

Justification: Fighting & Freedom in Christ

Good Morning OIC.

Last Week, I broke this message into two parts. This week, with the Help of the Lord, I will continue to exegete and bring out Paul's meaning in calling himself a man with the joy of Jesus ... filled with Holy Spirit ... conscious of God the Father ... yet, calling himself *a wretched man*.

Some review of last week:

Under the Section “**The Battle of the Two Natures**” I had quoted (Galatians 5.17/AMPC) - *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.*

How should we understand the phrase “*so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do?*” A Christian's freedom does not mean saying: “I am free so I can do *anything* that I want or desire to do!” A Christian's deepest desire is to become more like the Lord Jesus, therefore HOLY. As the Bible tells us in (Hebrews 12.14 /Mounce) *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* Once we know that our desire is for a *thing*, not against being holy, we still want to please Jesus with not just *what we do*, but also *when we do it*. Often, we will find that God's timing is not our timing. Also, remember holiness is not just a feeling, or *freedom from fighting sin inside us*; it is living lives characterized or evident to all as being set apart from worldly living. **A love slave for God learns to feel total freedom as he pursues a life with these restrictions or boundaries on his freedom. As we learn how great God's love is for us, we learn that Our Heavenly Father knows best.**

Another fact that assists our being victorious over our *Old Nature* is to realize our current “position before God,” “our right standing in Christ.” A Christian who is confident in his position does not get confused about Who is on his side in the midst of spiritual warfare: against our old nature or the devil. This section from the Book of Romans focuses on a Christian's battle against the enemy within his body, our *old nature*; not the Enemy outside our body, Satan.

Remember as we read some weeks ago in (Romans 3.14):

[All] are justified and made upright and in right standing with God, freely and gratuitously by His grace (His unmerited favor and mercy), through the redemption which is [provided] in Christ Jesus. All means all Believers in Jesus. Now in (Romans 7.19-20/AMPC), Paul reiterates what he just said in (Romans 7.15-18 /AMPC) in slightly different terminology.

19 *For I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am [ever] doing.*

20 *Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it [it is not myself that acts], but the sin [principle] which dwells within me [fixed and operating in my soul].*

Christians having been “Born Again” only recently are usually very amazed and surprised when they see *new desires for holiness in their inner being or soul*. This causes joy and real experiences of the Fruit of the Spirit. This is true joy. At some point in following Jesus, a Christian may be equally surprised or shocked at the power of his *old nature* still within him. Paul is simply teaching that the “sin principle” in a sincere follower of Christ is sometimes depleting a Christian of joy from within!

It is important that we Christians learn to know the difference between their *old nature* making “noise,” so to speak, and the voice of Satan. We feel the pull of sin, and Satan may attempt to make us give into our “evil thoughts and evil thinking” that are inside our bodies. But battles within can't be blamed on Satan. We are sensing the *corruption* within. Temptation from within or without is not sin. The Sword of the Spirit against Satan is speaking God's Word against him. Victory over our flesh or *old nature starts with prayer to God* as we hold onto precious promises in His Word, including some in this message. These Promises seem to be reminding Him that He said He is for us and not against us. But He did not forget that...We did!! We are really reminding ourselves to trust Him, His WORD and His SPIRIT, to bring to pass a victorious outcome of the battle.

Romans 6-7 clearly explains that **Christians struggling against sin are not possessed by demons, as some heretics teach.** A *heretic* is a professing Christian who has a major error in Biblical thinking which they proclaim as a vital or important truth! Sinning Christians are still Christians with the Holy Spirit inside. God does not share His Temple with any devils! **These struggling Christians, who often lose battles against sin, are simply possessed by their old nature and have not yet learned to not give in to its desires or lusts.** In Romans we learn that if the Apostle Paul was not exempt from such battles, we should not be disheartened when we find ourselves in the same kind of battle.

Holy Spirit breathed this part of Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome almost 2,000 years ago for God's children to learn how to walk in Freedom over their *old sin Nature*. Yet, it is truly amazing that God's Spirit does share our bodies, His temple, with *our old nature*. Yes, a Christian's body is the Temple or Tent of the Holy Spirit. As shown in (1 Corinthians 6.19-20 /AMPC): *Do you not know that your body is the **temple** (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received [as a Gift] from God? You are not your own, You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own]. So then, honor God and bring glory to Him in your body.*

Such Love...such wondrous Love! That God would love us! But these struggles may hinder living as we desire to live for Jesus, similar to the devil's attacks to hinder our walk to Glory. **But we are students sitting at the feet of Jesus as we are attentive to His Word.**

21 So I find it to be a law (rule of action of my being) that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands.

22 For I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [with my new nature].

23 and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh].

This week, as I was preparing this message for OIC, I had a similar example of weakness to cease behavior, not sinful behavior, but not beneficial to my health. As the dryer winter weather begins, if I forget to be careful to not use strong hand soaps or wear plastic gloves when washing dishes, I get eczema on my hands. Then, as it began recently, I was slow to treat it, so the itching increased. Now, as I am typing this message, **I cannot stop scratching the irritated hand with the other hand. I do it without knowing I am even doing it.** This is the same principle of our *old sin nature*. As in (Romans 7.21) *that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands.* This truly is something like scratching an itch, so to speak, like an automatic response out of our control. And in (v.22) *For I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [with my new nature].....and (v.23) But I discern in my bodily members in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh] a different law (rule of action) at war against the law of my mind (my reason).* The desire to sin in a Christian feels more powerful than the decision that he made in his mind, his new nature, to not sin. Unlike my weakness to scratch eczema, with only temporary harm; we all must pray earnestly for victory over our desires to sin. Sin separates us from God. Even if only moments being out of walking close to Jesus, it should make us all feel uncomfortable. That is actually because the Comforter alerts us to “Fight the

Good Fight.” We must pray to overcome sin, for we don't use our *Freedom to Fight*, sin will become our master.

Sincere Christians often don't realize that they have sinned until after the sin was committed. We must confess it as soon as Holy Spirit convinces us of it. For even if not conscious at the moment we sinned, we have given in to our sinful desire. Knowing God's eagerness to cleanse us of all sin, we have no reason to not be cleansed immediately. Jesus already bought pardon for that sin. But not confessing it may lead to the self-deception that we are already perfected in holiness.

The truths of our old nature for Paul and for all Christians may seem negative. But WAIT! How can TRUTH that has negative facts in it to bring our understanding to *Victorious Victory in Jesus* truly be negative? Was it not our LORD JESUS HIMSELF who said in (John 8.32 /NASB) *And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.* Now, looking back at the opening verse of this message:

O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death? in (Romans 7.24 /AMPC)

All the negatives of these verses describing Christian warfare against his old nature could put a Christian in a rather depressive state. Those facts are meant by God our loving Father to produce what Paul shared from his own *experiential Christianity*. But realize that all these facts which we Christians need to know, are focused on ourselves; but we must not stay in that mental attitude or state or thinking. As Charles H. Spurgeon once said: “If a man starts his prayer time focusing on himself, if he started happy, he will soon be depressed. But the man who starts his devotional time looking unto Jesus gets the spiritual bread and drink to have joy and strength.” Then sensing our Glorious Audience with the King, we are confident to request assistance in our battles from Him who is Lord of Heaven and Earth. Realizing King Jesus is always available to us, we see that the following Bible verses starting in Romans 7.25 into Romans Chapter 8, give us ALL we need when we are in Paul's bad experiential place : *O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death?*

But next, I want to comment on the analogy or wording Paul used to describe the seemingly unbeatable stranglehold and power of his *old sinful nature, shackles of this body of death* in (Romans 7.24 /AMPC).

These words would strike fear and anxiety and disgust in any audience within the realm of the Roman Empire, which included most of the known world in the 1st Century. The Roman Military had perfected Crucifixion on a cross, an extremely painful, cruel and slow means of death for criminals. They also had killed criminals by *shackling or using metal chains like a rope* to tie a

dead body to the back of the criminal sentenced to death. As the body rotted, disease of course set in to kill the living man. The Apostle Paul chose this expression to not only illustrate how evil and disgusting sin is to our Holy God, and should be to us; but also to show how we can never get rid of sin as long as we live, for sin is not only *on our backs* but inside our body.

But wait...how can Paul in the next verse (Romans 7.25/AMPC) switch to THANKSGIVING, from declaring his pitiable shackles?

O thank God! [He will!] through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) our Lord! So then indeed I, of myself with the mind and heart, serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

The Amplified Version's amplification or commentary within this verse answers that question, quite simply: **[He will!] Thus, the Apostle Paul had developed confidence to know that God will release and deliver him from seasons of defeat from being shackled to his old nature.**

TAKEAWAY #1

The Apostle Paul was thankful in his battle against his old nature because he knew that God the Father would deliver him with His Almighty power and strength through his Lord Jesus Christ. We can develop that same confidence as we persevere in or walk to Glory! But we must still resist our old nature from getting on the Throne of Our Heart, where we want Jesus to rule and reign in our lives. But this freedom to fight may be what feels like an eternity as we WAIT UPON THE LORD FOR THE VICTORY.

Many Jesus followers in the Master's School for Victory have memorized the Bible verse spoken through the prophet Isaiah in (Isaiah 40.31/NASB) *Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.*

Next, Paul will emphasize the other Person of the Holy Trinity, Holy Spirit, as the Source of power within that causes Victory in us. We are soldiers in the battle, but final victory is assured, for *The Battle is still the Lord's*. God had assured Moses of victory. He was leading the Israelites who were being tracked down by the Egyptian Army with horse pulled chariots. (Exodus 14.13 /AMPC) *Moses told the people, Fear not; stand still (firm, confident, undismayed) and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians you have seen today you shall never see again.*

Moses's God is our God. Our victory is assured. In (2 Corinthians 3.17/NASB)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

The placement of this next verse, (Romans 8.1), is spiritual dynamite...a Christian's struggles are blown away resting in this next statement of Fact for in TRUTH ... ***Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8.1/NASB)***

The Holy Spirit inspired and breathed on Paul to put this statement here as a **STOP SIGN** for doubt and discouragement from the previous verses. This is for any Christian sensing that he was losing the battle with his old nature. Now, Paul builds on this for further strength, as God, Who encourages us, has led Paul to write in (Hebrews 6.18 /AMPC) *we who have fled [to Him] for refuge might have mighty indwelling strength and strong encouragement to grasp and hold fast the hope appointed for us and set before [us].*

And as we meditate on Romans 8.1 we may say as the psalmist said in (Psalm 28.6-7 / NABRE)

6 *Blessed be the LORD,*

who has heard the sound of my pleading.

7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield,*

in whom my heart trusts.

I am helped, so my heart rejoices;

with my song I praise him.

TAKEAWAY #2

All Sin is as horrible and malignant as a rotting body of a man on our back; but, a Christian sinning as in Romans 7, is not the same as willful sin. Willful sin by a Christian is planning to sin and, when often repeated, becomes a practice. Practicing a musical instrument, for example, leads to better habits and better sounding performances. Willfully practicing sins makes for evil habits and bitter living and drifting away from Jesus. Willfully sinning is therefore planning to drift away and not stay close to Him who loved you enough to die for you. As Paul warns all Christians in (Hebrews 10.26/ NASB): *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*

The teachings here in Romans clearly show the difference between willfully sinning and battling sin, and sometimes losing the battle.

Our freedom and blessed assurance is built up to a higher plain, even onto a high mountain as we read in **(Romans 8.2-4)** *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

In a certain sense, before Jesus was revealed in us, we had been struggling in the valley of Death. The Law for the Jew, or a sense of right and wrong for the non-Jew, had killed us. We accepted Christ's Sacrifice to deliver us from being under the Law (Commandments or Right & Wrong). Then we are on a spiritual mountaintop, knowing all our sins are forgiven. But alas, later we realized that we must not just battle against the Enemy outside us, but one within us, our old nature. This puts us back into a valley, feeling defeat is coming. Then we see God's view in (Romans Chapter 8.1-4), that in His sight, we will be again on His mountain top because: *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.* (Romans 7.23 /NASB). **The Holy Spirit within us has broken the death cycle, sin to death.** Sins are forgiven...death cannot reign. God will not let us fall or stay in a valley despite our human frailties.

We can note that the above verse has both "law" and "Law." I totally agree with the following **quote from the Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC)** explaining, the two "laws" and bringing out more details of the meaning of these verses in Romans.

"... the construction of (Romans 8. 2-4) carries us beyond the thought of freedom from condemnation to the application of the redeeming work of Christ by the Spirit to the believer's life in such a way that the dominion of sin is broken and the reign of godliness assured. The noun "condemnation" has its counterpart in the verb "condemned" (Romans 8.3) { For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,}, which is followed immediately, not by a statement about the legal standing of believers, but by one concerning their manner of life (Romans 8.4) {so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.}. Thus, there is both a forensic {legal position} and a practical force {everyday living} in "no condemnation.""

A NOTE to the Reader - (EBD above in **bold print**) {verses inserted by Pastor Bruce for clarity}

God's provision for a Christian battling for his new nature to win over his old nature, the indwelling Holy Spirit. These Bible verses teach that the struggling Christian can rejoice in his

safe position, being **Justified by Faith**; but also, be confident of the indwelling Holy Spirit to cause Victory to happen in his life here and now.

No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus does not just mean only at the end of life on earth, but also the power of Holy Spirit to affect Holy Living now. The perfect freedom Christians desire, when they are made perfect with no indwelling sinful desires, is a *not yet*. The *already* is holy living now by the Spirit's power, not our own, **to cause Christians** to have victory over their sinful passions here on Earth.

The EBD quote continues with: **Romans 8.2** {*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.* Which in effect } **immediately picks up this practical, dynamic aspect by concentrating on the freedom from the imperious { impenetrable or unyielding} rule of sin and death, a freedom now available to believers through the Verse 2 {above} operation of the Spirit. The word "law" {not Law as Commandments} is used figuratively here in the sense of "principle", "law" indicates the certainty and regularity of operation that characterizes sin (which leads to death) and the Spirit (which leads to life). "Life" emphasizes both supernaturalness and spontaneity—hence the superiority of the Spirit's operation over the operation of sin. The Spirit gives us freedom from the enslaving power of sin."**

God's provision for a Christian battling for his new nature to win over his old nature is the indwelling Holy Spirit. Victory is assured as **the superiority of the Spirit's operation over the operation of sin:** *so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* Jesus' death on the cross fulfilled the requirements of the Law for all who believe in Him. Holy Spirit is available and empowers us to walk in a close relationship with Jesus.

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IN CLOSING

Justification: Fighting & Freedom in Christ is part of a Born Again Christian's walk to spend eternity with Jesus in Glory. We chose to fight against not only the Devil, but also our old nature, within our bodies. Our old nature often gives us trouble, challenging the Peace and Joy in fellowship with Jesus. As the Bible says: *and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.* In (John 1.3/ NASB). As we begin to walk with Jesus, we desire to be holy, as He is holy. But our old nature can be a stumbling block, distracting us from fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and finisher of our Faith. The Promise that being Justified to live by *Faith, and walking to Glory, from Faith to Faith and receiving Grace for Grace* seems weak in the battle. We often feel just like the Apostle Paul as he cried to God in (Romans 7.24/AMPC), a plea for Mercy: *O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death?* The third Person of the Trinity, Holy Spirit, within us assures us of Victory. Knowing there is no condemnation for us in Christ Jesus, we can be confident that as Holy Spirit has broken the cycle of sin and death, our battle is not in vain...nor is it alone. Holy Spirit causes the battling Christian to have victories...again and again. Be confident, dear Brothers and Sisters here at OIC, and you will be amazed how you sense Holy Spirit's causing victories beyond your control or ability.

Let Us Pray:

REFERENCES

{ } - Pastor Bruce's added notes for clarity

AMPC - Amplified Bible, Classic Edition

EBC - Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament
2004

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NABRE – New American Bible (Revised Edition)

NASB - New American Standard – 1995 Edition