

THE STRUGGLE OF THE MATURE CHRISTIAN

“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.” Rom. 7:25

The second half of Romans Chapter 7 deals with the struggle of the mature Christian. Though my soul is alive in Christ, when before my soul was dead in trespasses and sins, I still have a nature that is flesh, gets sick, has all the evidences of the curse that came from Adam’s original sin, and will eventually die unless the Lord Jesus returns before that. Thus, there is a constant battle between the natural flesh that I have that exists in me, and the supernatural indwelling of the Holy Spirit that has made me a new person in Christ Rom. 7:18-19. We know that this is a saved man, because as mentioned previously a saved soul looks at the sin he commits and recognizes it as sin, realizes it’s an offense to a holy God, and desires repentance that it will not happen again. Even the best of our good deeds performed by the grace of God are imperfect, and fall short of God’s glory. The more we mature as Christians, the more sin is illuminated by the brightness of God’s presence, and we become increasingly aware of our wretchedness as individuals, crying out together with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Paul knows the answer; and he does answer, but he doesn’t answer it immediately. Even as he dictates this mighty letter to Tertius, and even as the Holy Spirit renews the awesome revelation of Christ’s very presence as this epistle is written, Paul himself, brought to his own wretchedness as a sinner saved by God’s grace, pauses to reflect with refreshing joy: “O, Roman believers! I thank God!” Literally, he says, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Realizing again as I mentioned previously that to the believer, a glance at the holy and righteous Christ who was crucified for your sin and mine, brings us a deeper and more intense truth concerning the sin of man, and specifically, my sin and your sin against God, as individuals who have sinned against Him. This is what brings us our worship for Him, hope in Him, trust upon Him, and a desire to walk according to His will and good pleasure. It keeps us desiring to have a tight embrace upon His grace. “I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ!” is the worship and adoration of a sinner in awe of God’s amazing grace. And though we have these revelations, in church during worship, in our private times of prayer, in quiet times alone with the Lord, this rapturous moment doesn’t remain. We must contend with daily life, by the spirit, yet in this body of flesh. So, Paul continues, reiterating, that yes, it is a struggle indeed: “So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” The word, “serve” comes from the same Greek root that we learned in Romans 6, meaning slave. So literally, it would be more accurate to say, “So then with the mind I myself am a slave to the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” When Paul says this, he’s not saying that this is what we must do, as in a system that hangs in a legalistic balance. He’s not saying, “Do this, serve the law of God in your mind,

even though your flesh wants to do its own thing.” Paul is merely stating the truth that, in the words of the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary, “Such then is the unchanging character of these two principles within me. God’s holy law is dear to my renewed mind, and has the willing service of my new man; although that corrupt nature which still remains in me listens to the dictates of sin.” Because that exists, Paul explains it further in the whole of Romans 8, which is the actual answer to his question in Rom. 7:24, by the expanded truth of Rom. 7:25. In it we will see those spiritual graces that take place in a life being sanctified by the Holy Ghost; that our sanctification means, Walking After the Spirit Rom. 8:1-10; Surrendering to the Spirit Rom. 8:11-17; Hoping in the Spirit Rom. 8:18-27; Trusting Upon the Spirit Rom. 8:28-30; and Victory by the Spirit Rom. 8:31-39. The struggle between sin and law, and between flesh and spirit, manifests the grace of God while it simultaneously strengthens our faith, matures us as saints, and ultimately and more importantly glorifies God in His sovereign goodness. The revelation of these Scriptural truths, keeps us cautiously and grievously aware of sin, while joyfully and lovingly surrendered to Christ. Preaching from the text of Zech. 12:10, Octavius Winslow said it in this way: “To have a sight of sin and a sight of Jesus at the same moment constitutes one of the holiest and richest pages in the history of a child of God.