

Romans Part 18 (7:14 – 8:15)

--INTRO:

--in 7:1-13 Paul cleared up the misconception among Pharisees that he was forsaking the law of Moses and affirmed, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (7:12).

--in 7:14 Paul goes on to say, "For we know that **the law is spiritual...**" and then he proceeds to explain throughout 7:14-8:15 that...

--our flesh is unable to follow the moral law; that is, our flesh is unable to follow what is "spiritual."
--in 7:21 Paul introduces the word "law" in the sense of a *law of nature*, and calls the inability of our flesh to follow the moral law "the law of sin" (7:23).

--only our spirit, empowered by God's Spirit, is able to follow the moral law...
--in 8:2 Paul calls this *law of nature* "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

--the unsaved in their flesh may not violate specific commandments on the surface, such as *you shall not murder or you shall not commit adultery*, but in God's eyes these simple commands are violated by attitudes of the heart...

--in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus equated hate and lust with murder and adultery (Matt. 5:21-22; 5:27-28)

--people in their flesh can do the right things on the surface, yet not do them out of love for God, which is the "greatest commandment" (Matt. 23:37-38).

--*Doing good for one's own sake rather than God's is not doing good at all, but is merely a hypocritical projection of the sin of self-love.* —John MacArthur

--"for whatever is not from faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

--the Pharisees were a classic example of doing the right things on the surface... "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:28)

--as long as we live in our sinful bodies, we won't be able to follow the moral law perfectly, but through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us we are able to reach deeper levels of obedience... turning murder in our heart (hate), and adultery in our heart (lust) to Spirit-filled love...

--"THE LAW OF SIN..."

--before Paul was saved, as a Pharisee, he was deceived into thinking he could follow the law in his flesh; if asked to describe his morality, he would have probably sounded like the Pharisee in Jesus' parable:

--Luke 18:9-14: "He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

--now that Paul is alive in his spirit, he is acutely aware of the sinfulness of his flesh and gives a self-analysis in glaring contrast to that of the Pharisees:

--Romans 7:14-23: "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin [*speaking of his sinful flesh which coexists with his spirit – clarified by verse 18*]. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to 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."

--*Paul's strong words about his condition do not indicate he was only partially saved at the time but rather emphasize that sin can continue to have dreadful power in a Christian's life and is not to be trifled with. The believer's battle with sin is strenuous and life-long... In himself, that is, in his remaining fleshly being, a Christian is no more holy or sinless than he was before salvation. –commentary by John MacArthur*

--"THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS..."

--after describing the sinfulness of his flesh Paul states, "**O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!**" (Romans 7:24-25)

--there are multiple layers of meaning in Paul's concise statement "through Jesus Christ our Lord" which tie into passages in the following chapter...

--Romans 8:1-5: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh [*that is, in our flesh we could not follow the law*], God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us [*that is Christ followed the law perfectly in our place – thus fulfilling "the righteous requirement of the law" in our place*] who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

--the Holy Spirit's presence in us is not dependent on our ability to follow the law but on Christ's ability to follow the law – on the "righteous requirement of the law" (8:4) being fulfilled on our behalf by Jesus Christ!

--therefore He will never leave, and we can say with confidence "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it..." (Philippians 1:6)

--in moments of weakness where we feel overwhelmed by the weakness of our flesh, we can confidently say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! [*my relationship with God is eternally secure because of what Jesus Christ did for me!*]"

--the Holy Spirit will never say, *you've messed up one to many times, so I'm going to leave and abandon my work of sanctification...*

--Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you.' [*when we covet we lose sight of what we have in our relationship with God!*] 6 **So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"**

--in the words of Romans 8:2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

--that is, because of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit – "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" – we'll make progress in overcoming our sins... even if it's three steps forward and two steps back.

--in the words of Romans 8:11: "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

--the Galatian church lost sight of the fact that their relationship with God was dependent on the finished work of Christ and they started to slip back into the mindset of trying to earn their way to heaven by following the law...

--Galatians 3:1-3: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

--Galatians 5:4-5: "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

--"the hope of righteousness", that is, the ultimate deliverance from our flesh will be our new bodies in heaven.

--CULTIVATE INTIMACY WITH GOD...

--Romans 8:13-14: "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but **if by the Spirit** you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are **led by the Spirit of God**, these are sons of God."

--notice that the text says **if...you** – "if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body..."

--it is by the Spirit that we overcome our flesh, but we have a responsibility to make conscious decisions to say no to sin, and as we say no to sin the Holy Spirit works in miraculous ways deep within our being.

--God wants us to be **led by the Spirit**, not dragged around on a leash by the Spirit

--again, this involves responsibility on our part... we have to make a conscious decision to follow the Spirit.

--the inner-workings of the Holy Spirit are part of an intimate relationship between us and God...

--back to Romans 8:11: "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through **His Spirit who dwells in you.**"

--the Greek word *Oikeo* is translated "dwells" and carries the meaning of being in one's own home, opposed to simply being in a place like work. **The Holy Spirit has made His home with us... He doesn't just dwell in us impersonally as if away from home at work!**

--Romans 8:15: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the **Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'**"

--*Abba Father* is an informal Aramaic term for Father that carries the meaning of intimacy, tenderness, and dependence

--*Abba Father* is only used three times in the Bible... once used by Jesus to address God the Father and twice in reference to our relationship with God (Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6)

--when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane He addressed God the Father, to whom He is intimately connected, as *Abba Father*: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." (Matt. 14:36)

--cultivating intimacy with God is the key to overcoming our flesh!

--the essence of cultivating intimacy with God, and anyone for that matter, is communication...

COMMUNICATION WITH GOD
<p><i>listen to God communicate to you through...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">--His Word (the Bible)--His Spirit--active involvement in our lives
<p><i>communicate to God through...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">--prayer--following His Word (<i>actions speak louder than words</i>)

--in the words of Romans 8:5-6, "**set your minds on.. the things of the Spirit.. be spiritually minded.**"

--Romans 8:5-6: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but **to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**"

--being "spiritually minded" is synonymous with cultivating intimacy with God

--in the words of Hebrews 12:1-2 being spiritually minded is "fixing our eyes on Jesus"... "Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith, **who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...**"

--back to Romans 8:13: "...by the Spirit you **put to death the deeds of the body...**"

--if Jesus endured the agony of being nailed to the cross to pay for our sins, then we can endure the agony of crucifying our sinful desires... as we focus on Jesus!

--don't buy into the lie that you need to gratify the flesh... rather, nail the flesh to the cross!

--Romans 8:6: "for to be carnally minded is death..."

--it has been said that, in a sense, *If you don't kill sin, sin will kill you.*

--Philippians 3:7-10: "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ... 10 that I may **know Him** and **the power of His resurrection**, and **the fellowship of His sufferings...**"

--by the power of the Holy Spirit, crucifixion is always followed by a resurrection (in one form or another... "life and peace..." in the words of Romans 8:6)