

Lesson 40 - THE BELIEVER'S STATE IN THIS WORLD (2)      *Romans 7:21-25*

**(7:21) - “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me”** - In this passage the Apostle Paul is dealing with our relationship as believers to the law of God and how God the Holy Spirit continually uses that law to expose our sinfulness within ourselves and continually drive us to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, life, and glory. It is the Spirit's work always to show us that we have no righteousness but that which we find in our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit's work to show us that at all times, our worst and our best, we have no hope of salvation and final glory except that which is totally based on the merits of Christ's blood and righteousness alone. He does this continually by convicting us of sin as we see the law fulfilled only in Christ (**Rom. 10:4**). And so, as we see the reality of the holy law of God, we are made constantly aware that we are saved by God's grace, preserved by God's grace, and will be finally glorified by God's grace, all based on the perfect righteousness of the law as fulfilled by Christ in His obedience unto death for us. At no time are we to look to ourselves or depend upon ourselves for these blessings of grace.

In these verses, Paul is also emphasizing that this is every believer's state while in this world as we are imprisoned by these vile bodies of death. What we are LEGALLY in Christ (dead to sin, free from sin, not under the dominion of sin) is very different from what we are EXPERIENTIALLY in ourselves (**“carnal, sold under sin”**). LEGALLY, in Christ, we are totally, perfectly, and eternally righteous based on His righteousness imputed to us. EXPERIENTIALLY, in ourselves, we are nothing more than SINNERS saved by the grace of God. In this state we cannot attain the perfection of righteousness in our thoughts, works, and efforts to obey God. Why? It is because we are still carnal (fleshly). This is proven by the fact that within every one of us there is **“a law”** (a powerful principle) that whenever we determine to **“do good”** (according to God's standard of goodness as exemplified in Christ), **“evil is present with”** us. Notice, WHEN is evil present? We know evil is present when we desire and determine to do evil. But evil is also present when we desire and determine to do good. The point is this - Evil is ALWAYS present with us, because of the flesh that is always present with us.

**(7:22) - “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man”** - To **“delight”** in the law is to rejoice in it. Paul's **“delight in the law of God”** was certainly not in himself or based on his own goodness or any uncontaminated sinless nature in himself. His delight in the law was **“after the inward man.”** The **“inward man”** here is not another person inside of Paul acting independently of Paul. It was the inward spiritual life of Paul, **“the hidden man of the heart” (1 Peter 3:4)**, which is the new heart. It was, if you will, the real Paul, or the reality of who Paul really was (and is) - a sinner saved by grace looking to and depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation.

The only way any born-again sinner can delight in the law of God is by looking to Christ Who is **“the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4)**. It was because of what Paul had been made inwardly by the power of the Holy Spirit that he believed and rested in Christ for all salvation and all righteousness. So, Paul is admitting that he is still a sinner, but the sin he hates and fights does not define the real Paul. It is the **“inward man”** that defines the real Paul who believes in Christ and follows Him and who will be revealed in the last day when he is glorified together with all believers as in Christ.

**(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”** - As is the case of

every true believer, the law of God had been written on Paul's heart by the Holy Spirit when, in conversion, Paul was convicted of sin and brought to Christ for salvation, forgiveness, and righteousness. But Paul admits that there is "**another law**" (powerful principle) in his "**members**" (his human faculties, both mental and physical). This other law is totally opposed the law of God which was always on Paul's mind. This other law was the powerful corrupt principle of sin (sinful thoughts, desires, motives, and goals). It brought Paul "**into captivity to the law of sin.**" Paul could not be totally free from or rise above this corrupt principle which plagued him when he would determine within himself to be like Christ.

**(7:24) - "O wretched man that I am!"** - This is the grand conclusion of every true believer when considering our state in this world and our relationship to the law of God as far as our obedience and works are concerned. We are truly "**wretched**" (afflicted, troubled) people when we look within ourselves. We cry out with our brother Paul - "**who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**" This is the longing of sinners saved by grace crying out for ultimate and lasting relief and rest from the plague of sin within ourselves. "**The body of this death**" is Paul's way of describing our existence on earth in this carnal state which is in opposition to our existence in Christ and the spiritual life He has given us by His Spirit whereby we see the ever-present plague of our sinfulness and the ever-present blessing of His righteousness. The more we grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ, the more we see ourselves as "**wretched**" people who are totally dependent and in need of God's grace in Christ for our whole salvation and eternal glory. We see even more how that our salvation, from beginning to final glory, is all of God's grace and based on the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, where do we find relief and rest from our sinful condition? The next verse says it all -

**(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"** - Here again we see God's wise purpose in leaving us in this life as justified and born-again sinners warring against the flesh. It is to keep us clinging to Christ for all salvation. It is to keep us giving Him all the glory and taking none for ourselves. It is to keep us giving thanks to Him for all the blessings and benefits of salvation by His grace based on the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. It is to keep us humble knowing that if God were to impute sin to any of us, we would be damned forever. It is to keep us in the assurance of grace, not what we find in ourselves in some kind of righteousness within, but the assurance of His grace found only in Christ's righteousness imputed. It is to keep us as witnesses of His grace and glory in the salvation of sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to stir up within us more love to Christ and to His people.

Paul states that "**with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.**" How did Paul, or how do any of us, truly "**serve the law of God**"? God's children who have been born-again by the Spirit "**serve the law of God**" with their minds (their hearts) by continually "**looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith**" (**Hebrews 12:2**). We serve Christ by seeking to obey Him as we are motivated by grace, love, and gratitude. But our carnality keeps us serving the law of sin, knowing that we always fall short of the perfection of righteousness found only in Christ. We follow Him in His Word knowing that He is our only righteousness before God and that we are safe and secure in Him - "**If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory**" (**Col. 3:1-4**).