



Repentance Tabernacle Church

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Life's Certain Struggles!

Scripture: Romans 7:14-25

Romans 7 explains the inability of the law of Moses or of the flesh to give power over sin. In terminology that has puzzled many, Paul asserted his continuing struggles with temptation, even though he had been delivered from slavery to the sin nature. His candid revelations offer hope; if he could find release from the condemnation resulting from failure consistently to do the right thing, all believers can. Romans 8:1 tells us, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

Under the Old Covenant, sin ruled and produced greater sinfulness. The law did not produce the fruit of life; it resulted in death. Romans 7:13 states, *"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."* But the New Covenant is radically different; those who are identified with Christ bear fruit to God. Romans 6:22 says, *"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."*

The law, considered in and of itself, is spiritual. As a perfect standard, no fault could be found with it. But every human being shares Paul's problem: human beings are **"carnal;"** that is, they share in the sin nature that springs from Adam (Romans 5:12). Because of the universal sin nature, human beings are sold under sin. That is, they are slaves to sin. The law did not curb the sins it forbade; it actually provoked people to greater sin. Sin's strong desires worked in the **"members"** of those who were under the law to produce separation from God. The law showed men their imperfections, but it made no provision for them to overcome their unworthiness and to be fully restored to right standing in the eyes of God. With the coming of Jesus Christ, the law of Moses was terminated. Romans 7:6 tells us, *"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."*

Paul's struggles are those of a regenerate man who attempts to live victoriously over the sin principle by the power of his own human abilities or by reliance upon the law of Moses. He found that when he relied on his own abilities or tried to relate to God on the basis of the law that he could not understand his own actions. **Self-reliance seemed to produce in Paul an almost schizophrenic condition:** On the one hand, he willed to do right, but he failed to practice what he willed. He engaged in practices he hated.

This will always be the experience of any person who attempts to please God by self-effort or any similar works-dominated system. Nothing else can result, or it could be said that we save ourselves. **Since salvation is a gift, it must be by grace through faith; it cannot be of ourselves, and it cannot be the result of works.** When a person relies on his own ability, God allows him to experience the frustrations described by Paul: *"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good"* (Romans 7:16). The indwelling sin nature, which conquers the law of the mind which captures the individual. The fall of man in the Garden of Eden did not completely destroy man's desire to do right (the law of the mind), but it did infuse him so powerfully with the sin nature that in his own human strength he is unable to consistently do right. When a person's **"members"** are enslaved by sin, the mind itself is brought into captivity.

Paul was driven to cry out for deliverance from his wretched condition. The sin nature abuses one's human existence, both materially and immaterially, to produce separation from God (death). Deliverance from the domination by the sin nature is available through Jesus Christ our Lord, which comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit. When Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus, from that moment forward, there was never any question in Paul's mind as to the identity of the Lord: **He is Jesus.** To be born again does not end one's experiences with temptation. Mankind life is filled with struggles. We are exhorted to press on and fight the good fight of faith. Victory belongs to those who endure to the end. Jesus Himself was tempted, although He never yielded to temptation. One great difference between Jesus' experience with temptation and our experience is that we are not consistently successful in resisting temptation. As Paul put it, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). The ability to sin resides in the power of choice God has given all humans. No matter how sincere we may be or how self-disciplined we may try to be, no one can successfully resist temptation by sheer will power or by vowing allegiance to a legal system. **We can successfully resist temptation only when we rely on our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection and only when we allow the Spirit of God to lead us.**