

The Law of Sin
versus
The Law of the Spirit

Bill Pinto

Prepared by Restitution Ministries

www.acts321.org

info@acts321.org

For further information please visit;

www.thewordwasmadeflesh.org

Some time ago we did a study on the nature of Christ. This study actually follows on from there regarding the two laws. Since we will study about law it is good to understand and define law in some way. A law means a rule or a regulation. We have civil laws, laws of physics, natural laws, health laws and moral laws; many different laws. And one thing they all have in common is that they are absolute, that is why a law is called a law. It is absolute; it is binding; it is non-negotiable. Even if we do not like them. They govern our lives; they impact our lives. Even if we are not happy with them, they still demand a response. they govern how we live, they govern how we work, how we drive on the road. For example, there is a law of health. The law of health says that we need to drink water. We need to hydrate the body. If we do not like that law, if we disagree with it, we can stop drinking water. But what will happen? We will dehydrate; we will get sick and eventually we would die. It is a law. A law is a law. It demands a response. It will control and impact upon our lives depending upon how we

respond. The law of gravity; let us say we work on the tenth floor of an office building, and when it is time to knock off we can take the elevator or the stairs, or we can step out the window. Because of the law of gravity – we know what will happen if we do that. We can disagree with it but we know what will happen. Laws are binding, friends. When something is called a law it has an authority. Civil laws are enforced by the state and they bring penalties when we disobey them. Health laws, as we saw with water, when we break health laws, we get sick. There are penalties, there are consequences. They control how we live. Just as gravity controls our actions, the road laws control how we drive. And health laws control how we eat, drink and how we live. We have no say in these laws, they impact upon our lives whether we like them or not. It is very important to understand this principle as we study Romans 7. These laws demand a response. There are repercussions depending on how we respond to them, and they affect our character, they affect our reputation, they affect our

health and even our finances. For example, the law of stealing, we are not to steal, this is a civil law, and it is also God's moral law.

<u>Citizen A</u>	<u>Citizen B</u>
Steals:	Obeys the Law
Breaks the Law, Condemned	Lives honestly
Penalised	Respected in society
Thief	Honest
Regarded untrustworthy	Regarded as an upstanding citizen
Bad character	Good Character

Notice how the consequences from obeying or breaking a law affects us. Citizen A on the left breaks the law, he steals, therefore there is a condemnation involved, he is condemned, there is a penalty, he is penalised, he is regarded as a thief, he is regarded as untrustworthy in society, and he is beginning to develop a bad character. This bad reputation is all because he disobeyed the law.

Citizen B on the right obeys the same law. He

lives honestly and respectably. He is respected in society. He is regarded as an upstanding citizen and he is developing a moral and a good character in society. But notice it was how they responded to that law, which determined the impact upon them. It impacted upon them with penalties, which impacted upon their character and how they are living their lives. It also impacts on others whom they affect by their actions of course. Their characters and the penalty, reward or recognition they received, is dependent on how they responded to that law. And it could be a bad law, an inhumane law. For example, a law that constrains against our conscience or forces our conscience to do something that we conscientiously feel is wrong. Our character will still be developed according to how we respond to that law whether it is good or bad. It may test our loyalty to God one day.

With this in mind let us come to Romans chapter seven. We will study from Romans 7:19 through to Romans 8:4, eleven consecutive verses. We will go a little deeper than we did last time. As

we look at these verses, please take note not to pay too much attention to the chapter break between end of chapter 7 and beginning of chapter 8. When the Bible was written there was no punctuation nor chapter headings. The translators tried as best they could to submit the chapter headings where they felt it was right. In this study, just ignore that a new chapter has started as this is a continuing dialogue. In fact, when we get to chapter 8 verse 1, Paul is really climaxing the point he is making in the previous verses. So let us understand how Paul is speaking to us in the conversation. Starting in chapter 7 at verse 19, Paul the apostle, is actually reflecting on his past, before he met the Lord. And there was a lot of frustration. He says:

“For the good that I would I do not.”

Romans 7:19.

Let us just stop there and notice that for a moment. *‘The good that I would,’* what does that tell you about him? Does he have a knowledge of good? Yes. He says ‘the good that I would’ shows that he wants to do good. Where does this

knowledge reside? In his mind, in his conscience. So here is an unconverted man – keep this in mind. He is unconverted, he is struggling with sin. But he wants to do good. He desires to do good. ‘The good that I would I do not’; he has a conscience. Reading on:

... *“but the evil which I would not, that I do.”*

Rom 7:19.

Does he desire to do evil? No, *‘the evil that I would not,’*. But sadly he says, *‘that I do’*. Friends, this is not a converted man speaking, like some brethren want to tell you. Look at Romans 6.

This is how a converted man speaks.

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Romans 6:17-18

The converted man is free from sin, friends; he is a servant of righteousness, verse 22. *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to*

God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Romans 6:22

So this person, this man in Romans 7 we are reading about, he is struggling; he wants to do good but only does evil. This is an unconverted man but God is speaking to his conscience. God is striving with him, He is trying to get him to do what is right. Back to chapter 7 and verse 20:

“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Rm 7:20

The previous verse said ‘*For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do*’. Romans 7:19. Now he tells us what that evil is that he does, what he calls it, verse 20, ‘*but sin that dwelleth in me*’. This sin that is dwelling in him that causes him to do what he does not want to do, is the flesh, or the carnal nature or we can call it the fallen nature. It is part of every one of us. And that is what is causing him, or prompting him or leading him in the wrong direction, even though his conscience is striving and he wants to do what is right. It is his carnal nature that is causing him to do

what is evil. Notice then what he calls this ‘*sin that dwelleth in me*’. The next verse is very important. The sin that dwelleth in me, what is it? Verse 21:

“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” Romans 7:21

We see what he calls it? The sin that dwelleth in me, he calls it a law. It is the law of sin. Remember what we said about a law? It is binding, whether we like it or not. We have to respond to it. Depending on how we respond, our character is developed, for good or for bad. It is a law of sin and it is dwelling in me, it is dwelling in all of us. The law of sin, simply friends, means the law of selfishness. It means self. When we obey this law, there are repercussions; there are selfish acts that come out of our lives, out of our words. Selfishness brings forth lust, pride, envy, immorality, gluttony, greed, theft, lying, violence, etc. It all comes from self. It is always self. If we deny self; none of these things will ever appear in our lives. It is self we are wanting to please and we will do things that are not appropriate. When we live selflessly we live for the

other person, that is how relationships grow stronger. When self gets in the way that is when relationships fall apart. Please understand this point. Every human being, born of Adam, has been subject to this law, since the fall of Adam, yes, every human being! It is part of every man's nature, it is our fallen sinful nature; 'the sin that dwelleth in me.' We all receive it as a consequence of Adams disobedience, look at verse 14:

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.” Romans 7:14

Adam sold us all out; he disobeyed God and the whole human race received the consequences of it. But it is imperative that we understand the difference between sin and its effects. Sin and its consequences are not the same thing. Sin is our own individual act. It is not something we are born with, even though we have the weakness there. It requires an action of our will. Let me give you an example, every time something terrible happens in the world, who often gets the blame for it? God. They always say, 'it is an act of God', 'where is God

when all these things are happening?’ or ‘when all these children are starving?’ etc. ‘All this injustice, where is God?’ Understand the difference between sin and the effects of sin. It is because people do not understand this principle, that they say things like that. Sin brings suffering and death, friends, not God. And sin is disobedience to God’s law. Let me give you a hypothetical example. Let us say that tomorrow an entire city, every citizen living in that city, does not sin anymore. It is hypothetical so do not try to imagine it being true, it is just an illustration. The entire city tomorrow does not commit another sin ever again. What would happen to that city? What would happen to that society? Would there be any more violence? Infidelity? Killing? Stealing? Hatred? Divorces? Greed? Immorality? There would be none of these, it would all be gone. The moment they stop sinning it all goes. There would be no crime, so no need for any police. With no police to charge anyone, there would be no need for any courts. With no courts of law, there would be no need of any prisons. And no

need for insurance policies. It is all gone, because people stopped sinning. Why is there no crime? Because there is no more self, no more selfishness. If there is no selfishness, what replaces it? What is the opposite of selfishness? Selflessness. If we do not have one we automatically have the other. We either live selfishly, we act selfishly, or we live selflessly. The word selflessness means:

- **Noun 1. selflessness** – the quality of unselfish concern for the welfare of others
- **2.** The quality of not putting yourself first but being willing to give your time or money or effort etc. For others;

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/selflessness>

By the way, that is the law of heaven. It is called the law of self-sacrificing love. It is the law Jesus lived by, every moment of His life even though He was subject to the same law we are studying (the law of sin), but this law of selflessness was the law that governed His life. His will was always surrendered to His Father, ‘not My will but Thy

will'. He lived always for others. When we begin to live like this, we will not see any more crime or sin, and we will not be blaming God. God is working every moment to help and to heal and to protect and to provide. When there is no more selfishness, there will be no more poor, there will be no more hungry, there will be no more homelessness and no more nursing homes because now this law is being practised and obeyed. It is not just not doing wrong, the opposite principle immediately becomes part of our nature, and that is doing good and helping others so we can have a beautiful society. This is exactly what heaven is about. That is why it is our character we take with us to heaven. God changes our nature but not our character. If we do not overcome here, we will not ever get to heaven, because iniquity will never arise a second time.

Can we see that suffering and injustice is not from God, but rather that it is our disobedience to God that leads to it? The moment we begin obeying, those things disappear. It is true that we never see a whole city converted from sin. But nonetheless it can be true for us individually, in our lives. It can be true in our families, it can be true in our church. And it can make a difference to those around us in

society. Sin, friends, is our own act. There is a difference between sin and the consequences it brings. The law of sin dwells in everyone, whether we are converted or not, whether we are Christians or not, it does not matter, it is always there; we are still to keep self surrendered. *Everyone is subject to this law their whole life.* Only when Jesus returns and we are glorified is this law no longer part of our nature. But until then we must fight it every moment of our lives. Even the best Christian living in victory still has to keep the flesh surrendered. What I am trying to say is that the law of sin is not the direct cause of suffering and death; it is when one responds to this law and acts selfishly, that is what brings suffering and all its consequences. With this understanding we can see how Christ took our nature, yet He never sinned. Those who teach that the law of sin is sin, and that the law of sin that dwelleth in us is sin, are teaching that we will always be sinners, because that law of sin never leaves us, it is part of us always, (until glorification). The other problem we have is we must try to change Christ's nature if the law of sin is sin itself; because we cannot have Him taking part of that. We will see at the end of the study how crucial it is

that He partook of that, that He was made subject to that (law of sin), it is everything to us.

Every Christian in the world is still subject to the law of sin, friends. But we need to regard sin intelligently. For example, the sacrificial offerings that God ordained in the Old Testament, all those innocent animals that were killed. We look at that and we think it is bloodthirsty, we think it is cruel and of course it is in many ways, but God was trying to teach a lesson. He did not want us to sacrifice animals. He wanted his people to stop sinning. And when they would take a beautiful innocent lamb that they had brought up, and have to cut its throat, that was supposed to strongly impress upon them that an innocent was suffering for what they did! And that was supposed to stop them from sinning. When we understand how our sins affect others, especially Jesus, that is the strongest motivation to want to stop sinning, particularly because God has placed in our conscience the desire to do good. But sadly they turned the whole system into a system of works; they would sin, sacrifice, and think they were forgiven and continue to sin and live. It is the same in the church today, there is no difference, except

we do not sacrifice lambs. We just sin and ask God to forgive us. Tomorrow we sin and we ask God to forgive us again and so we continue. That is not the Christian victory, friends. This is exactly what was happening to the man in Romans 7. So we need to be intelligent regarding sin. In Hebrews 3:13 sin is called *'the deceitfulness of sin'*. It is a beautiful verse. When something is deceitful it means we did not receive what we were promised, what we expected, we were deceived. When something is deceitful, (and sin is called deceitful,) it promises people pleasure, prosperity, etc. But do they receive it? Maybe for a season but then it only brings emptiness, loss, broken relationships and eventually eternal destruction. That is what sin brings. The true Christian, he has peace, love and joy in this world, in this life. He is a blessing to others. He can see his children blessed of God, and he has that eternal assurance, *'blessed assurance Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine.'* That is true Christian living and that is what brings us peace, nothing in this world can bring us peace. When we look at Hollywood, we see the stars, etc. we look at their lives, they are full of scandal, they are full of drugs and full of broken relationships. They have

money, they have fame, but they do not have peace. Only God can fill that void. And we can only have that void filled when we surrender to Him and allow Him to live out His life in us.

Come back to Romans 7. We are up to verse 21. We saw that Paul calls *‘the sin that dwelleth in me’* a law. And we saw that these laws impact upon us and demand a response from us. When we respond to this law, the law of sin, it brings suffering and condemnation. And of course we start developing an unrighteous character. But God does not allow us to come into this world hopeless, friends. It sounds pretty discouraging but please read the next verse now. This is a beautiful verse, because this verse is right in the centre of this lament about how he feels so frustrated and helpless and can only do evil. Look what he says in verse 22:

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:” Romans 7:22

We read about the law of sin, now we are reading about the law of God. (You) see in every human being, there are two laws in operation, not only one; there are two. There is God’s law, which is what we saw in Paul’s conscience, he wanted to do good, he did not want to do what was wrong

because the law of God is there, it is in his mind. God has placed it in his conscience, and he delights in it. He does not want to live in sin. *'I delight in the law of God'*. Both are part of his nature. The inward man, that means his mind, his conscience, his inner being. So how can we teach that the mind itself is sin?

What we are reading here in scripture, is an unconverted man, who delights in his mind after the law of God because God has placed in us, in our minds, in our consciences, a knowledge of right from wrong. He has placed His law there. And that is what strives with us. God's standard of moral virtue is a knowledge of good, and it is in everyone's mind. (And he delights in it, even though he is unconverted he delights in it, he wants to obey God.) He also gives us a desire to want to obey. It is beautiful. When we read these verses carefully it is really wonderful. Not only has He placed His law there, His knowledge of good, but He has also placed in our natures a desire to want to obey that law.

The man in Romans 7 has a knowledge of good, he has a desire to do good. But there are two opposing laws, forces, in his nature that are striving

with one another. They are both called laws and they both demand a response. Depending on which law he responds to, this will determine his character and his eternal destiny. And they both impact upon his life. And this is critical to understand: our eternal destiny depends upon the one to which we respond and obey. If we obey the law of sin, it not only brings us an unrighteous character, it not only brings us unhappiness now, but eternal loss also. But, choosing to obey the law of God, brings righteousness, love, joy, peace and victory and of course, eternal life.

Come with me to Romans chapter 2. Notice a passage where we clearly see that God has placed His law in our minds, even if we do not know Him. It is close to everybody. Romans 2:14-16:

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.”

Romans 2:14

In this passage when it refers to Gentiles it means everyone who is not a Jew. This includes Moslem people, people in Africa and those remote places, Eskimos, people who have never heard of God, people who have never heard the Gospel. It

does not matter who you are; Gentile covers them all. *'Which have not the law'*, in other words they have never heard of God's law, they have never heard of God's requirements or His word. But look what it says about them. Remember when we saw; *'I delight after the law of God after the inward man'*. Look what it says here about people who have never heard of God or the Bible or a minister. It says they have not the law, but by nature they do the things contained in the law. People tell us our nature is sin. This verse is telling us that people in their human nature, who do not even know God, do the things contained in the law. In other words they are living honestly, obediently and righteously. And they have never heard of the law. Where did that come from? We saw in Romans 7:22 that God has placed it there. It is part of our nature. There are two laws operating in us. Look what it goes on to say: *"...these having not the law, (repeats it a second time) are a law unto themselves: (why?) Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, ..."*
Romans 2: 14-15

Notice that? The conscience bears witness that the law of God – His moral standard – has been

written in their hearts. Now watch this; “...***and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;***” Romans 2:15

In the Judgment, God will not call witnesses if we are lost, to show the things we did and give evidence. God will show us that our thoughts condemned us. Our thoughts either excused us or accused (condemned) us. The reason God does that is because God has placed in us a knowledge of His law, a knowledge of doing right, and a desire to want to do right. If we go against that knowledge, we need to have an active thought to disobey, so it is our very thought that condemns us, *‘their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another’*, when?

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”
Romans 2:16

Notice Friends, that is what condemns us in the judgment because God has placed it there to begin with.

So although we can obey the law, even if we have not received firsthand knowledge of it since its part of our nature, nonetheless, the bad news is in Romans 3, it says:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” Romans 3:23

We have all responded to this law of sin at some point in our lives, and for many of us, many times in our lives. And the news gets worse because the Bible says; ***“For the wages of sin is death; ...”*** Romans 6:23; eternal death. So we have all sinned and the wages of that is eternal death and separation. But there is also good news. The news of the gospel.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation (atoning sacrifice) for our sins.”

1 John 4:10

Yes, we have sinned. Yes, we are facing eternal loss; but God did something about it. He did it before we were born. He planned it. He sent His Son to be a sacrifice for our sins. That beautiful chapter in Isaiah:

“...the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:6

“...for he shall bear their iniquities.”

Isaiah 53:11

God placed on His Son every sin we will ever commit in our lives, before we were born. Every sin

we will ever commit has already been paid for; this is really good news. The gospel is powerful. Sin has all been paid for. Our sins were purchased. We come into this world acquitted and justified, free and innocent and on probation and with the moral law working in our lives, as we have been seeing. We all have a knowledge of God's law and a desire to follow it even though the law of sin is there. God has done all this for us before we were born. It is not our sins that will keep us out of heaven, but our unwillingness to depart from them; because our sins have been purchased. But when we are unwilling to depart from them and we continue to live in them, then God cannot save us, otherwise heaven would not be heaven, it would have the same problem we are having down here.

Back to Romans 7, in verse 22 we saw that the apostle says he delights in the law of God after the inward man, and we saw that was God's law written in his conscience, a knowledge of and wanting to do what is right. But unfortunately, even though he delights after the law of God and wants to do good, notice what happens in verse 23:

“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.”Romans 7:23

Notice the war that is going on. Come to Galatians 5 for a moment. Notice the battle that is going on. And he is losing. This battle is always ongoing:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: (there’s the war) and these are contrary the one to the other: (these are the 2 laws friends) so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”Galatians 5:17

This is exactly what Paul is experiencing there when he is brought into captivity. They fight against each other, and we cannot do the things we want to do. Look at Galatians 6:8

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”
Galatians 6:8

When we choose to obey that law of sin as we have been seeing, it brings forth an unrighteous character and sin. So once again there are consequences depending upon the law to which we respond.

Back in Romans 7:23. We see how hopeless

and utterly despairing his condition is. He is losing the battle. The law of sin was warring against the law of his mind, even though he wanted to do what is right. But it has brought him into captivity. It seems he cannot escape. And look what he cries out in utter despair. Look how hopeless the situation is:

“O wretched man that I am! (The next word is the most important word in the chapter) who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”
Romans 7:24

The Pharisee receives the gospel. Now he realises he has a death sentence. He realises he is lost and defeated. But the word ‘*who*’ is so critical in this chapter. We will see this more clearly later on, but for now we see he has been fighting in his own strength and he realises he has come to the point where no matter how much he wants to do good, even though he has a moral understanding of good and a desire to do good, he is brought into captivity to the law of sin. He realises that of himself, he cannot free himself and he says, ***who, who*** can free me? Who can deliver me? Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? What a beautiful verse.

All his efforts to do good are continually failing. He cries out for help. He needs a power from outside of him in order to receive deliverance from this law. Up until now he has not heard the gospel, but now something happens. This man of Romans 7, the apostle Paul has an answer to his question, *‘who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’*

Look at verse 25 it is such a beautiful text, look at the very first words he says. From crying out as a wretched hopeless sinner who is lost; see what he says next:

“I thank God through Jesus Christ...”

Romans 7:25

He heard the gospel and he accepted it. He heard that there was Someone who could deliver him from the law of sin. This is a converted man speaking now; this is no longer a man who is frustrated and helpless as in the previous verse.

Look what he says:

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind (which was previously in captivity) I myself serve the law of God;”

Romans 7:25

Notice he is physically the same man, but he

is serving the law of God now. What happened to the flesh? Remember we said, they are both there? The law of sin is the flesh. The law of God is God's moral standard, of wanting to do what is right. They are both there. They are there before we are converted, we all know that. They are there after we are converted. We all know that too. We do not need a Bible to teach this. We know it, because every day we know we need to surrender wrong thoughts. We need to dart a prayer to heaven when there is a temptation before our eyes or a temptation to say a wrong word. The flesh is still there friends. The flesh serves the law of sin. The flesh will always serve the law of sin, but it is not controlling the mind anymore. The mind is serving the law of God. And the flesh never disappears; a converted man still has a sinful nature, but his converted mind can now control his flesh.

Those who teach that our nature is sin will never ever answer this objection. Not to mention many others. They teach nature is sin; but our nature now is still sinful and fallen. But we are not sinners. Jesus had a nature like ours, yet He never sinned. Because nature is not sin, nature will never be sin.

Lucifer sinned in heaven with a holy nature. Adam sinned in Eden with a holy nature. They are two separate entities — sin and nature.

Notice the difference from verse 23 to verse 25. In verse 23 this law of sin was warring against the law of his mind, in other words, God's law. And it would bring him into captivity to the law of sin; he could not escape, he cries out, who shall deliver me?

Romans 7:23 “*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.*”

Romans 7:25 “*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.*”

In verse 25 now for the first time we read about Somebody else; before it was himself trying to overcome, but now he says I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, so with the mind I myself serve the law of God. The mind is no longer captive;

it is serving the law of God. Do you know what this word ‘serve’ means? It is a really powerful word. It means to be a slave to, to be in total subjection to. It means to do service, it means to obey.

1398. douleuo *dool-yoo'-o* from 1401; to be a slave to (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary): – be in bondage, (do) serve(-ice).

He is saying here I am a slave to God. I am in service to God. My mind is in obedience to God. This is total, complete deliverance from sin. And that is exactly what the next verse says in Chap 8:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,...” Romans 8:1

There is no more condemnation because *now* he is converted. He received the gospel, he heard about Christ not only justifying him for his sins but imparting power to him to overcome his sins; so there is no more condemnation now to them which are in Christ Jesus. Please notice *now* how often Paul starts mentioning Christ. Why is there no more condemnation? What does the rest of the verse say?

“...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:1

He is now exercising his will to obey that voice in the conscience. He is now walking after the Spirit, denying the flesh.

As in this little illustration, two paths are before us:

The law of sin, which is the flesh bringing forth unrighteousness, etc, and there is the law of God.

He is no more under condemnation now as we read in Romans 8:1 *‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’* To walk after means to follow. He has now been enabled to follow the Spirit’s promptings. He has made a decision. That is what changed things: he exercised his will in obedience to God. When we are walking after the Spirit friends, it means we are obeying the law of God in His strength and power.

Please notice something with me here. Remember we saw the analogy of a city that had been converted? Not only would there be no more crime, violence, suffering, injustice, etc. but at the same time, selflessness would rule. So there would

be no more nursing homes, no more needy and poor, because those people who turned from their sins would be helping those more underprivileged ones. Another law takes over. The moment we choose to obey the law of God, we deny the other law. The moment we obey the law of sin we deny the law of God. They are opposites, they will always be opposites. When we obey one, the other one immediately is denied. And this battle is in the conscience friends, it is always taking place. We know this. Again I could do a whole study on it, but we know this. Practical everyday living tells you this. There are people right here, who know that they are still struggling with things, as I do. So we know it still goes on. We always need to *choose*, and give our will to God, so we are able to walk down the right path. This takes place before conversion; very much so.

It is not true what people say; that when we are not converted we do not know what sin is. That is not true. I remember before I was converted, I did not like doing the things that I did and that is exactly what Romans 7 is talking about. Many people do not like the lives they are living, do not like the consequences of their choices, do not like

to see their children suffer. They do not like to see that they are causing suffering to others, because they have a conscience, which, friends, God has placed there. They have a desire to do good, so that battle is there before conversion, and it is there *even more* afterwards. Because when we are converted our conscience is enlightened; and we have a much deeper, finer understanding of sin. God shows us things that we were not even aware of before. Read the 38th Psalm, the first dozen or so verses. It is a beautiful Psalm. I study the Psalms with my family every morning. That is a beautiful Psalm to understand the battles/wars that go on in the conscience; David is speaking about his own personal experience.

Did you know that this point here proves emphatically, that we cannot be born sinners? That it is impossible? Because our nature does not change. It does not change. We are still sinful; the law of sin is still there. The law of sin is not sin. It is only when we obey it that sin is produced. This sin principle is still part of your nature, friends. The flesh never disappears.

Notice this in Romans 8 verse 12.

“Therefore, brethren,(the apostle here is speaking to Christians, he calls them brethren) ***we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.”***
Romans 8:12

If our flesh disappears why is the apostle speaking to Christians and admonishing them not to walk after the flesh? Because it is still there, of course it is. That is why he says, *‘brethren, we should not walk after the flesh.’* Like us today, we should not walk down the wrong path, because, of course, the weakness is still there. Selfishness still abides in our nature.

Look at verse 13:

“For if you live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”Romans 8:13

Once again we see that conflict, that struggle going on between the two laws.

God has endowed us with free will, with moral powers, with a conscience, a good conscience, and with a desire to want to obey that conscience, and the voice of God speaks to that conscience through His Holy Spirit.

Look at Romans 6 and verse 16. It is our choice that determines our character and our sin or victory.

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Romans 6:16

Yielding means making a decision, (choosing or surrendering,) taking one path or the other. It is to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, it is unto whom we exercise our will to obey, that determines whose servants we are. The WILL is the governing power in the nature of man.

This is a really good text for righteousness by faith because notice two main points it brings out. In order to receive righteousness by faith the first thing we need to do is to yield. In other words, exercise our will in obedience to God. Yield to His commandments, yield to His word. And then it requires something else, *‘unto whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey.’* (It needs obedience.) First a willing mind, and then we need actions; we need obedience, to confirm that the actions of our will are truly for God. That is what brings *‘unto us righteousness’*. Yielding our will to God, and then

obeying as He reveals His will to us. This is what our next verse states. We are up to Romans 8 verse 2; this is exactly what the apostle discovered. Remember we said that it is a response to a law that impacts upon your character? It says;

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”Romans 8:2

As he obeyed one, it freed him from the other one, and from its condemnation. He had to exercise his will in obedience to God. What does it mean *‘in Christ Jesus’*? Come back to Romans 8:1 for a moment, notice this with me;

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, ...”

What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? Let us read on:

“...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”Romans 8:1

To be in Christ Jesus means we are walking after the Spirit, we are following after the Spirit’s promptings. Notice this;

“For the law of the Spirit of life...hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”Romans 8:2

To be in Christ Jesus means to be obeying the law of the Spirit or the promptings of the Spirit, yielding to it. Look at Romans 8:10

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; (once again we see that sin principle is still there) but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Romans 8:10

When we receive the Spirit of Christ, whose life do we receive? If Christ be in you... we know that the life of Christ is the Spirit of Christ. When we receive His Spirit, walk after His Spirit, we are receiving His life. The following is important. Notice this with the middle part faded out;

If Christ be in you... The Spirit is life because of righteousness.

The Spirit of Christ, brings the life of Christ, it brings the righteousness of Christ. That is why the apostle says in Romans 8:2 ***‘For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’*** As he was receiving Christ’s life through His Spirit, he was receiving His righteousness, and living victoriously. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the righteous life of Christ.

In February of 2012 I preached a sermon called, 'But There The King Is But A Beggar'. Some of us may remember it. And I made this statement. That 'the righteousness of Christ is the life of Christ, and the life of Christ is the light of all men'. This is Biblical, friends. That was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. When we receive Christ, we receive His life through His Spirit. And that Spirit brings the very righteousness of Christ; it is the life that He lived.

I want to show you something interesting now. God is truly leading us. In the General Conference of 1893, there was a lot of recovery from the rejection of the message of 1888; a lot of recovery from it. And they started to be more humble and accepting of the message of Waggoner and Jones. I want you to notice with me now, according to one leading brother, who was at that conference session, — as he was recording, he actually wrote quite a bit, regarding that session. He noted what the fundamental point was, of that GC session of 1893, we saw this in February this year. I never received this from any man. The Lord revealed this when I was studying. Not that I need to show this to you, you would know this fact. But

notice what happened to our church in 1893, the great revelation it brought out, according to L. H. Christian, who was at those meetings, and this is from a book called ‘The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts’, page 241. I am indebted to a brother in Ballarat, a dear brother who has done some tremendous research, it has been a real blessing to us.

Notice what L. H. Christians said, remember what we saw here? The righteousness of Christ is His life and it is the life that He lived? And the life with which He lights all men. Look what they discovered in 1893 after the rejection of the message of 1888.

“It was really at the General Conference session in 1893 that light on justification by faith (they would use that term interchangeably with righteousness by faith — that is what he is talking about) that the light of the message of 1888 seemed to gain its greatest victory, and it was thought that it is the righteous life of Christ here on earth (the life He lived on earth) that is imputed to us by faith which brought great blessing” L. H. Christian, ‘The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts’, page 241

This is really important friends; we will see

how important this is now. It is the life He lived on earth, this is the message of 1888; the nature of Christ was the absolute heart of it, the absolute centre of the gospel. The life He lived on earth in a nature like ours, which is imputed to us by faith; and is what brought that great blessing, is that which would have finished the work. And this is what made the difference to the man in Romans 7 who was struggling. He could not overcome, he was in captivity to the law of sin. This is what made the difference: he heard the gospel. We will see this in a moment. He heard something that could turn him from a man who was in captivity to a man who could say *'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death'*. What was it that he heard? What was he taught? We know it was his will and he chose to obey. He chose to say, *'No'* to the law of sin and chose to obey the law of God but, notice what else he said previously in verse 18. His will was determined. Especially a Pharisee. He said, *'for to will is present with me;'* Romans 7:18, he wanted to do what was

good. He wanted to do what was right. He was willing to do what was good, to live righteously, however the problem was, *'but how to perform that which is good I find not.'* Romans 7:18. He was willing, but not able.

The human will is very, very powerful. I think we do not realise how powerful the human will is. When we look at some stories of survival, and at some stories of prisoners of war, and we see to what extent people will go to survive, it is truly incredible, it is amazing how powerful the human will is. But the human will, as powerful as it is, cannot stop us from sinning. We still need a power from outside of ourselves. This is the problem of Romans 7; it is exactly what he is talking about. This is the message of Romans 7. That is why he cried out *'who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'* Even with the will of a Pharisee, he could not perform that which he wanted to do, which was good. He was willing, but he had no power. He was trying to overcome in his own strength, but he was continually failing. The law of

sin held him in bondage.

Now notice carefully; it is really interesting. Have you ever heard commentators talk about Romans 7, or Bible students who say “what in the world is this chapter doing between Romans 6 and Romans 8?” Because Romans 6 is a chapter about total victory over sin, Romans 8 continues that theme and the love of God giving His Son to die and walking in the Spirit, etc. Two of the most positive uplifting chapters of the Bible are Romans 6 and Romans 8. Sandwiched between them, we have chapter 7; describing a man who cannot stop sinning, who cannot do good, of total frustration and hopelessness. The apostle knew what he was doing. He knew why he put that chapter there. If we do not understand this chapter, we can never overcome sin because we do not know what the problem is. He was trying to overcome in his strength. He had not heard the gospel, or he was rejecting it, I believe he had not heard it, yet nonetheless notice some verses in Romans 7;

7:18 For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do.

7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

7:22 I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

7:23 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.

Notice here he is relating his struggle and his total helplessness to overcome. Because he is trying to overcome in his own strength and trying to do what is right but failing. He then cries out in verse 24 in utter desperation, saying:

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

Notice when he receives the gospel how he speaks. Look Who he begins to talk about more significantly. The first thing he says, Romans 7:25 ***“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** (He heard the gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. His life, death and resurrection, His power to forgive sins,

then he says) ***“So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God;”***

8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” (Before he was working in his own strength. Now he is looking to Christ Jesus, looking to God and to His Son).

8:2 “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free” (from the law that previously held him captive) ***“from the law of sin and death.”***

8:4 “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk...after the Spirit.”

Now he is speaking about God, and is talking about Christ, he is talking about the Spirit. Before he was talking about himself and his own frustration of trying to overcome. We see in Romans 7 he is trying to fight the battle in his own strength. In Romans 8 he is converted; and now it is the Spirit of Christ Who is fighting the battle for him. He is simply surrendering his will to Jesus. In Romans 7 from verse 7 to 24, which is the whole passage that articulates this desperate struggle, not once do we hear of the Spirit or of Christ. Not once. It is simply not there. In fact in the whole chapter of Romans 7, Christ and the Spirit are mentioned only once, earlier on, but not dealing with this war

that is going on. When we get to chapter 8 Christ is constantly referred to, *Jesus Christ* is mentioned 12 times. *The Spirit* in one chapter is mentioned 20 times. You see the difference? The first thing he says is, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Now he starts talking about the deliverance that Jesus wrought for him through His Spirit. He is no longer trying to overcome in his own strength. He is overcoming in the strength of Christ, that is why he can say, *I thank God through Jesus Christ.* Previously he said, *to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* (Rm7:18) but now he has found out how to do that which is good; trusting in his Saviour and the life that *He* lived. We will see now how crucial that is and that it is the entire lesson of Romans 7, friends. We need to have an intelligent faith. We must have a power outside of us; the will must be used to exercise faith in a power that is outside of us. We can give Him our will, and He will work in us ***“to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*** Phil 2:13. We will have strength from above to hold us steadfast. We will be enabled to live a new life when we give our will to Christ. But we need to have an intelligent faith. I have given this illustration

before, and it is one that I have read in the book 'Saved by Grace.' It is a beautiful illustration. Imagine a huge tree. It is so large it is in the way and needs to be removed. So we take a really heavy sharp axe, and place it in the hands of Diego, a young boy. And we say "Diego, please cut this tree down," but he cannot even lift the axe up because it is so heavy and he is just a young boy. Now we may 'will' all we want that this young boy is going to cut down the tree; but he will never be able to perform our desire. This is the man's problem in Romans 7, the experience of Romans 7, he was willing, but that which he wanted to do he could not perform. And so he had to look outside of himself, but looking outside of himself is not enough. He needs evidence. He needs to know that someone can get rid of that tree.

And so Diego's father comes along, he is a strong man, and you put the axe in his hands. How long do you think the tree will be there now? What happened to our faith? It just exploded. We have total faith now. Total faith; because now we see not only the instrument but we see the man who is wielding it. And we know that that tree will not be there much longer. In this way we need to have an

intelligent faith. Paul, when he heard the gospel, was not just hearing the gospel: he had to hear what it was about the gospel that could give him this victory he had so desired his whole life. He struggled to achieve this, but could not. These are my words. When Paul received the gospel, he knew where to exercise his faith. He placed his will in Christ. *“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord...the law of the Spirit of Life hath made me free from the law of sin and death”*

It was an intelligent faith, friends. Paul understood his problem. His problem was the law of sin as we saw in Romans 7:23. It held him in captivity and he could not overcome it, nor could any other man; there is no point having faith in anyone else. The law of sin has held every man captive since the fall of Adam. This was the obstacle, this was the problem that God, and all humanity faced, this law of sin; and it is really important now. This law of sin is holding everyone captive. The greatest Pharisees could not keep it. No one could. Moses and Abraham could not. We have all sinned and fallen short. What does God do? The law of sin is the problem; and He has to overcome this problem, so what does He do? In order to save

man He has to defeat this law. He has to! He cannot ignore it. He must get this law out of the way. He must defeat it. This law holds us captive to sin. The wages of sin is death. For God to free us from sin He must free us from this law.

The only way God could defeat this law, and save man, was to send His Son, subject to this same law, in His flesh, and never once to respond to it. Thus He would condemn that law in the flesh. And He would free man from its power. That is what Paul discovered. That is the power of the gospel.

That is what is being destroyed today; this is everything to us. That is what Paul was striving with in Romans 7 and in chapter 8 when he hears the gospel. He hears Someone came, and He lived a perfect life, His whole life, and then He offered that life on the cross and it paid for his sins. And now He wants to impart that victorious life to him. That is what God had to do. If we call the law of sin, 'sin'; we have to change Jesus' nature, which is what people are thinking to do today. The moment we attempt to change His nature He is no longer subject to that law that holds everyone else captive. We then can have no reason to have faith in Him helping us because He never would have dealt with

our temptations and feelings. The law of sin is not sin. We saw throughout this study, there are 2 laws in our lives; and they are there before we are converted and they are there now. We all know this. God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, with those very same temptations and feelings. The next verse, Romans 8 verse 3. shows what God has to do; He is obligated to do it, He has no choice in order to free us from the power of this law. He has to defeat this law. It says in Hebrews, *'it behoved Him'*. That word *'behoved'* means He was under obligation. God?! Imagine saying that about God? He was under obligation. Amazing how powerful that verse is.

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Hebrews 2:17

Romans 8:3 says: ***“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,”*** (in other words the law of God could not produce the righteousness that it desired, and what does God do?), ***“God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,”*** (He sends His Son subject to that same

law of sin in His flesh and what does the Son do? He lives a perfect life by faith and surrender to His Father's will, and then He brings that life to the cross), "***and for sin,***" ('and for sin' He brings that life as a sacrifice to the cross to pay for our sins and then it says, He), "***condemned sin in the flesh:***" Jesus defeated the law of sin, friends. How powerful is that law of the Spirit. Much more powerful than the law of sin. Jesus defeated it. It no longer needs to hold anyone captive. This is what the apostle discovered, this was the whole theme of his hope. Everywhere he preached, all he preached about was the resurrection of Christ. How often do you hear a sermon on the resurrection these days? To be honest with you, I have not heard one in 12 years. In all my time in the church, I have not heard a sermon on the resurrection. By God's grace I plan to do a couple, because in the book of Acts this is all you read about. In Paul's epistles all you read about is the resurrection, this was the great power, the resurrection; because He defeated the law of sin that holds us captive and holds us in the tomb. He destroyed it. In His own life He destroyed its power and offers us that victory as a gift if we accept. He came out glorified and He brought the captives with

Him. He had to defeat that law in order to do so. What was the result of Jesus defeating this law? What was the result? The law that holds us in bondage? Look at the next verse, it is beautiful how he puts this argument together, look at the next verse:

Romans 8:4 ***“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,”*** You see why it is fulfilled in us now and it could not be before? The will was there but the power was missing. Now he knows from where he can receive this power. The righteousness of the law can now be fulfilled in us because Christ condemned it in His flesh. He condemned the law of sin. He lived a victorious life and now He wants to impart it to us. That is what 1888 was all about. That is what the message in 1893 (that we read earlier) was all about. The righteousness of Christ is the life He lived on earth that we may receive it by faith. That is what we are reading about here: ***“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*** Romans 8:4

If we teach that Jesus had a different nature from ours, friends, then the law of sin was never conquered in human nature, because we are

virtually saying that He did not have it, so we can never overcome it, and would join the man in Romans 7 who is struggling against sin and in that state, no one will ever overcome. The nature of Christ is the very heart of the gospel. It is the link between Romans 7 and 8, especially this verse — Rom 8:3. It is the very heart of it. That is where Paul connects the two. After verse 3, he starts talking about living victoriously in the Spirit, but all the way up to verse 3, he was talking about his failure. And then he tells us that Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh and condemned sin in that flesh and now imparts His victorious life to us; now he talks about victory through the Spirit. It is everything to us, friends — understanding this is *everything*. Even the cross is compromised if we understand the nature of Christ incorrectly because we do not really know Who lived and died for us. What He overcame. Jesus not only had to fully pay for our sins, but He had to save us from our sins. He had to do both. Not just justify us but sanctify us. He had to be fully Divine in order to pay for our sins, because no man can pay for our sins, no human being can do that. He had to be the Creator; He had to have ownership of life. He is the Creator of life

and therefore, He could say, 'I created man, only I can take life from man, he is My responsibility.' He, Jesus, is our *'everlasting Father.'* Isaiah 9:6. He had to be Fully Divine; He had to be an infinite sacrifice. He also had to be fully man. Fully Divine to pay for our sins and fully man in order to impart the life for us to overcome our sins Romans 5:9,10. The righteousness of Christ is the very life of Christ, and it is the very life He lived in our fallen nature. It is the life that conquered the law of sin and produced the righteousness of the law, and this is the life He seeks to impart to you and me. We just need to exercise the free will He gave every one of us to obey the voice of conscience. To do what is right. Paul was struggling because he did not have the gospel. Once he received the gospel and he overcame, the world was on fire. That is all he could preach about. And he did not just preach words, he preached with power; in his own life, no matter what anyone did to him, whether they were going to stone him to death, whether imprisoned and chained in Philippi with Silas, yet he was still singing hymns and praising the Lord. That very night there was an earthquake and the doors burst open, the jailer runs in, he is about to take his own

life because he is a Roman guard and the prisoners' escape would mean his death, and Paul says, '*do not do it for we are all here.*' That very night, that jailer and his family are converted and saved. It did not matter what situation Paul was in, he could praise and thank God because he knew that God was in control. He knew Christ had conquered that law. He had nothing to fear. Nor do we.

Amen.

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