



Repentance Tabernacle Church

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The Struggle Within!

Scripture: Romans 7:14-25

Mankind's 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. Romans 7 explains the inability of the law of Moses or of the flesh to give power over sin. 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. The law did not curb the sins it forbade; it actually provoked people to greater sin (Romans 7:13).

Under the Old Covenant, sin ruled and produced greater sinfulness (Romans 6:14; 7:13). The law did not produce the fruit of life; it resulted in death (Romans 6:21). But the New Covenant is radically different; those who are identified with Christ bear the fruit of God (Romans 6:22). 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 (Hebrews 10:1-4, 11; Galatians 2:16).

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the law of Moses was terminated (Romans 7:6). Those who were under the law are now delivered from it through their identification with Jesus Christ in His death. With the passing away of the Old Covenant and the institution of the New Covenant, it is now possible to serve God in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. People no longer relate to God on the basis of "the letter," or the law of Moses, but on the basis of the presence of the Holy Spirit within them (2 Corinthians 3:6-7). Under the New Covenant, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is placed on the believer's account and the believer is reckoned by God to be as pleasing to Him as Jesus is (2 Corinthians 5:21). New Covenant service springs from the full acceptance with God already enjoyed by the believer.

Any attempt to overcome temptation by the strength of the flesh is doomed. Paul wrote, "*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*" (Romans 7:18). This demonstrates that it does no good to demand right behavior from those who are not recipients of the grace of God. Such demands merely compound the problem and drive people further into hopelessness and despair. Every human being shares Paul's problem: human beings are "carnal;" that is, we share in the sin nature that springs from Adam (Romans 5:12).

Paul's struggles are those of a regenerate man who attempted to live victoriously over the sin principle by the power of his own human abilities. Paul found that when he relied on his own abilities or tried to relate to God, that he could not understand his own actions. He wanted to do right, but he failed to practice to do what was right. He engaged in practices he hated. This will always be the experience of any of us who attempts to please God by self-effort.

Salvation is a gift, it must be by grace through faith; it cannot be of ourselves, and it cannot be the result of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). If we rely on our own ability, God will allow us to experience the frustration described by Paul (Romans 7:16). The reason for our inability to do what is right by our own power is the sin nature that dwells in us. The sin nature interacts with the flesh to produce ever-increasing sinfulness in us.

Nothing good resided in our human nature, because it is marred by sin. The Adamic nature allows a person to will to do what is right, but it does not give us the power to actually do it. When we rely on the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have the ability both to will and to do right (Philippians 2:13), but when we rely only upon our own human ability, though we can will, we cannot do. "*Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*" (Romans 7:20).

Sin conquers the mind and the individual (Romans 7:5, 8). As long as a person relies on his own ability or attempts to relate to God with his own ability, this is his experience. 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) (Romans 6:6, 12-13, 19; 7:5, 13; 8:10.)

After such a seemingly hopeless situation, Paul welcome relief comes with the good news that deliverance from domination by the sin nature is available through Jesus Christ our Lord, in His death, burial, and resurrection by the indwelling Holy Spirit.