

## **Indwelling Sin vs. the Indwelling Spirit**

### **Romans 7-8**

#### **I. Romans 6:19: Habits of Righteousness Replacing Habits of Sin**

##### **A. Quick Review of Romans 6**

1. We must not continue in sin that grace may abound! (Romans 6:1-2)
2. We must realize that we have been united with Christ in BOTH his death (to sin) and his life (to a new pattern of living)
3. We must understand that our old man (in Adam) is dead and therefore our “body of sin” can be increasingly rendered inert... starved to death

***Romans 6:6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin***

4. We must CONSIDER ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus at the moment of every temptation

***Romans 6:11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

5. We must no longer PRESENT our members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but we must PRESENT ourselves to God overall, and our members to God as instruments of righteousness

***Romans 6:13-14 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.***

##### **B. Developing New Habits**

1. Understand the “body” and how trainable it is through repeated habits
2. Key verse: Romans 6:19

***Romans 6:19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.***

3. Two things are being compared: “Just as... so also”
4. They are being favorably compared... “In the same way that you used to X, so now do Y”
5. I think what’s being compared are HABITS... the fact that the body is trainable through repeated actions, either for evil or for good
6. The more repeatedly you present your members to sin, the more developed sin patterns become; the more repeatedly you present your members to righteousness, the more progress you will make to holiness

## II. An Overview of Romans 7: The Bitter Struggle with Indwelling Sin

- A. Paul’s Analogy from Marriage: Our death to sin in Christ frees us up from an old contractual obligation to sin
- B. “The Law” here refers to God’s law in its condemning power... once you have died, it no longer has power over you

***Romans 7:1-6 Do you not know, brothers-- for I am speaking to men who know the law-- that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup> For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. <sup>3</sup> So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.***

***<sup>4</sup>So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.***

1. There is a NEW WAY OF LIFE, a new pattern of service to God
  2. The old pattern of life under fear of condemnation is over forever
- C. The Law is Not Sin... It is Holy and Good; yet it shows HOW WICKED OUR HEARTS WERE

***Romans 7:7-12 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." <sup>8</sup> But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. <sup>9</sup> Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. <sup>10</sup> I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. <sup>12</sup> So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.***

1. There are inevitably questions about the Law... it seems reasonable for Paul to ask if the Law is sin... is the Law EVIL
2. The answer must be ABSOLUTELY NOT!
  - a. Remember that “the Law” contains a perfect summary of God’s righteous expectations for a godly life under the Old Covenant
  - b. Remember also how Jesus summarized the Law of God

***Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'***

- c. This is marvelous and beautiful...

***Psalms 19:7-8 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.***

- d. The real work of the Law is to display our sin... and to hunt us down and kill us for violating it
- e. The fact that the Law is “holy, righteous, and good” really just exposes how utterly wicked we are apart from Christ
- f. Amazingly, just the command “You shall not covet” was the very avenue by which Paul learned what coveting was and broke the command

**D. Sin Is Insanity: I DON’T UNDERSTAND MYSELF!!**

***Romans 7:13-20 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. <sup>14</sup> We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but***

*what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

Q: Why is it so vital to the Christian life to understand the struggle with indwelling sin Paul describes here in this passage?

Q: Do you think Paul is describing his own battle with sin before he was a Christian, or after he became a Christian? How would you defend your answer?

Q: One Puritan writer said that Christians never do anything wholeheartedly... we never sin wholeheartedly (because the indwelling Spirit fights against it and convicts us and holds us back), and we never serve Christ wholeheartedly (because the indwelling sin nature fights against it and makes us reluctant and holds us back). How does Romans 7:13-25 bear this out? How have you seen this true in your own walk with Christ?

NOTES on the Text:

1. This is the essence of the point... sin is utter insanity!
2. The holy, righteous, good Law actually produces DEATH
3. For us, as elect people, its purpose is to lead us to Christ and then to teach us how to live
  - a. In leading us to Christ as Savior, it must reveal how great a problem sin really is
  - b. Furthermore, sin will continue to be in us
4. Paul speaks as a REDEEMED MAN... not in his “pre-Christian” state
  - a. How do we know this? What in the text shows us this?
  - b. The repeated statement “IT IS NO LONGER I WHO DOES IT...”; the “no longer” is the language of a significant CHANGE

***Romans 7:17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.***

***Romans 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.***

- c. Therefore Romans 7 is BOTH a most discouraging AND a most encouraging passage

5. The insanity of sin

***Romans 7:15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.***

6. The flesh absolutely cannot obey God... and it is so strong, that it continues to war against every desire we have to stop doing evil and to do good

***Romans 7:18-20 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.***

E. Only Christ Can Rescue Us from This Body of Death

***Romans 7:21-25 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. <sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.***

Q: Do you see this same struggle inside you as well: *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.*? How do you account for this bizarre situation?

Q: Why do you think God chose to allow the sin nature ("flesh") to continue in us after our conversion, when He is planning on completely destroying it at the moment of glorification (at death or at the Second Coming of Christ)? If God has the power to destroy our indwelling sin in an instant, why doesn't He do it now?

Q: What is the significance of Paul's lamentable cry, *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?* And what is the significance of his next statement, *Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!* ?

Notes on the Text:

1. The force at work in Paul's members dragging him away from good and toward evil is so strong Paul calls it a LAW at work in his members
2. His new nature sees the same delight in the Law of God that the Psalmist does

***Psalm 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.***

3. But the force of wicked habit in the flesh is overpowering and ruins attempt after attempt to live a Christ-like life

4. Paul's final lamentable cry is a yearning for glorification!

Q: One Scottish preacher said in a sermon to his congregation, "I'll never allow you out of Romans 7 as long as I'm your pastor!" What does that mean?

### III. An Overview of Romans 8: The Power of the Indwelling Spirit

#### A. A Decisive Break Made by the Spirit (Romans 8:1-4)

***Romans 8:1-4 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.***

Q: How does this section give believers in this struggle with indwelling sin hope while we live in this world?

Q: How does verse 2 describe what kind of people are free from the condemning power of the Law?

Q: How does verse 4 describe the way Spirit-filled Christians live in relation to the timeless moral laws of God?

#### B. The Life of the Flesh vs. the Life of the Spirit

***Romans 8:5-8 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup> The mind of the flesh is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; <sup>7</sup> the mind of the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the flesh cannot please God.***

Q: What aspect of human life does verse 5 focus on? How is the mindset of the non-Christian so radically different from that of the Christian?

Q: How does Paul contrast the mind of the flesh with the mind controlled by the Spirit in verse 6? What does he mean when he says the mind of the flesh is "death"? Does he mean that it results in death, or that it reveals that the

individual is spiritually dead already, or what? What does he mean when he says the mind controlled by the Spirit is “life and peace”?

Q: In verse 7, Paul then brings us the issue of the natural man’s hostility to God. How is the mind of the flesh in “hostility” against God? Why is it impossible for the mind of the flesh to submit to God’s law?

Q: Paul adds that the man “in the flesh” (i.e. controlled by a fleshly mindset) cannot please God. Why is this so?

#### C. The Decisive Presence of the Indwelling Spirit in All Christians (Romans 8:9-11)

***Romans 8:9-11 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.***

Q: How does verse 9 signal a major turn in Paul’s presentation? What is the joyful news he relates in this verse to all Christians? What does it mean that Christians are not “in the flesh but in the Spirit”?

Q: What if someone does not have the Spirit of God living inside them? What is true of that person, according to verse 9? Is it possible to be a Christian and not have the indwelling Holy Spirit? According to that fact, then, when must the Holy Spirit enter a person?

Q: What hope does Paul hold out for all Christians concerning the body in verse 11?

#### D. The Obligation All Christians Have to Kill Sin by the Spirit (Romans 8:12-14)

***Romans 8:12-14 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, <sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.***

1. This will be our focus for the rest of the class!

2. John Owen’s *On the Mortification of Sin* will unfold this to us!

He begins with this assertion: *The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin..* He also goes on to add: *The vigor, and*

*power, and comfort of our spiritual life depend on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.*