

THE BATTLE FOR VICTORY

or

The Apostle Paul's Autobiography

TEXT: *Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after 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. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 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.*

THESIS: To reveal the struggle every believer has with the two natures within us.

INTRO.: A. Every believer has two natures: "in this corner" is the old sinful fleshly nature" and "in this corner" is the absolutely holy new nature of the indwelling Holy Spirit." In this passage Paul gives us an intimate picture of his daily struggle with his two natures. Some believe this is the description of a **carnal Christian**, but it is actually the portrait of a **maturing saint!**

B. Paul reveals the struggle every believer engages in while he battles for victory in his Christian life. The question asked today is "**How are YOU doing? Are you winning or losing? Will you continue in defeat or experience victory?**" The battle is real, but only true believers are engaged in this warfare. The unsaved only have one nature so they just do whatever feels good to them or whatever saves their conscience.

TRANS.: Let's examine what God has to say on the subject as Paul (under inspiration of the Holy Spirit) pulls back the curtain on his personal struggle and reveals **THE BATTLE FOR VICTORY** every maturing Christian must deal with on a daily basis.

I. THE FACTS: v.14

A. The Law is Spiritual:

1. Paul is speaking specifically of God's Law given to Moses.
2. So the problem is not the Law (God's Word) but the problem is with Paul.
3. The problem is never with God's revelation it is with man's old nature.

B. The Flesh is Sinful:

1. We are to "**reckon**" ourselves "**dead indeed unto sin**" but our old nature is alive and well! (6:11) we are to live so that we relinquish our will and our control of the flesh over to the Lord.

ILLUS.: Evang. Lester Roloff preached a message titled "**Dr. Law & Dr. Grace**" He likened *Dr. Law* to a physician who can *diagnose* the patient's illness, but cannot *prescribe* a treatment. Only *Dr. Grace* can *treat* what is wrong. But you need to know what is wrong before you can be treated.

2. We are to live so that we relinquish our will and our control of the flesh over to the Lord.

Rom 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

II. OUR FAILURES: vv.15-20

NOTE: If you ever had any doubts about the reality of the two natures in a believer, this passage will settle the issue!

A. The Contest:

1. The Charismatics would have you believe that what Paul is describing here is before he got the victory over sin, but note the present tense in vv.15-18
2. The Holiness doctrine is that the old nature is eradicated and no longer serves sin at all, but Paul is making the distinction between the spirit that *"is willing"* and the flesh that *"is weak"*.
3. In vv.15-20 we have the state of every believer between the old, carnal, fleshly nature and the new, spiritual, godly nature.

NOTE: Verse 15 sums it up: *"That which I do* (lying, cheating, lusting, sinning...)*...for what I would* (Bible study, prayer, soul-winning) *that do I not; but what I hate* (jealousy, pride, gossip, bad temper, covetousness, laziness, etc.) *that do I..."*

B. The Contestants: vv.18,19

1. There are two Pauls! One wants to do right, but doesn't and one wants to avoid sin, but can't!
2. These two share the same body but fight over everything!
3. He is hindered from doing the right thing and helped to do the wrong thing!

C. The Conclusion: vv.17,20

1. Paul identifies the two opponents and concludes it is not the new man but his old sinful nature that is at fault.
2. He isn't throwing up his hands in defeat or saying *"Why fight it?"* – he is telling us there is a new man living in him which can be victorious.

NOTE: The Word of God and the Holy Spirit lives in the new man *"His seed remaineth in him...and he* (the new man that is *"born of God") "cannot sin, because he is born of God."*

Note that in v.18 Paul doesn't just say *"in me"* because Christ was *"in him"* – he clarifies it by saying (*"that is, in my flesh"*) *dwelleth no good thing."* The flesh is so rotten that one day it will be nothing more than a maggot buffet! When Adam sinned the first thing God did was to clothe his flesh. When the maniac of Gadara got rid of the demons in him the first thing he did was to put on some clothes! If you ever are tempted to be proud over your body just remember that its ultimate destiny is to fill the belly of a worm!

III. PAUL'S FINDINGS: vv.21-25

A. His Companion: v.21

1. Paul states that evil is always present with him.

ILLUS.: An old Puritan divine said: "When I *pray*, I sin. When I *preach*, I sin. My very *repentance* needs to be repented of, and my tears need washing in the blood of Christ."

2. The only people who don't struggle with their sinful nature are the lost!

B. His Confession: v.22

1. Paul loved the Law!
2. All believers who want victory love God's Word.

ILLUS.: It isn't God's people who contribute to the crime rate, the sexual immorality, the abortion butchery, the homosexual agenda! Just think what a different world it would be if everyone loved God's Word!

C. His Captivity: vv.23-25

1. The physical location of the new man is in the body; a jail of rotting flesh.
2. The new man is waiting for a "jail break."

ILLUS.: The picture here is that of a man chained to a dead corpse! You cannot escape the old man and he becomes a stench in your nostrils and you long to be free!

CONCL.: The victory is found in v.25 ***"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** He delivered Paul, and He will deliver me, and He will deliver YOU! Even our response to this invitation is tainted by our old nature, but **THE BATTLE FOR VICTORY** is in Him, not us!

Believer, don't you long for the victory?