

Series: Romans
Title: Sanctification by the Spirit
Text: Rom 7: 14-8: 2
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In the first half of Romans 7, Paul shows how an unregenerate man cannot be justified by the law. He does not hear the law. Therefore, he thinks he is alive by the law. But when the commandment comes sin revives and his self-righteous self dies.

In the second half of Romans, Paul shows that a regenerated man cannot be sanctified by the law. Before verse 14, Paul spoke in the past tense while speaking of the time before he was regenerated. Beginning with verse 14, Paul begins speaking of himself in the present tense as a regenerated believer—“*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I AM carnal sold under sin.*” Only a regenerated sinner knows the warfare between flesh and spirit, the old man and the new man.

Subject: Sanctification by the Spirit

Proposition: The same as the law was not given to justify a sinner, the law was not given to sanctify a believer.

The believer is justified from sin. We are given liberty from sins dominion over us. The believer is dead to the law. But the regenerated believer still cannot use the law to sanctify himself. He has a new inward man but the old nature is still sin. He cannot put off his old man and put on the new man himself—he cannot mortify the deeds of the flesh himself. If it were left up to us, our sinful flesh would reign over us and keep us bound in sin. Christ alone reigns in the regenerated sinner; Christ alone delivers us from the captivity of our sinful flesh; Christ alone makes us put on the new man and put off the old by the grace of God.

Two things the Spirit of Christ does in a regenerated child of God: one, he cleanses me of guilt so that I know there is no condemnation toward me before God. Two, the Holy Spirit reigns in my inward man, putting down my flesh, so that I do not fall away in sin, apostatizing from Christ. I am kept by the power of God. This is not done through hearing the law of works but through the hearing of the faithfulness of Christ (Gal 3)

TAKING SIDES WITH GOD

Romans 7: 14: For we know that the law is spiritual: but I AM carnal, sold under sin. 15: For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16: If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is good.*

The Holy Spirit uses the law to make a regenerated sinner take sides with God against himself.

Paul begins, “*For we know.*” Only “we” who are born of God, given the unction from above, “know” but “*we know that the law is spiritual.*” When the commandment came—when God regenerated us and gave us spiritual discernment in the inner man—we began to know the law is spiritual. For the first time, we learned that it reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart; it requires truth, perfection, holiness in the inward parts; the law requires perfection inside and out. So it happened as Paul described it earlier in the chapter, when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died. The law revealed to me that in my flesh, “*I am carnal, sold under sin.*”

Now there is a new man within, a new spirit, a new nature, which does not condone sin. But I cannot control sin—*"For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."* I see that I am carnal sold under sin because *"that which I do I allow not."* This is a phrase that carries a depth of meaning. One it means, I do not excuse or approve of my sin. Two, it means *"That which I do, I know not"*—sin is in my thoughts before I know it. *"For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."*—in our new man we would do the righteousness of the law. But our old man prevents us from doing what we would. It mixes sin with all we do—*"what I would do, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."*

It is important to understand—especially for a new believer—though we *do* sin outwardly, by the power of Christ, outward sinful behavior does not dominate our lives as it once did. Yet, we see our sin more than ever! Now we see sin in our inward *thoughts*. Paul was not an outwardly immoral man before or after conversion. But before the law of God, we see our sinful thoughts are as much *"doing sin"* as our outward acts.

So the law makes us take sides with God against our own selves—*"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good."* The law makes a believer see that there is no way we can keep the righteousness of the law by our works. We cannot justify or sanctify ourselves by the works of the law. In my flesh, I am carnal sold under sin. Therefore, the law is good in that God used the law to reveal this to me.

THE "ME" THAT GOD SEES

Romans 7: 17: Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 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. 19: For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20: Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

The Spirit of God reveals the good news to us in these verses. God is speaking to every believer here. God is telling us through Paul that before God, my flesh is not the real me. Before God, the real me is my inward man. God looks upon the inward man that he has created.

Our flesh can never contribute to our salvation because in our flesh dwells no good thing. Our flesh is our sinful nature which is of Adam. Even in the regenerated believer, our old sinful nature has not been refined, purified, or made better. It will always be sin and it will only do sin. When I sin it is *"sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."*

God says to each believer—*"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."* Brethren, the only thing you and I can see is our sinful flesh. Paul would not have known this about himself. But God is speaking to us through Paul. God declares through Paul that he looks on the inward man that he created.

The inner man is created of God in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore, of God, in my inner man—*"to will is present with me."* *"But"*—due to my sinful flesh—*"how to perform that which is good I find not."* In my inner man there is—*"the good that I would."* But due to my sinful flesh—*"I do not."* In my inner man there is—*"the evil which I would not"*—but due to my sinful flesh—*"that I do."*

But here is the good news—this is how God sees me—this is what God says about me—*"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."* In the inward man, a new creation is made by God of his incorruptible seed so that there is no sin in the new man.

1 John 3: 9: Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

The new man is created after God in Christ's image.

Ephesians 4:24: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Colossians 3:10: And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

It is the inward man that God looks on.

1 Samuel 16:7...For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

2 Chronicles 6:30: Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:)

Psalm 51:6: Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

1 Peter 3:4: But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Since God looks on that inward man, he teaches Paul and you and I who are born of God—"*Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*" In my new man I am holy and righteous and Christ has dominion in my new man so that God says I am in the Spirit, not in the flesh. Therefore, God says, "*Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*"

Romans 8: 9: But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10: And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

It is true my body is dead in that my old sin nature is still only sin. But, also, before the law my body of sin was destroyed when I was crucified with Christ so that I am free [justified] from sin. My body is dead also in the sense that I am become dead to the law by the body of Christ that I be married to another even to him that is raised from the dead, that I might serve God in newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter.

Romans 8: 11: 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.

The Spirit that reigns in me will overcome my sinful nature and quicken me in my new man so that the Spirit quickens my mortal bodily members to do the good God would have me to do.

Romans 8: 12: Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16: The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

So we are in no way debtors to our sinful flesh. We can only mortify our flesh through the Holy Spirit. But we must not fear and run back to the law in an attempt to mortify our flesh. God has not given us the Spirit of bondage to fear but the Spirit to cry Abba, Father. We are the sons of God. The Spirit tells us so in our inner man.

THE REASON FOR THE WARFARE

Romans 7: 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 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. 24: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 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.

God has left this old sinful man to war against our new man to keep us looking to Christ alone.

There is a standing rule or law in every regenerated believer. This is how it is now and shall always be until we put off this body of sin in physical death. The law is this *“that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”* I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But this other law in my members wars against the law of my mind. My sinful nature brings me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. It means my sin nature overcomes my mortal bodily members.

But I thought Romans 6 said we were free from the dominion of sin over our person? So why does God allow sin to temporarily reign over us? God has left the old sinful flesh to bring us into captivity *temporally* for two reasons.

One, reason God has left our sin nature is so that we continually see that left to ourselves we cannot depend on our inward man to free us from the dominion of sin—*“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.”* If God allowed me to do the good that I will in my inward man, if I myself were able to overcome my sin, then I would boast and be overcome by greater sin.

Two, God leaves this sinful flesh, so that we continually are brought to cry out to God, confessing our sins and asking Christ to deliver us—*“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

1 John 1: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Here in Romans 7, Paul shows us that *our new man cannot do the things we would* because our sinful flesh brings us into captivity *to the law of sin that is in our members*. But in Galatians 5, Paul declares something different. He declares *our old man cannot do the things he would*. He is telling believers we must not go back to the law and live after the flesh. He shows us how our sinful nature will be mortified. *The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus* delivers us from the dominion of *the law of sin and death*, keeping our flesh from doing the sinful things it would.

Galatians 5: 16: *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17: 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. 18: But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law...

Therefore, knowing that my flesh will always be sinful, and knowing it is the Spirit of God who alone can deliver me, God gives a believer this resolve—"*So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*" This does not mean we live in sin. It simply means we understand that this warfare will always exist.

THE GOOD NEWS

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

Here is the good news, Paul has been declaring since Romans 6. He is declaring that our sinful flesh has been crucified in Christ so that there is now no condemnation. We are free from sin [justified] and free from the law's condemnation and rigorous rule—"*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" Again, Paul goes on to declare in the verses after this that it is by the work of Christ done for us that we are made righteous so that there is no condemnation.

Also, by the Spirit dwelling in our inward man, we are free from sins' dominion over our persons and are made to follow Christ and rest in him—"*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" It is not me that hath made me free. It is not my works of the law that hath made me free. I delight in the law in my inward man but I see my sin nature overcoming my inward man and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. I am free from sin's dominion because "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*"

By God's grace, by Christ's work for me and in me, every believer is free from sin's condemnation, free from sin's dominion over our person, free from the law in every way and married to Christ. We are led of the Spirit. Our flesh is mortified by the Spirit. We have no condemnation and we reign in life by God's grace by the power of Christ Jesus our Lord. And one day we will be free from sin and death's presence. Therefore, we live and walk in newness of spirit. We walk by faith in Christ, constrained by Christ's love for us. We do not go back to the oldness of the letter and live after our flesh.

Amen!