

Victory in Jesus
Part II
Romans 7:14-8:2 and James 1
FBC Waynesboro
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Professing Christians in our culture have for far too long hidden behind Romans seven. We see Paul in this passage showing us the struggle of his soul and we conclude that if this was the struggle of the great apostle whose life was revolutionized by a bolt of lightning in the open countryside, then who are we to think that we can resolve the struggles of our own soul. If this mighty man of God found himself doing what he did not want to do and not doing what he desired to do, then what are we thinking when we say that God wants to give us an overwhelming victory through our Lord Jesus Christ? The problem when we come to this passage is not only that we do not penetrate deeply enough, it is that we do not read far enough. Here is one of those places where chapter divisions hurt us. The truth is that chapters 7 and 8 are interwoven as one piece of very powerful proclamation about the victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ in spite of who we are by nature as sinners whose desires are always seeking to dominate our lives.

Follow with me the flow of this passage in Romans seven as we seek God this morning to show us the way to this victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ. The opening words of verse 14 and 25 form a frame for this passage and prepare us for the powerful transition that comes in chapter 8, verse 1. The two verses that frame this passage point us toward the victory. The verses in between show us why it is that we need this victory and why it is that this victory is not within us by nature. Verse 14 opens with these words, “we know that the law is spiritual.” We are absolutely confident that the law is the gift of God. It is given by God to establish His holy standard of righteousness. It is given by God to express the depth of our depravity. It is given by God to guide us in the way that is right as we are led in that way by the Spirit of God. The law is from the Holy Spirit. Verse 25 opens with these words, “thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is in the surrender of our lives to Jesus and the submission of our lives to His Lordship that we experience and express this victory that is ours.

In between we are shown why it is that we are in need of this victory. First, Paul says that we need this victory that comes only through Jesus because as we are by nature we are sold under sin, 14. The word for “unspiritual” describes the basic nature of every human being born into the world. Our whole life is oriented to our flesh, and flesh here is a technical term whose best meaning is “life ordered by what we want as shaped by our thoughts and our feelings.” Then Paul clarifies what this means with a term from the vocabulary of the institution of slavery, “sold under sin.” We are born into sin which means that we are born with everything in us seeking to satisfy our basic desires. That basic nature does not die until we do.

Second, Paul says that this condition of our character creates confusion, 15 since we find ourselves doing that which we do not want to do and not doing that which we desire to do so that don’t understand our own doings. The third thing here is critical: it represents the difference between a believer in an unbeliever. When an unbeliever lives to gratify the desires of his flesh there is little grief or guilt, but when a believer lives to gratify the desires of the flesh there is grief and guilt because we know through the conviction of the Holy Spirit that we have violated the holy law of God.

Fourth, the reason the desires of the flesh keep crying out for satisfaction is because sin is living in us, 16-20. The word for “living” here means “to dwell” as in “establishing a space and building a house.” Sin wants to establish a space and build a house in our hearts. The Bible says that the source of all our corruption and confusion is “the world, the flesh and the devil.” The devil works through the world to appeal to our flesh and thus build a dwelling place in our lives. And the more we are enticed by the flesh and allow ourselves to be entertained by the ways of the world, the more space and the bigger house sin will occupy. Now look at verses 17-18, the intensity of your struggle is directly proportionate the size of the house that sin has built in your heart.

The fifth truth is set before us in verse 21: It is the one that so many of us sitting here are engaged in every day of our lives. We desire to do what God wants us to do; we really want to be who God wants us to be, **BUT WE FIND OURSELVES FRUSTRATED BECAUSE THERE IS A DISCONNECT BETWEEN WHAT WE DESIRE TO DO AND WHAT WE DO.** Paul says that this is the essence of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, 23. The word for “waging war” is a military term that has to do with the strategy that is necessary to capture and control someone for

your use. Satan knows our hearts and he knows exactly how to strategize so as to energize us so that we are constantly falling and failing in our following and being faithful to Jesus.

And for the true believer this struggle always leads to an exclamation and a question. O wretched man that I am.. The word is used only one other time in the Bible and that of the church in Laodicea where there was wretchedness and the people did not see it or say it because they were not the people of God. But when a child of God is caught in this trap of trouble, we know how sinful we are and how great is our struggle and we cry out, “who will rescue me from this body of death?” And Paul exclaims that we have the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, that the struggle is real but the victory is sure because there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus because through Jesus Christ the Spirit of God has set us free from the law of sin and death.

Now let’s turn to James one so that we can see what needs to be seen and know what needs to be known in order both to experience and express this victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ.