

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## CONFLICT IS NOT A STRANGE THING

### INTRODUCTION

The desire for favorable and pleasant circumstances is part of our makeup. It is as though we long for the tranquility that characterized the beginnings of our race in Eden. A preference for trouble can be developed, but it is contrary to our nature.

Sin has made us vulnerable to the wicked One. Craftily, the devil persuades people to act out of harmony with even nature. Sodomy is an example of living in contradiction of our basic constitution. Drunkenness is another, with other indulgences that cause the mind to become virtually useless. The enjoyment of pain and trouble are also unnatural propensities.

Made in the image of God, we cannot be truly content with struggle, adversity, and trial. David expressed the deep-seated desire of all humanity when he said, "O, that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest" (Psa 55:6). The compelling effects of hope speak to this part of us, enabling us to overcome conflicting influences within and without. That is why it is written, "For we are saved by hope . . ." (Rom. 8:25).

## GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE AND THE END OF TIME

There is an "eternal purpose" that is at the root of God's involvements with humanity. Properly seen, it becomes a powerful motivation to us for good. Divinely conceived, it is woven into everything that God does. That objective has to do with the elimination of all variance, conflict, and turmoil. It focuses upon everything in heaven and earth, and is being carried out through Christ Jesus. The Spirit succinctly states this purpose in Ephesians 1:9-10. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Eph 1:10). This is the "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11).

While this "eternal purpose" has not yet been fully realized, we are living in the final stages of its development. With this objective in mind, the Spirit revealed, "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb 9:26). Those in Christ Jesus are said to be those "upon whom, the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:11). Again, it is written,

"this is the last time" (1 John 2:18).

All creation is moving toward this ultimate objective. "Because the creature [impersonal creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom 8:21-22). The absence of all corruption is simply another way of viewing the presence of perfect harmony.

The desire for harmony that is integral to our nature is a faint but powerful reflection of that purpose.

## ERROR OF EQUATING VICTORY WITH THE ABSENCE OF CONFLICT

There are several erroneous doctrines in the "church" world. Some of them have a very good sound to them, but that is only because of Satan's craftiness. They are all designed to turn us from the FOCUS of God's "eternal purpose" and engage us disproportionately in temporal pursuits, many of which are religious, but vain.

One of the primary misconceptions Satan has foisted upon unsuspecting souls is that of equating spiritual victory with the absence of conflict. This is something humanity wants to hear, but it is still false. While we are in "this present evil world" (Gal 1:4), conflict WILL be present. There are times of spiritual respite, when the waves are not so high, and the winds are not so disruptive: but contradiction is always present, like it or not! While we are "in the body" no provision is made for the complete dissipation of trouble. Those who seek such a condition in this life are really hurting and handicapping themselves.

God does not promise calm seas and blue skies while you are in this "vile body" (Phil 3:20). Even Jesus was "straitened" when He was here, and you will be also. He said, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I STRAITENED [distressed, NKJV] till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). Faith addresses this situation, enabling us to triumph: but it does not eliminate trouble, vexation, war, and conflict! When these are removed, faith will no longer be needed!

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## OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

This is not intended to be a retreat into mere academic inquiry. While we will explore various texts, we will focus on identifying THE NATURE of the faith-life, or living by faith (Heb 10:38). If God's people do not know the nature of the battle in which they are engaged, Satan will get the upper hand with them. My ultimate purpose is to give advantage to the people of God. If God is to be glorified in us, we simply cannot be uniformed about the life we possess in the Son.

## IDENTIFY THE CAUSE AND NATURE OF INWARD STRUGGLE

Why do we have struggles within? What is it all about? Some think the new birth eliminates inward struggle. Is this so? We will seek to clarify legitimate and very real spiritual struggles, giving you an appreciation for why they are present. Considerable time will also be given to identifying that struggle.

## CONFIRM THE SOULS OF BELIEVERS

Getting into Christ involves a triumph over the devil. But that is not the end of our exposure to him. The great difficulty is NOT getting into Christ, but remaining, or abiding, in Him. A "good fight of faith" is not related to being converted, but to remaining sanctified (1 Tim 6:12). Intense spiritual activities like running (Heb 12:1-2) and wrestling (Eph 6:12) has to do with life AFTER we are born again. I have observed over the last six decades that very little attention is devoted to this subject in the churches and its contemporary literature.

This is why early messengers were so involved in confirming and edifying the saints of the Lord. "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). God's people must be strong if they are to finish their course. Understanding the nature of inner conflict will contribute to that strength.

## AFFIRM INWARD STRUGGLE IS EVIDENCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

One of the loftiest insights I ever received was this: struggle is evidence of spiritual life. For years I interpreted inner conflict as a sign of distance from God, spiritual weakness, and Satanic triumph. It is important that you see this is not true. When you have conflict with Satan, it is BECAUSE you no longer belong to Him. When you experience war within, it is BECAUSE you have been reconciled to God. The part of you that remains unregenerate did not go to sleep when you were born again. It remains with you, although it has been made separate from you by means of "the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:10-12). There is a part of you that is not yet saved – your body, which is scheduled for redemption at the resurrection of the dead (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30). Until then, the body and everything about you that is inexorably tied to that body, will cause inner conflict. God has, through Jesus Christ, graciously made provisions for this most unpleasant circumstance, which provisions will appear useless until the reality of living in this world (John 17:11; 1 Pet 5:9), but not being of it (John 17:14,16), bursts upon the soul.

## THE WAR WITHIN

## HUMAN INTERPRETATIONS OF INNER STRUGGLE

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Verse 23, Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Because the Divine imagery in man involves intelligence, he continually attempts to interpret or assess his condition. This can be good, but it can also be evil. If we assess our situation FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD, we will be forced to wrong conclusions—i.e., having an excessive amount of pleasure (Lk 8:14; Rom 1:32; 1 Tim 5:6; 2 Tim 3:4), being rich (Matt 13:22; 1 Tim 6:9), etc. If, on the other hand, we REASON AS SPIRITUAL MEN, we can profit from introspection—i.e., being able to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2), being "sincere and without offence" (Phil 1:10), being "acceptable to God" (Rom 14:18; 2 Tim 2:15), and willingly praying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa 139:23-24).

Now, when we come to the matter of inner struggle – two competing natures within – how we reason about it is vitally important. Because the situation is addressed in Scripture, a misunderstanding of it is in no way good or acceptable. A failure to comprehend what the Lord says, leads one in the direction of the devil, for "no understanding" is the arena in which he works successfully.

## IGNORE THE EXPERIENCE BY TURNING TO DISTRACTIONS

Inward struggle is viewed by some as antithetical to us. Because of this, some attempt to remove its grim reality by resorting to distractions. They think these will bring relief. The inordinate quests for pleasure and the practice of fleshly indulgences are examples of this kind of activity. It is tragic that much of the religion of our day is nothing more than an appeal to this type of beguilement. Much of the modern praise movement is really nothing more than a distraction from the harsh realities of spiritual life. Religious entertainment, so common in our day, is not to be the thrust of our gatherings. A lot of laughter – even wholesome laughter – will not alter the unpleasantness of inner conflict.

## EVIDENCE OF INFERIORITY

Others, particularly in the religious realm, view inner struggle as evidence of inferiority. The presence of conflicting emotions and thoughts are considered evidence of the absence of grace. Thus some people pretend they are "happy" all of the time. Honest souls who are wrestling with contrariness within are considered weird, or apparitional because they are confused about a very real and legitimate experience. When human experiences that are delineated in Scripture are not addressed from the pulpits and other teaching media, what God intends to be comprehended will prove to be confusing. Some heartless people even think that inner warfare actually suggests basic rebellion in the individual recognizing it. Therefore, doubts and fears are generated by this view of incongruous experiences. The individual with no understanding might reason, "If I am

not fundamentally sinful, why do I have such offensive thoughts?

### PRETEND IT IS NOT THERE

Those enamored of a state of inactivity suppose that conflict is inevitable, and that any effort to address it is pointless. Their fatalistic view forces them to simply ignore their struggles, pretending they are not there. The result is that they are carried about by their emotions, which are the weakest part of their constitution. They rise and fall on the ocean of experience, bobbing up and down upon the uneven sea of life without hope. They do not extend themselves to appropriate the good, nor do they exert effort to avoid evil. Using whatever means available to them, they simply attempt to get away from the whole matter, pretending as though it does not even exist.

However, as this series of lessons will confirm, inner warfare, or competing desires within are a very real experience. There is a reason for it – a reason that itself is not sinful. In my personal judgment, much of the failure to discern such experiences is owing to the neglect of professed Christian preachers, teachers, and writers, to accent what ACTUALLY HAPPENS when a person is born again; or what results from the washing of regeneration. An astounding number of professed Christians cannot imagine anything beyond the forgiveness of sins being experienced – and they have an extremely abbreviated view of even that matter. Such people are prone to think that Christ's death changed the way God reacts toward men, instead of altering how men respond to Him. In Christ, real human experience is intended to be understood by the believer to some measurable degree. A satisfactory explanation must be obtained that soothes the soul and pleased the Lord.

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### CONFLICT FROM THE BEGINNING, #1

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHAOS

From the beginning, conflict has existed: the abrasive hostility of order and disorder, light and darkness, good and evil. The Word of God opens with an introduction to conflict. "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved (brooded) upon the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2). Think of the Spirit of God, moving within the framework of Divine objective, brooding upon the face of the chaotic deep. Deity is averse to chaos and disorder, as is shown in creation. The extent of the conflict of that ancient

chaos with God's Spirit transcends our imagination. The effect that disorder has upon you is a very faint reflection of that situation.

## LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The first creative work of God summoned light into existence. But even then, there was conflict. Light did not dissipate darkness, nor could it be merged with it. They are conflicting orders. What illuminates and what obscures cannot be joined together. Thus it is written, "And God saw the light, that it was good: and God DIVIDED the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen 1:4,5). There is a divinely appointed line of demarcation between what illuminates and what obscures. They can never be joined. They are, by their very nature, in conflict.

## ADAM, EVE, AND SATAN

The crowning work of God's creation was man. Everything led up to that. The Lord's observation at the conclusion of each creative act was, "and God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:10,12,18,21,25). But following His crowning work, the observation was, ". . . and, behold, it was VERY good" (Gen 1:30). The earth was created to be inhabited by man, not merely by the impersonal and brute creation.

No sooner was man created, "male and female" (Gen 5:1), than hostility was introduced. Eve was confronted with moral conflict. She had to weigh something that God said against a contrary statement. The result of that confrontation is found in the reign of sin and death that has followed (Rom 5:12-21). With the introduction of "the knowledge of good and evil" came conflict, not known in the sweetness of innocence. Here is the first record of man confronting conflicting gods!

## CAIN AND ABEL

Struggle now became a part of our race. The first two sons were Cain and Abel. They were different. One was "of the evil one" (1 John 3:12), and one was pleasing to God (Heb 11:4). This condition was not due to a deficiency in the family structure. It was the result of man's fall. Prompted by a religious controversy, Cain "rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Gen 4:8). Thus, are we introduced to the first person-to-person conflict on the human level. At the threshold of human history, therefore, the seriousness of conflict – particularly religious conflict – is demonstrated.

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## CONFLICT FROM THE BEGINNING, #2

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There are recorded examples of the variance between the godly and the ungodly – between godliness and ungodliness. They confirm the reality of the conflict that is initiated when a person is favored by God, and lives by faith.

### ENOCH AND THE WORLD

Before the passing of a millennium, corruption began to dominate the world. With the rapid multiplication of our race came the more rapid spread of evil. In the midst of a wicked generation a man equal to the conflict arose. His name was Enoch. He "walked with God" while others walked in their lusts (Gen 5:24). He was not at peace with his world, where wickedness was increasing exponentially. That condition was strictly owing to his acquaintance with, and service to, the Living God.

Because he was translated from this life without experiencing death, his analysis of that generation is important. It was an inspired analysis, and is a fitting description of any generation unduly enamored of the world, and living only to satisfy their own lusts, or desires.

God inspired Jude, the brother of James, who was the brother of our Lord, to confirm the relevance of the prophecy of Enoch to his own generation, and all of the following generations. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to EXECUTE JUDGMENT upon all, and to CONVINCe ALL that are UNGODLY among them of all their UNGODLY deeds which they have UNGODLY committed, and of all their hard speeches which UNGODLY sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 1:14,15). In prophesying the impending flood, Enoch provides us with the first example of a man in conflict with the world.

He delivered a word that revealed the impact that generation had upon God. Sending a host of thousands of angels, He executed judgment upon the world during the time of Noah. That judgment was to "convince," or "convict" [NKJV] all that were ungodly. Their ungodliness consisted of both "deeds" and "speeches" – things that were spoken against God Himself. Be sure, that this mode of conviction is most terrible – to be convicted of your sin while the world is being inundated with a flood that will not stop until "all flesh died" (Gen 7:21). And what brought this judgment? It was conflict – the conflict of people with God Almighty.

### NOAH AND THE WORLD

Lamech, Noah's father, lived during the last 56 years of Adam's life. The godly influence generated by that association was doubtless the contributing factor to Noah's godliness. Ungodliness reached its apex in his day. It was so dominant and unrestrained that God "repented that He had made man on the earth" (Gen 6:6). Those supposing that an omniscient God is indifferent to the attitudes of men, need to consider the gravity of that statement!

The all-seeing eye of God found a man in conflict with that wicked world: righteous Noah. The result was that Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8). Commissioned to build "an ark to the saving of his house," Noah became a witness to that conflicting generation. This "preacher of righteousness," by obediently constructing an ark, "condemned the world" that contended with him (Heb 11:7). In Noah we have the first example of a winning minority!

The last telling and unquestionable example will be the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." (2 Thess 1:7-10). That will confirm that the separation of the godly from the ungodly will finally and totally be effected.

Until then, there will be the unrighteous and the unrighteous, the godly and the ungodly. The saints of God must learn to distinguish between the two, and to deliberately and effectively side with the righteous and righteousness. That is what inner warfare is all about – siding with the Lord.

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## CONFLICT FROM THE BEGINNING, #3

### ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

Following the dispersion of the proud would-be builders of Babel's tower, God called Abraham, separating him from the masses to Himself. He promised that the race would be rescued by Abraham's "Seed" – (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-4; 17:16). Specifically He said, "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:3); "And in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Apostolic doctrine states, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal 3:8).

Eventually, two sons were found in Abraham's house: one from a bondmaid, and one from his wife, who was barren for 89 years. THESE SONS WERE IN CONFLICT. Ishmael, the son of Hagar the handmaid of Sarah, "mocked" Isaac, the son of Sarah. The result of this conflict was

the expulsion of the "bondwoman and her son." Commenting on that ancient conflict, Paul wrote, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so IT IS NOW" (Gal 4:29). He also wrote that Hagar was a type of the Law, and Ishmael was a type of those under the Law (Gal 4:24-27). He added, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, EVEN SO IT IS NOW. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Gal 4:31).

## JACOB AND ESAU

Jacob and Esau also provide us with a remarkable portrayal of conflict. These were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. While yet in the womb, these twins struggled with each other, locked, as it were, in combat. Rebekah did not know what was happening, and so went to the Lord and asked Him to reveal what was taking place. "And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD" (Gen 25:22). The Lord answered her inquiry: "And the LORD said unto her, TWO nations are in thy womb, and TWO MANNER of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people SHALL BE STRONGER than the other people; and THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER " (Gen 25:23). Not only were two nations represented by those prenatal infants, they were "two manner of people" – in the womb: a most vivid depiction of inner conflict! They were different, and would be at variance with one another because of that difference. To this very day, the descendants of Jacob and Esau are in conflict – and it all started within the same womb, and at the same time.

## THE WORLD IS AN ARENA OF CONFLICT

We cannot afford to be confused by the presence of conflict. This world is an arena of fierce and unrelenting dissension and conflicts, or battle. Whether we read of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, or Ishmael and Isaac, conflict is there. It is seen on the plains of Shinar when people conspired to build a tower (Gen 11:1-9). It is perceived when Israel was in Egypt (Ex 1:13; 3:9; 6:5). While Israel was in Egypt, it is written, "the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (Ex 11:7). Ultimately, that was the cause for the conflict. God rejected one people, and received the other. He cursed one people, and blessed the other.

This conflict between Israel and other nations is again seen when they occupied Canaan. It is written that in order "to prove Israel . . . to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses." (Judg 3:4), God caused enemies to rise against them – "Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath" (Judg 3:3-4). As time passed, the Philistines were against them (1 Sam 4:10; 19:8; 31:1). The Midianites were against them (Judges 6:3-6). The Moabites were against them, and needed to be "subdued" (Judges 3:30). **CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PEOPLE CHOSEN BY GOD, AND THOSE WHO WERE NOT CHOSEN BY HIM!**

The reality of conflict is not the issue. The real concern is HOW WE WILL HANDLE IT.

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## JESUS, THE ULTIMATE REVELATION OF CONFLICT

Jesus Christ came "from above" – from another world (John 8:23). His coming was an intrusion into the conflicting order of this world. Even in a humbled state, with the prerogatives of His Deity laid aside, there remained a sharp contrast between Himself and "this present evil world" (Phil 2:5-8; Gal 1:4). In Him we find the ultimate revelation of spiritual conflict.

## HIS BIRTH

From His birth, the world opposed Christ. Herod diabolically attempted to rid his empire of this heavenly Competitor when He was but an infant. So violent was his opposition that he proceeded to slaughter "all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" (Matt. 2:16).

## HIS YOUTH

A conflict of worlds was seen during Jesus youthful life. On one occasion, when He was twelve years old, He articulated the conflict to His mother. After a laborious search of three days, His "parents" (Luke 2:27) found Him in the temple. Concerned that He had not been more thoughtful of them, Mary said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." The "holy Child's" answer proclaimed the conflict. "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:48-49).

## HIS MINISTRY

During His earthly ministry, our Lord was found to be in conflict with traditional religion. This conflict was the result of His insightful declaration of truth. Following His "sermon on the mount," this observation is recorded. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and NOT AS THE SCRIBES" (Matt 7:29). His was not a learned historical disquisition or linguistic study. He unveiled to the people what He had both "seen and heard." The scribes just talked – and "the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1 Cor 4:20, NIV).

The frequent skirmishes He had with the Scribes (Matt 9:3-4; Mk 2:6-7; 3:22), Pharisees (Matt 9:11-13; 12:2-3; 19:3-6), and Lawyers (Lk 11:44-47; 14:3-6) were evidence of a conflict between spiritual perception and devotion to dead tradition. The conflict between these two perspectives still exists.

## CHRIST'S SUMMONS AMIDST CONFLICT

Christ calls men to Himself in the crucible of conflict and contradiction. To a decadent world and a lethargic church the clarion call still rings out. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). **THE REQUIREMENT OF SELF DENIAL POSTULATES CONFLICT.** The taking up of one's own cross presumes there are competing influences that must be violently opposed and subdued. Were there no conflict, there would be no such summons.

Addressing those who were "at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1), our Lord spoke clearly of His mission. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at **VARIANCE** against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt 10:34-36).

Our Lord's language should not surprise us. The discord generated by the Lord's presence is more revelatory than disruptive. It is the unavoidable result of embracing Him that is in every sense "separate from sinners" (Heb 7:26).

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## DELIVERANCE FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD

Because of its basic contradiction to God, Jesus came to "deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God" (Gal. 1:4). Presently, we are delivered from its power and influence. Ultimately, we shall be delivered from it completely, "spirit, soul, and body" (1 Thess. 5:23). Having been delivered "from this present evil world," we are no longer obligated to serve it, or yield to its distractions. It is certainly true that we are "in the world" (John 17:11), but it is also true that in Christ we "are not of the world" (John 15:19). Furthermore, we "are not of the world" in the same sense that Jesus "is not of the world." In His Gethsemane prayer, Jesus twice said, "they are not of the world, **EVEN AS I am not of the world**" (John 17:14,16).

In view of this very real circumstance, Jesus said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, **THEREFORE THE WORLD HATETH YOU**" (John 15:19). He then added, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, **THEY WILL ALSO** persecute you; if they have kept My saying, **THEY WILL KEEP YOURS ALSO**" (John 15:20).

This is why believers are not to court the favor of the world, or seek to be accepted and promoted by it. They belong to a higher order, being citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20-21). God is their Father (Matt 5:16; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), Jesus Christ is their Brother (Heb 2:11), the Holy Spirit their Comforter (John 14:16,26; 15:26), and the holy angels their ministers (Heb 1:13-14). Here, in this world, we are, like the saints of all ages, "strangers and pilgrims" (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11). We are journeying through "this present evil world" like Israel journeyed through the wilderness en route to Canaan. Like Israel, if we do not believe we can enter the domain where Jesus is presently reigning, we will not do so (Heb 4:1-11).

Candidly, in our time, there is not enough being said about this lofty citizenship, and the quest of the saints for it. There is too much talk about this world – its politics, its entertainment, its business, and its manners. Too many modern Christians even look like the world, as well as conduct their lives as though they were of this world. Any professed life from God that does not set a person at a variance with this world is really nothing more than the world disguised as the church.

Salvation, from this perspective, is the translation of people from the inferior realm to the superior one – from the corrupted world to the eternal one. These are opposing orders between which dissonance is unavoidable. Our transition to the everlasting realm is described in these words; "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [qualified] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col 1:12-13).

Where there is not a keen sense of this deliverance, and a life lived in comportment with it, there can be no understanding of inward conflict. Distorted views of it are not merely a failure to understand. They are unquestionable evidence that the individual has an inordinate attachment to "this present evil world" – the world from which Jesus Christ has "delivered" His people.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23).

## PSALMIC EXPRESSIONS OF CONFLICT, #1

One of the primary values of the Psalms is their precise articulation of spiritual experience. Like Paul, David was a man "born out of due time" (1 Cor 15:8). In relation to his Apostleship, Paul was born after his commissioned peers, and after Jesus had returned to heaven. David, on the other hand, was born before redemption, before reconciliation was made, and before the formation of the body of Christ. Furthermore, with very few exceptions, the people of his time simply did not have the appreciation for his spiritual sensitivity that those in Christ possess. He was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). Because of this, God revealed more to David than to His peers. This was in fulfillment of a word: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant" (Psa 25:14).

### PERSONAL CONFLICT

Unwilling to be reconciled to the deficiencies of his own flesh, David challenged his soul. "WHY art thou cast down, O my soul? and WHY art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance" (Psa 42:5). These are the words of a soul in conflict.

Describing the frustration of inhibiting inner influences, David wrote, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the Living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psa 42:1,2). He was deeply cognizant of the inadequacy of this "dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psa 63:1). His spiritual appetite could not be satisfied from the shallow wells of this world. That is the essence of the conflict of which I speak. This conflict, when it is perceived, provokes a longing for high and stable realities. For David, these realities were shrouded with darkness, so only the fringe of them could be seen. This was because they could not be fully revealed until sin was put away, and there was a Mediator and Intercessor in heaven. But He saw enough of them to earnestly long for them.

Viewing his life from the higher perspective, and in view of his desire to be with the Lord Himself, David wrote, "I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart" (Psa 38:8). This was not the expression of a morose spirit that lived beneath the clouds of despair. He had seen enough of God to whet his appetite for more – more than earth could give. His desires reached far beyond the limitations of this world. The Psalmist's "roarings" were similar to the "groans" of the believer (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 5:2,4). They were intensified because of the lesser light possessed by David.

### THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

## PSALMIC EXPRESSIONS OF CONFLICT, #2

### CONFLICT WITH SOCIETY

Like Enoch and Noah, David experienced variance with his generation. Often the wicked seemed to surround him, tempting him to become reconciled to them. It is then that he would fervently pray. "Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me" (Psa 36:11). "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity" (Psa 64:2). Fellowship with God necessarily involved conflict. Its requirements are no different today!

In a unique description of conflict with the wicked, the Psalmist wrote, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of THE UNGODLY, nor standeth in the way of SINNERS, nor sitteth in the seat of THE SCORNFUL. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa 1:1,2).

The Psalmist prayed for God to "establish the just," and "let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end" (Psa 7:9). Hear him as he fervently petitions the Lord, "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about" (Psa 17:8-9). Experiencing the onslaught of the wicked the Psalmist prayed, "They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." (Psa 17:11-14).

The abrasive opposition of the wicked touched the heart of the Palmist, and He sought help from God because of it. Hear the cries of a soul in conflict: "Make haste to help me, O Lord my Salvation" (Psa 38:22). "Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me" (Psa 40:13). "They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me, and behold" (Psa 59:4). "Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy: That they may know that this is Thy hand; that Thou, LORD, hast done it. Let them curse, but bless Thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let Thy servant rejoice." (Psa 109:26-28).

When it appeared as though the wicked had the upper hand, the Psalmist prayed, "Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For Thou art my Hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my Trust from my youth" (Psa 71:4-5).

The people of God still realize conflict in society. They confront people who contend with them because they do not engage in the things that formerly enamored them. Thus it is written, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil

of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." (1 Pet 4:3-5). This is a form of contention, controversy, and argument about the proper focus of life. It is caused by the "newness of life" in which the saved walk (Rom 6:4).

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

The follower of Jesus should be surprised when confronting inner conflict. You were "born again" in the crucible of conflict. The word of the Gospel not only informs men of a differing order, but of the means of entering into it. Entrance into this everlasting kingdom necessarily involves an exit from the competing "fashion of this world," which is "passing away" (1 Cor 7:31). We leave the "old" to embrace the "new." We cease to serve the devil in order to serve Christ.

Conflict is the experience of competing influences. It is an experience uniquely belonging to the moral arena. Nature, it is true, "groans" and travails in pain. But theirs is not the experience of conflict as ours. They do not wrestle with inhibiting influences, but have been "made subject to vanity" without the involvement of their will (Rom 8:20). By nature, they are "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom 8:19). It is not so with mankind. We must be apprized of Divine provision, and then constrained by intelligent communication to "lay hold of eternal life" (1 Tim 6:12).

Conflict is the unavoidable result of temporality. It is written, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor 4:17-18). Notice, it is while we are fixing our attention on "the things which are not seen," that our afflictions are perceived as "light," and "but for a moment." In other words, while we are in this temporal world, what is seen, in a sense, competes with what is not seen. What is "not seen" includes all of the things faith can perceive, including God, Christ, and all of the rich promises that are vouchsafed to us. The part of you – "the old man" – which was crucified when you were baptized into Christ (Rom 6:6) is old, but, as long as you are in this temporal body, he is not dead. He cries out for attention from the cross, like the impenitent thief who was next to Jesus when He was laying down His life. For that "old man" to be revived and active, he must feed on things that are temporal, and he will not cease to cry out for your attention. That is the warfare that is the subject of this series of devotions. Only when we are no longer "in the body," and

have been ushered into eternal realms, will there be no more conflict.

The presence of good and evil provides us with the opportunity of choice – the employment of our discretionary powers. It also mandates the expression of resistance. One of the antithetical realms must be resisted. They cannot both be embraced or rejected simultaneously. One must be received, and one rejected. There is no other alternative.

The perception of truth occurs in the arena of conflict. Unlike the glory that is to come, truth is made accessible to men amidst contradictory influences. The soul must lay hold of truth by overcoming rational hindrances. These obstacles are not only around us, but they are within us, striving to frustrate us. Progress in the apprehension of the truth reveals progress in overcoming the world.

Our current conflict requires that we be alert and diligent. "Be sober, be vigilant," the Apostle urges, "for your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." The only way to successfully counteract his activity is to be "steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet 5:8-9). Conflict is not a strange thing, and the correct handling of it by those professing faith should not be strange either. A spiritual perception of the nature of an inward struggle neutralizes its effect upon the believer.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## GETTING OUR BEARINGS

Every believer confronts a fierce inner struggle. Some are taught to ignore it, while others, by misinterpreting it, are brought to confusion. It is vital that those in Christ recognize that they are personally involved in the struggle of good and evil. They are not bystanders in Satan's insurrection against the God of heaven. They have been called into a battle, and provided "the whole armor of God" for protection (Eph 6:10-18). That simply means that there is a sense in which the believer is vulnerable – else there would be no need for "armor." It also means that there remains something associated with the believer, with which Satan can work, else there would be no need to resist him (James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-9). There is something associated with the saved that must be "put off" (Eph 4:22; Col 3:8-9). We are apprised there is something to be "crucified" (Gal 5:24). We are taught by the grace of God that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

We know from apostolic doctrine that Satan and his hordes cannot touch "whosoever is born of

God" – "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18). But there are things about the individual believer that are NOT born of God. To begin with, there is the "body" which has been "purchased" (Eph 1:14), but has not yet been "redeemed" (Rom 8:23). Add to that whatever must be "put off" and "crucified," and you have before you areas through which Satan can gain access to you.

Confusion on this matter can cause personal spiritual defeat, as well as doctrinal error. The supposition that life in Christ is attended only by favorable and pleasant circumstances is a false one. It has given rise to a host of false doctrines. The "health and wealth" gospel is prominent in the list of emphases to be zealously avoided. The doctrine of the eternal securitist also ranks high. It teaches that, struggle or not, you are safe in Christ independently of personal effort. This is a grievous error. Spiritual armor that is not put on provides no protection at all.

Those in Christ are involved in an inner struggle. Potential blessing and cursing are associated with this conflict. It is not possible to confront evil without confronting eternal jeopardy. Wherever evil is found, in principle or in expression, Satan is at work. And wherever Satan is at work, imminent danger exists! The fall in Eden's Garden provides us with an example of the seriousness of moral warfare. At the time Satan tempted Eve, both Adam and Eve were morally perfect. Yet, they were tempted, succumbed, and fell. Now, up, fellow soldier. Put on the whole armor of God and fight, resist, and reject the attempted encroachments of the devil. Do not be naive!

## THE WAR WITHIN

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AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #1

## THE REALITY OF INWARD STRUGGLE

"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.  
- Romans 7:15-25 (NKJV)

## INTRODUCTION

When believers become preoccupied with Law, or a regimented and lifeless approach to God, the real nature of spiritual life is obscured. Everything related to life and godliness is thrown out of focus when men address life as though they were merely measuring up to a moral standard. In such a case, they set their objectives too low, and think too small, coming under great restriction. Make no mistake about this, the saints of God ARE being conformed to the image of Jesus (Rom 8:29), and they ARE being changed from one stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). That change, however, is facilitated through faith, not works. Those who walk by faith and live in the Spirit have an intense regard for HOW they live. Like Paul they confess, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" NKJV (Gal 2:20).

Armed with spiritual weaponry, the saints engage the powers of darkness, striving with all that is within them to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:10-18). Faith constrains us to "abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11), and the grace of God teaches us how to do it (Tit 2:11-12).

In the process of this type of living, tremendous outbreaks of UNWANTED THOUGHTS occur within. These are the eruptions of "the flesh," which remains linked to our earthly bodies. There is no limit as to how vile these thoughts can be, or how frequently we may have to contend with them. They may "pop" into our minds when we are engaged in the most focused spiritual activities, and when we least want them to show themselves.

The "good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12) involves dealing with these wayward and unwanted thoughts. Spiritual weaponry has been provided in Christ that can be used to throw down these thoughts, refusing to allow them to dominate our minds, even though they enter into them. The Spirit says this of these weapons. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:4-5). These weapons, however, cannot stop the unwanted thoughts from occurring.

This situation is a source of consternation to the believer. You will sense this in the text we are to consider. If there is no understanding of what is actually occurring, the child of God may conclude he is surely condemned, or has not even been born again. Many a fainting soul has interpreted the eruption of the "old man" (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9) as a personal decline in spirituality. It should be apparent that if we are told to "put off the old man," he has not been banished to extinction. He is as much alive as the impenitent that was hanging on a cross next to Jesus (Lk 23:39).

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and

bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #2

Theologians, as men are wont to call them, have argued for centuries over this text (7:15-25). Some insist that it is the perspective of Paul BEFORE he was in Christ – a sort of lament of one who is under the Law. Others insist that it is the contemporary experience of believers. If we do not have the proper view of the text, it will only minister confusion.

### THE THEME OF THE CHAPTER

The theme of this chapter, as well as that of the sixth chapter, is life IN Christ, NOT OUT OF CHRIST. Ponder the statements that have been made – statements that form the inspired context of the seventh chapter.

### OUR PRESENT STATE

We are "dead to sin" (6:2).

We were baptized into Christ's death (6:3).

We also should walk in newness of life (6:4).

We have been planted together in the likeness of Jesus' death (6:5).

Our "old man" is crucified with Christ (6:6a).

Henceforth we should not serve sin (6:6b).

He that is dead is freed from sin (6:6).

We are to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin (6:11a).

We are to reckon ourselves as alive unto God through Jesus Christ (6:11b).

We are not to allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies (6:12).

We are not to yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness (6:13a).

We are to yield ourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead (6:13b).

We are to yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God (6:13c).

Sin will not have dominion over us because we are not under law, but under grace (6:14).

Salvation makes no provision for continuance in sin (6:15).

We obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to us (6:17).

Made free from sin, we have become servants of righteousness (6:18).

Now we are to yield our members as servants of righteousness (6:19).

We are free from sin and are servants to God (6:22).

We have become dead to the Law through the body of Christ (7:4a).

Our death to the Law in order that we might be married to Christ (7:4b).

We have been delivered from the Law, becoming dead to it (7:6a).

Our lives are now lived in service to God in the newness of spirit, not in the oldness of letter (7:6b).

It should be apparent that the perspective being presented is that of one IN Christ, not one outside of Christ. The foundation of our acceptance in Christ is proclaimed in chapters four and

five. The extended commentary on our past is found 1:20-3:20.

## REFERENCES TO OUR PAST CONDITION

In the sixth and seventh chapters of Romans there are references to our past, but not in an extended way. That is, the past IS PAST! A few comparisons are made to accent the glorious benefits that are realized in Christ Jesus.

We WERE the servants of sin (6:17).

We DID yield our members as servants to iniquity and uncleanness (6:19).

When we WERE the servants of sin, we WERE free from righteousness (6:20).

We BORE no fruit in our past, and are now ashamed of it (6:21).

When we WERE in the flesh, the motions, or passions, of sin, WERE aroused by the Law (7:5a).

In the flesh, our passions WORKED in us to bring forth fruit unto death (7:5b).

Under the law, sin awakened, and we DIED, losing any sense of acceptance before God (7:8-9).

The commandment of God PRODUCED death in us, not life (7:10).

Sin WORKED through the commandment of God to deceive and slay us (7:11).

Sin WORKED death in us through the good commandment of God, showing sin to be exceedingly sinful (7:13).

None of these statements is Paul's central theme. They are all mentioned within the greater context of salvation, and what the believer experiences in Christ Jesus. The remainder of this chapter is a continuation of the Spirit's exposition of our experience in Christ. What we are in Christ Jesus is set within the comparative context of what we were when we were not in Him.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #3

### ONLY PRESENT TENSE WORDS

Previous to this passage, there were occasional references to the past: "WERE baptized. . . WERE baptized. . . HAVE been planted . . . WERE the servants of sin . . . HAVE obeyed from the heart . . . ye HAVE yielded . . . WERE the servants of sin . . . WERE free from righteousness . . . WERE in the flesh . . . motions of sin DID work. . . I WAS alive once without the law . . . sin REVIVED and I DIED . . . I FOUND to be unto death . . . sin DECEIVED me and SLEW me."

How dramatically the passage before us differs (Rom 7:15-25). There is NO reference to the past – not a single one; no allusion to the past – not a solitary one. If, as some allege, Romans 7:15-25 is referring to when Paul was under the Law, it would have to be couched in language referring to the past, for in Christ we are “delivered from the Law” (Rom 7:6).

Everything in Romans 7:15-25 is in the present, and speaks of a present experience. "I DO . . . ALLOW not . . . I WOULD . . . DO I not . . . what I HATE . . . that DO I . . . I DO that . . . I WOULD not . . . I CONSENT. . . it IS good . . . It IS no more . . . sin that DWELLETH . . . I know . . . DWELLETH no good thing . . . to will IS present . . . that which IS good . . . I FIND not . . . I WOULD . . . I DO not . . . which I WOULD not . . . that I DO. . . I WOULD . . . I DO not . . . I WOULD not . . . when I WOULD . . . DO good . . . evil IS present . . . I DELIGHT . . . I SEE. . . . IN my members . . . WARRING against . . . BRINGING me . . . which IS in . . . man that I AM."

There is not a single reference to the past in this text. It takes an extraordinary amount of imagination to view this passage as a commentary on life when we were dead in sin. Such an approach would clash with the entirety of the passage. Having made these observations, the meaning and weight of the passage will be very apparent to you. Here is an experience common to all believers, yet little understood by great segments of them. You will find yourself entering into this text as it shines Divine light upon your life. The nature of life in Christ will be clarified, and you will find great delight and revelation in that clarification.

Let it be clear in your mind. Paul is not sharing with us the frame of mind and the inner experience he had under the Law. If that is what he is doing, he would not speak as though that experience was still active. If that is the case, then he really would not have been delivered from the Law. Further, that would indicate he was still under Law, instead of under grace.

Additionally, if grace simply handles the experiences under the Law by enabling the believer to live as though they were not occurring, even though they are, then grace is allowing God to tolerate what He affirms He will not tolerate. Sin alienates people from God – whenever it is committed.

In Christ there is a NEW birth (John 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:23), a NEW creation (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10), a “NEW man” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), and a very real change (2 Cor 3:18). That defines who we really are before the Lord. It is not an imagined newness, or a parabolic creation. But there is a part of us that is NOT new – beginning with our body, and whatever is inextricably tied with it.

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #4

THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and

bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 16 of 69

#### AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #4

##### THE SUBJECT IS THOUGHT, NOT DEED

What is the seventh chapter of Romans addressing and expounding? First, this is written to those who have been "baptized into Jesus Christ" (Rom 6:3-4). It is for those who know they are "dead" with Christ, and are "free from sin" (Rom 6:5-7). Such people are to KNOW and "believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom 6:8). These are to "reckon [themselves] to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:11). To "reckon" is to reason in view of what God has said, rather than what you have experienced. When this kind of reasoning is adopted, Divinity joins with the believer to do what the individual is really, by the Spirit, desirous to do. The grace of God will teach the believer how to do this (Tit 2:11-13), and the "exceeding greatness of the power that is to us-ward who believe" will enable us to do it (Eph 1:18).

Those who have been baptized into Christ are solemnly commissioned, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom 6:12-13). This is not a mere suggestion. It is to be done!

Now, I ask you, does that sound like a setup for saying we continue in sin? Is the Spirit going to provide us some theological salve that will take away the hurt of sin, and yet allow it to remain? Has not the Holy Spirit made plain that sin that is expressed outwardly, or is done, disqualifies a person from the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5)? Is there any justification in the Word of God for failing to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1)? Are not the saints commanded, "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil" (Psa 97:10), and "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom 12:9)? Incidentally, those who emphasize baptism ought to be teaching these things to the people who are baptized.

Those who use the seventh chapter of Romans to justify the expression of sin, or set forth the theory that sin can be politely tolerated, and lingers on out of necessity, are simply wrong. They are deceivers, and, whether wittingly or unwittingly, are actually promoting transgression.

##### WHAT MUST BE SEEN

It is important to see that THOUGHTS are the subject of this text, NOT DEEDS. Remember, Paul has already said that the Law caused him to recognize lust, or unlawful desire, at the very core of his being. Lust is inherent in the flesh – it is part and parcel of it, and cannot be separated from it. It would be absurd to introduce a lengthy dialog on outward deeds after elaborating so extensively on the matter of "lust" – which erupts in the region of thought. When it comes to an outwardly impeccable life, such a life can be achieved without Christ, and without grace. The

Pharisees, who were vassals of the devil had clean outward lives – Jesus said so (Matt 23:27-28). Commenting on his life prior to being baptized into Christ, Paul said "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, BLAMELESS" (Phil 3:6).

Let it be clear that salvation offers a complete remedy for sin – freedom from both its guilt and its power. That is woven throughout the seventh chapter of Romans.

When Paul says "doing" or "do" (Rom 7:15,16,17,19,20,21), he is NOT referring to an outward act, but to activities of the mind, which is declared to be the battleground (2 Cor 10:4-5). He has already told us that the Law forthrightly condemned "lust," which is an inward thing. In order to confirm how great our deliverance from the law is, he will now affirm that we cannot stop the flesh from lusting. It will throw its thoughts into our minds whether we want them or not. While the Law condemns those desires because they found a way into our thoughts, we are not condemned for them in Christ Jesus, because now such thoughts are hated. That is because they conflict with what we really want, or will to do. Such thoughts are not willing thoughts. They have not been summoned into our thinking because of personal preference, but are in the category of temptation – temptation from which the one who abhors that temptation can escape (1 Cor 10:13).

In Paul we have a soul so sensitized by grace, that a tempting thought – one that was not desired or sought – was offensive. Paul did not want these thoughts to assert themselves in his mind – but they did. They did because the believer is not yet thoroughly saved. His body is not saved (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14), and there is a soul in man that is inextricably tied to that body. We have an “old man” that is crucified, yet cries out for attention from the cross. We are to “reckon” ourselves dead to sin, even though there is a part of us that must be crucified (Gal 5:24). There are worldly lusts that must be denied, or rejected (Tit 2:11-13). These are not the lusts of other people, or ethereal thoughts floating about in the air. They are erupting from “the old man” – our “old man” – which is to be “put off” – even though he was crucified at the time of our baptism (Rom 6:6). Although, like the impenitent thief that was crucified with Jesus, he did not die instantly upon the cross, he must be kept there.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #5

SPIRITUAL FRUSTRATION

“For that which I do I allow not; but what I hate, that do I.” OTHER VERSIONS read, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do” (New King James); “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (New International); “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (New Revised Standard); “I don't understand my own behavior – I don't do what I want to do; instead, I do the very thing I hate!” (Complete Jewish Bible); “For that which I do, I do not own: for not what I will, this I do; but what I hate, this I practice” (Darby); “For I allow not that which I do: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I” (Geneva); “I don't realize what I'm doing. I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I do what I hate” (God's Word); “I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate” (New Living); “for that which I work, I do not acknowledge; for not what I will, this I practice, but what I hate, this I do” (Young's Literal); “for that which I am working out, I do not approve” (Rotherham Bible), “For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns]” (Amplified Bible).

I have taken the time to provide the interpretations of other translations to confirm the adverse impact erroneous theology has upon translators. First, Paul is speaking about something that occurs within – in the mind, as in “covet” (Rom 7:7). He is NOT speaking of what he “practices,” or of “actions.” Neither is he speaking of what he is consistently “doing.” He is not speaking of a “work,” or something that is achieved.

PROPER representations of what Paul is saying include, “I allow not” (KJV), “I do not own” (Darby), “I do not acknowledge” (YLT), “do not approve” (Rotherham).

#### IT HAS TO DO WITH THE ACTIVITY OF THE MIND

Does anyone really think that an action, a practice, or a transgression can be committed unwillingly? Is sin committed robotically? Is an action, or practice like a jerking knee, or an unwilling trembling of the hand? Is not sin the result of being tempted, drawn away of ones own lust, and that lust conceiving, so that the deed is committed (James 1:14). In such a case, the lust is not hated. Paul is addressing the inward warfare with unwanted thoughts – intrusive thoughts that must be “cast down” (2 Cor 10:4-5). The frustrating experience is that such thoughts can enter the mind WITHOUT BEING INVITED OR DESIRED. They are fiery darts hurled at us from the evil one, because we live in a “vile body” (Phil 3:20) that, though purchased, has not yet been redeemed. Paul laments because he has to deal with such Satanic diversions. He is challenged by the thought that although his mind is being “renewed” (Rom 12:2), yet such thoughts can be found there – thoughts that must be rejected, and cast down. In fact, that is why the mind must be renewed, because there have been unwanted and defiling thoughts found there – like Canaanites were found in the promised land.

People who are driven by Law, and seek to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:3), cannot make such a statement. First, they are not inclined to do so. Second, it is too incriminating and condemning for them. Christians who are serious, yet uninformed about the nature of the Kingdom, consider the condition described in this verse as an evidence they are sinful. They ponder the possibility of being unacceptable to God, and may think maybe they were never

really "converted" (Acts 3:19).

The prevalence of the tenets of psychology in the professed church has only served to further obscure the significance of this experience. Approaching the various aspects of the believer's life from the standpoint of the human psyche, as perceived by psychology, brings no advantage to those in Christ, and is most reprehensible. It is a thoroughly false and erroneous view.

The Holy Spirit never approaches the inner-experience of the believer from the earthly point of view. Because, from the inward point of view, there "is neither Jew nor Greek . . . bond nor free . . . male nor female . . . in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). Those distinctions are never presented as the basis for the analysis of life. If you are familiar with current religious trends, there is a phenomenal amount of such examinations in the Christian community. People are taught to view their emotional and intellectual lives from their status as men or women, ethnic origin, of other social distinctions. This is neither innocent nor inconsequential. Such approaches throw sand into the eyes of God's people, and are to be rejected.

We have before us a classic example of true spiritual reasoning. The Spirit will analyze inner turmoil and the frustration that proceeds from it. He will not introduce a single word concerning race, gender, or social considerations – not so much as a syllable. Rather, He will go beneath the surface into the realm where human spirits have no such distinctions.

Inner struggle within the child of God will be viewed as A CONSEQUENCE OF SALVATION – like fighting the heathen was a consequence of Israel being given Canaan. It will be set forth within the context of justification by faith and the imputation of righteousness. Our baptism into the death of Christ initiated this struggle, and our release from the body of flesh and blood will terminate it, freeing us from it. In the meantime, because it is not the basis for condemnation, the nature of it must be understood, even though the experience itself goes beyond our human understanding. The essential weakness of the human will is confirmed in this very experience: we do not will for such thoughts to come into our minds – but they do. Paul will effectively teach us that we are NOT condemned by the experience, even though it is an unpleasant one. The committing of sin does incur condemnation (1 John 3:4,8). The ONLY time thoughts are imputed to you is when they are willingly kept and cultured.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 18 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #6

"For that which I do I allow not." (Verse 15, Romans 7:15-25)

## I ALLOW NOT

Instead of "allow not," the New King James, New American Standard, Revised Standard, and New Revised Standard read, "For what I am doing, I do not understand." The American Standard reads, "I know not." Other versions read, "have no clear knowledge" (BBE), "I do not own" (DARBY), "I don't realize what I'm doing," (GWN). These other versions are all very misleading. Although, from a strictly etymological consideration such a view can be justified, when it comes to the Word of God, etymology (the history of a word, and the study of the sources and development of words) has very little value. There is a reason for this. God speaks of things that are transcendent to the language of men. That is why there are so many doctrinal definitions of words like "justification," "the Law," "reconciliation," "the cross," "the resurrection," "the day of judgment," "life," "death" etc. Spiritual life involves causes, activities, and results, that cannot be duplicated in any place other than Christ Jesus, or any domain other than the salvation of God. The language of men, regardless of how sophisticated it may appear to be, can rise no higher than human observation and experience – all of which is limited to what can be observed with the five human senses: sight, smell, hearing, tasting, and feeling. However, the things of which God speaks include God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, holy angels, heaven, Satan, principalities and powers, human spirits, and much more. In order for us to have any valid knowledge in these areas, God teaches men (John 6:45; 1 Thess 4:9), Jesus is teaching men (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20), the Holy Spirit teaches (1 Cor 2:13), and the grace of God teaches (Tit 2:11-13). Remove this Divine source of knowledge, and, when it comes to matters pertaining to life and godliness, men can only "stab in the dark." That is precisely what some versions of Scripture reflect – men stabbing in the dark.

Paul is writing in view of the revealed fact that man has a "spirit" as well as a "soul" (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12). Saved men have an "old man" as well as a "new man" (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). So far as thoughts are concerned, they all are not originated by man himself. There are thoughts that are traced to revelation from God (Dan 2:30; 1 Pet 1:12). There are also thoughts that are hurled at us by the devil – imaginations and high thoughts that are to be cast down (2 Cor 10:4-5). Temptations come from the tempter, and they are all thoughts (James 1:14-15). For the saved, such thoughts are offensive, and totally unwanted.

"For that which I do, I allow not." Paul has not CONSENTED to have such thoughts. They did not come because of his will, which was actually against such thoughts. Whatever one may think of the human will, it cannot stop a foreign, offensive, and tempting thought from entering the mind. If this was not the case, we would not need spiritual weapons and armor. There would be no need for "the shield of faith," with which Satan's fiery darts are quenched – and those "fiery darts" are all thoughts – thoughts you never would have had if there was not a devil, and you were not in your present body.

Several preliminary observations are in order. First, Paul is declaring a PRESENT circumstance, not a past one: "I AM doing . . . I DO not . . ." Second, this is a circumstance that goes beyond human understanding: "I do NOT understand." The only way to know anything about this experience is for God to make it known – which He has done in His Word. Third, he knows

WHAT is happening, and later will affirm he knows WHY it is happening (v 23). Yet, that knowledge brings no satisfaction to him. How could wicked thoughts come to him unbidden and unwanted? The KJV reads "allow not," emphasizing he had made no provision in his heart and mind for such thoughts. He did not willingly go into areas that nurtured such thoughts. He had not sought them out. Yet they came to him.

We conclude from these things that faith is superior to knowledge. It brings a higher form of understanding than is possible in nature. If this were not the case, the experience that is now described would prove to be the total undoing of the tender hearted. With care, the Spirit moves Paul to open up a fact of spiritual life that is common to all believers.

By faith Paul is speaking of the unwanted expressions of the sinful nature. He is not confessing sin or transgression, but a grievous condition.

### WHAT I AM DOING

Remember that this is an expression of a sensitive heart. Those with calloused hearts will have no idea what he is talking about. "What I am doing" does not refer to the thrust and expressions of life, but to unwanted intrusions into the thought life. Further, it does not refer to an outward deed, although what is described can cause outward expressions. He is not speaking of an immoral deed he committed again and again. This is describing the battle between the flesh and the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:17 – "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (Gal 5:17, NIV).

By saying "I allow not," or "I do not understand," Paul is saying he did not fully understand the corruption of his own human nature. It is as though he was stunned by the depth of the wickedness found in the "old man." It is one thing to know theologically that man is corrupt by nature. It is quite another to experience the outbreak of that corruption in our thoughts.

The use of the word "actions" in some translations tends to confuse the text, leading some to believe the reference is to an outward deed. This is emphatically NOT the case.

The thrust of Paul's life was Godward. He had turned his back on the past, renounced the things that had separated him from God, and was pressing toward the mark with unrelenting zeal (Phil 3:7-14). Outwardly, he lived "holily, justly, and unblameably" (1 Thess 2:10). But there were inconsistencies within. He was not struggling with his will, or what he wanted – that was consistent, and he confesses that to be the case. But his will was not able to stop the eruptions of the "old man." He wanted no unacceptable thoughts in his mind, and yet they were found there anyway, and had to be cast down.

In this case, the phrase "I do" refers to any thoughts Paul DID NOT want to have. By saying "I do not understand," he means that he was unable to stop them. There were times when he was broadsided, so to speak, by defiled thoughts and lusts that exceeded what he thought was possible. He actually had to grapple with unwanted and intruding imaginations. He had to cast them down violently, even though he had made no place for them in his mind. That was the

frustrating part of it all.

In using the word "frustrating," I do not mean the undoing of the believer, or his utter defeat. Rather, I am referring to discouragement, being humbled, and being baffled. The earnest desire to be utterly without spot NOW, is thwarted by these unwanted thoughts. The tender desire to be pleasing to the Lord in every part of our being is blasted by the entrance of things displeasing TO US, to say nothing of our Lord.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #7

### WHAT I WILL TO DO

"For what I would . . ." Other versions read, "what I will to do" (NKJV); "what I would like to do" (NASB); "For what I want to do" (NIV).

The word translated "would" is translated from a word that means "to will, have in mind, intend; to be resolved or determined, to purpose; to desire" (Strong's), "to be resolved or determined, to purpose" (Thayer); "as exercising the will; from a motive of desire, wish, want" (Friberg); "to purpose, generally based upon a preference and desire" (Louw-Nida). This speaks of a basic and fundamental preference – what is desired or willed.

Paul will now show us that the human will, even when sanctified, is not the seat of our power. Through Paul's will, as sanctified by faith, he was able to stop persecuting the church, and do so instantly, and for the rest of his life. He never retrogressed into again persecuting the church, or lamented because he unwillingly opposed and sought to do harm to other believers – never! After he believed on Christ, his will never again allowed him to consent to the stoning of a believer in Christ.

There are things the will CAN do, and do well. It can move you to want to be absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8). It can provoke you to give beyond your means (2 Cor 8:3,12). The will can move a rich believer to share his wealth with others (1 Tim 6:18). It can also constrain us to "live honestly" (Heb 13:18).

HOWEVER, there is an area where the will is powerless! It is in the matter of stopping unwanted thoughts and lusts from entering the mind! It cannot absolutely control what thoughts

are entertained.

Other versions translate this expression as follows. "For I do not do what I want" (NRSV), "For I really want to do what is right" (NLT).

"Would" – this is an arresting word! It reveals a heart that has been sensitized by grace. Here is a condition in which the individual is acutely aware of the nature of everything that courses through the mind. The person in Christ can sense whether a single thought is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, good or evil, loved or hated. That determination is made by the individual's basic, or fundamental, desire. It is to be understood that when a person is covered (Acts 3:19), born again (John 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:23), created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10), and made a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE PERSON. "Newness of life" is experienced (Rom 6:4). God's "laws" are "put into their minds," and written "in their hearts" (Heb 8:10). Ezekiel prophesied of those in Christ, "And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezek 36:27). The most immediate evidence of the new birth is found in the will – the preference, the desire, the basic want.

"FOR WHAT I WOULD, THAT DO I NOT!" Other versions read, "For what I will to do, that I do not practice" (NKJV); "I am not practicing what I would like to do" (NASB); "what I want to do, I do not do" (NIV); "I do not do what I want" (NRSV); for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it" (NLT). The words "practice" and "practicing" are wholly improper. "Practice" has to do with putting thoughts into action – and that simply is not what Paul is addressing. Paul is speaking about what is found in the thought processes. He is speaking of thoughts that are not desired, preferred, or valued. They were not invited into the mind, and yet they came – like "fiery darts" from the wicked one. The will – not even the renewed will – could stop them from entering. This weakness is owing to the body, which, from a practical point of view, is the doorway to sin.

And what is it that Paul wanted? What was his will on the matter being considered?

At this point, we must rise above the details of life. "What I want" refers to the fervent desire for total purity before the Lord, with not a single deviation. Speaking through Paul, the Spirit here throws down the notion that man can please the Lord in the energy of self strength, without the help of the Lord. Even when the will is strengthened by the Spirit, and the affection is set on things above, it cannot close the gate of the mind tight enough to forbid the entrance of profane thoughts. "I do not do what I want!"

It is as though he said, "I do not want my flesh to lust against the Spirit, but it does anyway" (Gal 5:17). "I want no part of my thinking to be unacceptable, yet I find such a part." Do not think for one moment that when Paul acknowledged he was not "already perfect" (Phil 3:12), it was a casual statement. He fervently desired to be "absent from the body and present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:87), but he was not. His presence in the body, and current absence from the Lord, produced all manner of things he did not want. There were deviate thoughts so close to him they had to be taken captive and made to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

"What I want," then, refers to a perfectly consistent life for the Lord, with no interruptions or inconsistencies – particularly in the mind. However, Paul was not able to achieve such a condition because of the presence of the flesh and what is by nature bound to it – the sinful nature.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 20 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #8

### WHAT I HATE TO DO

" . . . but what I hate, that do I."

It requires an honest and informed soul to make such a confession. This is not the acknowledgment of a murderer like Cain! It is not the confession of a covetous man like Achan. It is not the admission of a profane person like Esau. It is not even the confession of a godly person who sinned like David. This is the admission of a person who lived "holily, justly, and blamelessly" (1 Thess 2:10). This is the man who counted everything but loss in order to know Christ, and was pressing toward the mark in order to apprehend that for which he had been apprehended (Phil 2:7-14). This is the man who "labored more abundantly than they all" (1 Thess 15:10). This is the man who could say without any Divine rebuke being leveled at him, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (1 Cor 4:16). And again, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

If Paul had not told us, "but what I hate, that do I," we would never have known it. He was not attempting to hide a secret sin, or the Holy Spirit would have provided some editorial comment like "he wist not what to say" (Mk 9:6), or "not knowing what he said" (Lk 9:33). Those who allege that Paul had some secret sin that kept occurring in his life have done nothing more than put their ignorance on display.

Other versions read as follows. "But I do the very thing I hate" (NRSV), "But what I have hate for, that I do" (BBE), and "I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns]" (Amplified Bible). The ones provided these translations, at least in this case, are merely playing with words, giving them the meanings assigned by Greek philosophers. In other words, they did not understand the text, and so blundered through it like a senseless ox.

This is the statement of a sensitive soul – not an insensitive one. Insensitivity is characteristic of one who sins repeatedly. Paul hated more than the outward show of sin, or the baser sort of transgressions. Some people who wear the name of Jesus do not "hate iniquity" as fully as they should (Psa 97:10; Romans 12:9). They are too calloused toward things that are hated by God, and are an abomination unto Him (Prov 6:16-19). For this reason, they cannot comprehend why Paul speaks as he does. They assume Paul was just like they are – but he pointedly told believers to follow him! If he was someone who sinned repeatedly, to admonish people to follow him would be tantamount to blasphemy.

It is important to see that Paul is not speaking as a sort of spiritual superman. His analysis is the result of living in the energy of the new creation – a privilege vouchsafed to every person in Christ Jesus. This is the experience of those who ACTUALLY DO live by faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38), walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16; 5:25), abide in Christ (John 15:4,7; 1 John 2:27-28), and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14), patiently running the race set before them, while looking to Jesus (Heb 12:1-2). Salvation comes with the grace to live in this manner (Tit 2:11-13). In fact, no other kind of living is acceptable to the Lord.

What Paul is speaking of is an experience of someone who is walking with the Lord, whom Satan is attacking with his "fiery darts" (Eph 6:17). Paul has quenched them with the "shield of faith, but laments because they were found in his mind at all. You may rest assured that until temptation itself is loathsome, you will not be able to resist the devil, or understand what Paul is saying in this text.

What we have here is a man of God, living by faith, walking in the Spirit, wearing "the whole armor of God, and fighting the good fight of faith, whom Satan is attempting to turn aside. The wicked one hurls his "fiery darts" at him (Eph 6:17), but Paul has hoisted the shield of faith, and had diffused them. Nevertheless, they had reached his mind, even though they failed to reach his heart and will. As grace teaches the saved, he had denied, or rejected, them (Tit 2:11-13). Yet, here is a saint of the Lord who was so sensitive, so devoted, so tender, that he hated the fact that he had to deal with such things, having to cast them down in the act of vigorous warfare. As it is written, "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" (2 Cor 10:4-5). This is a necessary activity, but it is not a preferred one. It has to do with survival, not growth. Sensitive souls prefer to be on the receiving end, and in fellowship with Christ. In their hearts, they do not seek the temporary distractions that take place in warfare.

The conditions declared in this passage were not sought, but were THE RESULT of living in the fellowship of Jesus (1 Cor 1:9) and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14).

I am sure Paul did not seek "despair of life," but there was a time when he wrestled with it (2 Cor 1:8). He would rather have not experienced "sorrow," but he did (Phil 2:27). I know he would not have preferred "fears" to come into his mind, but they did (2 Cor 7:5). These are the better part of unacceptable thoughts. He did not invite any of them – but they came. He did not prefer any of them – but they came. He hated that they came, but they came anyway. He hated that

there was any part of him that could receive them, requiring vigorous expulsion. You see, there is a part of us that is not yet saved – a part that has to be strictly controlled and managed by faith. But make no mistake about it, this is not the joyous part of spiritual life, and that is what Paul is confessing.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 21 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #9

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." (Rom 7:15)

## DOES THIS APPLY TO WORDS AND DEEDS?

Some might ask if **DOING** what is hated applies to words and deeds. There is certainly a sense in which we can say or do things we actually hate – although any person is less likely to outwardly do what he hates. Such a person would not be considered to be “normal,” for man simply is not made to live outwardly in a manner that is detestable and hated to that person. Such an individual would be considered personally undisciplined, erratic, and having no fixed course. Is that really the kind of person any individual of sound mind imagines Paul the apostle to have been? What would possibly lead a person to accept such a postulate – and where is there a recorded example of Paul maintaining a life of uncontrollable fits and starts? Remember, our text is not speaking of a single occurrence, but of something that was regularly experienced. The statement made is **NOT**, “what I would, that do I not **OCCASIONALLY**; but what I hate, that do I **OCCASIONALLY**; OR “what I would, that **DID** I not; but what I hate, that I **DID**. OR “what I would **ONCE IN A WHILE**, that do I not **ONCE IN A WHILE**; but what I hate, that do I **ONCE IN A WHILE**.

If the hypothetical statements above were proper, why did Paul admonish the people to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6)? How could he properly describe himself, with the Holy Spirit consenting to it by having it stated in Scripture, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (1 Thess 2:10). Why would Paul say that if it was not true, and he was really doing outwardly what he hated to do, and was unable to control his conduct?

Is this the kind of person the salvation of God produces? Or does salvation leave us as we were in the first place? Is theoretically painting Paul as being “just like us” really comforting to the

human spirit? Is it really common weaknesses that draw the saints together? Who is the individual so unthinking as to adopt such a foolish postulate?

Emphatically, our text is not saying that Paul continually struggled with sinful outward expressions. There is a critical difference, however, when we say or do things that we ourselves loath, and when UNWANTED lusts and thoughts invade our minds. We must confess ill-spoken words and contrary deeds as sin, and procure forgiveness for them. God is "ready to forgive" (Psa 86:5) these faults, and to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We DID them, and therefore we must be forgiven of them. But that is NOT what Paul says about the experience of our text. This is NOT the situation in the text before us.

Unwanted lusts and thoughts are not credited to us as sin, and are not to be confessed as sin. This is the whole point of this text. Paul will establish with unusual strength that such expressions do not belong to us. Because of the portal of the body, such thoughts are thrown by the devil at us like poisonous arrows. He aims to have us own them as our own, instead of inimical intrusions. If we do not respond to them by entertaining and fulfilling them, they are NOT credited to us as personal transgression. This will now be developed more fully.

The New King James Version renders the word "do" as "practice." This is based on the philosophical use of the word in the Greek (katargazomai) – i.e., a meaning derived from the Greek philosophers, which is the lexical approach to Greek words used in Scripture. However, when the Holy Spirit uses, or teaches, certain words, they cannot be fully defined lexically. **THEY ARE EXPLAINED DOCTRINALLY.** This is because heavenly concepts and realities cannot be fully contained etymologically. That is why there are such things as "the apostles **DOCTRINE**" (Acts 2:42), the **TEACHING** of Jesus (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20), the **TEACHING** of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13), the **TEACHING** of the grace of God (Tit 2:11-13), enlightenment (Eph 1:18), spiritual understanding from the Lord (Col 1:9), etc. It is why it is written, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, **MAY BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND** with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; **AND TO KNOW** the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, **THAT YE MIGHT BE** filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph 3:17-19). The requirement for that phenomenally extensive tutelage is of itself proof of the inadequacy of humanly developed concepts and words.

The common use of the word "practice," when applied to our text, vigorously runs around the reality of Divine tutelage, just as though it did not exist. It attempts to put truth into a container that is wholly improper. "Practice," as used in ordinary speech, does NOT reflect the intent of this verse. As ordinarily comprehended, the word "practice" speaks of **VOLUNTARY AND WILLING** expressions. Indeed, this word ("practice") is often used in Scripture to denote this type of action – a willing and preferable word or deed (Matt 21:24; John 4:34; 1 Cor 9:23; 2 Cor 11:12).

However, that is NOT the meaning of the word in this passage. Here the experience being addressed is **UNWILLING** – "I would not." In Christ, that can **ONLY** apply to thoughts, not deeds. Sinful words and deeds can **ONLY** be done willingly. That is why they must be confessed, forgiven, and no longer expressed.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 22 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #10

### TWO NATURES

As this text will develop, there are two distinct natures resident in the believer: the "old man" and the "new man" (Eph 2:22-24; Col 3:9-10). Like Jacob and Esau before they were born, they reside in the same domain, and struggle with each other: "And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD" (Gen 25:22). One was "loved," and one was "hated" – "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom 9:13). One was born first, and the other second (Gen 25:25-26). One was the heir of Abraham and Isaac, and one was not (Gen 50:24; Ex 2:24). One was a profane person, and one was not (Heb 12:16). Jacob's house was "a fire," and Esau's house was "stubble" (Obadiah 1:18). Jacob was blessed by God, and God changed his name (Gen 32:29), but Esau's name remained the same, and he was a "fornicator" and "profane" (Heb 12:16). God accepted Jacob (Gen 28:13-15), but rejected Esau (Heb 12:16-17).

In Christ, UNTIL we are born again, we have only one nature – and it is a fallen nature. The Spirit describes our former selves as "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1); walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2); "the servants of sin" (Rom 6:17); "without Christ" (Eph 2:12); "darkness" (Eph 5:8); "as sheep going astray" (1 Pet 2:25); "alienated in our mind through wicked works" (Eph 4:18), etc.

In salvation, GOD DOES NOT CHANGE THAT CORRUPT NATURE. Rather, He gives us a "new" nature. Just as in the giving of the New Covenant, God did not make the Old Covenant New, but provided a New and separate covenant, so God in the new creation does not refurbish the old, but provides a totally new creature, or creation.

At this point, there is some complexity. Man has a composite nature – in order of priority, spirit, soul, and body. In regeneration, all of them will eventually be changed, but not at the same time. Our bodies, and the soul, which is wed to the body, have not yet been "changed." That will take place at the resurrection of the dead, when we will receive a new body, our house which is from heaven (2 Cor 5:1-5). Our essential persons HAVE BEEN changed – the governing part. As for our bodies, they must be controlled in the energy of faith. This is what Paul was referencing when he wrote, "But I keep under MY BODY, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any

means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor 9:27). The "deeds of the body," or the ones it instigates, are to be put to death (Rom 8:13). It must be remembered that our bodies have been purchased, even though they are not yet changed. As it is written, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God IN YOUR BODY, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19-20).

Those in Christ have two natures. Each nature has a distinct personality, mind, and will. Each is ruled by a different master, and motivated by different principles, or laws. Both are powerful, and aggressively seek their own way. One is good, and one is evil. One is from Christ, and one is from Adam. One is earth-centered, and the other is oriented for heaven. The devil works in one, and the Holy Spirit in the other.

When we are baptized into Christ, God Himself crucifies the "old man" – the corrupt nature. As it is written, "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. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom 6:6-7). The "old man" was not killed, but crucified in order that he might eventually die. Because that "old man" is inextricably tied to your body, as long as you have a body, you have to contend with the "old man." When the Scriptures declare that you are "dead with Christ," the depiction is that of being consigned to death, as in the crucifixion of Jesus and the penitent thief. This is why Paul; writes, "For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise RECKON YE ALSO yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom 6:10-12). The word "reckon" means "consider." In the domain of faith, due consideration of the body being consigned to death carries the same practical weight as if the person was no longer in the body. God has told you that you are going to die, at which time you will be divested of your body (Heb 9:27). The "old man," who needs the body to express himself, has been crucified in anticipation of your liberation from the body. When you, by faith, live in the persuasion and prospect of that reality, your body will not be able to control you – you will control it.

The phrases "what I hate, that I DO," and "I DO what I will not to do," refer to the DOING, or expressions, of the "old man." In this case, because he is "crucified, they are internal, unwilling, and are not external acts. Paul uses the word "I" because they occur within him. They are part of his total makeup, but are NOT part of his essential person. They are foreign to his identity in Christ, and contrary to his new heart and spirit. They challenge him like Goliath, and taunt him like Sennacherib. Yet, they are not really him! It is because of this that he can say "NO!" to them.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and

bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 23 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #11

IF I DO THAT WHICH I WOULD NOT

"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good." (Rom 7:16)

Other versions read, "If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good: (NKJV); "But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good" (NASB).

Once again, I want to emphasize that "do" is not referring to an expression – a willing thought, or a word, or a deed. Some versions miserably fail to make this distinction: "While I am acting as I do not want to" (New Jerusalem Bible), "But if I know that what I am doing is wrong" (New Living Translation), "Now if I do [habitually] what is contrary to my desire" (Amplified Bible). I cannot overemphasize the seriousness of these misrepresentations.

The phrase, "am doing" is incorrect, for it represents a continual willingness. The idea of "habitually" is also erroneous. Paul is not speaking of a habit, which is a default manner of living, but of an unwilling intrusion of a thought – a "fiery dart" hurled at him by the wicked one. He is speaking about an unwilling imagination to be thrown down with effective spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:4-5). Our spiritual weaponry is not designed to fight against ourselves, but against our enemies – which include invasive thoughts that have not been summoned up by our wills.

While it should not be necessary to say this repeatedly, a veil of ignorance has been thrown over this passage by those who lack spiritual understanding. The result is that a very essential aspect of the Kingdom has been obscured to the people of God. They have been left to struggle with the corruption of the "old man," thinking they are dealing with their BASIC self. As a result, some have doubted whether or not they are really saved. Others consider their baptism to have been invalid. Still others are persuaded they waffle in and out of God's favor because of unwanted uncomely thoughts and imaginations within. These can extend into the area of dreams, which are often troubling to those who are tenderhearted.

To further complicate the matter, a form of religion has been developed and hawked that leaves people insensitive to inner conflict. There also are people who think that flawed thinking is just part of being human, so they think nothing of it. Of course, this view obscures the need for the shield of faith, because they imagine all unacceptable thoughts come from within the believer. That is not the truth, They come from without the believer, thereby necessitating the shield of faith. A shield is not intended to protect us from ourselves, but from our enemy – and this is an enemy that does not confront us visibly or sensibly.

I have labored to confirm that we are in a war, and occupy a battlefield that involves more than

ourselves and other men. We are contending with the devil, principalities, powers (Eph 6:12), and even demonic forces. All of these promote thoughts. Some of these thoughts are false doctrines (1 Tim 4:1), and some are temptations – fiery darts to be quenched with the shield of faith (Eph 6:16).

The Spirit will now show us how to reason upon these things. When involuntary imaginations overtake us, intruding into our thoughts, here is how the believer is to REASON about the situation.

This is the first of a series of CONCLUSIONS – conclusions drawn by faith, not by human knowledge or wisdom. The point under consideration is doing what is really hated: "but what I hate, that do I." Once again, this is speaking of the intrusion of corrupt imaginations and thoughts. The perspective now put before us is that of a person who is in fellowship with Christ Jesus. This is NOT the view or utterance of a person alienated from God, and "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1)

As I have said, the Spirit will now show us how to reason upon these things. When involuntary imaginations overtake us, intruding into our thoughts, our text will now show how the believer is to reason about the situation. Lesson 26 will deal specially with agreeing with the Law.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 24 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #12

### DOING WHAT I WILL NOT

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not.”

First, the believer is to acknowledge these are unsought and unwanted thoughts. The phrase, "If, then, I do WHAT I WILL NOT TO DO" means this: If something occurs in me that is against my will – something I have neither sought nor cultured, and the eruption is something I actually hate and despise, IT CANNOT BE MY THOUGHT. It is a foreign thought. It is like a robber that comes to steal, kill, and destroy. It is as much out of order as a Philistine in Israel, a heathen in the Holy of Holies, or the devil in heaven. It does not represent my preference. It is not what I muse and meditate upon. It is contrary to who I REALLY am, where I am REALLY going, and what I REALLY desire.

But to be effective, there must be understanding, else I will take the credit for the thought, just as though it was something I preferred and sought after. Satan, in all of his cunning craftiness, is endeavoring to get you to accept his assaulting thoughts as your own.

## ERRONEOUS TEACHING

Those who insist this passage is referring to Paul prior to his life in Christ have revealed their failure to comprehend the very nature of salvation. It makes little difference how they bend the words of the text, or attempt to correlate what is being said with other texts of Scripture. In their teaching, they have affirmed those outside of Christ, (in their very best state noted for "ignorance and unbelief" (1 Tim 1:13) – have NO preference for sin. Rather, they hate it, and have NO desire to do it. Nowhere are those outside of Christ so described! But if their view of this text is correct, then Paul conducted himself as one in Christ, rather than one who was outside of Him, while active in persecuting those who were in Christ.

Think of how Jesus described those who have not believed on Him – and Paul was in that category prior to being in Christ. They are “condemned already” (John 3:18), “the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36); they not only do not believe on Jesus, but such do not believe on God who sent Him (John 12:44). If Paul was writing about himself prior to being in Christ, he was in that category. The question is this: How can one outside of Christ reason and speak as though he was in Christ?

Think of how the apostles describe those outside of Christ: “servants of sin” (Rom 6:17,20), “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), living “according to the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), “children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2), “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph 2:3), “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph 2:3), “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18), “not a people” (1 Pet 2:10), etc. Is this really how you would describe the person who wrote Romans 7:15-25? If Paul is speaking of himself prior to being in Christ, that is what he was when he was writing that text, for it is all – every single word – in the present tense!

What is more, if these pretentious teachers are right, the alienated sinner is not even guilty of sin at all, as will be affirmed later in this chapter: "Now if I do that I would not, it is NO MORE I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom 7:20).

There is not a person outside of Christ who does not prefer to sin. That sin may take a mild form that is not offensive to an insensitive society, but it is enough to bring the wrath of God upon the sinner. If "A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin" (Prov 21:4), how can goodness be ascribed to such people? And, it is good to love righteousness and hate iniquity, a trait of Jesus Himself (Heb 1:9) – but it is NOT a trait of those outside of Christ, and those who dare to say that it is, have only put their ignorance on display! As for Paul, in this text, he clearly states he “hated” the very thoughts that had assaulted him (Rom 7:15).

If the sinner, or the person under the Law, prefers to do good and hates to do evil, precisely what is the difference between that person and the saved? How is it that a sinner can eat the fruit of redemption, without having access to its tree of life? The entire notion reflects spiritual thoughtlessness.

Emphatically, this passage refers to those with a new will, a new heart, and a new spirit! That newness is precisely what has produced this experience. This battle within is not one of rote, but is the result of having a “new heart” (Ezek 36:26). "What I will not" is what I do not will, or want, to do, and in this text, it applies to THOUGHTS, not deeds.

A novice may very well imagine that a sinner, under the domination of the Law, does not really want to murder, or steal, or commit adultery. That is, from one point of view, conceivable. But, what about the person who does not detest unwanted thoughts, and does not wage war against them? Compare such people with the person who actually has a nature that is repulsed by even a tempting thought to sin? That is the matter now being discussed in Romans 7:15-25. Where is the person outside of Christ that is alarmed when they want something that displeases God?

How can a person who is properly described as “DEAD in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1-2), possess the sensitivity described in Romans 7:15-25?? And, if Paul is really speaking about his life prior to being in Christ, he had such sensitivity, which is really traced back to being alive in Christ Jesus. The resounding conclusion to the warfare described in Romans 7:15-25 is this: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:1).

If the matter still seems too distant, think of wanting to be secure in this world, as opposed to desiring to be with the Lord (2 Cor 5:1-8). Ponder fearing death (Heb 2:15), or being occupied with thoughts of what we will eat, or what we will wear (Matt 6:25). What of the love of money, or an inordinate attachment to mother, father, brother, and sister (Lk 14:26). What of a failure to WANT to crucify the flesh, together with its affections and lusts (Gal 5:24). What about wanting to stay in this world, and not being "willing to depart" (Phil 1:23). Such thoughts would not be considered immoral by many – but in Christ they are sinful notions! Should they be tempted to think in such a manner, that temptation itself would be repulsive and offensive to them. It would be a thought to be quenched with the shield of faith.

Such conditions DOMINATE the sinner, even though they may be covered with the veneer of culture. They show that sin is really not hated, even though some more heinous expressions may be repulsive. If this is not the case, then such people would not be condemned – which they emphatically are in Scripture (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5; Rev 21:8).

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 25 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #13

## SIN HATED IN ITS TOTALITY

For those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1), and are living by faith (Heb 10:39), the words "I do what I DO NOT WANT TO DO" (NIV) refer to the outbreak of the old nature, or "old man" (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9) in ANY sinful thought. Such thoughts do not speak of a certain class of sin, but of sin in its TOTALITY. The intrusions may take the form of questioning the reality heaven, or the validity of Scripture. They may include imagining God has abandoned us, or that there is no need to fight the good fight of faith. They may take the form of discouragement, fear, or hopelessness. They may be the intrusion of mysterious dreams that are so contrary to our nature in Christ, dreams they cause confusion within the believer. They may be thoughts that simply require you to look to, and focus on, something or someone other than Jesus. More is involved in hated thoughts than the allurements into immorality, although that is surely involved.

These sinful intrusions include all manner of evil lusts, but are not limited to them. The temptation to commit adultery, for example, may take the form of prostituting our affection for Christ – instead, giving your love, affection, and devotion to the world. We may be tempted to seek counsel or solace from men rather than God. We may be tempted to steal time and money from God, with never a thought of taking such things from men. They may be temptations to simply delay a wholehearted response to the Lord. At the point such things are "thoughts," they can be thrown down with your spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:4-5), and quenched with the "shield of faith" (Eph 6:16).

If Christ died that "that they which live should NOT henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:15), then any tempting thought not to do so IS hated by those who are living by faith. People who stir up such thoughts, whatever their motive may be, are our enemies. Settle it in your mind that God Almighty, and Jesus Christ the Lord simply will not receive a person who is not living to and for them (2 Cor 5:14-2 Cor 7:21). There are professed preachers and teachers without number who teach the people of God to think as though that was NOT true – even though God has clearly spoken on the subject. The thoughts such men present are hated by those who are really living by faith.

The Living God confirmed to Israel that it is a sin – serious sin – not to think like He does. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man HIS THOUGHTS: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. FOR My thoughts are NOT your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:7-9).

Under the Old Covenant, because the nature of the people was not changed, this became their NORMAL stance – their thoughts and ways being at a variance with the thoughts and ways of God. God indicted the people for this condition, but the Law provided no power for the people to change. That kind of change was promised through the prophet Ezekiel. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A NEW HEART also will I give you, and a NEW SPIRIT will I put within you: and I will TAKE AWAY the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will GIVE YOU an heart of flesh. And I will PUT My spirit within you, and CAUSE YOU to walk in My statutes, and ye

SHALL KEEP My judgments, and DO them" (Ezek 36:25-27).

That blessed promise was not fulfilled until Christ died, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and was seated at the right hand of God, with all things being made subject to Him. However, since those things have taken place, the promise of God has been fulfilled IN EVERY PERSON who has been “baptized into Christ” (Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27), is born again (John 3:5,7; 1 Pet 1:23), has been “created in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10), and has experienced “the washing of regeneration” (Tit 3:5). For these people – and only for these people – deviate thoughts are intrusions. They are not generated by the believer himself, and are therefore hated.

Now, in Christ Jesus, the words "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD" (Isa 55:8), are NOT an appropriate description of the people of God. They themselves are "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).

When their thoughts are at a variance with those of the Lord, it is an intrusion – a temptation – a temptation to which they must not yield, or they will end up owning such thoughts, having to repent of them. The saints of God CAN be tempted ONLY because they remain “in the body.” That is the only avenue of entrance to which Satan has access. That is precisely why it is called a “vile body” (Phil 3:20). As soon we leave this body, we will never again experience a tempting thought. Praise the Lord!

It is for this reason than we must “keep under” our bodies, controlling them, rather than them, controlling us (1 Cor 9:27). There is coming a time when you, precious believer, will move out of your body. Then, and only then, will you be free from thoughts you hate.

One closing thought: The closer one is to the Lord, the broader the range of sinful expression. That is, you will consider more things to be “sin” than when you were first converted. That is because you are growing up into Christ in all things, which is as it should be (Eph 4:15). Just as surely as there will be more the person WILLS to do, there will be more he WILLS NOT to do. The growing believer is constantly learning what is out of place in the mind.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 26 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #14

## AGREEING WITH THE LAW

"If then I do that which I would not, I CONSENT UNTO THE LAW that it is good" (Rom 7:16).  
"If, then, I do what I will not to do, I AGREE WITH THE LAW that it is good." (NKJV)

The Law IS good, whether men see it that way or not. It is written, "Wherefore the law is HOLY, and the commandment HOLY, and JUST, and GOOD . . . For we know that the law is SPIRITUAL" (Rom 7:14). There is no flaw in it, and no disadvantage in its statutes. It reflects the nature of God, and is therefore good. It defines sin (Rom 3:20), and is therefore good. The weakness of the Law is not in its framework or demands. THE WEAKNESS IS IN MANKIND. Thus it is written, "For what the law could not do, in that it was WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH"(Rom 8:3). That is, the Law could define sin, but it could not take it away. It could convict the sinner, but it could not change the sinner.

However, when someone acknowledges, consents to, or agrees that it is good, a milestone of spiritual life has been reached.

## NOT HEARTLESS AGREEMENT

This is no mechanical or academic agreement! It is not agreeing with your back, so to speak, pinned against the wall, as though you were forced to agree. This is the expression of the heart. The affection consents. The will consents. Even the intellect consents. No part of the essential person – the "new creation in Christ Jesus"– disagrees with the good Law of God!

Much before Paul's time, David, the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam 23:1), put this "consent" or "agreement" into words. Although he lived and died under the Old Covenant, his faith took him beyond the perimeter of the Law. In his measure, he was able to speak in harmony with the New Covenant, even though it was not enacted until nearly 1,000 years after his death. That is a most remarkable circumstance! Read some of David's expressions and see if they do not reflect the nature of the New Covenant, and, hopefully, your own heart.

1. "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psa 119:18).
2. "For Thy judgments are good" (Psa 119:39).
3. "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Psa 119:34).
4. "So shall I keep Thy law continually for ever and ever" (Psa 119:44).
5. "I have remembered Thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept Thy law" (Psa 119:55).
6. "I have not forgotten Thy law" (Psa 119:61).
7. "I delight in Thy law" (Psa 119:70).
8. "Thy law is my delight" (Psa 119:77).

9. "Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction" (Psa 119:92).

10. "O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psa 119:97).

11. "My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Thy law" (Psa 119:109).

12. "I hate vain thoughts: but Thy law do I love" (Psa 119:113).

13. "I hate and abhor lying: but Thy law do I love" (Psa 119:163).

14. "I have longed for Thy salvation, O LORD; and Thy law is my delight" (Psa 119:174).

Consenting that the Law is good, involves delighting in it, preferring it, not forgetting it, and meditating upon it. David's expressions were preparatory for what would be realized in Christ. Paul is acknowledging participation in the salvation for which David longed (Psa 119:81,123, 160,174).

#### THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 27 of 69

#### AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #15

#### THE STRUGGLE IS THE EVIDENCE

The invasion of his mind with unwanted passions and desires were Paul's EVIDENCE that he agreed with the Law. He made no attempt to justify such thoughts, but acknowledged that he hated them. They did not originate in his will. That hatred was only possible because he consented to the goodness of God's holy Law. In this, Paul was an example of all true believers. His experience was not unique to him, and must not be viewed as though it was. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to put into words what is involved in "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12), wrestling against principalities and powers (Eph 6:12), and living "unto God" (Gal 2:19). He was given the wisdom to describe what is involved in the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusting against the flesh (Gal 5:17). He spells out what it means to "resist the devil" (1 Pet 5:7-8; James 4:7). He puts into words something of the use of the "shield of faith" (Eph 6:16).

The word "consent" also carries the idea of verbalization, or confession, coming from a word that means to affirm or confess. It is as though the intrusion of unlawful desires into his mind

caused him to shout out, "THY LAW IS GOOD!" It was good by contrast as well as nature.

## IT IS NOT REALLY ME

"But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." Here we come to grips with the heart of this passage. This is the second conclusion drawn from the intrusion of foreign desires and thoughts – expressions of the "old man." Without controversy this is one of the most liberating practical proclamations of Scripture. I use the word "practical" because the affirmation is associated with human experience. Foundational freedom is based upon the belief of the Gospel and consequent identity with Jesus. That aspect of liberty was powerfully declared in the sixth chapter of Romans. We were freed from sin: liberated from guilt, and emancipated from an obligation to the flesh. It is essential that this liberty be grasped by the heart. It is not enough to only know it theoretically .

## BUT NOW

The words "But now" refer to our status in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:21; 6:22; 7:6; Eph 2:13; 5:8; Col 1:26). This is the life that has resulted from our burial, death, and resurrection with Christ (Rom 6:3-4). It is equivalent to saying, "But now that I am in Christ" (2 Cor 5:17); or "Now that I am justified" (Rom 5:1); or "Now that I am being "made the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5L21). It is the same as saying, "Now that the body of the sins of the flesh has been put off" by the "circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11), or "Now that I am risen with Christ" (Col 3:1).

Here is something vital to see. This is not the result of perception, but of a very real identity with Jesus. This is true whether the believer sees it or not. It obtains power when it is seen, but it exists as soon as a person is "joined to the Lord" (1 Cor 6:17), and "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14); or put into Christ by God (1 Cor 1:30). If you are in Christ, what follows is true of you, whether you have ever seen it or not. The role of this passage is to show us the condition of the saved, not their potential!

We will further develop, and confirm, that the struggle that is described in Romans 7:15-25), is EVIDENCE of salvation, PROOF of justification, and VALIDATION of having been reconciled to God. It is an experience that can, in fact, be realized by no one except those who are in Christ Jesus!

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #16

### IT IS NO MORE I THAT DO IT

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom 7:17). Other versions read, "It is no longer I that do it" (NKJV); "So now, no longer am I the one doing it" (NASB); "As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it" (NIV); "But in fact it is no longer I that do it" (NRSV), and "So I am not the one doing wrong" (NLT).

This is the CONCLUSION Paul reached after acknowledging he had wrestled with thoughts he did not originate or desire. THIS IS AN INSPIRED CONCLUSION, for the Spirit has included it in Scripture. It stands in the same category as the words delivered by the prophets: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any PRIVATE INTERPRETATION. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet 1:20-21). That is, no part of Scripture is an interpretation of what was given to the writer. It is the clear affirmation of what was revealed by the Lord. The same is true of the words recorded in Romans 7:15-25. These are not Paul's interpretation of what he had experienced, but the assessment of God Himself – which assessment Paul comprehended by the Holy Spirit.

On the surface, this may appear to contradict what Paul has just confessed. First he says, "For what I hate, I do" (verse 15). Then he says, "I do what I will not to do" (verse 16). Now he says, "It is no longer I who do it."

Among other things, this shows the complexity of life in Christ Jesus. Too often there is an oversimplification of life in Christ. Actually, the believer is a microcosm of world conflict– a sort of miniature world in which both good and evil reside, temporal and eternal, earthly and heavenly. WITHIN THE BELIEVER TWO WORLDS COLLIDE! One is favorable and one is unfavorable. One promotes destruction and the other promotes life. One is tainted, and one is pure. One is acceptable, and one is not. One is to be embraced, and the other shunned and rejected.

In Christ we receive a new identity. "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a NEW creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" [NASB] (2 Cor 5:17). The "old things" have "passed away" in several ways.

1. They are no longer the center of our attention.
2. They no longer have dominion over us.
3. They no longer condemn us.
4. They are no longer an integral part of us.
5. Our view of them has changed.

"Old things," however, have not become extinct, or nonexistent. We still have to contend with them, even though they cannot exercise total control of us. We are required to MORTIFY, or put to death, OUR "members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the

wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also PUT OFF ALL THESE; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Col 3:5-8).

In the place of "your members that are upon the earth," the NIV reads, "whatever belongs to your earthly nature." That is the sense of the text. Those members properly belong to our body – the Adamic part of our nature, or what we are by natural birth. They are a part of our human constitution, even though they have been circumcised, or cut away, from our regenerated self, or the "new man" (Col 2:11-12). What you are in Christ cannot be properly considered as part of the human nature. Rather, this is part of "the Divine nature," of which those in Christ are partaking. As it is written, ". . . glory and virtue, Whereby [by which] are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE" (2 Pet 1:4). And again, "For we are made PARTAKERS OF CHRIST, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb 3:14). Further, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have PUT ON CHRIST" (Gal 3:27). That is a very real experience, not a parabolic one. That "new creature," or new creation, is the only part of you that God receives!

IT IS NO LONGER I because these eruptions do not come from my "new man," or true identity in Christ Jesus. The part of me that is in fellowship with Christ has nothing to do with them, and in that sense, "It is not I." That new part is real, not merely theoretical. It is part of me, but NOT the only part of me. I have a "new man" to be put on, as well as am "old man," which is to be put off.

It is important to understand this is not a mere excuse or alibi, as the wicked are wont to make. It is not a "devil-made-me-do-it" explanation for transgression. There is NO transgression here. Paul is not admitting to having fallen into immortality. Something was done, but it was not overt, external, or willing. It was subdued while yet only within. Paul is speaking of the expressions of old nature that remain in him – tied, as it was, to his tabernacle of clay.

It was not him because he did not WANT what was expressed. His will was against it. His heart was not in accord with it. That is why he did not allow it to foam out through his words and deeds.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 29 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #17

## IT IS SIN THAT DWELLS IN ME

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but SIN THAT DWELLETH IN ME . . . Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but SIN THAT DWELLETH IN ME" (Rom 7:17,20).

Here "sin" is not transgression, or iniquity, as ordinarily perceived. Rather, it is "the law of sin," or the sin principle (Rom 7:23,25; 8:2).

If "I do" it, yet "I" do not do it, then who is it that really does it? It may sound like a lot of double-talk, but it is not. The guilty party is that part that has been circumcised from the regenerated part. As it is written, "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also YE ARE CIRCUMCISED with the circumcision made without hands, in PUTTING OFF the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:10-11). Viewed from another perspective, it is the part of you that was crucified when you were baptized into Christ: "Knowing this, that our old man is [not 'was'] crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom 6:6). That is, like Jesus, the "old man" is intended to remain on the cross until he dies – which he will not do until you are no longer in your present body.

The "putting off," or "removal" (NASB) of "the body of the sins of the flesh" does not refer to its extinction, but to its removal from your essential person. That "old man" remains in your body, but it is distinct and separate from who you are in Christ Jesus. His cries are no more coming from the real you, than the words of the impenitent thief were identified with the penitent thief (Lk 23:39,42), who were crucified with Jesus.

It is the "law of sin," or sin principle, that remains in the believer, and expresses itself exclusively through the "old man" – which is to be "put off" (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). However, although "the law of sin and death" still has measured access to me through my thought processes, I have been freed from it, so that I no longer have to obey it. As it is written, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath MADE ME FREE from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). Both of these laws function in present bodies of believers, but both are not owned by the believers. They are with us like the Canaanites were with Israel in Canaan (Josh 17:12-13), and Sanballat and Tobiah were with Nehemiah (Neh 6:1), and Mordecai and Haman were with Esther (Esth 2:22; 5:12), and Judas was with the disciples (Matt 26:21).

This is a powerful example of the meaning of Titus 2:11-13. There "the grace of God" is said to effectively teach us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

This denial is not pretending the "ungodliness and worldly lusts" do not exist, or saying they are not in us. Rather, it is denying they are an expression of our will and preference. It is also a refusal to allow them to sit upon the throne of our heart and mind. It is as though we refused to approve of their appeals, rejecting them through the energy and direction of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13). Of course, such a word is pointless if the "old man" no longer exists.

Being made "kings and priests unto God" (Rev 1:5-6), we rule over the petitions of our lower and sinful nature. We can reject their appeals in the power of the Holy Spirit. When they say "follow me," we say "NO!"

As I have mentioned, these contrary thoughts are like Sanballot and Tobiah were to Nehemiah. They are in the place where we are. They shout at us as though they belonged to us, but they do not. They are enemies, living within the borders of our personality, but separate from our real persons. Whatever they say to us, and whatever suggestions they make, we say, "It is not I! That is not the expression of my true desires!"

In a sense, it is a humbling experience to find that we have "sin" dwelling in us, cohabiting with us in the same vessel. But it is a temporary situation from which we will be delivered. Until that deliverance comes, learn to capitalize on the truth revealed in this text. You are not responsible for what the sinful nature suggests! That is a privilege vouchsafed to you by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. You have been made a king (Rev 1:6) to rule over something. That something is not your social surroundings, or the governments of the world, or even the city in which you live. You have been made a king to rule over your body, and bring it into subjection (1 Cor 9:27). That is the territory over which you are to authoritatively preside.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 30 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #18

### I KNOW ABOUT FLESH, #1

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18).

Other versions read, "in my sinful nature" (New International Version); "that is, inside my old nature" (Complete Jewish Bible), "in my corrupt nature" (God's Word, "in my natural self, that is" (New Jerusalem Bible).

The word itself that is translated "flesh" does not contain all of the meanings reflected in the above versions. The Greek word used is "sarx," which means "flesh (the soft substance of the living body, which covers the bones and is permeated with blood) of both man and beasts" (Thayer). However, that is NOT the sense in which this word is used in our text.

Believers must come to know what "FLESH" means in this text. The Scriptures speak of "when

we were in the FLESH” (Rom 7:5); not walking”after the FLESH” (Rom 8:1); minding “the things of the FLESH” (Rom 8:5). Ponder this reasoning: "So then they that are in the FLESH cannot please God. But ye are not in the FLESH, but in the Spirit." (Rom 8:8-9). And again, "For if ye live after the FLESH, ye shall die" (Rom 8:13). "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the FLESH, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom 13:14)."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" (Gal 5:17). All believers must come to the point where they KNOW what these texts are teaching.

The dichotomy of our experience is, in a sense, frustrating. We experience an unwanted and unsought inner conflict that cannot be avoided as long as we remain in “this present evil world.” Although we have been delivered from the world itself (Gal 1:4) – which is infinitely more than an “age” – we have not been delivered from inner conflict. As I have said, “the world” is more than an “age,” or a period of time. It is a domain in which hostile personalities reside – Satan, his angels, demons, and principalities and powers that are of a superior order to humanity. There is a word for “world” that is correctly translated “age” (aion). It is used 129 times from Matthew thru Revelation. The Scriptures also refer to the “world” by using another word – “kosmos.” It is used 145 times from Matthew thru Revelation. The word “kosmos” identifies what was created in the beginning. The word “aion” speaks of the duration of what was created. The inner battle of which our text speaks takes place while we occupy the created realm, and are living during its duration.

Whether you are speaking of “the world” as a domain, or from the standpoint of its duration, the enemies mentioned above reside in it. We are also in “the world” in both senses – and that is the basic reason for the inner conflict expounded in our text. Both time and domain have been defiled by sin. Since sin has entered into the world [kosmos] (Rom 5:12), both time and domain are now the arena in which good and evil are locked in contention. There is a part of you that is consigned to death, and there is a part that cannot die.

In our text, Paul is confirming that the people of God do not have to be ignorant about this conflict. He was not ignorant of it, and we should not be ignorant of it. When the later versions of Scripture read "I do not understand what I do" (v 15), it can be a bit misleading – to say it mildly. This is an expression of frustration, not one of ignorance. Paul knew these unwanted intrusions were not issuing from His real self. He will now affirm he also knew that nothing good was resident in his “flesh” – the natural self. This is now the third conclusion drawn concerning the involuntary outbreaks of the flesh within. Again, let me affirm that Paul is informing us that he KNEW what was going on in this conflict.

## I KNOW ABOUT MYSELF

This entire context (Romans chapters 6-7) is one about knowing. "Do you not KNOW that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (6:19). "What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had KNOWN sin, but by the law: for I had not KNOWN lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (7:7). In the sixth and seventh chapters of Romans, Paul is speaking about what is KNOWN – not what is unknown.

This does not refer to mere academic knowledge. Paul is not reciting the tenets of a discipline of life. This is something he understood. He had a grasp of the situation, and was able to reason upon it – “I KNOW!”

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 31 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #19

### I KNOW ABOUT FLESH, #2

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” (Rom 7:18)

## IN MY FLESH

It is one thing to have a sort of knowledge about the flesh itself. It is quite another to understand about YOUR OWN flesh – to have insight into the nature of YOUR “natural man” (1 Cor 2:14). The “natural man” is the part of you whose lineage can be traced back to Adam – both seen and unseen.

Doctrinally, the Spirit has already delineated the flesh in general. "There is NONE righteous, no, NOT ONE : There is NONE that understandeth, there is NONE that seeketh after God. They are ALL gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is NONE that doeth good, no, NOT ONE." (3:10-19). That should be an end of all controversy. Yet, it is not enough to merely memorize those facts and spout them heartlessly. The sense of them must be grasped for them to have power in the individual.

Concerning the flesh, Paul had some of the most respectable flesh that has ever been on earth. Hear him speak about it. "Though I might also have confidence IN THE FLESH. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust IN THE FLESH, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil 3:4-6). Speaking of the unregenerate, you simply cannot get better than that!

Mind you, this is distinction among A DISTINCT PEOPLE – a people chosen, led, and defended by God Almighty! Moses told them, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath CHOSEN thee to be a SPECIAL people unto Himself, ABOVE all people

that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6). These people had received more than any other people. They were the ONLY people given a holy Law and a covenant with God. Paul excelled among THOSE people. ALL of the prophets and ALL of the promises were directed to them. And Paul excelled among THEM!

## NOTHING GOOD DWELLS

I am interested to hear what a man like that will say of himself. He is not hesitant to speak on this matter. "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (NASB). He does not say some good is found in the flesh, but that NO good is found there. Not only is nothing good found in the flesh generally, nothing good is found in HIS flesh. This is what he comprehends about himself. He can see the truth of it, and He does so through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

There are professed Christian teachers who say they do not understand how Paul could say such a thing. By saying this, they only betray their own ignorance. Paul KNEW, they do not. You can rest assured if they do not understand NO good was in Paul's flesh, they surely are not aware that no good is found in theirs.

What did Paul mean by this statement, and what compelled him to affirm it? He is speaking of his natural self, which he calls "my flesh." The word "flesh" is used in distinction to "spirit," and stands for everything that is indissolubly united with the body – everything that can be traced back to Adam.

Whatever I will be freed from in death and the resurrection is "my flesh." Whatever part of me cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, is "my flesh." If it must be controlled and brought under subjection, it is "my flesh." If it comes from Adam, it is "my flesh." Everything about me that required my new birth is "my flesh."

This is "the natural man" that cannot receive "the things of the Spirit of God," and to whom they are "foolishness" (1 Cor 2:16). Flesh is absolutely consistent in all of its ways.

Paul calls it "MY flesh" because it is resident in him, not because he is charged with its defense and protection. He preferred not to have it, but there it was with him, ever being a source of aggravation and inner contention.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #20

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” (Rom 7:18)

### JESUS SPEAKS

Jesus spoke to this point when He said, "the flesh PROFITS NOTHING" (John 6:63). By this, Jesus did NOT mean the flesh was profitable in some, but not all, areas. He does NOT mean there are a few circumstances in which "the flesh" can yield benefit. Men may say this, but Jesus Christ does not. Hear Divinity speak: “THE FLESH PROFITETH NOTHING!”

Stated another way, Jesus said "without Me, you can do NOTHING" – and "the flesh" is "without" Christ in every sense of the word (John 6:63). When it comes to the things of God, and working out ones own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12), “the flesh IS WEAK” (Matt 26:41). It is "weak" – incapable of contributing to or sustaining the "new man" (Matt 26:41). It cannot generate a child of God (John 1:13). It even made the law of God "weak" – "For what the law could not do, in that it was WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3). This is the only part of you in which Satan can gain a foothold, for he cannot touch what has been born of God: "WE KNOW that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18). Do you KNOW that??

### NO GOOD THING

This is not a lifeless theological statement. It is the confession of something that has been seen or perceived. In "my flesh dwells NO good thing." There is NOTHING there that will be honored in heaven, nothing that can be salvaged. Everything about "the flesh" must eventually be separated from me! Titles conferred upon the flesh cannot transfer to heaven. The accomplishments of flesh, however notable they may appear, are unrecognized in heaven, and will not be honored there.

Knowing, or realizing, this, Paul could consider everything bringing gain to that part of him (the flesh) to be "dung" – worthless and to be discarded (Phil 3:8). He did not look to the flesh for spiritual support. Those who remained in that realm could not edify him or bring heavenly benefits to him. Those who hawk routines for the advancement of believers have given them sand to eat. All of their routines and systems rely upon the flesh – all of them. They may claim (which they do), that their routines help one form new habits – but habits are nothing more than a coverup for the lack of spiritual power and aptitude – things that are given to those who are in Christ Jesus: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim 1:7).

By nature, nothing good was found in Paul – or us! Any good must be received, for "EVERY good gift and EVERY perfect gift is FROM ABOVE" (James 1:17). If nothing good is found in us by nature, then it follows that men are "evil" by nature, for evil is the total absence of good. This is why Jesus said to His disciples, "If ye then, BEING EVIL, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to

them that ask Him?" (Matt 7:11). By this, Jesus did not mean His disciples were the dregs of humanity, wallowing in perversion and moral corruption. Rather, he meant they were not good in the eyes of God, and thus required regeneration, or the new birth – just like us.

This is the same as "concluding all under sin" (Gal 3:22). Sin has leveled the playing field of humanity. The part of us that made us sinners in the first place, remains with us. Although it is not the dominant part of us, it is a part with which we must contend. What Paul now says of himself is to be applied to everyone.

This circumstance was perfectly clear to Paul, even though he did not know the depths of it, he did realize the reason for and nature of the warfare. That is precisely why he was able to stand in the heat of the conflict, keep the faith and continue fighting the fight. Because he knew the situation was not unique to him, he elaborates upon it. He will show how he knew this by spiritual reasoning as well as by revelation. The argument is unusually powerful, bringing liberty to the soul, or those who comprehend it.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #21

### A SHARP LINE OF DEMARCATION

The language and tone of the first part of the seventh chapter of Romans (Rom 7:5-13) is significantly different from that of verses 15-25. In the first part, experiences and assessments are all in the PAST tense: "When we WERE . . . "WERE by the Law" . . . "DID work" . . . "HAD NOT known sin" . . . WROUGHT in me" . . . "I WAS alive without the law once" . . . "the commandment came, sin revived, and I DIED" . . . "I FOUND" . . . "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, DECEIVED me, and by it SLEW me" . . . "WAS then." It seems to me that it requires an unusual imagination to think of such expressions as the contemporary experience of those in Christ Jesus.

THE language itself confirms it is in the PAST – a period of time to which apostolic doctrine frequently refers. "For when we WERE yet without strength . . . while we WERE yet sinners . . . when we WERE enemies . . . ye WERE the servants of sin . . . when ye WERE the servants of sin . . . when we WERE in the flesh . . . such WERE some of you . . . who WERE dead in trespasses and sins . . . Wherein IN TIME PAST ye walked according to the course of this world . . . also we all HAD our conversation IN TIMES PAST in the lusts of our flesh . . . at THAT

TIME ye WERE without Christ . . . you, that WERE sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works . . . we ourselves also WERE sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another . . . who through fear of death WERE all their lifetime subject to bondage . . . Which IN TIME PAST were not a people . . . WHICH HAD NOT obtained mercy" (Rom 5:6,8,10; 6:17,20; 7:1; 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 2:1,2,3,12; Col 1:21; Tit 3:3; Heb 2:15; 1 Pet 2:10).

There is a sharp line of demarcation between our lives of alienation and our reconciliation to God. There came a point in time when we were no longer in sin but in Christ; when we were no longer enemies but were reconciled. No good purpose can be served by speaking of times of death, enmity, and alienation, as though they were still present. Such vernacular would only serve to obscure what occurs in salvation, and would further confuse believers.

Under such aberrant teaching, those experiencing a struggle within would then be led to conclude they were NOT in Christ, and that they remained dead in their sins. If the erroneous assumption that this text (Rom 7:15-25) refers to Paul's past life, inward struggle would actually a sign that we have NOT passed from death unto life. In such a case, it would be evidence of NOT being saved and reconciled to God. There is no way to view this passage other than that of a present experience! This (Rom 7:15-25) is Paul's assessment of the PRESENT – of our life in Christ, and the conflict it has produced with the flesh.

Any and every time the Spirit deals with sin in the church, it is never addressed as a state of normalcy. Also, whenever our sinful past is mentioned, the blessed change of status for those in Christ quickly follows – “BUT NOW” . . . (Rom 6:22; 7:6; Eph 2:13; 5:8; 1 Pet 2:10); “BUT YE ARE” (Rom 8:8-9; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Pet 2:9); “BUT ARE NOW” (1 Pet 2:10; 2:25), etc.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #22

### CONFIRMED IN GALATIANS

"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" (Gal 5:17)

The very experience declared in Romans 7:15-25 is confirmed in the book of Galatians, leaving no doubt as to its application. Other versions read: "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit,

and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (NASB); "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (NIV); "For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other [continually withstanding and in conflict with each other], so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do" (Amplified).

In other words, within the child of God, "the flesh" cannot have full expression, nor can "the new man." No matter how long a person has been in Christ, he will confront desires he does not want, which must be thrown down – and desires that are fervently desired, yet cannot be fully carried out. This is how God intends for life to be lived while we are in the body. The contention itself prompts us to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:15). It confirms to us that we are not yet in our ultimate home, but are traversing in a strange land (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 1:1; 2:11). It promotes a longing to be with the Lord, and experiencing total freedom from the residue of sin (2 Cor 5:8).

This is a brief description of the inner warfare explained more fully in the seventh chapter of Romans. The point being made in Galatians is precisely the one made in Romans. The struggle itself is not sinful, and does not condemn us. "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Gal 5:18). The leading of the Spirit is presented within the context of a struggle with the flesh. We choose to follow the Spirit rather than the flesh. While the Law condemns the flesh, together with all of its desires, it cannot condemn us if we follow the Spirit – even though the very lusts it condemns are found in our earthly constitution. That is good news!

James speaks of this conflict in another way: "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (James 4:5). Other versions read, "Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?" (NIV); "Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?" (James 4:5). This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in the book of James. Although the passage has long been mysterious to theologians, it appears to me that James is depicting the Holy Spirit as Himself spawning desires that do not lead men to sin. In so doing, the Spirit desires for our whole persons to be controlled and led by Him. This is, in my understanding, a most vivid depiction of inner warfare. It is traced to the ultimate sources of conflicting desires –sinful ones exude from the flesh, and holy ones from the Holy Spirit.

If a person attempts to live for Christ as though this conflict did not exist, the advantage will be given to the devil.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present

with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #23

I WANT TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT

" . . . for to will is present with me." (Rom 7:18b)

Other versions read, "For I have the desire to do what is good" (NIV), "I can will what is right" (NRSV), "I have the mind," (Basic Bible English), "I can want what is good" (Complete Jewish Bible), "the desire to do what is good is with me" (Holman Christian Standard Bible).

With the person in Christ, it is not a matter of NOT wanting what is right. That is the trait of the unreconciled and unregenerated, not of the saved. Faith effects the will! The new birth is accompanied by new desires. A "new heart" has profound and holy desires. However, while willingness is imperative, it is not omnipotent. A modicum of honesty will confirm that being willing is not the same as accomplishing the thing willed. This is because there is more to the saved ones than their new nature. They also have "the flesh" – the part of them that is traced back to Adam. Or, "the old man," which is to be "put off" (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9). There are still "ungodliness and worldly lusts" that are to be denied, or rejected (Tit 2:11-13). They contend with "fleshly lusts" from which they must "abstain," for they "war against the soul" (1 Pet 1:11).

These inner enemies are not what the saints desire. They are totally unwanted, and are inimical intrusions. Wanting to do what to do what is right does not stop them from coming. This is because we have a body, animated by a nature, in which such thoughts find a place of entrance. There is no human regimen that can stop them from entering. They have to be rejected and cast down with Divinely supplied weaponry (2 Cor 10:4-5; Eph 6:10-18). If, when they come, we will do as we are exhorted, we will gain the victory over them: "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:15-16). Jesus was "tempted" (Heb 2:18; 4:15), and overcame the temptation. He wants to enable you to do the same. Come to Him WHEN you are tempted, not after you have succumbed to temptation. When that happens you do not need help, but forgiveness (1 John 1:7,8).

Paul is saying he is willing to do what the Law demands, down to the smallest detail. To state it another way, he did not want to sin, and he did desire to walk perfectly before God. That was his heart. These were such consistent desires that the thoughts presented by the flesh were foreign to his thinking – unwanted intrusions into his mind.

Being "willing in the day of His power" (Psa 110:3) is essential, but it is not the total answer. We will yet be delivered from a state wherein we are willing, yet cannot fully do what we want. That will be when we are out of this present "vile body" (Phil 2:20), and in our "house which is from

heaven" (2 Cor 5:1-5).

### I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO DO IT

" . . . but how to perform what is good I do not find." Other versions read, "but I cannot carry it out" (NIV), "but I cannot do it" (NRSV), "but to accomplish that which is good, I find not" (DARBY), "I have the mind but not the power to do what is right" (BBE). As used in this text, the words "cannot do" mean "cannot CONSISTENTLY do."

Here is the frustrating part of the faith-life. While we remain in the body, there are good things we want to do, yet cannot find a way to do them! Every believer knows this is the case. Daily we seek grace to help in these times of need, when we are, of ourselves, impotent to do what we already know is good, and desired.

The word "DO" is not a casual word, as though Paul was satisfied with some token expressions of his will. Rather, he wanted to perfectly execute the will of God, with no element of dissatisfaction. It is like the disciples falling asleep when they really wanted to stay awake (Matt 26:41).

### THE GOOD THAT I WILL TO DO

This does not refer to obeying moral laws, civil laws, and helping our neighbor. Faith moves our will into a higher realm – one that governs the domain of external expression. "The good" of reference is consistent and uninterrupted.

The individual being led by the Spirit wants no deviate thoughts – not a single one. He wants to "attend upon the Lord without distraction" (1 Cor 7:35). The desire is for uninterrupted communion with God. "The good" that is willed is to always have the things of God fresh, always be joyful, strong, and dominated by the peace of God.

The desire is for no taint, however small, to be found upon our lives and service to God. It is for no spot or blemish to be found upon our lives. That is what we want! But who has discovered the power to fully realize those desires? That is the point of our text. Faith has made us willing, but not all-wise or all-powerful.

### THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #24

### THE EVIL I DO NOT WANT TO DO

“For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom 7:15)

The believer does not want to contend with waywardness in his own person. We would to God we had no part of us that had to be subordinated, for evil does have to be subordinated. But a condition in which nothing needs to be subordinated, however greatly it is willed or desired, is not with us! Every believer has something within that needs to be subdued – the old man to be put off (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), ungodliness and world lusts that must be rejected (Tit 2:11-13), and tempting lusts that war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11). No believer, while he is in this world, can do without the way of escape that accompanies every temptation (1 Cor 10:13). While you are “in the body” (Heb 13:3), you will never have a day when you will not need an Intercessor in heaven (Heb 7:25), an intercessor within (Rom 8:26-27), and grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:15-16). It is that reality that moved Paul to record this text. Just as there were enemies in Canaan, so there are enemies associated with our flesh that must be subdued. However, we had rather live without having such contentions.

There are thoughts that have to be "cast down." As it is written, "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" (2 Cor 10:4-5). There is a sense of aggression and strong violence in the text.

Our will is not to have imaginations that must be thrown down, and thoughts that must be captured. Such things are "evil." But who is the saved soul that has not experienced such a state? "The evil I do not want, I do." "DO" does not mean fulfill. It means something surfaced in ME that needed to be put down!

We are NOT willing to have thoughts and lusts that must be denied, or rejected. Things like this are "evil." Yet, such things DO arise in us. We must even be taught by the grace of God to reject them, thrusting them from us. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that , denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Tit 2:11-12). Our wills are NOT to ever have a worldly passion to which we must say "NO!" (NIV). But what believer has ever experienced the thorough satisfaction of that desire in this world? "The evil I do not want, I do." "DO" does not mean I executed the desire. It means something came up in ME that had to be denied, or rejected – and no justified person loves to have inimical influences arise within!

How grand it would be, says our will, if there was nothing in us that needed to be crucified, mortified, and put to death. Things that require crucifixion and death are “evil.” Are such things resident in our total makeup? Indeed they are! "Therefore put to death YOUR MEMBERS which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). These things are "evil."

Is there any among us who dares to boast they have no "members" that need to be put to death –

mortified? "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11). Who is the believer that will affirm he has not confronted "fleshly lusts" from which he had to "abstain?" "The evil I do not want, I do." "DO" does not mean carry out. It means something arose in ME that had to be put to death – something from which I had to abstain!

Our will prefers not to have anything about us that needs to be subdued or conquered. After all, we have been called to an inheritance into which nothing defiled can enter (Rev 21:27). That is the environment we want. Anything that has to be subjugated is "evil." Ponder what Paul says of the body. "No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" [NIV] (1 Cor 9:27).

Here is an enemy we carry with us night and day. We are painfully aware of its presence every conscious moment. It shouts its desires and preferences in our minds at the most inopportune moments. "The evil I do not want, I do." "DO" does not mean I followed the dictates of my body. It means I have a body that is wayward and must be ruled!

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #25

### WITHHELD FROM THE SAINTS

It is tragic beyond description that the perspective of Romans 7:15-25 has been largely withheld from the saints. Even though the circumstance exists in every person that is in Christ Jesus, not many have heard it expounded, relatively few have any understanding of it, and no one totally comprehends it. This is something that is not only in the Scripture, it is in one of the books that extensively expounds the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Further, although this was Paul's testimony of himself, that is not all it was. It is the testimony of a common experience – else there would really be no point to giving it. Also, it is an experience that is not as easily discerned as it is intended to be. This is because it is dealing with inner feelings and warfare, which are far more difficult to comprehend than commandments having to do with outward expression.

As unbelievable as it may seem to many, the modern church has gone to the field of psychiatry to deal with inward feelings, experiences, and warfare. This is a field of worldly knowledge that is a "science of behavior and mind, embracing all aspects of conscious and unconscious experience as well as thought." Men who have contributed to this sphere of knowledge include

Yales, Plato, Aristotle – all worldly philosophers like those in Athens. Sigmund Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. None of these men recognized the spiritual makeup of man, who is comprised of spirit, soul and body (1 Thess 5:23). None of them were proclaimed followers of Christ. None of them acknowledged that man was created by God Almighty. In this field, things impacting thought are traced back to the organic functions of the body. Man is not thought to have an unseen part that is in the image of God, nor is man seen as one capable of being impacted by the Holy Spirit, and by the devil himself. Yet, an unbelievable number of “Christian” so-called specialists, have adopted this philosophical approach to mental discipline, disorders, etc. If one were to hand Paul over to some of these men for diagnosis, there is not a one of them that would give a diagnosis like Romans 7:15-25.

I hasten to say that I am aware of some mental disorders that are caused by chemical imbalance and other physiological, or biological functions. That is not the sort of thing I am addressing. However, even in that area, faith and spiritual insight will be a great asset in addressing such circumstances. – and that is not to mention that the Lord Jesus is also known for healing.

The perception of this text is a precious key that unlocks Kingdom mysteries to us. No person who sees this will question the need for the grace of God. The demand for an indwelling Spirit will not be doubted by those who see this. The need for perseverance and an aggressive fight of faith makes perfect sense to those who identify with this text! They will not question the need for edification, meeting with kindred spirits, or ingesting the Word of God. Their understanding moves them to seek every advantage possible. They will seek all of the graces afforded them in God's great salvation. However, if this truth is not perceived, they are not apt to seek the Lord when what they do not want is found in their thinking. This requires proper teaching of apostolic doctrine that will allow the believer to comprehend to some degree what is being experienced in “the good fight of faith.”

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 38 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #26

### SOUND SPIRITUAL THINKING

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Rom 7:20-21). The NKJV reads, "Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good." (Rom 7:20-21)

It is not enough to merely know what is happening within us. We must be able to draw valid conclusions from our condition – conclusions that make for edification and comfort. Men have considered this passage and arrived at all manners of erroneous and dangerous conclusions. Such reasoning has brought no advantage to the saints of God, but has been like weights upon them, hindering them in the race set before them. In some, it has even caused pretension – acting as though they did not even occur. But they DID occur – that is the whole point of this passage.

The degenerative effects of much of the preaching of our time is most serious. Many contemporary interpretations of Scripture are no more than the mere opinions of men. They are subtle "doctrines of demons" designed to turn men in the wrong direction. As when Peter "walked on the water to go to Jesus" (Matt 14:29), these teachings constrain men to look at the storms of life instead of the Ruler of the storms. They do not culture a proper view of self, God, Christ, salvation, or a godly life in this world.

### IF I DO WHAT I WILL NOT

Now Paul begins to reason concerning his condition. He has acknowledged his will is far ahead of his ability to fulfill it. That acknowledgment is not intended to apply only to himself. He is expounding the truth of deliverance from condemnation and the appropriation of righteousness (Rom 3-5). He is elaborating on our death with Jesus – death to sin, and death to the Law (Rom 6).

In Christ, a new WILL is received. This is the result of having God's holy and spiritual law put into our minds and written upon our hearts (Heb 8:10). It flows from having our conscience purged from dead works so that we may "serve the living God" (Heb 9:14). Now, the thoughts that once found a home in our minds are unwanted and repulsive. When they present themselves, just by the presence of such thoughts, we have done what we did not want to do – for thinking is inward "doing!" We have thought what we did not want to think! These intruding thoughts have not been summoned by our wills, but shot into our thinking like poisonous arrows from our enemy, the devil. Because he has no access to the new nature (1 John 5:18), these "fiery darts" can only lodge in our "old man," or sinful nature, which must be crucified. It is our old nature, "the flesh," that formally presents them to us as proper areas of thought. But they are not proper, and thus the person who knows what is happening refuses to dwell upon them.

How are we to reason when this grievous circumstance introduces itself? Are we to throw up our hands in despair, concluding that we must be walking at a distance from God? Are we to deduce that we have not been regenerated, or that we must be forgiven for such things even asserting themselves into our thought processes? The Spirit will now teach us how to reason on these things.

This is the fourth conclusion drawn by the Apostle. Allow me to remind you of these four conclusions drawn to this point.

1. "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good" (verse 16).
2. "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (verse 17).
3. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (verse 18).

4. "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (verse 20).

### "NO MORE"

"It is no more I that do it!" "It no longer I who do it!" (NIV). The same expression was used in verse seventeen: "NO MORE I that do it." At this point, we need to more fully expound this expression, "no more," or "no longer." Why not simply say "It is not I?" Why add the words "no more," or "no longer." There is a reason for this manner of speaking.

The lusts which now intrude into our minds were once welcomed by us – often the very same lusts. What is now "the old man," or the "not I," was once us! That self was not "old" then, but in the vigor of its youth. It is what caused us to be dead in trespasses and sins, alienated from God, and condemned. Our old self loves to remind us of our old self, and suggest to us that we return to the old ways, like a dog to its vomit, and a sow that was washed to its wallowing in the mire.

But we are "no more," or "no longer" that person. We are a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), the "sons of God" (1 John 3:1-2), and "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17). We admit those desires once felt at home in us, but "no more!" They are "no longer" an expression of our will. They are "no longer" welcome in our minds. They do not belong to our real self! What unspeakable liberty is realized by the soul who has a grasp of this reality!

### THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 39 of 69

### AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #27

#### I FIND LAW

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." Other versions read, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good" (NASB); "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me" (NIV); "So I find this rule: that for me, where I want to do nothing but good, evil is close at my side" (NJB).

This law is to spiritual life what the law of gravity is to nature. Every time a person wants to go up, he confronts the law, or principle, of gravity that pulls him down! No matter how often or how high the person jumps, the law of gravity is there. He cannot get rid of it, but must learn how to live with it. He can take measures that can counteract the law of gravity, like flying in an airplane, or climbing, but he cannot get rid of the law of gravity.

So it is in spiritual life. The desire to do good is always mixed with the suggestions of our old nature. This is a spiritual principle, and should not surprise us. The point is not the source of this law, but the PRESENCE of it. It is an ever present truth that the determination to do good is always neutralized by the presence of "evil." While in this world, no child of God will be thoroughly satisfied with what he has done. He will find that the only activity with which he can be thoroughly pleased is that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Evil," in this case, refers to all inner influences that compete with the good we want to do – "good" as defined by God. While they are not always evil morally, such thoughts ARE "evil" because they draw us away from the "good" we intend to do. Good and evil are always contending within us. It is a principle that remains with us while we are in the body.

We have an example of this in young John Mark, whom Paul had taken on a missionary journey with himself and Barnabas. He came along as a "minister," or "helper" (Acts 13:5). In the midst of their journey, when they came to Perga in Pamphylia, John left them and "returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13). This work, that John Mark abandoned, was a work to which the Holy Spirit had called Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-2). Later, when Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do" (Acts 15:36). At that time "Paul thought not good to take him (John Mark) with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work" (Acts 15:38). The contention was so sharp between Paul and Barnabas over this matter that they "parted from one another" (Acts 15:39, NKJV). Paul chose to take Silas with him, while Barnabas took John Mark. That is the last time Barnabas is mentioned in the chronicles of Acts. Some time later, John Mark did recover, becoming again trustworthy. Paul saw it. When he was in prison, he wrote to Timothy asking him to come to him, adding, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." (2 Tim 4:11).

When John Mark left Paul and Barnabas, he was abandoning "the work." We do not know why he left, but it was something from which he had to recover. He had experienced the contrary law of which our text speaks. The fact that he was moved to leave "the work" confirms it was "evil," or contrary to the will of God. Perhaps you have had a similar experience, being tempted to leave the work of God, quit, or chose a less demanding activity. If so, you have experienced the contrary law of which Paul testified. It always asserts itself when you are engaged in doing the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The point of Paul's testimony in Romans 7:15-25 is to confirm the nature of life in Christ Jesus. Any thought that suggests you leave the work of the Lord for strictly personal interests and preferences is an "evil" thought. It is "evil" because it competes with your desire to serve the Lord. Thank God, we have been supplied with spiritual armor and weaponry to reject such thoughts – even though we regret that they ever entered our mind against our will. The grace of God even teaches us to reject such distracting notions.

This aspect of spiritual life will be further developed in verse twenty three. It has only been introduced in this verse. But it is a vital principle, and must be seen in larger measures by the elect.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #28

### THE RECONCILED WAY OF THINKING

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man." (Rom 7:22)

This is the sixth conclusion Paul draws from his perception of the turmoil within – the struggle of good and evil within the womb of the mind.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of knowing how to assess our inward experiences. Many believers are at a tremendous disadvantage simply because they are ignorant of the cause and nature of inner conflict. They can imagine they are better than they really are, unaware of the "evil" that remains associated with them. They can also conclude they are worse than they really are, not understanding that the evil with which they struggle is IN them, yet is NOT an expression of their real, or essential, persons. Thus, the high value of this passage is accentuated. Once seen, it becomes a weapon with which to do battle. It also becomes a sweet elixir to assuage the weary warrior.

### DELIGHTING IN THE LAW OF GOD

"For I delight in the law of God." Other versions read, "I joyfully concur with the law of God" (NASB). "I take pleasure in the law of God" (BBE). "I dearly love God's law" (NJB).

How is it that Paul can conclude he delights in the Law of God, when evil has erupted within him? Does not "evil" being "present" with him suggest the law of God is not within him? INDEED NOT! In regeneration, this word of Jeremiah is fulfilled, as declared in Apostolic doctrine: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I WILL put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and WILL be their God, and they SHALL be My people." (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10; 10:16).

Paul knew he delighted in the Law of God because he recognized "evil" when it asserts itself. This is no academic recognition, but one of the heart. He knows competing influences when he experiences them. Delighting in the Law of God SHAPES THE WILL of the believer, causing him to want to do right things, and be repelled by the wrong things.

Rejoicing in the Law of God, and being satisfied by its message, are the results of having it written upon the heart and put into the mind (Heb 10:16). Delight includes the following conditions: approval of, preference for, and pleased with. This frame of mind is expressed by holy men of old time.

JOY. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the JOY and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer 15:16).

VALUE. "I have ESTEEMED the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 15:16).

DESIRED. "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be DESIRED are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psa 19:9-10).

NOT FORGET. "I will delight myself in Thy statutes: I will NOT FORGET Thy word" (Psa 119:16).

TRUST. "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I TRUST in Thy word" (Psa 119:42).

KEPT. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I KEPT Thy word" (Psa 119:67).

HOPE IN. "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have HOPED IN Thy word" (Psa 119:74,81).

BETTER. "The law of Thy mouth is BETTER unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psa 119:72).

LOVED. "O how LOVE I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psa 119:97).

PROVOKES HOLINESS. "I have REFRAINED my feet from every evil way, that I might KEEP Thy word" (Psa 119:101).

SATISFYING. How SWEET are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa 119:103).

REJOICING. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the REJOICING of my heart" (Psa 119:111).

MEDITATE IN. "Mine eyes prevent (are awake in) the night watches, that I might MEDITATE in Thy word" (Psa 119:148).

STAND IN AWE OF. "Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart STANDETH IN AWE of Thy word" (Psa 119:161).

A TREASURE. "I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth GREAT SPOIL" (Psa 119:162).

TALK ABOUT. "My tongue shall SPEAK OF Thy word: for all Thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172).

While all of these are surely involved in delighting in the Law of God, yet many of them may seem distant from us when "the law of sin" erupts within. Even at that time, however grievous it may be, the very fact that we abhor the expressions of the "old man" PROVES we really do "delight in the Law of God." That not only is a valid conclusion, if we are to overcome sin, it is an essential one!

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me;

but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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#### AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #29

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom 7:22). Other versions read, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man" (NASB); "Deep inside me I find joy in God's law" (NIRV); "In my inmost self I dearly love God's law" (NJB).

There was a law in his members in which Paul had no delight at all: "But I see ANOTHER LAW in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:23). When that law asserted itself, he hated its intrusions and suggestions. However, when it came to "the law of God," he delighted in it and served it (Rom 7:25).

#### THE ABSENCE OF SUCH DELIGHT

The glaring absence of a delight in the Law of God is abundantly apparent in far too many professed Christian assemblies. A lack of appetite for God's Word, and a studied effort to avoid being exposed to much of it, are altogether too common.

This is a most serious condition, even though it is NOT common to so regard it. Many a local congregation tailors its activities for those who have NO delight in, or high regard for the law of God. Various forms of entertainment and a variety of family activities are thought to be sufficient for the people. They can be happily together, without a word spoken from or for God, or reminders of the nature of life in Christ Jesus, the necessity of a good warfare, and being more alert to the deteriorating effect the world has on any individual.

Be clear about this! Jesus did not pour out His soul as an offering for sin in order for such things to occur among His saints. His aim was not to make happy, healthy, and wealthy, individuals – and those who imagine that He did are only displaying their inexcusable ignorance.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of people who lacked a delight in the Word of the Lord. Through the Spirit he defined their condition most precisely. You may rest assured, if this was true under the limited perspective of the Old Covenant, it is much more true in this "day of salvation." Hear the prophet as he laments that people would not hear the Word, for whatever reason. As a result, they became subjects of the wrath of God. "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they CANNOT hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have NO delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together" (Jer 6:10-11).

There are holy men and women of God who are rightly agitated by the minuscule spiritual appetites of people who say they are “Christians.” Even the youngest babe in Christ has an appetite for the Word of God – that is how they are born again: with a hearty appetite!

An "uncircumcised ear" is the result of an unregenerate state. No good can be said about it, and there is no acceptable excuse for its presence (Acts 7:51). These are people who, when they are exposed to the Word of God, do not have the slightest idea what they have heard. The Word of God does not appeal to them. Such are people to whom God has NOT given "an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear" (Deut 29:4) –and He has not done so for good reasons.

Be clear about this, there is no room – none at – in the prospective bride of Christ for people who lack a compelling interest in the word of God, and the “things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:14). Such people are referred to as “wood, hay, and stubble,” as compared to the real saints of God who are likened to “gold, silver, and precious stones” (1 Cor 3:12). God is quite clear about this circumstance, and issues the following warning to those who bring this “wood, hay and stubble” into the church. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor 3:11-17).

There exists in many contemporary churches a completely intolerable situation. All of the vain explanations for this are unacceptable. In Christ Jesus there is forgiveness, regeneration, righteousness, the law written upon the heart and mind, and the conferment of a new nature. For people to live as though they were under the Old Covenant, with the same manners as Israel in the wilderness, is only evidence of their failure to believe the Gospel and be born again. For such people, the seventh chapter of Romans has no comfort and no instruction – absolutely none.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #30

### THE INWARD MAN

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." (Rom 7:22)

Other versions read, "in the inner man" (NASB); "in my inner being" (NIV); "in my inmost self" (NRSV); "In my heart (BBE); "Deep inside me" (NIRV); "with all my heart" (NLT).

Most of the above, and similar, versions present an erroneous view. While this may appear a technical point, it is an essential one. First, the text does NOT say “MY inward man,” but “THE (Greek, ‘tov’) inward man.” The ancient Greek writers used this expression to denote the human mind – but that is NOT how it is used here. Words like “inner being,” “inmost self,” and “deep inside me,” are wholly inadequate, and do not enable the conveyance of a proper understanding.

This expression – “inward man” – refers to the new creation. It has characteristics that cannot be ascribed to the unregenerate, or those who have not been born again. Elsewhere Paul wrote, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the INWARD MAN is renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). That cannot be said of any part of the human nature, which is in a state of deterioration and demise, being under the curse of God. Again Paul writes, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the INNER MAN" (Eph 3:16). It ought to be apparent that the Holy Spirit is not given to us to strengthen the natural part of us – which cannot enter into glory. The “inner man” is the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17) – the part of which it is said, "For we are His workmanship, CREATED in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).

This part of our being is associated with our hearts, or essential, persons. It is where the Law of God is written (Heb 10:16). It is where the Holy Spirit resides (Gal 4:6), and wherein we are "sealed" as God's own people (2 Cor 1:22). This is where the love of God is "shed abroad" (Rom 5:5). The heart is where the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is beamed, so that we come to know the Lord through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6). It is also where assurance is placed (1 John 3:19). The "inward man," or the heart, is the focus of edification and comfort. It is the part of us for which a resurrection body – “a building of God” – is reserved in heaven (2 Cor 5:1-5).

This is the part of us that cannot be educated by men. It is not the repository for worldly wisdom, and academic expertise. This is the part of man that is taught by the grace of God (Tit 2:11-13), the Spirit of God (2 Cor 2:13), and the Lord Jesus Himself (Eph 4:20-21) – in summary, this is the part of us that is “taught of God” (John 6:45; 1 Thess 4:9).

The delight and pleasure in the Law of God is found in the "inward man." This is not, as already confirmed, simply the unseen part of our being. Rather, it is "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col 3:10). This is the re-created part, where Divine strength is imparted by the Holy Spirit of God! As it is written, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit IN THE INNER MAN" (Eph 3:16). He is an "inward," or "inner" man as compared with our bodies, which are called the "outward man" (2 Cor 4:6) – which includes the corrupted unseen part that is wed to it. This circumstance is why those who are not born again simply cannot delight in “the Law of God.”

**THE CONCLUSION:** If you delight in the Law of God, you have been born again, regenerated, and created anew. That “delight” is what makes expressions of the “old man” offensive, intrusive, and hated.

**THE WAR WITHIN**

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #31

RENEWAL WITHIN

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom 7:22-23)

The experience of which Paul testifies demands constant inner renewal and refurbishment. This is elsewhere described as "the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2). Because it is done under the administration of the Holy Spirit, it is referred to as "the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit 3:5). That renewing commences at the new birth, but it is certainly not concluded there. Further, salvation is nowhere promised to those who are not engaged in this renewing process. This is the change that is mentioned in Second Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, ARE CHANGED into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The inner warfare expounded in Romans 7:15-25 has a certain eroding effect upon the soul that requires this constant renewal. It is also why the followers of Jesus must be "strengthened" (Acts 18:23), and "edified" (Acts 9:31). It is also why Paul prayed that God, "would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be STRENGTHENED with might by His Spirit in the INNER MAN; That Christ MAY DWELL in your hearts by faith; that ye, being ROOTED AND GROUNDED in love, May be ABLE TO COMPREHEND with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to KNOW the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be FILLED with all the fulness of God." (Eph 3:16-19). That is such a rare condition in our time that it should be embarrassing to those who know this is the purpose of God.

This essential aspect of salvation is virtually unknown among professing believers. For countless professing "Christians," a large assembly with a lot of friends, and brief involvement in singing what is said to be praise, is thought to be the optimum environment. Emphatically, that is not at all the case! Any persons who are not growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15) cannot CONFIRM they are "in Christ" (Eph 4:15).

The inner warfare described in our text is where spiritual progress is made. It is where we are being "conformed to the image" of God's Son (Rom 8:29). It is where evil is rejected, and good is appropriated. It is where ongoing spiritual alteration takes place, as the Holy Spirit changes us

from one stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18).

In a very vivid portrayal of the "inward man" (Rom 7:22; 2 Cor 4:16), the Spirit confirms it ("the inward man") is the focus of Divine attention and blessing. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is BEING RENEWED day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, WHILE we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" [NASB] (2 Cor 4:16-18). Let it be clear to you, the change described in the text just quoted MUST take place. It is integral to salvation itself.

An excellent example of the renewal and revitalization of the "inward man" is found in our text. There, fatiguing and frustrating inner conflict becomes the evidence of a delight in the Law of the Lord. It becomes the occasion for the discovery of a wayward law within us – a law that shoots evil into our thinking as soon as we intend to do anything good and well pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. The knowledge of our real condition strengthens us for the battle, and enables us to say "NO!" to the suggestions of our own "sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3).

## OUT OF TOUCH

As a result of personal neglect and a lack of spiritual feeding, a staggering percentage of professing believers are not acquainted with their "new man," or "inward man." The flesh speaks louder to them than the Spirit, and their eyes and ears are more closely tuned to things that are seen than to things unseen.

There are disadvantages to this deteriorating condition that have eternal ramifications. Unless we see something of what is being expounded in this seventh chapter of Romans, Satan WILL gain the advantage over us. However, once our real situation is seen, or comprehended, we will be more demanding about feeding and nurturing the inner man. We will not be content with religious novelties, powerless preaching, and distorted emphases.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 44 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #32

A CONTRARY PRINCIPLE WITHIN

" But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

This is the seventh conclusion drawn from the recognition of the presence of inner conflict. One might think delighting in the Law God within the inward man is the end of the matter. Some may even think this describes the totality of our experience in Christ. But that is not the case at all. Through the Spirit, Paul will now elaborate on WHY "evil is present with me."

He does not say evil WAS present with him, but that it IS present with him. If you are in Christ, it is also "present" with you. If you are not in Christ, then you are totally "evil" with no vestige of good within. That condition requires a new birth. Those in Christ have already been born again, but require "spiritual understanding."

### I SEE ANOTHER LAW

Because of the war within, Paul sees, or perceives "another" working principle within his total self. Other versions read, "I see a different law in the members of MY BODY" (NASB), "I see another law at work in the members of MY BODY" (NIV), "But there is another law at work within me" (NLT), "but I see that acting on MY BODY there is a different law" (NJB). Note that the New Living translation omits the expression "my body." This is an inexcusable omission.

This law, or principle is presently within all believers. It is a law associated with OUR BODIES – our "members." It works in a temporal environment that is dominated by both sense and time. As long as we are "in the body," we must contend with this law. No amount of discipline, or even deep spirituality, can get rid of this law while we are living in this world. When we walk in the Spirit, we neutralize its power, and are able to subdue its lusts. As it is written, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). However, we are not able, even in that state, to get rid ourselves of this inimical law. It travels with the body, and cannot be separated from it. When we lay the body in the grave, we will lay the working of this principle in the grave also. When our spirit flies free from this body, it also moves beyond the influence of this wayward law. However, while we are "in the body," this law is with us, even though it is against our sanctified wills.

Those who argue that this section of Scripture merely refers to our former lost condition have greatly erred. In that state, and in the sense of our text, we did not delight in the law of God after the inward man, which has an entirely new frame of reference. This "inward man" "is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col 3:10).

Paul did not see this law by his intellect, but through his spiritual experience. This understanding was not induced by a statement of Scripture, but by participation in the Divine nature. It is quite true that "all have sinned," committing transgression, saying and doing things contrary to both God's nature and Law. However, it is also true that they "come short of the glory of God," having in themselves things that do not exist in God (Rom 3:23). It is not merely that they have not done everything God does, or that they have not fully measured up to His law. Rather, there exists in us a condition that does NOT reflect the glory of God. That condition involves the presence of a contrary law within – a law that is tied to the flesh, and cannot be dissolved as long as we are in

the body. Even though it is cut away from us through the "circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11-12), yet it exercises influence over us. It erupts against our will, and causes us to think things we abhor.

If we remained under the law, that circumstance would condemn us. The fact that we do not want the things the flesh suggests, has no relevance whatsoever under the Law. That is why this contrary law must be understood. It is traceable to Adam, not Christ, and although it still speaks, because its suggestions are hated, we are not condemned for their presence. Instead, we are given spiritual weapons to throw down its suggestions, rejecting its suggested desires, and keeping the flesh crucified. Blessed is the individual who has understanding in this critical area.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 45 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #33

### WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom 7:23)

Other versions read, "waging war against the law of my mind" (NASB), "at war with the law of my mind" (NRSV), "fighting against the law of my mind" (DARBY), "which battles against the law in my mind" (NJB).

This other "law," or principle, is not only a working one. It is an aggressive one. It wages relentless war against "the law" of our mind, which is a "mind" in which the Law of God has been put by God Himself: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I WILL PUT My laws into their mind" (Heb 8:10). Hebrews 8:6-7 makes clear that this is the covenant Jesus is presently mediating. This is an inseparable part of the New Covenant – the putting of God's Law into the mind, and the writing of it upon the heart. Hebrews 10:16 states it this way, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I WILL PUT My laws into their hearts, and in their minds WILL I WRITE them" (Heb 10:16). There is no such thing as a person in Christ in whom this Divine transaction has not taken place. The Divine performance of this work speaks of the individual being brought into agreement with the Law, preferring God's Law, and living in accordance with it. Paul said it this way in Romans 8:4: "That the righteousness of the law MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

## NOT A CASUAL CIRCUMSTANCE

This is not a casual circumstance, and we dare not consider it as though it was. Nor, indeed, is it and obsolete experience, formerly endured, but at last far from us. It requires stupidity and ignorance to contend no such law exists in the believer. Only those who are strangers to "the law of my mind" are unfamiliar with "another law in my members."

## INFERIOR, BUT POWERFUL

Although this "law" is an inferior one, it is nevertheless a powerful one. The Canaanites were inferior to the Israelites, even though unbelief made them appear superior. By faith, Goliath was inferior to David, even though, in the flesh, he appeared superior to him.

Those who fail to take the "flesh," or sinful nature seriously, will be overcome by it. Those who nourish the flesh, always looking at things according to appearance, and speaking continually of life in the body, have brought inner war to a feverish and dangerous level. There is a continual war going on within the believer. It may reach very high levels, or be decidedly reduced, but it is always there. Flesh and Spirit are locked in unending combat. Sin and grace are competing with one another. Faith and the works of the flesh are engaged in an unending contest. Good and evil are always against each other – within us.

But our text says this contrary law carries the battle against us. It forces the issue, and floods us with evil notions as soon as we determine to do good. This is not a docile principle, nor is it merciful and considerate. In times of great stress and difficulty, it will throw doubts and fears into your mind, and many wicked notions as well. It does not volunteer to cease the battle, nor does it refrain from its aggression. A departed brother from many years ago, Tzeror Hammer (early 1700's), once said, "As long as the righteous live, they are at war with the corruption of their nature. When they die, they are at rest."

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 46 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #34

### THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, SOLD UNDER SIN" (Rom 7:14).

Other versions read, “sold into bondage to sin” (NASB), “sold as a slave to sin” (NIV), “given into the power of sin” (BBE), and “sold into slavery to sin [and serving under its control] (AMPLIFIED).

This is the very statement that commences the text with which we are dealing (7:15-25). Notice, it is in the present tense – “I AM.” This is the “I” that is NOT in Christ – the natural “I,” or the part of Paul that is not regenerated, born again, and justified: “that which **I** do I allow not . . . what I hated, that **I** do . . . **I** do that which I allow not . . . the evil which I would not, that **I** do . . . If **I** do that which I would not . . .”

There are TWO distinct “I’s” in the believer – “the old man” (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), and “the new man” (Eph 4:24); the part that is “joined unto the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), and the part that is not (1 Cor 9:27); the part that has, and continues to be, “changed” (2 Cor 3:18), and the part that has NOT yet been “changed” (1 Cor 15:51-52). One part must be strictly controlled (1 Cor 9:27), one part has been “made free” (John 8:32,36; Rom 6:18,22). One part is traced back to Adam (Rom 5:14-19; 1 Cor 15:22), and the other to Christ (Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27).

Human nature – the nature traced back to Adam – is corrupt at its very foundation. It is not capable of yielding good or delighting in the Law of God (Rom 3:10-18). It cannot be converted, changed, or reformed. Even when it sits side-by-side with the new creation, it remains unchanged and utterly corrupt. You can educate it, and it will remain corrupt. It desires the same things it always desired, and is relentless against the “new man” and the “law of your mind.”

Being evil-affected by the psychological thrust of our day, there is great resistance against this aspect of “spiritual understanding.” If you are ever tempted to doubt the total corruption of human nature, consider that YOU must “PARTAKE” of the “Divine Nature” (2 Pet 1:4) and Jesus Christ (Heb 3:14) in order to dwell with the Lord. What you “partake” of in salvation is an altogether different nature.

If human nature could be reformed, do you not think God would be capable of doing so? Instead of a reformation program, however, through Christ God has instituted a transformation program – one in which we are born again (John 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:23), and created anew (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). That new creation is what causes the inner warfare now being described.

When Israel inherited Canaan, it was not an empty land. They moved in among heathen peoples who had to be driven out. God commanded them, “Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures [figures of stone], and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: And ye shall DISPOSSESS the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it” (Num 33:52-53). Canaan was THEIR land, but they had to rid it of heathen inhabitants.

Likewise, those who are in Christ now live in a body that is inimical to them. It is the residence of enemy influences – “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-17). That body – your body – is wed to the earth. There are affections within it for things that are passing away, and they must be subdued. Your body is the gate through which Satan

gains access to you. It has a persona that, in a sense, is a part of the total you. That persona is the "I" that Paul, is referring to: "I am carnal."

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 47 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #35

### BRINGING ME INTO CAPTIVITY

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom 7:23)

As you can see, the expressions keep getting stronger and stronger. First, there was an acknowledgment that Paul did what we did not want (v 15). Then, it was admitted that nothing good could be found in the flesh (v 18). The deficiency of the will was also declared, for Paul could find no way to consistently do what he really wanted (v 18). It was also confessed that the good that was desired was not being done, and the evil that was abhorred was being done (v 19).

There was a law, or principle, resident in him that always competed with the good he wanted to do (v 21). Although he delighted in the Law of God after the inward man, there was a contrary law within that viciously attacked that holy propensity.

As if that was not enough, Paul now makes one of his strongest and most arresting statements. He does not refer to the past, but to the present. This contrary and wickedly militant law, he says, is "making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (NASB). The statement is equally strong in every version of Scripture.

### NOT TO SIN, BUT TO THE LAW OF SIN

There is an important distinction to see here. The captivity is NOT to sin, but to "the law of sin" that resides in our "members," or human constitution. That is, Paul does not find himself continually transgressing the law, or falling into moral failure. It is not that he does not want to lie, but finds himself continually doing so. Or, that he does not want to be a thief, but continues to steal everything he can. Or, to bring it into the present, that he does not want to get drunk or take drugs, but does so anyway. Improvement in that area of morality can be achieved under the Law – Paul, when he was Saul of Tarsus, did so – "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil 3:6). After Paul encountered

Jesus on the road to Damascus, he never again persecuted believers – not a single one, not even one time. Yet, he is the one that found this law within warring against the law of his mind. Let us be candid about this. To manage to abstain from alcohol, drugs, fornication, pornography, etc., you do not even have to be a Christian. You can be a Buddhist, or a Hindu, or a Roman Catholic monk and absolutely cease from such activities.

Some, driven by a shallow understanding, assume this is the description of a person alienated from God – a person "under the Law." However, Paul says this of himself. He does not speak of the past, but of the present! Further, it does not refer to total domination by sin, but to captivity to THE LAW OF SIN. Briefly stated, he means the "flesh," or "law of sin," can assert itself whenever it desires. To put it another way, he cannot stop it from shouting out from the cross. That law cannot force him to sin, but it can force him into the position of having to deal with it.

There is a vast difference in captivity to THE LAW OF SIN, and enslavement to sin, which was our former condition. Unwanted thoughts course through the mind of the believer. Often they are like floods that wash away spiritually productive thoughts, forcing the believer into the defensive mode. Of course, for the spiritually insensitive, all of this is of no consequence. Sinful thoughts are not painful for them, so they think nothing of their entrance. But for those who walk in the light and live by faith, they are most abrasive and grievous. They contradict what the new heart seeks, enjoys, and ponders. The very wording of our text confirms the regenerated person is under consideration. To be brought into captivity shows the individual was NOT in captivity before the described experience. But that is not the case with the sinner, for they live every day of their lives enslaved to sin, as formerly described (Rom 6:17-21). That is precisely why they need a Savior (Rom 5:8-10). That is why we were "delivered from the Law" (7:6). If men could of themselves control sinful impulses, they would need no Savior, no Intercessor, no hope by which they could be saved. "Captivity" in this case, has to do with having to deal with the law of sin, not with succumbing to it. Those made "free from sin" (Rom 6:18,22) are no longer enslaved to it. However, there remains a part of them that is still in the "sinful" category – their body, and everything that is integral to it. That part has been severed from our essential persons by "the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11-12). However, though cut away from us, it was not discarded, but remains with us as long as we are "in the body." It is "crucified," but, like the impenitent thief, has not expired. Like Israel, who was really in the promised land, there are yet Canaanites with Jubusites with which we have to contend.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 48 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #36

## PUT THE TEXT TO THE TEST

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” (Rom 7:23)

If you want to put this text to the test, make some resolves for tomorrow. I trust you can do it heartily, with the full consent of your will, and in order to please God. Determine to carefully guard your mind, so that no sinful thought will weave its way into your thinking. Resolve to meditate day and night upon the Word of the Lord (Psa 1:2), and to fill your mind with wholesome Kingdom realities. Decide that you will fully comply with the exhortation, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS" (Phil 4:8).

You have all the tools that are necessary for the realization of that commitment. Your will is in it (Phil 2:12-13). You have armor to protect you (Eph 6:10-18). The peace of God can keep your heart and your mind (Phil 4:7). You have an Intercessor in heaven (Heb 7:25), and One in your heart as well (Rom 8:26). You have the fellowship of the Son (1 Cor 1:9), the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14), and access to God (Eph 2:18). Surely you will be able to boast tomorrow night that your resolve has been realized! You have been given “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3), and have been blessed with “all spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:3). Surely there is no reason why you cannot live a single day without any conflict – without ever having to reject some offensive thought. Put this to the test. If a day is too lengthy, determine to do this for just an hour or two.

I will tell you that before the period you have determined has passed, you will be required to do battle. Your shield will have to be hoisted, and your sword unsheathed. You will have to call upon the name of the Lord, resist the devil, and deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. There will be imaginations you will have to cast down, and thoughts you must take captive. You will find “the law of sin” trying to take you over. Mind you, at this point you are only dealing with temptation – dark suggestions. But you will have to deal with them. That is the nature of spiritual life.

What will have happened to you? Why were you not able to perfectly do what you wholeheartedly wanted to do? It is then that you will be able to join in the confession of Paul: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (NKJV). Can you perceive this law? It is resident in the part of you that is traced back to Adam. The part of you that is “new” is not capable of delivering something to you that must be resisted, requiring the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. Can you identify with Paul's conclusions? They are for every believer to know. If you are in Christ, there is an enemy in your body – one that will remain with you as long as you are in that body. You cannot afford to be indifferent to its presence, any more than Israel could afford to ignore the Canaanites that were in their land – land God had given them.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 49 of 69

AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #37

YEARNING FOR DELIVERANCE

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24).

Other versions read, "free me from the body of this death" (NASB), "rescue me from this body of death" (NIV), "rescue me from my dying body?" (GWN), "this body doomed to death?" (NJB), "this life that is dominated by sin and death?" (NLT), and "Who will [rescue me and] set me free from this body of death [this corrupt, mortal existence?]" (AMPLIFIED).

The New Living Translation totally distorts of the text – "Who will free me from THIS LIFE that is dominated by sin and death?" The word translated "body" is "soma," which a "body," not a life – particular NOT "a life dominated by sin and death."

THE REAL SITUATION

Those in Christ have been "raised to walk IN NEWNESS OF LIFE" (Rom 6:4). They are described as being "ALIVE UNTO GOD" (Rom 6:11), and "those that are ALIVE FROM THE DEAD" (Rom 6:13). By the grace of God, they are REIGNING IN LIFE (Rom 5:17). They are partakers of the Spirit – and "the Spirit GIVETH LIFE" (2 Cor 3:6). Christ Himself is described as "OUR LIFE" (Col 3:4).

YET, there is a part of us that is consigned to death – a part from which we cannot rid ourselves. It is our body – our "vile body" (Phil 3:20). So far as our connection to God is concerned, "the body IS DEAD because of sin" (Rom 8:10). That is precisely why those who emphasize health and wealth are so wrong – seriously wrong. Both health and wealth have to do with the body – and the body is consigned to death. Anything and everything associated with the body will pass away when we leave the body. Only those out of tune with heaven (which is the most favorable was to say it), would develop a theology that centers around the body! Now Paul asks the penetrating question, "Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (NASB)

This is the eighth conclusion provoked by the incessant struggle with the sinful nature. What a heart-wrenching cry! This is no casual word of a half-hearted church member! Here is the cry of a person with an undivided heart, but a divided nature. It pours out of a person whose inward man is growing stronger, but whose outward man is weakening, and in the throes of death. This is a person with the law of God upon his heart and in his mind (Heb 8:10; 10:16), and the law of

sin in his earthly nature (Rom 7:23,25; 8:2)

## I AM A WRETCHED MAN

Virtually every version of the Scripture uses the word "wretched." Some paraphrased translations use the words "unhappy" (DARBY, BBE), and "miserable" (NLT). The word "wretched" means one who is enduring troubles and afflictions, and is in deep misery. It speaks of one who has been given "the bread of affliction" to eat (Deut 16:3; 1 Kgs 22:27). It is the kind of cry that came from Isaiah when he saw the Lord "high and lifted up." "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips"(Isa 6:5). To even a greater degree than Isaiah, we have reason to lament, for the remnant of our fallen nature remains in our bodies. We would long ago have escorted it from our frail tabernacles, but we have not been able to do it. It lives where we live, and goes where we go. "Wretched man that I am!" It is humiliating and fatiguing to have to deal with an enemy in the land! Blessed is the person who knows this.

This is NOT wretchedness because of the guilt of sin, as expressed by David when he sinned against Uriah the Hittite. "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Sam 12:13), or when he numbered Israel: "I have sinned greatly in that I have done" (2 Sam 24:10). This is NOT penitential wretchedness! It is NOT the wretchedness expressed by Judas when he betrayed our Lord. "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt 27:4).

This is the wretchedness that comes from knowing everything that is said or done is expressed imperfectly, and not as the pure heart desires. It is the lament of Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" [NASB] (Gal 5:17). Blessed is the person who is able to so lament. Such a person reveals a tender heart, a determined spirit, and a sanctified will.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 50 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #38

### DELIVERANCE FERVENTLY SOUGHT

"Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24)

Notice that the association is with the "body," NOT the heart or a condemning conscience. That

is a critical distinction. The body is our source of shame, being a "vile body," weak and frail, and requiring subjugation: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our VILE BODY, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:20-21); "But I keep under my body, and BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor 9:27); "But we have this treasure in EARTHEN VESSELS, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor 4:7). At this present time, "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor 6:13). However, it will not volunteer to serve the Lord, but must be made to do so. For the sensitive of heart, that is a condition they do not want to continue. Therefore, they look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the possession of a new body that will be "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil 3:21).

The body is the point of our vulnerability – a "lowly body" (NKJV) that makes for "humiliation" (ASV). Our body is a part of us that will not be allowed to enter heaven. We will require a new body, and one is presently reserved for us in heaven (2 Cor 5:1-2).

Our body is called "this body of death" because it has no inheritance in the kingdom of God. It is a part of the order that has been cursed – given the sentence of death. From yet another view, it is dead toward God. As the Spirit says later, "And if Christ be in you, the body IS DEAD because of sin" (Rom 8:10).

If our present bodies are to be employed in the service of the Lord, they must be "quickened," or given life through the Holy Spirit. As it is written, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also QUICKEN YOUR MORTAL BODIES by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom 8:11). That expression does not refer to the resurrection of the dead, but of the newness of life. The NIV reads, "give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Rom 8:11). In the resurrection of the dead, life will not be given to your "mortal body," but you will receive a new body.

The "deeds of the body," or the things it is inclined to do, must be put to death, for they have nothing to do with God. In fact, those deeds stand between us and God. If they are not mortified, they will exclude us from the everlasting kingdom. Thus it is written, "if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:13).

The body is also associated with death because we can only be "present with the Lord" when we are "absent from the body" – "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord . . . We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be ABSENT FROM THE BODY, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:6,8). All forms of suffering, from temptations to persecution, come because we are in the body. It is the arena of battle in which the Spirit and the flesh converge for war. When we are liberated from our bodies, we will be done with the inward struggle, persecution, and every form of inability and restraint. Hope has to do with being "absent from the body and present with the Lord."

THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #39

THIS IS GROANING

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:23)

The exasperating expressions of Romans seven are the GROANS of the eighth chapter of Romans. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even WE OURSELVES GROAN WITHIN OURSELVES, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23).

It is also the GROANING of the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians. "For in this [body] WE GROAN, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle DO GROAN, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor 5:2-4).

Our spirits long for the time and the place when there will be no more struggle: no more contention with the flesh, no more unwanted thoughts, no more need for armor, no more need for a shield, and no more fighting. We long for a trouble-free and perfected state because that is what has been promised by the Lord. In Christ, we are destined to arrive in a very real place were "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." (Rev 7:16); a place where there is "no more [turbulent] sea" (Rev 21:1); a place where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev 21:4).

THE REASON FOR OUR PRESENT CONDITION

There is a reason for our present experience – the presence of a law that wars against the law of our minds. In this experience, our preferences are revealed. The strength of our determination is made known in this inner conflict. Our faith is tested, and our affection examined.

The first responsibility given to us as "kings and priests unto God" (Rev 1:6), is the subduing of our own bodies, and the unseen things associated with them. Bringing them into subjection is the testing area. How much we receive from God will be determined by how well we do in subduing

the body and bringing it under subjection (1 Cor 9:L27). In the work of subduing it, we will personally experience the feelings and frustrations of the seventh chapter of Romans. Although the battle wearies us, it also produces proof that we have a new nature. It confirms we have something from God. Truly, this is a "GOOD fight." Fight on, weary soldier, fight on! It will not be long, and there will be no more war or battle; no more fatigue, no more irritation, and no more enemy in the house. As we stand in the presence of the Lord, we will hear words something like those spoken to Isaiah: "THIS IS THE REST wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and THIS IS THE REFRESHING" (Isa 28:12). On earth, Israel refused to hear those words. In the glory, we will welcome them with thanksgiving.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

Lesson 52 of 69

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #40

### DUAL NATURES, DUAL SERVITUDE, #1

"I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom 7:25)

Other versions read: "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" (NASB); "Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself IN MY MIND am a slave to God's law, but IN THE SINFUL NATURE a slave to the law of sin" (NIV); "Thanks be to God [for my deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself WITH MY MIND serve the law of God, but on the other, WITH MY FLESH [my human nature, my worldliness, my sinful capacity--I serve] the law of sin" (Amplified Bible).

This represents the ninth and final conclusion to which the understanding of inner conflict led. Perhaps it will be well to enumerate those conclusions once again. They exemplify the godly way of assessing inner conflict.

1. "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good" (verse 16).
2. "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (verse 17).
3. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (verse 18).
4. "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (verse 20).
5. "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me" (verse 21).

6. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (verse 22).
7. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (verse 23).
8. "O wretched man that I am!" (Verse 24).
9. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (verse 25).

What takes place in salvation is rather complex – but that is because man is rather complex in his makeup. He consists of “spirit,” “soul,” and “body” (1 Thess 5:23). The spirit is the essential person, the soul is what animates the body, and the body is what links us with the earth. In salvation, the body is not yet saved, but will be saved at the resurrection of the dead. Until then, it is a “purchased possession” (Eph 1:14) that will be “changed” at the resurrection, when it will be redeemed (Rom 8:23). The “soul” is not yet saved, for it is inextricably linked with the body. Hence, it can vacillate, rising to peaks of joy, and sinking into the depths of depression. David exhorted his soul: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance " (Psa 42:5,11; 43:5). For a man living under the Old Covenant, that is a most remarkable insight!

In regeneration there is a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15) –a new identity, a new facet of our identity. The complication is that the old identity remains with us, which is necessitated by the fact that we remain in the body. This old part is referred to as “the old man,” and “the flesh.” When we are baptized, “the old man” is “crucified.” As it is written, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 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 6:4-6). The “old man” was not exterminated, or killed, but “is CRUCIFIED.” The older versions read “IS crucified.” Newer versions read “WAS crucified.” The latter expression – “was crucified” – refers to the commencement of that crucifixion, as when Jesus was nailed to the cross. Just as Jesus remained on the cross until He died, or His spirit left His body, so “the old man” is to remain on the cross until we exit the body. Just as the impenitent thief could not steal as long as he was on his cross (Lk 24:39), so “the old man” cannot dictate the manner in which we live as long as he remains on the cross. However, should he be allowed off the cross, he will change the way a professed believer thinks and lives. Therefore, we read, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24).

Actually, this crucifixion of the flesh is renewed every day. That is, they that are in Christ make sure “the old man” is securely pinned to the cross. This is involved in taking up our cross every day. As Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). It is as though we picked up our cross with our “old man” on it. That sinful nature will be shouting to you to allow him to express himself – but he can only do that if he is removed from the cross. From this perspective, the contrariness with which Paul contends in our text (Rom 7:15-25), is actually “the old man” pleading to be removed from the cross. You, like Paul, will have to contend with this as long as you are “in the body.” You will not be rid of that “old man” until you are out of the body.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #41

DUAL NATURES, DUAL SERVITUDE, #2

THANKING GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

"I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25)

This expression of thanksgiving is preceded by the words, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:23-24).

Why would Paul follow those words by saying "I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord!" He confessed he saw "another law in" his own "members, or human makeup, and it was vigorously warring against his mind – his godly propensity. The circumstance caused him say he was a "wretched man" – miserable, enduring trials, and afflicted. How could he give thanks "through Jesus Christ our Lord" under that circumstance?

It is not the condition itself that produces this thanksgiving, but the UNDERSTANDING of it. Every person in Christ endures this inner warfare – but multitudes do not understand it, and it has even proved the undoing of people laboring under the weight of the experience. Further, you can live a long time, and travel far and wide, yet hear no one expound this passage of Scripture. This is a most serious omission! It is ever true, "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" (Gal 5:17). The people of God have both a right and a need to understand that experience.

The fact that unwanted thoughts invade ones thinking proves that something good has happened to them. They possess a nature that is repulsed by tempting thoughts, and it is the "Divine nature" of which they are being made "partakers" (2 Pet 1:4). That is something to give thanks for! They are having the same kind of response Jesus had when He was tempted – and that is because they "are made partakers of Christ" (Heb 3:14). That is something to give thanks for!

It is a grievous circumstance that so many very real believers do not know what they have been

made in Christ Jesus, what they really do possess, and the glorious things to which they have free access. Too many men occupy the pulpits of the world who are fitly described by Isaiah: "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa 56:10). They have left their constituents in a state of miserable ignorance, and led them to believe that social and domestic problems, and fleshly "habits" are of the greatest concern. They have taught people to live just as though there was no God, no eternity, and no day of judgment. They have emphasized things that have thrown a darkening veil over the "exceeding great and precious promises of God" (2 Pet 1:3), and moved the people to live as though they had no access to the throne of grace (Heb 4:15-16), no Holy Spirit within (2 Tim 1:14), and no fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9). They have produced a generation of people who are called "Christians" who have a near-total ignorance of "the power that worketh in us" (Eph 3:20).

Let me be clear about this. Today's "church" is the direct result of preachers and teachers – whether the churches are strong or weak. What the people have believed has made them what they are, and what they have believed is what they have heard or read preached and taught. At the very head of the gifts given to the church are teaching gifts – "apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers (Eph 4:11). Paul states it this way in First Corinthians: "And God hath set some in the church, FIRST apostles, SECONDARILY prophets, THIRDLY teachers, after . . ." (1 Cor 12:28). The "apostles" remain with us by virtue of their writings, which is Gospel truth solidified in writing – foundational writing. Their writings, when believed, will produce people who can comprehend Romans 7:15-25. The "prophets" and "teachers" that have been placed in the church are those who can insightfully expound the apostolic writings, leading the people to understand what God has wrought in them, who they are, what they have access to, and why there is such a thing as inner warfare.

The thanks of our text is also given because the answer to the dilemma is seen. In answer to the question, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the renewed heart shouts back, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" That is, God is going to deliver me from the source of this frustration. He will do it through Jesus Christ, when He returns for His own. As it is written, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil 3:20-21). Indeed, deliverance is on the way! This battle has an appointed time and place of termination. O, that all believers will see this more clearly!

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

## AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #42

### DUAL NATURES, DUAL SERVITUDE, #3

#### SERVING WITH THE MIND

"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God." (Rom 7:25)

Other versions read, "So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law" (NIV), "So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God" (ASV), "So I am obedient to God's standards with my mind," (GWN), "I myself with my mind obey the law of God" (NJB), "In my mind I really want to obey God's law" (NLT), and "So then indeed I, of myself with the mind and heart, serve the Law of God" (Amplified).

And what is the summation of all that Paul has seen – all that can be seen in this battle with the flesh. We can see there is a REAL "me," and an IMPOSED "me." There is a part of me that expresses my REAL desires. There is also a part of me that expresses things CONTRARY to my desires. Paul does not own the contrary part, even though it dwells within his body. It is not the real him, just like a Canaanite living in Israel's land was not an Israelite; or a false prophet among real prophets is not a real prophet.

When it comes to the real "me," the part that is regenerated, in which the Holy spirit dwells, and which is reconciled to God, "I MYSELF" serve "the Law of God." That is what the real me thinks about, ponders, loves, and desires. The REAL ME is the one God has "created" (2 Cor 5:17) – the one that is "His workmanship" (Eph 2:10). It is the one who is "begotten of God" (1 John 5:18), and "born of God" (1 John 3:9). If you are "in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1), the part of you that is traced back to Adam is not the real you! That is what you WERE, not what you ARE – and that is the perspective of all of heaven – God, Jesus, the Spirit, and the holy angels.

The "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24), and "is renewed in knowledge after the Image of Him that created him" (Col 3:10), is the ONLY part of you that God receives. It is the ONLY part of you that was "added to the church" (Acts 2:47). It is the ONLY part of you in which the Holy Spirit dwells (Rom 8:9). It is the part of you that causes your body to be "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19). The Holy Spirit does not dwell in anyone's body in which there is not a renewed spirit. It is the ONLY part of you that will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. You not only CAN agree with God on this matter, you MUST do so. The Holy Spirit will help you in this understanding, as well as the grace of God. You will never be able to live consistently by faith until you know what really comes from you, and what really does not come from you.

When this is perceived in truth, the believer can say, "I live by every Word of God, delight in it, and desire it more than my necessary food. My mind is devoted to the Law of God. That is not surprising, for God has put His law into my mind, and written it on my heart. He has given me the same nature as possessed by the Law: holy, just, and good. He has made me 'spiritual' like the Law, and able to gladly receive what God has to say. Like Jesus, I also 'delight' to do His will."

I understand "my mind" to be the part that has been "illuminated," which comprehends the "good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:2). The "mind" is not merely the part where thinking is done, for Paul has spent considerable time reminding us there is also the place where "the law of sin" expresses itself.

This means that regeneration confers upon men a mind that is devoted to the Word of the Lord. The mind of the flesh is not exterminated, but crucified. It remains in you like the Canaanites remained in Israel, Judas among the twelve apostles, and Pilate in Jerusalem. Wherever this understanding is missing, a most serious condition exists, and unspeakable hindrances will surface.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #43

DUAL NATURES, DUAL SERVITUDE, #4

SERVING WITH THE FLESH

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; BUT WITH THE FLESH THE LAW OF SIN" (Rom 7:25).

Other versions read, "but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin" (NIV); "but with my old nature, I am a slave of sin's Torah" (Jewish Bible); "but with the flesh sin's law" (DARBY); "but I am obedient to sin's standards with my corrupt nature (God's Word Translation); "but in my disordered nature I obey the law of sin" (NJB); "but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin" (New Living Translation).

The New Living Translation is in interpretation, not a translation. The phrase "LAW ("nomos") of sin" is found in all major Greek versions. Emphatically, Paul is not saying that in his flesh he obeyed, or served, "sin," but "the LAW of sin." This should not even have to be said, for it has been revealed, "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. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom 6:6-7). If such a person sins, it is not because he has to, and it is to be confessed and abandoned. Paul is not confessing personal transgression in our text – either past or present.

"The flesh" is the natural part of us – the part that is traced back to Adam; the part that cannot

enter into glory. Nothing good is found in it, as has been powerfully affirmed. The "law of sin" is the sin principle that dwells within the flesh. It is not that the flesh CAN serve this dreadful law. This is what it does. In fact, it cannot do anything else. "The flesh" cannot serve God or the law of God. It has been corrupted and cannot be changed. This is why it has to be crucified (Gal 5:24). This is why its desires ("fleshly lusts") "war against the soul" of the saved ones (1 Pet 2:11).

The expression "the flesh" occurs ninety times from Matthew thru Jude. We read that "the flesh is weak" (Matt 26:41), "profiteth nothing" (John 6:63), "cannot please God" (Rom 8:8); that we are "not to live after the flesh" (Rom 8:12); that if we "live after the flesh," we "will die" (Rom 8:18); that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Gal 5:17); that if we "sow to the flesh," we will "reap corruption" (Gal 6:8); and that "the lust of the flesh . . . is not of the Father, but of the world" (1 John 2:16). It is imperative that these texts are understood and received. The reason for this is that "the flesh" serves "the law of sin" – continually and only!

From time to time, novices in the faith may imagine they have made good progress in their spiritual life. Satan will lead them to believe they are better in their flesh than they once were. Perhaps they have conquered old habits successfully. As soon as they let down their guard, "the flesh" breaks forth, confirming that it consistently and without exception serves "the law of sin." This cannot be corrected by developing "new habits." The only way to conquer the flesh is to refuse to yield to it – and the only way to do that is to crucify the flesh with its lusts, and "walk in the Spirit" (Gal 5:16,24,26).

There is a particular teaching that is making the rounds these days. It is not a new teaching, but an ancient heresy that has been revived. It states that we can be morally "perfect," with no flaw whatsoever. Those who embrace it generally make no claim to having achieved this perfection. However, they do say it is possible here and now, while we are in the body. They reason that if Jesus told us to "be perfect" (Matt 5:48), then surely their idea of "sinless perfection" must be possible.

This passage has devastated this false teaching. It is the testimony of one the premier members of the human race and the body of Christ as well. Among the most elite, the Apostles, this man "labored more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor 15:10). In a remarkable text, the Holy Spirit calls Paul to the witness stand to confirm the faith of the saints. With unmistakable words he states nothing good resides in the flesh – his own flesh. It is the realm in which "the law of sin" resides, and is the part of us which serves that law of sin. The very presence of the flesh, together with the "law of sin" that resides in it, makes us imperfect – whether sin has been expressed externally or not. Paul alludes to this when he wrote, "Not as though I had already attained, EITHER WERE ALREADY PERFECT: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12). The imperfect part of us is the part that must be managed, denied prominence, crucified, and put to death.

How thankful we must be for the promised deliverance from this vile body (Phil 3:20-21). Then nothing about us will serve "the law of sin." Then we will never again have to contend with "the law of sin," or confess to its presence within us. It will never again raise its ugly head, but will be forever removed from us. In the meantime, we will receive help from God when we are able

to identify and confess our real situation. In this case, what you do not know can really hurt you! You do well to make it your aim to see the conflict within correctly, and to approach it in a proper frame of mind. "The flesh" is an incessant fighter. Let it loose, and it will conquer you. The net of safety is found while walking in the Spirit.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## CONCLUSION OF AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS 7:15-25, #43

We have briefly reviewed one of the pivotal sections of Scripture that deals with our experience. Many a soul has succumbed to the battle simply because they were unaware of what was going on within them. The warfare that has been described reveals the foolishness of those who say we should be happy all of the time, and that there is never cause for any other feeling. Perhaps such people are sadly lacking in their desire for holiness, and a fervent desire to dwell forever with the Lord. For the believer there are experiences like being "cast down" (2 Cor 4:9; 7:6), being "sorrowful" (2 Cor 6:10), being "troubled" (2 Cor 4:8), feeling wretchedness (Rom 7:24), being angry (Eph 4:26), etc. Much of this is owing to the inward conflict of the flesh and the spirit.

When heaven is in your eye, and your affection is set on things above, and not on things on the earth, it is, in a way, frustrating to confront the waywardness of the flesh, and have to contend with its imaginations. Those imaginations are to be thrown down, and displaced by an affection that is set on things above (Col 3:1-2). Unfortunately, many things that are billed as "Christian" activities give the participants no advantage in this "good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12). To be sure, there is grace for the battle, and we can come away with the victory. But that victory will not be achieved with a light-hearted spirit and undiscerning heart. If we do not "know" that nothing good dwells in our flesh, we may be prone to listen to it, and entertain its lusts. That inclination will either result in giving in to its desires, or concluding that we may not be in Christ at all.

We have been exposed to a telling explanation of why deliverance from the Law is necessary. Under the Law, men are condemned for the very presence of wayward thoughts and desires, whether they are wanted and or honored or not. When the commandment "Thou shalt not covet" came home to Paul's understanding, that was the very thing he saw. He saw that his earthly nature was ungodly and condemned – even though he was a member of the only race God has ever chosen (Deut 7:6; Amos 3:2; Rom 9:4-5).

If it is true that, even after we are in Christ Jesus, we cannot stop the eruptions of the flesh, we

must come away from any notion that we are justified by the Law – for the Law does not allow even a single unwanted thought. If there is no grace, there is no hope! If there is not a new creation in Christ Jesus, there is no hope! If we have not died to the Law, there is no hope. It will do no good to concoct a theology that says the Law has died, or that it has been abolished, or that it no longer exists. That foolish teaching does not come to grips with our situation. It is nothing more than a religious imagination – which is the worst of all imaginations. Salvation is so marvelously thorough that it will sustain us while the Law remains in full vigor! The grace of God is so sufficient that it will uphold us in the heat of an inward struggle that seems to contradict our profession of faith. It makes us equal to the battle.

The flesh has not changed! The natural man remains the same. The Adamic nature remains with us as long as we are in the body. All of the weaknesses of the flesh remain, and it still has no capacity to desire or please God. But that is not all there is to us. We are MORE than "the flesh." Praise the Lord! There is more to us than the "old man." The "law of sin" still remains within our earthly natures, but it cannot dominate us as we "live by faith" (Heb 10:38), which is the victory that overcomes the world – the world that is in our flesh, as well as outside of it (1 John 5:4-5). You must never allow anyone or any teaching to rob you of this awareness! Now, be strong and of good courage to fight the fight of faith with confidence. You do have something from God – and it is vastly superior to "the flesh," "the old man," and "the natural man."

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## ROMANS SEVEN, A MACRO VIEW

The seventh chapter of Romans provides us with a macro view of inward struggle. It has been interpreted by some to refer to life without Christ. Specifically, it is taught that this was Paul's experience when he was "under the law," or outside of Christ. This is a false view, and tends to disarm the believer. It is not the manner of the Kingdom to elaborate on detailed experiences that occurred while in a state of alienation from God.

## PRESENT TENSE

In dealing with his personal struggle against evil, Paul consistently uses present tense words. Beginning at verse fourteen (14) of the seven chapter of Romans, there is not a single reference to the past. Note the following expressions. "I do" (v 15), "I would" (v 15,21), "I hate" (v 15), "I consent" (v 16), "I know" (v 18), "I find not" (v 18), "I do not" (v 19), "I find" (v 21), "I delight" (v 22), and "I see" (v 23). These words identify contemporary experience, and are not employed

to analyze the past.

"I do not do the things I want, but the evil that I do not want is what I do" (v 18). At the time of this writing, Paul had been in Christ for about twenty-five years. He was not merely reflecting on a struggle that existed over a quarter of a century ago, but on one in which he was currently involved. Suffice it to say, we are dealing with the reactions of one who is in Christ – a veteran in the good fight of faith.

## THE REALITY OF THE STRUGGLE

Paul's language is arresting – both to those conscious of their involvement in the struggle, and to those ignorant of it. For those experiencing these things, his language is marked by a precision that promotes spiritual liberty. For those ignorant of the warfare, his words appear too strong – apparently applicable to a prior time in his life.

## ARRESTING LANGUAGE

"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (v 15, RSV). "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good want" (RSV). "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (v 23, RSV).

When Paul says he does not understand his own actions, he is not acknowledging spiritual naivete. Here is a remarkable confession of faith! The Apostle lived so close to God, that the intrusion of worldly thoughts and perspectives were confounding. Basking in the light of God's grace, he found such encroachments strange. The marvel of this perspective of faith is its contrariety to the experience of the religious masses. For many professing Christians, an illuminating thought is as strange as a morose one was to Paul. Unspiritual thought is strange to faith; spiritual thought is strange to unbelief. I am confounded by the common acknowledgment of aloofness from God. Preachers and teachers readily admit they are "stumped" by the logic of Scripture. Their speech too often betrays that their mind is filled with thoughts that follow the pattern of the world. But this is not, nor will it ever be, the response of faith.

The "actions" Paul did not understand were not his involvement in the will of God. They were not the deep and profound thoughts he had of the "things of the Spirit of God." Rather, they were the intrusion of earthly thoughts – fiery darts from the evil one. O, that this view was more common in our day. O, that men were more surprised by their propensity to evil than by their involvement in "the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

One cannot ignore the nature of this struggle. Here is a graphic picture of inhibition and frustration. The right things are loved, and wrong things are appropriately hated. The will has been altered, provoking the fervent desire for right, as well as an aggressive abhorrence of evil. Yet, the individual cannot consistently implement his desires. He is engaged in a conflict within. Both good and evil are present, struggling for the supremacy! Further, the writer is discontent with the outcome of this inner warfare. His discontent is not moroseness, nor does it produce despair. Rather, it stimulates the writer to a more earnest and consistent endeavor to keep the

faith. It is important to see that this is not merely Paul's perspective. It is the view of faith, and whoever has faith has this view to some measurable extent.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## THE SUBSTANTIATION OF JAMES

"Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:5-6).

Other versions read: "Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?" (NKJV); "Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit He caused to live in us envies intensely?" (NIV); "The Spirit which God put into our hearts has a strong desire for us" (BBE); "The Spirit that God caused to live in us wants us to belong only to God" (NIRV); "The longing of the Spirit He sent to dwell in us is a jealous longing" (NJB); "the Spirit God has placed within us is filled with envy?" (NLT). The Amplified Bible reads: the [human] spirit which He has made to dwell in us lusts with envy?" The New Revised Standard Version reads, "God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us" (NRSV). It cannot be that God is longing for the "human spirit," for that is the very spirit that requires regeneration. Nor, can the text mean that God yearns for the Holy Spirit, which is in no way separated from God.

James speaks of the Holy Spirit which God has made to dwell in us, and of the intense longing that Spirit has for our unmitigated acceptance of His ministry. This is why it is written, "grieve not the Holy Spirit" (Eph 4:30), and "quench no the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19). It is the Spirit's intense longing that is quenched by unbelief and carnality. But, James continues that "more grace" is provided for the situation (James 4:6).

We are in an arena of fierce competition, and the Holy Spirit of God yearns for our cooperation. His influences are what moves us to fight against contrary notions that arise from our "old man." There is a sense in which He Himself engages in this warfare. One way in which He is engaged is spelled out in Romans 8:26-27: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we KNOW NOT what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." The "know not" that is specified in that text is reflected in Paul's expression in Romans 7:18:

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but HOW TO PERFORM THAT WHICH IS GOOD I FIND NOT" (Rom 7:18). That is the point of frustration – but our salvation is calculated to deal with that difficulty through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who yearns over us earnestly – so earnestly that He makes intercession for us when we confront unwanted and invasive thoughts – fiery darts from the wicked one. God's response to the Spirit's intercession is that "He giveth more grace." It is therefore no mere coincidence that the text following the expression of the Spirit's intercession reads, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).

Those in Christ are much like Rebekah, mother of Jacob and Esau. Before they were born, it is written that they "struggled together within her." The condition caused concern to Rebekah, so she went to "inquire of the Lord" – an excellent procedure for everyone to follow. The Lord's words to her are illuminating. "Two nations are in thy womb, and two different manners of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:22-23). Like Rebekah, the believer has two contrary natures within. One is from heaven, the other from earth. One is spiritual, and one is fleshly. One is sensitive to God, the other is sensitive to Satan. One is the root of good, the other of evil. These two natures are locked in mortal combat!

Faith, however, causes the new nature to be dominant. When our faith is strong, we are more spiritual. When our faith is weak, we become more fleshly, or carnal. Our "new man" excels when faith prevails. Our "old man" dominates when faith subsides.

## THE REASON FOR THE STRUGGLE

Faith brings the capacity for reciprocity with heaven. This is described in various ways in Scripture. It is being "called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor 1:9). It is also referred to as "the communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14), and being "joined to the Lord" (1 Cor. 6:17). This is "eternal life," which consists of the spiritual knowledge of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ" Whom He has sent (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). Maintaining that understanding is involved in "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12), which produces the conflict of the two natures resident in our bodies.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## NEW LIFE INTRODUCED

The introduction of this “newness of life” is glorious (Rom 6:4). We have become "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4), as well as "partakers of Christ" (Heb. 3:14). God has "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts" (Gal. 4:6), as a pledge of future glory. Our personal involvement in the process is set forth in the new covenant promise, "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10:16). This describes a very real inclination toward, and preference for, the will of God. The absence of this in much of the “Christianity” of our day is cause for great alarm. Men have come up with all manner of programs and methodologies having to do with behavioral correction. As wise as they may appear to be, the need for them is really evidence of the absence of “newness of life.”

From within, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Thus are we empowered to love God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, fulfilling the law of God (Matt. 22:37). This inward work results in the possession of a "sound mind," capable of distinguishing both good and evil (2 Tim. 1:7).

The new birth is not a metaphor, as some would have us believe. An actual transformation has taken place. We have been united with Christ, and are now indwelt by Deity (John 14:34; Rom. 8:9,11; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph. 2:17). However, our rebirth did not eradicate the old nature. It will remain with us until we are "absent from the body" (2 Cor. 5:6-9). Howbeit it, our new life commenced with “the old man” being “crucified,” and that is where he is to remain (Rom 6:6; Gal 5:24).

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he IS a new creature: old things ARE passed away; behold, all things ARE become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). This does not mean that the old nature has passed away – it has not! The capacity to sin remains with us, in the part of us that is from Adam – “the old man.” The person in Christ still is tempted, "drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). Old things "have passed away" in that they are no longer loved and preferred. We are being oriented for heaven, where "no unclean thing" can enter (Eph. 5:5). From this perspective, conflict within may be viewed from two perspectives. First, Satan is attempting to remove our appetite for spiritual things, and increase our appetite for the passing things of this world. Second, the Holy Spirit is culturing a penchant for things that are eternal. This will allow us to make the transition to glory without any trauma. God does not intend our induction into eternity to be abrasive.

"All things" have become "new" due to spiritual perspective and appetite. We are LOOKING for "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13-14). That prospect has made everything "new." Yet, while we occupy the realm of sense and time, proclivities to evil remain in us, although they are not part of the new “us” – the real “us.” We are not content with this condition. Its presence accounts for all of our setbacks, shortcoming, and insensitivities. **THE REASON FOR THE STRUGGLE IS THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW AND HEAVENLY LIFE!** As soon as the "new" came, the first was made "old." This is the principle revealed in the old and new covenants (Heb. 8:13). When the “New Covenant” commenced, the first covenant was made “old.” "In that he saith, A new covenant, HE HATH MADE THE FIRST OLD. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:13).

It is not only true of the covenants, it is also true of man's nature. Our Adamic nature became

"old" when we "received" Christ (John 1:12) and the "Spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15). At this point, the conflict began! The Divine life, now in "the sons of God" (1 John 3:1) requires the crucifixion of "that which is born of flesh" (John 3:6). Though crucified, however, the "flesh" remains adamant and expressive, like the impenitent thief with whom Jesus was crucified (Luke 23:29). Unlike the penitent thief, however, the flesh cannot and will not change (Luke 23:40-42).

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## CONTRASTING VIEWS

Conflicting principles are now found within us. We have a "HEAVENLY treasure" in an "EARTHLY vessel" (2 Cor 4:7). In that condition, it is not possible to be without the experience of fierce inner conflict and contradiction. That situation is the source of contradictory feelings, thoughts, and inclinations. Our "EARTHEN vessel" struggles for dominance, and in its conflict with the "TREASURE" we have our warfare. The "treasure," like Abraham, is found in strange and hostile environment (Heb. 11:19).

Both "LIGHT" and "darkness" EXIST in us. The presence of these moral influences requires diligent effort to "walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). Light has no "communion" with darkness (2 Cor 6:14). No place is this lack of communion as evident as it is within the believer. It becomes the source of an incessant struggle.

"Good and evil" wrestle within the reconciled, struggling for the dominance (Rom. 7:15-23; 1 Cor. 15:33). The influence of one of these cannot be experienced without the influence of the other. "Good" cannot be pursued without "evil" crying for attention, and "evil" cannot become the focus of attention without "good" objecting. Two contrary voices cry simultaneously, demanding our allegiance.

"The SPIRIT" and the "FLESH" have mutually antithetic desires, and make them known within the redeemed: "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" (Gal. 5:17). They "lust" against each other, pulling in opposite directions. Their contrariety is the cause of inner struggle and conflict.

The eternal and the temporal orders cry out for the attention of the saints. The sobering reality is that believers have the ability to behold them both (2 Cor. 4:18). This condition requires spiritual vigilance and diligence in the child of God. It is not possible to be passive or casual in this struggle, and still be found "accepted of Him" (2 Cor. 5:9). The presence of warring principles

creates a "valley of decision" (Joel 3:14) – and every day critical decisions have to be made. These decisions have to do with fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), the communion of the Spirit (2 Cor 13:14), and the leading of the Spirit (Rom 8:14).

There are an "old" and a "new" man within the saved. The "old" is to be subordinated and "put off" by the believer, while the "new" is to be "put on" and cultured (Eph. 4:22-24). This cannot be accomplished without hearty effort on the part of the believer. Neither will it be achieved in assemblies of believers that do not contribute to their spiritual strength. The casual sharing of general information and news items will never give the saints an advantage in their warfare. Intellectual treatises of interesting subjects, historical analysis, and humorous anecdotes will not do it either. The saints cannot be advantaged in this warfare by entertainment, philosophy, the sharing of mere human opinion, and other such distractions. I am not naive. I realize such things are not of themselves sinful. However, when they begin to wean the child of God away from intimacy with God, they do become sinful. They are all matters that must be managed by one's faith.

Religious leaders that take the warfare seriously will feed the flock of God, as they are commanded to do (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2). Those that do not should be discharged immediately, and without question. Eternal issues are at stake!

A struggle between life and death rages in everyone that has believed and obeyed the Gospel. It is something in which you are involved. It has to do with eternal life and condemnation, and it was initiated by the introduction of spiritual, or newness of, life.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## ANOTHER VIEW OF THE SITUATION

We are living in two conflicting worlds simultaneously. The "world to come" (Heb. 2:5) is now our abode by faith. We have been "raised us up together, and made us sit together IN HEAVENLY PLACES in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). This "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4) is our visible residence while we remain "in the body" (2 Cor. 5:8). However, there has been a very real joining to "the Lord," who is in heaven: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor 6:17). And, we have been "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14). The reality that connects us with that world is our faith in Christ, "By whom also WE HAVE ACCESS by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:2). The repository for grace is not on earth, but in heaven.

These are not merely two different worlds. One is destined to destruction: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein SHALL BE BURNED UP" (2 Pet 3:10-12). The other constitutes a "kingdom that cannot be shaken," and will be fully revealed when the other one is destroyed (Heb. 12:27-28).

Until that time, they are irreconcilable. An eternal order cannot be at peace with a temporal one! Christ and the world cannot be loved at the same time. One cannot live for this world, and for the world to come at the same time. As a believer in Christ, you have to do with them both, and that is a constant source of inner conflict. Of necessity, one must be rejected, spurned, and neglected, while the other is cultured. All who leave this world having set their affection on it will be excluded from the presence of the Lord. All who set their affection on things above, and not on the earth, will be included (Col 3:1-2).

We have also been "espoused" to a visibly absent "Bridegroom" (2 Cor. 11:2). This condition has introduced a conflict of interests. The world solicits us to deny our betrothal and play the harlot with her. No person in Christ is exempt from the struggle. All have received a heavenly mandate to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12,19). Take the warfare seriously, and have done with things of no eternal consequence. The time is short, the battle is fierce, and your eternal destiny is at stake.

An inner struggle also ensues because part of us is dying, while the other part is being constantly renewed. Our "outward man" is perishing, but our "inward man is renewed day by day" – "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

It is the persuasion of eternal realities, and our participation in them, that makes our current afflictions "light" – by way of comparison. Further, as the balances in which we will be weighed are perused by faith, we will see that a weight of trouble is offset by a GREATER weight of glory.

The "perishing" part (the outward man) of us is not reconciled to dying! Further, the "inward man" requires that our "affection" be "set on things above, and not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). However, this can only be accomplished while subduing the earthly proclivities of the "outward man." Thus, the struggle – and what a sanctified struggle it is! It is nothing less that "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12).

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present

with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## OUR REACTION TO THE STRUGGLE

"But I see another law in my members, WARRING AGAINST the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom 7:23)

"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" (Gal 5:17).

The struggle of which we speak is a reality, not an imagination. This is NOT mere theological jargon. It also is not something to be ignored – which is emphatically taking place in the professed Christian community. This is an inner warfare that takes place in every person who is in Christ – yet an extremely small percentage of the people have any cogent idea of what is going on in this experience. Pretentious theologastors (theological quacks) have come up with convenient explanations to satisfy the mind – but they are of little value to the person who is experiencing competing influences within.

The fact that this is a very real war involving good and evil, and righteousness and unrighteousness, requires a decision on your part, as well as personal and determined involvement. Briefly stated, you are to subdue the evil and nourish and sustain the good. You must dogmatically refuse to take credit for what you do not want, and claim the victory by following what you do want. When I say "want," I am referring to the new heart and new spirit that every person who has been, in reality, baptized into Christ receives. This has to do with the new creation (2 Cor 5:17), being "born again" (John 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:23), being "created" in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10), and walking "in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). Because the law of God has been written upon their heart, and put into their mind (Heb 8:10; 10:16), their preeminent desire is to please the Lord, and walk in the light. These are people who have been reconciled to God, have realized a purged conscience, and have come to hate sin. That is the ONLY kind of people that are in Christ Jesus – for Jesus cannot be joined to anyone who is fundamentally unlike Himself (2 Cor 6:14-7:1).

In our time – and for at least four decades – there has been a version of Christianity perpetrated that has allowed for the unrighteous to be received by local congregations. Denying self and taking up one's cross daily is not required. Walking in the light is not required. Walking in the Spirit is not required. A hunger and thirst for righteousness are not expected. Spiritual growth is not being realized. There is an alarming presence of disinterest, worldly-mindedness, spiritual retardation, and an alarming ignorance of Scripture. "Church people" have grown accustomed to these things. Under the incapable leadership of fake pastors, buildings where professing Christians meet have become entertainment centers. They have stages where the actors can entertain the people. Now, it is in vogue to have walls painted black, with the audience sitting in relative darkness while the stage is lit up for the frolicking leaders. Is it any wonder that people attending gatherings like this have little or no understanding about the warfare within – if there even is one?

In this warfare, your faculties can be drawn upward or downward, to heaven or to earth. You are the custodian of your thoughts, your soul, your affection, and your desires. They are not always commendable, because there are two differing sources from which they come – the “new man” and “the old man” (Eph 4:22-24). Your thoughts can turn you Godward, and toward the earth. Although a professing Christian can be an undisciplined soul, and can dwell upon unholy thoughts, even developing a preference for the fading fancies of the world, to do so is to forfeit life and be “cast away” (Luke 9:25).

We are to “cleave to the good” and “abhor the evil” (Rom. 12:9). Both are present within us, and both must be appropriately confronted as long as we are “in the body.” We are to “desire the sincere milk of the Word,” while “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” (1 Pet. 2:2; Tit. 2:12). Like our Lord, we are to fervently “love righteousness” and zealously “hate iniquity” (Heb. 1:9).

You have been called to a life that demands growth “in grace” and the crucifixion “of the flesh” (2 Pet. 3:18; Gal. 5:24). “Hold fast” what is “good,” and “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Dullness and passivity are never in order in this struggle. They place one in spiritual jeopardy, and ultimately lead to condemnation.

## THE WAR WITHIN

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

The fierceness of the inner struggle is directly proportionate to our perception and acceptance of the “new” order – a new spiritual order that is radically different from the “old, or “natural” (1 Cor 2:14) manner of living. There is a NEW covenant (Heb 12:24), NEWNESS of life (Rom 6:4), “NEWNESS of spirit” (Rom 7:6), a NEW creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:19), a “NEW man” (Eph 4:24; Col 2:10), a “NEW and living way” (Heb 10:20), and a “NEW commandment” (1 John 2:7,8,15). How is it possible for such glorious newness to be undetected by those experiencing it – and by those witnessing it? And if this all occurs while I am in an unchanged body, how could I possibly expect living without some form of inner opposition?

In salvation there is a fundamental “change” that takes place, and continues taking place. Initially we are “changed” from being “enemies” to being “reconciled” (Rom 5:10; Col 1:21), from being “dead” to being “alive” (Eph 2:1-5), from not being a people, to being a people and from not obtaining mercy to obtaining mercy (1 Pet 2:10), and from being vassals of the devil, to

being the servants of God (Eph 2:2-3; Rom 6:20-23). The Holy Spirit is changing the saved from one increasing stage of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). We are also anticipating the final "change" that will occur in the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:21). How can it be possible for such significant changes to take place, while I am in the same body, without the part of me that is a natural part of my body resisting the change?

Drawing "near" to the Lord sensitizes our spirit to both the good that characterizes the "new," and the evil that characterizes the "old." We ourselves draw near to God (Heb. 10:22), while "the flesh" draws back. Yielding to the "old," and thus drawing back from God dulls the soul, causing one to unwittingly digress to "perdition" (Heb. 10:39).

Ignoring "spiritual things" (1 Cor 2:13), and yielding to temptation and the flesh, will diminish the struggle, and thus jeopardize the soul. Further, a reduction in the struggle will cause one to gravitate to the flesh, and consequently to incur Divine displeasure. It is tragic that this is the condition of many professed believers. Their failure to engage in the "good fight of faith" accounts for their general disinterest in spiritual nourishment (1 Pet 2:2), and fellowship with the Son of God (1 Cor 1:9). If this condition is not addressed, there is no hope of them forever being with the Lord. The battle is that serious!

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS, #1 (Introduction)

The remarkable complexity of spiritual life has been generally unappreciated in professed Christendom. An unfortunate tendency to oversimplify life in Christ prevails in too many circles. In spite of the careful and thorough approach to faith that is found in Scripture, men speak of "simply believing," "let go and let God," etc., as though there were some kind of automatic pilot available to believers. The result has been the disarming of the church. She has laid her armor down, and is no longer noted for aggressive warfare against the powers of darkness – which is why despotic and wicked spiritual powers are growing exponentially. Without being overbearing on this matter, some equate spiritual aggression with the boycotting of products, blocking entrances to abortion clinics, and crusading for truth in politics. While there may be a place for these things, they must not be given preeminence. One can heartily engage in all of these efforts without having so much as one small spark of faith. They do not require the Holy Spirit, strangership in this world, or fellowship with Christ. You can be fundamentally unholy and do all such things.

## SIMPLICITY

In Scripture, simplicity, at least on the surface, is related to getting into Christ. Think of these expressions. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord be saved" (Acts 2:21). Isaiah prophesied of this situation in Isaiah 35:8; "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). Isaiah's words remind us of the promise of Jesus, "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the Light of this world" (John 11:9).

## A FIERCE BATTLE

Once we are in Christ, we become participants in a fierce and unrelenting battle. It calls for strategies and efforts that exceed involvements related to coming into Christ. The reason for this condition is not that getting in Christ is unattended by labor, decision, and even aggression. It is that LIVING in Christ is an extended effort covering a possibly lengthy period of time that requires significant resources.

Confidence in God would be easy to achieve if no conflict existed. The requirement for struggle and resistance in the faith cause many to "walk no more" with the Lord Jesus (John 6:66). This is the result of a distorted view of salvation. The thought is common in religion, perpetrated by the powers of darkness, that ease and pleasure are integral to life in Christ. This, however, is by no means the case.

All that have been "joined to the Lord" (1 Cor 6:17) are, by virtue of that union, citizens of heaven and "strangers and pilgrims" in the world (1 Pet 2:11). They "desire a better country," and therefore "crucify the flesh, together with its affections and lusts," because its corrupting influence (Heb 11:16; Gal 5:24). This is an activity prompted by devotion to Christ, and is identified with rationality and perception. Such is not the response of an unwilling servant under a system of law.

In Scripture, the lack of spiritual understanding is called "ignorance." This is an alienating situation, which prohibits fellowship with God: "Having the understanding darkened, being ALIENATED from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph 4:18). "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom 11:25).

There are few areas of life where this is as true as that of inner conflict. Those who are ignorant of the nature of the "fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12) are confused by the opposing influences found within their own persons. That very ignorance forms the perimeter within which the powers of darkness work.

In the seventh chapter of Romans, Paul identifies the results of new creatureship (2 Cor 5:17).

With remarkable clarity, he describes the nature of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. He concludes that, although the struggle is fierce, resulting in a degree of frustration, yet it proves the presence of spiritual life.

Several years ago, a tract called "Four Spiritual Laws" was originated in the evangelical community. It was basically deficient in its presentation, and we are not referring to it in this section. My personal opposition to the tract in question is that it does not approach sinners like God does. There is absolutely no example or precedent of such an approach in Scripture. It is an attempt, however noble, to reach men for Christ by employing the wisdom of men. There are four revealed spiritual laws, which I will cover in the next lesson.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## THE FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS IN SCRIPTURE

Paul identified four valid laws in Romans 7:22-23. They are spiritual principles with which the believer must become familiar. (1 The law of God. (2 Another law in my members. (3 The law of my mind. (4 The law of sin.

## THE TYPE OF LAWS

Two of these laws are objective, or detached from experience itself. They are principles that exist independently of human involvement – like the law of gravity in nature. Two of these laws are subjective, i.e., they are matters that we personally experience.

## OBJECTIVE LAWS

The "law of God" and "the law of sin" are objective laws. They lie outside of mankind, and apart from human experience. They exist independently of us, and yet we are subjected to them both. They are uninfluenced by us, but we are influenced by them.

It is vital that we realize the nature of these laws, or principles. Nothing that we can do will alter either of these laws. Our opinion of them changes nothing. Our love or hatred of them has no bearing on their existence. We cannot expand them or reduce them. They are completely independent of us. Nothing that we can do can alter the "law of God." We cannot add to it or take from it. We cannot will it out of existence, or summon it into existence. It is intrinsically good, and we cannot cause it to become evil.

Similarly, we cannot change "the law of sin." Like "the law of God," it is static or unchanging. It is not possible to make it good or cause it to be less a law of sin than it is.

The "law of God" is given within an intelligent framework. It consists of words and directives. It identifies sin and apprizes men of their guilt of it. This law, "given by Moses" (John 1:17), convinced Paul of the nature of personal "lust" (Rom. 7:7). It was not a "feeling" that convicted Paul, but a perception, or understanding. The "law of God" produced that insight.

The "law of sin" is an unwritten law, and differs significantly from "the law of God." It is the spirit of sin that is promoted by "the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). It is not sin itself, but the principle of sin, written in the natural order. Unlike "the law of God" it does not bring the knowledge of sin. Rather, if heeded, it will produce involvement in sin. The difference between the two is seen in the sin of Adam and Eve. Satan told Eve that eating of the forbidden fruit would bring the knowledge of good and evil. That, however, was not all it produced. The disobedience urged by Satan obscured the good and brought personal involvement in evil. The pair became unfit for fellowship with God, and forfeited life itself, being expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24).

## SUBJECTIVE LAWS

"The law of my mind" and "another law in my members" are subjective laws. Both of these laws reside within the believer, and are experiential in nature. These are the source of the inner conflict which Paul describes. These laws are aligned against each other, and cannot be reconciled. When God writes His law upon our hearts and places it in our minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16), it becomes "the law of my mind." This speaks of a basic propensity to right; of a preference for the holy and spiritual and good. Experientially, the one that is reconciled to God is in agreement with Him. He wills to do the will of God (John 7:17), and is displeased when he does not.

As the "mind" of the believer is inclined to the holy law of God, his unregenerate "members" that are "upon the earth" gravitate to sin (Col. 3:5). This is the "flesh"—the part of us that has been unaffected by the grace of God. Our "members" are recalcitrant, and must be brought into subjection. The natural part of us competes with the renewed part. As the renewed mind is in harmony with the "law of God," so are our "members" in harmony with the "law of sin."

Both righteousness and unrighteousness have an appeal to believers. Righteousness appeals to our "mind," and sin appeals to our "members." There is an undeniable inclination to both good and evil. These propensities, however, are not found in the same part of our natures. The purified heart and mind (Acts 15:9; 2 Pet 3:1) are drawn to righteousness, and our remaining parts are drawn to sin. This condition is the source of the struggle of Romans seven.

Both of these subjective laws ("of the mind" and "in my members") are principles. They are to the renewed man and the fleshly nature what the law of gravity is to the impersonal creation. Neither of these laws can be altered. To put it another way, what God has blessed cannot be cursed, and what He has cursed cannot be blessed (Num. 23:8). A great deal of effort has been expended in religious circles to bless the flesh. It has been unsuccessful! If, in human experience,

a person chooses to live “after the flesh,” which is ruled by “the law of sin,” he will be excluded from the kingdom of God, for “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:7-8). Thank God for the “new man” and “the law of God” which he loves, and to which he joyfully submits.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## THE FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS IN SCRIPTURE, #2

### INCLINATION DOES NOT EQUAL INVOLVEMENT

The God of heaven can make people do something against their will. This is confirmed in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), Cain becoming a vagabond (Gen 4:12-14), the flood (Gen 6:17), the dispersion of the people in Shinar (Gen 11:9), and the impossibility of those who did not believe God to enter into Canaan (Num 20:24), etc.

However, when it comes to the four spiritual laws made known in the seventh chapter of Romans – (1 The law of God (7:22,25), (2 Another law in my members (Rom 7:23), (3 The law of my mind (Rom 7:23), and (4 The law of sin (Rom 7:23,25), coercion is not involved. Because of the existence of these four laws, involvement in either sin or righteousness is necessarily preceded by inclination. Temptation is a Satanic effort to get people to WANT to sin. This is because God created man with a will that compels him to do something – as contrasted with the instinct of animals. By nature, that will is not “free,” but has been captured by iniquity, and therefore serves sin. Man requires a new will in order to serve God, which is realized in the new birth and the sanctified life (Phil 2:13). With this renewed mind, the believer can successfully negate temptation by resisting the devil (James 4:7), being taught by the grace of God to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts (Tit 2:11-13), and taking the escape which is, for the child of God, provided with every temptation (1 Cor 10:13). The new birth enables a person to WANT to do righteousness, to prefer godliness, and to engage in a fervent quest to be forever with the Lord.

Therefore, one who is in Christ cannot be coerced to DO evil, and one who is outside of Christ cannot be coerced to do righteousness. The implications of this are disruptive to several popular doctrines.

Take, for instance, the doctrine that asserts there is a point in time when the believer, while in this world, becomes incapable of sin. Some call it "sinless perfection." Others (Nazarene

Theology) have dubbed it "sanctification," which doctrine affirms a point of time is reached while men are in this world, where they are incapable of sinning. The error of this teaching is that it requires the elimination of "the law of sin," which is in our members. I have personally never known a person who claims to have reached this point. But our text clearly states that "the law of sin" is not eliminated as long as we are in this world. Nearly 25 years after becoming an Apostle, Paul admits to the presence of this law in his own members – he saw "another law" in his members, and it was warring against the law of his mind (Rom 7:23). Furthermore, he had to deal with it. He could not simply ignore it. It is axiomatic that as long as this law is present, the possibility of sin remains. If this were not the case, the "law of sin" would cease to be a principle, or law. A principle that cannot operate can no longer be called a principle.

It ought to be noted that sin itself is not said to be "in our members," but the "LAW of sin." The inclination is there, but the inclination itself does not produce moral guilt. It is only when the individual yields to the inclination that he becomes guilty of transgression.

### THE BELIEVER'S BASIC LAW

From the experiential point of view, the basic law that governs the believer is "the law" of the renewed mind. Any conflicting inclination is "another law." Within his own personality Paul saw a part that was unjustified and unsanctified – a part that would no longer be with him after he left his mortal body – either in death, or at the coming of the Lord. There were proclivities against which he willingly strove. These tendencies are called "another law." This is Paul's way of disowning them. They do not really belong to him; they are only resident in his "members." They are not a part of his will. He does not prefer them; in fact, he abhors them. They are not the result of a personal quest, nor have they been cultured in a disciplined manner.

All who live by faith have the same experience. Because, however, many are unable to correctly identify it, the Apostle provides us with an illuminated view of the situation.

The fact that the "saved" can speak in this way is proof that a fundamental change has taken place within them. The ungodly do not do so, because they are not in agreement with God. They do not have heavenly preferences, nor are they truly discontent with "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4), and their "vile body" (Phil. 3:21).

### THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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### THE CONSEQUENCE OF CONVERSION

Conversion is a very real experience, not simply a philosophical thought. It involves a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), the generation of a “new man” (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), becoming part of a new body of people, and commencing a change that will consummate in being glorified (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:17; 8:30). While there is a change that is taking place now, what took place at the point of conversion was instantaneous, or immediate, and was very real. Let me briefly name just twenty-three of these unique experiences.

1–Forgiveness (Eph 1:7; Col 2:13), 2–Justification (Rom 5:1), 3–Peace with God (Rom 5:1), 4–Reconciliation (Rom 5:10), 5–Deliverance from the devil (Heb 2:15), 6–Deliverance from the power of darkness (Col 1:13), 7–Deliverance from the Law (Rom 7:6), 8–Deliverance from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10), 9–Translation into the Kingdom of God’s Dear Son (Col 1:13), 10–Addition to the church (Acts 2:47), 11–Placement in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:18), 12–Raised up and made to sit in heavenly places (Eph 2:6), 13–Made “light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8), 14–Joined unto the Lord (1 Cor 6:17), 15–Given the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 4:8). 16–Have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand (Rom 5:2), 17–Have access by One Spirit to the Father (Eph 2:18), 18–Made “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6), 19–The treasure of salvation in an earthen vessel (2 Cor 4:7), 20–An inheritance (Eph 1:11), 21–A Great High Priest in heaven (Heb 4:14-16), 22–Hope as an anchor of the soul (Heb 6:19), 23–An Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

Whether you were cognizant of these things or not, they took place when you were converted. These are things God Almighty did, not you. You experienced them, but you did not cause them. You came into Christ with ALL of these remarkable advantages, which, candidly, are not at first perceived, or comprehended. These realities do not commence when you are aware of them, but rather when you were “added to the Lord” (Acts 5:18). As you advance in the faith you become aware of them, but they have been yours all along.

The complicating factor is that there was a part of you that was NOT changed. In fact, the part of you that is “new” was created, and is not the result of change. Your body, and the unseen part of your person that is joined to it, is now hostile, and must be subordinated (1 Cor 9:27). Furthermore, what you received at the time you were put into Christ contains all of the resources necessary to make your body your slave, and not your master.

This series of lessons has been an exposition of a condition that was created by a new creation – a new mind, a new heart, and a new spirit. The new is better than the old. It is more powerful than the old. It will transfer to heaven, whereas the old will not. You will keep it after you die, but the old will all pass away. “The flesh,” or your “old man,” is fighting to stay alive, and competing for the dominance. If you do not know what is happening, the battle will appear to be more than you can handle. It will cause a cloud to descend over the remarkable benefits you have already received, and obscure the glory to which you are being brought by Jesus. Satan does not want you to see these things, but “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For

I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## THE ART OF RECKONING

In addressing those who have been baptized into Christ, being buried with Him in death, and raised with Him to walk in the newness of life, the Spirit says, " . . . knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. LIKEWISE you also, RECKON yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:9-11). For "reckon," other versions read, "consider" (NASB), "count yourselves to be" (NIV).

"Reckon" is a word denoting a form of reasoning – particularly perusing what the Lord has said about what takes place in a matter. The word "reckon" is translated from a word that means "to take an inventory, estimate, conclude, reason" (Strong's); "compute, calculate, to take into account; weigh, meditate upon" (Thayer). It is a form of reasoning that has a large scope in which nothing but good exists.

In Romans 6:11, the term "reckon" does not imply that we are not, in some sense, and in fact, "dead." What it does signify is that there is a part of us that remains alive, or responsive, to sin. If this was not the case, we could not be tempted. That part however, is not the essential part of us, and may therefore be denied – rejected as an unwanted enemy in the house. It is a part of us that will no longer be with us when we leave this world. We are "reckoning" ourselves to be "dead indeed UNTO sin" when we are "abstaining from fleshly lusts that war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11). Those lusts are thus treated as though they were food offered to a dead man. This abstinence is not an end of itself, but is the means to an end. Our real objective is to appropriate the things toward which "the law of our mind" inclines us. The pursuit of the "kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt 6:33) can only be properly engaged in as we "reckon" our essential persons really dead and unresponsive to sin. The "new man," in fact, "is after God . . . created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24). That is the part of the regenerated person that objects to, and is offended by, any suggestion to sin. These suggestions come in the form of thoughts that are aptly described as the "flaming missiles of the evil one" (Eph 6:16 (NASB)).

This contrary law – "another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (Rom 7:23) – is within our unregenerate parts ("the flesh"), and contradicts the "law of our mind." "Thought" has a preeminent place in the kingdom of God. Jesus did not induct an era primarily marked by emotion or feeling, or by outward deeds alone. While these things most certainly exist, they are subordinate, in the case of the redeemed, to sanctified thought. The Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation," is comprised of thoughts addressed to the mind. As one entertains those Divinely powerful thoughts, the distracting and unwanted thoughts become

incapable of dominating us. This is so because we treat them as nothing more than the stench of a dead body. The saved love and relish the thoughts God, Christ, and all of the things associated with, and obtained through them.

God has written His law upon the renewed parts of us – our heart and mind. We have a mandate to bring every thought "into captivity "to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). The NIV reads, "make it obedient to Christ." We obey this commission by bringing our thinking into line with the law of God that is written by God Himself upon our hearts and put into our minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16). When thoughts stray and are out of harmony with the holy law, we are to turn reject hem, taking them captive in order to obedience (2 Cor 10:4-5). There is no true obedience without the spiritually productive involvement of the mind.

## THE WAR WITHIN

"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:15,18,19,21,23)

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## CONCLUSION OF SERIES

### DISTRACTING THOUGHTS

The experience of distracting and unwanted thoughts is not of itself comforting, delightful, or helpful. For the person who lives by faith, distraction is always a most sobering and undesired reality. This is vital to know, especially in the USA, where distractions are abounding at exponential rates – social, political, entertainment, religious, etc. One cannot leave his home and walk a single city block without being inundated with distractions of all sorts. Some of these linger in the mind, and haunt the memory – even though they may be considered evil.

When unlawful and unwanted thoughts do occur, we are not to think that this of itself parallels the teaching of Romans 7:15-25. The point of identification there is the CONFLICT of the thoughts with our basic desires and aspirations. We do not abhor them simply because they are not proper, or not lawful. For the person who is born again, and has been translated into the Kingdom of God's Dear Son (Col 1:13), such thoughts contradict their natures, oppose their preferences, and are against their objectives. They conflict with their primary desire, which is to please and be with the Lord. They distract the godly from their objectives, which include being faithful (Rev 2:10), maintaining their hope (Heb 6:19), and laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). The contradiction of intrusive unwanted and opposing thoughts, is the experience delineated in Romans 7:15-25.

Paul says that "another law" within his members brings him "into captivity to the law of sin

which is in my members" (Rom 7:23). He does not mean that he is captured by sin and forced to transgress the law of God. He is not describing the consistent pattern of his life, or the majority of his experience. He is describing the exception, not the rule. Sin, however, is so repugnant to the righteous, that the occurrence of the exception – the intrusion of an unwanted thought – is viewed as a "captivity." That is so because the person who is "born again" cannot keep it from occurring, and is forced to deal aggressively with it, using the spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:4-5) God has provided, and the teaching that grace has delivered (Tit 2:11-12).

The child of God cannot be content with this kind of conflict, even though it cannot be escaped while he is in the world. The reason he cannot be content with it is because he has been called to be brought by Jesus (Heb 2:10) to a place where there is no war, conflict, resistance, or need for vigilance. In that glorified "rest" there is no need for warning, admonition, or sword and spear. Those who are in Christ long for the time when the saints "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they LEARN WAR ANY MORE" (Isa 2:4).

However, until that time, the saved must "learn war," and become expert in spiritual battle. They must seek the Divine tutelage David confessed: "Blessed be the LORD my Strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight" (Psa 144:1). They must don "the whole armor of God" in order to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:10-18). There are wars that are without – against social trends, false doctrines, the spread of immorality, and other things. For such battles there are spiritual champions, like Paul, Peter, John, and others. But for the most personal of all conflicts – the one within – the believer must learn to address it personally, leaning on no other person except the Lord Himself. No child of God can ignore this conflict, or depend upon his brethren to manage his battle through prayer. To begin with, none of them know, or can know, the extent of your inner conflict. You must diligently "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

As difficult as it may seem, you must engage the foe. You must learn to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts, as grace teaches you to do (Tit 2:11-13). You must place a great value on the fact that you do not want these kind of thoughts, and culture that dislike. You will receive grace to the precise proportion of that dislike and hatred.

May the Lord bless you to perceive the war within properly, and to address it discreetly and with godly expectation.

–Given O. Blakely