

Romans Chapter 8: (1 - 14)

Struggling in Christian Life

Chapter 8 is like the highlight of the entire Book of Romans because it tells us about the victory, you struggle but there is a victory involved. If find it to be a law what I want to do right evil lies close at hand. In your mind you want to serve God, in your body you want to serve the flesh. So that is the main problem with Romans 7. When we enter Romans 8 with 7 in mind then we have this struggle, every time I want to please God, I fall then I finally struggle. What can I do? We can look into couple of things, we can become like Dr Jackle and Mr Hyde. You can live a conflicted life, you take an evil portion and you split yourself into two. That is one way of doing it or you could be living fearfully, serving by works, all the time being condemned. My mind wants to serve God, in the end I sin, I lie, I have sex outside marriage and I am a horrible person, you continually live a defeated life. That is one way of doing it, or you can become a hypocrite. These are all the ways we all deal with the conflict, we can deal with it we get hypocrite or you could try our best and still feel condemned or we could punish ourselves, do all sorts of acrobatic things, beat ourselves in order to beat the flesh as it is evil, but in my mind I love God, you could dissociate the two, or you could change the law, obey the letter of the law.

A young man came to Jesus and said, how do I earn eternal life? Jesus asked what about the Ten Commandments, he said I obey all of them. He has taken the letter of the law, not the spirit of the law, so they feel superior. So Paul solution is written here,

Romans 7

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

So this is the struggle. If you struggle with this it does not mean you are not a Christian, it does not mean you are living a defeated life. Every single Christian will struggle with this. If you don't struggle with this then you already accepted you are hypocrite. You are already given into the dark side. The fact that you struggle means there is a robust Christian fight in your life. So what is the victory? The victory is basically the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8 and John 16 these are the two chapters that talk about the Holy Spirit.

John 16:

13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

So what does the spirit do? The spirit actually makes Jesus real to you. You come to Bible Study, you will learn a whole bunch of truths but when you go back if they remain in your head then the Holy Spirit hasn't worked this magic on you. What the Holy Spirit does is take whatever is in Romans and you go home and it percolates down here and it makes Jesus real.

The word “glorify” comes from the Hebrew word, ‘kabod’ which is make heavy. That means Jesus is the most impactful, most heaviest, most important person in my life. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus the most important person in your life. The only way you can make the person most important in your life is to make Jesus real that is the difference between Christianity and all other religions. All other religions is a concept but Christianity is mystical in a sense that you study the word but when you get home in the quietness of your bedroom Jesus becomes real and if you haven’t experienced that in your life then the spirit may not be working in your life.

How the Holy Spirit makes Jesus real?

Holy Spirit’s work has been widely misinterpreted all over the place. Minister of Holy Spirit being filled with the Holy Spirit, some people says baptized with the Holy Spirit. The term is used in three ways if you look inside the Bible;

- 1) Regeneration,
- 2) Sanctification
- 3) High assurance and power.

Regeneration:

Romans 8

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Finally when you struggle with sin, you want to be a good witness and you failed, in your workplace you dare not tell people you are Christian because you feel so condemned and the first thing Paul tells us, there is no condemnation. This is the most freeing kind of statement that will ever happen in your life. There is no condemnation, no matter how far you have messed up, why because the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus.

10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

All our cells are designed to multiply and divide x number of times, at the end of it then you will stop dividing. That is why we actually fall sick and get cancer and all that. All bodies are dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. It is life because of righteousness. It is the righteousness that makes us alive.

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

This is the kind of eternal life which we are going to have. So there is something happening, although you are wind up clock is winding down, there is something special that is happening inside your life and if you know we talk about life there are different levels of life.

1. Plant life. The plant responds to stimuli and touch.
2. Then you got a dog. The dog has five senses like us, but we are better than the dog, because we not only have five senses but we also have appreciation of ugliness, injustice, wickedness, oppression. Have you ever seen a dog got appreciation of beauty, no matter how ugly you are the dog will come and lick you. Dogs have no appreciation.
3. Then the spiritual life is when you are aware of spiritual things, you can regress. Imagine if you were comatose, it means you don't appreciate beauty anymore, you don't appreciate injustice, you don't read newspaper that is why they talk about vegetative state, you can regress spiritual life.

But if Christ is in you although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. So there is a different level of life. While you appreciate beauty, while you appreciate injustice, while you appreciate oppression in a spiritual realm you appreciate other things, you appreciate God's love, you cannot see God but yet can feel God's love. You can appreciate thankfulness, when Lord has brought something in life and you feel thankful to God. So there is a whole level of life. You hunger for God's word, you enjoy worship, you don't do it because you have to do you enjoy. If you are spiritually dead then you are only alive to the things like money, power and all other things. They are spiritually dead because they cannot respond to things like God's love, thankfulness, hunger for the word, it does not compute at all. This is a different level of life.

A lot of people who are marginal Christians or nominal Christians act like this. This is Desmond Ryan who writes for the Philadelphia Inquirer. He writes

*I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.
Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep,
but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk
or a snooze in the sunshine.
I don't want enough of God to make me love a black man
or pick beets with a migrant.
I want ecstasy, not transformation.
I want warmth of the womb, not a new birth.
I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack.
I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.*

So these are the kind of people, sometime they say they are Christians but actually spiritually they are dead. There is no real appreciation of the higher order. You are acting like a dog, acting like a plant or a human being acting like a dog, you are regressing, because inside you are spiritually dead.

Timothy Keller tells a story of a young girl who was 16 years old and he was a young pastor at that time in one of the first church that he actually pastored and he shared the story about how this girl, the biggest problem in her is that she has no boyfriend. Everybody got a date, everybody got someone to take them to the prom, and she got no prom. So Timothy Keller started to counsel her, he told her that Jesus Christ died for you, you are going to have eternal life, you will be resurrected and there is nothing that will separate you from the love of Christ. After telling all these things to her, she said "but I do not have a date". Then you realize that spiritually she is dead. All she can understand is that kind of level of life is dead. All the other things you can talk whatever you want, you are spiritually dead. Later on this

young lady got married and grew in a Christian life and then she became spiritually alive. So basically to have the spirit means to be spiritually alive because of righteousness, because you start to love righteousness in your life.

John 16:

8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

So the number one work of Holy Spirit when it regenerates in you to live again is that it convicts you of sin that means you know you are sinful and you start to hate your sin, not only you hate your sin but it convict you of righteousness and judgment and this righteousness is an alien righteousness. The story was told of Martin Luther. Martin Luther is a man who is totally convicted of sin, he knew he struggle at Romans 7, he want to be good but you cannot be good, but the whole time he was trying to live a good life in order to please God and what the Holy Spirit does, is it convicts you of the fact that you can't have that righteousness. The only righteousness that is going to work is what the righteousness God gives you. His breakthrough for Martin Luther was the fact that only God can give you an alien righteousness that belongs to God and given to you free. Only a Christian can be convicted of the sinfulness of his own righteousness. That is the difference.

Acts 9:

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

So here is Paul at Damascus road, he wasn't a Christian, he persecuted Christians and then when he became a Christian he was described as filled with the Holy Spirit. So this is an example of the work of the Holy Spirit filling you in terms of regeneration and becoming a Christian.

Sanctification:

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

So the Holy Spirit gives us the assurance because we are set free from the law of the spirit of life. So spirit gives you assurance that there is no condemnation despite our struggles, despite our imperfections, you know why because Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

So here he is telling you that God has done what the law couldn't do. The law is perfect but the flesh is weak. So the sources of guilt that we have is basically condemnation or conviction and what the Holy Spirit does is that it takes away the condemnation but in its place the devil still comes, the devil will still try to condemn us. The condemnation you can see in the passage,

33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

So basically Paul is telling us there are people, there is devil working in us telling us, condemning us all the time. So we feel a sense of condemnation making us very small. You know it is the work of the devil. If you feel the work of conviction that means there is something that you have done but the spirit tells you this is not right and you began to hate what you do that is the voice of the Holy Spirit, but the voice of the devil is the one telling you are hopeless. The fact that you have no condemnation sets you free. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, not that you are perfect, you are not condemned. The problem with our flesh is that we are not condemned but we are not perfect. This is what Jesus tells his disciples.

Matthew 7:

11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

How does he describes his disciples, 'evil fellows'. A Christian is a one who is able to say, yes I am evil, I do sin, I can admit I sin but I am not condemned, the Holy Spirit tells you I am not condemned, I am saved by the spirit of Christ.

There is a story in the US in Michigan. There was a car and there were three children in the car, they played with the brakes or somehow then the car slid into the water and all three children died, they were all in the range of 4-6. The parents were totally devastated, they were Christians and it took them a long time for them to recover through their faith and they started another family and it went on and 20 years later on they grew in their faith and the man became a deacon in the church and he was serving very well in the church until one day he had to confess to his pastor that he had sexual desires for another woman in church and he couldn't understand why he had sexual desires after growing so well in Christ for another woman in church. He shared it with the pastor and before he could do anything else the man killed himself, committed suicide because he felt condemned, "you were deacon after 20 years after what God has done for you, some more you have these sexual desires, you don't understand Jesus said you are evil", you are condemned, you are now no longer condemned but you are evil. So that is a hard thing that we actually have to juggle. The fact that we mess up and we are condemned, we are no longer condemned but we are evil.

The devil is trying to tell us that it is by our works, so if you didn't confess, you forgot to confess, you did this and that, that sin is not forgiven, your sins are forgiven yesterday, today and tomorrow, you are totally accepted by God, 110% and when you go to Romans chapter 8 going down to about 39, it will be a great discussion on that, eternal security.

If you are to sin against God, before you become a Christian it is like breaking the State Law. Once you are a Christian there is no condemnation, it is like a married couple. We wound God's heart when we actually sin. So you are saved for a purpose, for us who walk not according to a flesh but according to the spirit that is the purpose that we actually have, to walk in the spirit not the flesh. So Christian is the one where he has no condemnation and he lives a life guided by the Holy Spirit. So we can experience conflict but we are not condemned. The Holy Spirit gives you assurance that you are not condemned. Now the other thing is that we need to focus on things of the spirit.

5 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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

So there are two types of mind-sets and the word mind-set is basically to mean to focus intently on something, to be preoccupied with something, to have attention of the imagination totally captured by something. It is totally wrapped up. In fact the mind is not really the mind, in Greek and Hebrew idea is your whole personality.

Mind-set of flesh is to justify its own existence. Mind-set on spirit is completely different. So we need to focus on things of the spirit. The mind-set on spirit is life and peace, the mind-set on the flesh is hostile to God, it cannot submit to God's law. You are not in the flesh, you are in the spirit, in fact the spirit of God if in fact the spirit of God dwells in you. So anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him. So if you belong to Jesus Christ then you will be focused on the things of the spirit. Some people think being filled with the Holy Spirit is like water in a cup, because they believe the Holy Spirit is like some force, like Yoda says, "may the force be with you".

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

So the words are interchangeable, why, it is a trinity, it is a person. So it is not a force, it is a person. All the person does is when he fills you means he comes next to you and he influences your life. So influence much we have the person desires, what he hates you hate, you love what he loves. The spirit of truth makes Jesus real.

When the spirit of truth comes he will guide you in the truth and will make Jesus real to us. The spirit glorifies Jesus, it takes what is mine and declares it to you, you don't see the spirit and a lot of churches make the mistake of looking for it. The Holy Spirit highlights Jesus and it highlights truth.

When we compare the letter of Colossians and Ephesians, there are parallel passages which exactly can interchange. Here is

Colossians Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Ephesians Do not be drunk with the wine but be filled with the spirit.

The result is, when the word of Christ dwell in you, you will be teaching, admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. If you are filled with the spirit you may be addressing one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, making medley to the Lord God with your heart. So therefore if we look at it carefully word of God dwelling richly is the same as being filled with the Holy Spirit because the Spirit is the spirit of truth.

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of truth. It will tell about Jesus. So conservative churches always value the truth, but in real life, real spirituality is actually never less than biblical truth but a little bit more. Charismatic churches say, it is all about emotion and very little about the truth. In real life the spirit never works apart from truth, you must have a balance; you must have both the spirit in terms of emotion and also biblical truth together.

So when we open our eyes, open your mind to the Holy Spirit, whenever you read God's word right, it will then be printed into your hearts and change the heart. That is the mind of the Holy Spirit. That is what the Holy Spirit does to you. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, it cannot submit to God's law because it cannot, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

So a mind which is focused on the flesh cannot be sensitized by the spirit either way. So this is what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual experience, makes the word of God come alive, and highlights the word. If you go to a church and you are worshipping in such a way that is always about emotion or being slain all the time then it is not right, because Holy Spirit exist to tell you the truth. If there is no truth there can be no experience, very-very important thing to understand.

The Holy Spirit takes a biblical truth and creates an emotion in your heart. If you have to think about a biblical truth, then the Holy Spirit hasn't spoken to you. It has made the word of God come alive in your heart and we all need to learn to recognize that. If we look at a person and feel compassion automatically then the spirit has made the whole idea of love your enemies into your heart, so much so that you actually feel what you suppose to think. If you have to think about it, already it is not quite there yet. So what Holy Spirit does is that it makes scriptural truth alive in your heart and it is not explosive, it is a slow change in all of your attitude slowly with time. That is called focusing on things in the spirit. So if you put your mind on spirit you will think about how welcome you are, how loved you are, how adopted you are, how blessed you are, how predestined you are, all of a sudden you start to hate what the spirit hates, love what the spirit loves and you put in your heart God's word it may come to life and see how they run.

So therefore we can choose to focus on the spirit. The spirit is there, it makes the word of God come alive.

Mortify your flesh:

Mortify means put to death.

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 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.

So the spirit comes to live inside us. If you a Buddhist there is no such thing because God is the universe and he does not come to live inside you. If you are a Muslim it is absolutely impossible, Muslims will never agree with you that God come and live inside you. We are the only faith where it is mystical where actually God comes and live with you. When Holy Spirit comes it is allowing Jesus words to influence your activity, your thinking, your values that is how the Holy Spirit works, it is not come Sunday, stand up here, Holy Spirit is a person. So the other thing is that when you look at this passage. So it is like a two stroke engine, how to kill the flesh and you actually live to the spirit, aspiration and mortification.

Galatians 5:

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

So it is basically turning. If we look in Colossians there are lot of passages like that. So basically two stroke engine is you fill this with explosive spark it gives the power and then the things moves. So there are two kinds of fuel that you put. One kind of fuel is putting in all that Christ has done for you, his death on the cross, his love for you, his eternal security that he gives in you and if you focus on that, you put that in your engine, you are thinking about all the time you are running towards Christ. Some people put, why do you live a righteous life, because I am afraid to go to hell and I want to go to heaven. That is a wrong kind of fuel. You put that kind of fuel it won't last very long because your life is made out of fear. You cannot live righteous life based on fear, the motive must be love. Only love can transform us. Holy Spirit is like a bike, when you ride the bike it stores energy and later on it releases it. It is like pressing on accelerator.

All you have to do when you actually mortify the flesh is you turn the direction of your car towards Jesus Christ. When you press an accelerator, there is not a lot of work that you do. That is all when you decide to turn then you decide to press, who gives you the room, the spirit. All you have to do is to decide to turn to Jesus, to decide to read your bible, to decide to meditate on the word. When you decide and you do it then the thing kicks in and the power takes over your life. That is the two-stroke engine Paul talks about. Otherwise you will be like pushing, pushing and pushing away.

High Assurance And Power:

Acts 4:

31 When they prayed together the place where there were gathered together were shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

This is extraordinary situation, they were being persecuted, they prayed together and then they were Christians, they already filled with the Holy spirit and then the place were shaken and they were all you know filled with the Holy Spirit and then continue to speak the word of God boldly. So here we actually see another way in which the Holy Spirit fills people, you fill them when they are sanctified, you fill them when they are regenerated , you fill them when you got assurance and power and there is a difference in the three. Historically, one of the problems with the charismatic movement is that they believe on only this part. When the Holy Spirit fill you, you must speak in tongue, you got power, so therefore you must be close to God. There are lot of people who can speak in tongue, they can preach well, heal people and yet can be far away from God. So that is a problem. On the other hand we got John Wesley, he said that the Holy Spirit comes and the filling of the Holy Spirit is making you like Jesus Christ with the fruit of Holy Spirit and he completely ignored this part, it is so unbiblical. Real Biblical fact that is the filling of Holy Spirit occurs regeneration, sanctification and power and as Christians we must understand Holy Spirit fills all these three areas. So we are actually combining a lot of what the charismatics do together with the conservatives, because it is biblical. You can't just have Bible study but you don't feel the presence of Jesus Christ. It has both involved.