this simple example because it so clearly describes the kind of situation that we are in, how it came to be, and the kind of forces that are at work behind the scenes within our very own minds and bodies.

If we truly understand what's going on inside of us, then we won't be easily fooled or tricked into doubting our own salvation or worse, doubting the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's working within us. Again I will repeat the previous reference that the sign of a true Christian is not the absolute absence of sin in their life, but rather their attitude toward it. There is none but Christ who can boast of the total absence of sin in their life, and this is both before and after salvation. (1Jn 1:8-10)

If we know why, then we won't be unnecessarily discouraged, because a distraught soldier is a poor soldier. A soldier who knows with certainty that he is on the winning side perseveres with diligence and confidence. And so are we commanded to *press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*. (Phi 3:14) We do this by setting our hearts and minds to the task of daily putting to death the deeds of the flesh being prompted by the sin virus that resides in us, because we know with certainty that our efforts, though never perfect in this life, will not be in vain. Our mind has been forever changed, our heart has been forever replaced, and our affections have been forever redirected, and this will never ever change, because these precious gifts are *protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. (1Pet 1:5) So here we are, brand new conscious beings, but still residing in a sin infected flesh and blood body, so in the words of Paul, *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*.

I truly hope Paul's teaching in this lesson has been as helpful to you as it has been to me. Knowing what's going on within us gives us an understanding of why we still sin even when we really don't want to. And understanding that there is a very real distinction between what we call ourselves, and this foreign thing we call sin. The unbeliever can't grasp this because there is no conflict at all, his/her mind is in perfect sync with his/her flesh, both love to sin. It's only the born again believer who understands that something lives inside of us that is not in sync with the new mind and new attitudes, and this difference causes the Christian's conflict that we all know so well. However, recognizing who and what the enemy is, allows us to deal with our failures more objectively, though they never cease to torment us, and that knowledge makes us able to recover from a failure much more quickly, without spending a lot of time wallowing in misery, because when we know in advance that we're probably going to take a few hits from sin, we also know that it will never ever defeat us, so we're very quick to get back up, immediately confess our sin to God, give thanks for the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and get back to the task at hand. That task of living sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age. (Tit 2:12) So, along with our dear brother Paul, we all together joyfully cry out: *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami
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