The Believer's Relationship to Sin
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 80-87

We're looking at one of the greatest of all the books of the Bible, Romans, great in terms of the import of its message, and touching some of the high points of this wonderful epistle. As we look at Romans 7 verses 14 to 25, we come to the subject of the Christian and indwelling sin. What is the relationship between a Christian and sin? How are we to define the sin problem in the life of a Christian?

A rather flippant young man asked a preacher on one occasion somewhat mockingly this question. "You say that unsaved people, people who don't have a personal relationship with Christ, carry a weight of sin." Well, he said, "I feel nothing. How heavy is sin, ten pounds, forty pounds, eighty pounds, 200 pounds?" The preacher pointedly replied, "If you laid a 400-pound weight on a corpse, would it feel the load?" The young man replied, "No." And the preacher drove home the point, "The spirit that knows not Christ is equally dead and feels not the load of sin."

It is true that people who don't know Christ, people who are not Christians, haven't really come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ feel guilt, feel bad about doing bad very often because doing bad creates bad circumstances. But they do not understand the true weight of sin. Because they do not understand the law of God, nor do they love the God they have offended. But a believer, one who has come to know God, has a great sensitivity to sin. He is not indifferent to sin, but hypersensitive to it. Chrysostom, that great saint of God said, "I fear nothing but sin."

Another unbeliever, when confronted with a message of salvation by grace, free in Christ said, "Well, if I believed your doctrine that salvation was by grace and free for the taking, then I would believe it and take it and then fill my life with sin." To which the gospel messenger replied, "Well, how much sin do you think it would take to fill a true Christian to satisfaction?" Listen, a true Christian finds no satisfaction in sin. Though we have received salvation by grace through faith, that does not make license. That does not create an attitude in a truly converted person that I want to sin and I will fill my life with sin because I know it's all forgiven anyway. Not so. A true Christian feels the real weight of sin, the sinfulness of sin, the heinousness of sin, the offense that it is to God, and thus he hates the evil, seeks not to fill his life with it, but to empty his life of it.

Now there are many reasons why a Christian would want to avoid sin. First of all, it grieves the Holy Spirit. Secondly, it offends God. Also, it causes our prayers to be unanswered, and the Bible says sin makes our life powerless, our praise inappropriate, our blessings are withheld, our joy is removed. It brings us into chastening from God. It hinders our growth. It limits our service. It pollutes our fellowship. It endangers our life. But the bottom-line is it's really contrary to our desires.

Do you remember what I read you a little while ago in Psalm 42:1? The psalmist said, "as the deer pants after the water brook, so pants my soul after thee, O God." It is characteristic of a Christian, one who has been made new, who has died — Do you remember last time? — died in Christ and risen to walk in newness of life to have new desires, holy longings, righteous aspirations. We long for God. We long for what it is true, for what is right, for what is good, for what is just, for what is noble, for what is excellent. That is the man who hates sin and loves righteousness. But there's a problem. The righteousness which we love is not always apparent in our lives. The sin we hate often is. We're in conflict.

Thomas Watson, that great Puritan divine, wrote in his classic, *Body of Divinity*, several centuries ago these very insightful words. He said, "A sign of sanctification is an antipathy against sin. A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it, as a serpent sheds its coat, but keeps its sting. But a sanctified person can say he not only leaves sin, he loathes it." He said, "God has changed your nature and made you like a king's daughter, all glorious within. He has put on you the breastplate of holiness, which though it may be shot at can never be shot through."

When you become a Christian, as we saw in our last study, you're united with Jesus Christ, you die in his death and his sacrifice for sin pays the penalty for your sin. You are buried with him as it were in that death and you rise with him in his resurrection to walk as a new creation. Though you are a new creation with all new desires and impulses and longings after holiness, there's still a conflict.

You do have a sanctified conscience. Do you know what conscience is? Well, maybe you would be able to understand if I said it this way. Conscience is part of the defaced image of God in which you were made. Conscience was put there to stimulate righteous behavior. Conscience feeds off your mind. What you know to be true in your mind activates your conscience which moves your impulses through action. When you became a Christian, there's a sense in which God sanctified your conscience. And now that much defaced image of God is restored to some degree and your conscience is now sanctified and it's giving you good impulses. It's telling you what is right and holy and good. Your conscience is not just stimulated by your mind, but it is stimulated by the Word of God, which your mind apprehends, and by the Spirit of God, who is moving within you, so the Word and the Spirit move the conscience to move you to that which is holy, just, and good.

So the testimony of the believer is that there is within him a...a righteous impulse. There is a holy longing. There is a desire after God. There is a love of God and a love of His Word and a love of His truth and a desire to live by and think like it. But there's also something else there, and that is the presence of sin. That's there too. It could be said that once you were only a sinner, and someday you will be only a saint. But right now you are a sinner-hyphen-saint and therein lies the struggle.

We find the apostle Paul in the throes of that struggle in Romans 7. He's in the middle of it. He is looking at it from his own personal vantage point. And what you have here is not one of his reasoned, logical, exercises in theology, not one of his presentations of some systematic truth. But what you have here is a bleeding heart, an aching spirit. What you have here is a man caught in sorrow, a man who is lamenting his condition. A man who is hurting deep within, because there are such holy longings in him and he doesn't seem to be able to fulfill them because of ever present sin.

Three laments appear in this passage. They are very similar. In each lament, there are three parts. There is a condition by which he describes what causes him to lament or weep or be sorrowful. There is the proof of that condition. And then he touches back to the source of that condition. Now I want you to look at these laments, because I think they're going to put you in touch with your own personal experience as a Christian struggling with holy longings that collide with sinful impulses.

Let's look at the first lament in verses 14 to 17. In verse 14, we find the condition. He describes the cause for his sorrow: "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." This is not your run-of-the-mill guy. This is maybe the finest Christian that ever lived and the noblest of all believers. We would probably concur, the greatest of all preachers apart from Christ Himself. This is a man who not only knew what others taught him, but knew what God taught him personally by way of revelation.

This is a man who had a number of personal visitations from the risen glorified Christ. This is not some extraordinary person; however, in spite of all of that, this is a man who identifies with us in the very struggle of spiritual living. He says, "I know the law is spiritual. I know it." What do you mean by that? I know the law of God has come from the Holy Spirit. I know it is a divine standard. I know it is God's Word. I know it is accurate. I know it is honorable. I know it is true. I know it is believable. I know it is authoritative. I know it is inerrant. All of that, I affirm the Word of God.

Back in verse 12 of this chapter he says, "The law is holy. The commandment is holy and righteous and good." And so he says, as a believer, the new creation in me affirms all of that. It affirms the holiness of God's law and the righteousness and the goodness of it. I don't question that. I know that it is spiritual. "I love thy law," the psalmist said. "Oh how I love thy law." "It is my delight," he said.

Well, Paul is saying the same thing. God's law is divine and he's affirming the divine character of it as offered by the Holy Spirit. And God's law is holy and it's good and it's righteous. And so he says, "I have in me that which longs to see that law and understand that law and love that law and obey that law." But there's something else going on. “I am of flesh.” Literally, I am fleshy. I am fleshy. What do you mean by that?

Well, he says I... There's still something about me that's carnal. Something about me that's *sarkinos*, that's earthy, fleshy. This means simply that there are impulses in me that are contrary to the law of God, contrary to what I long for and love and seek. He's not saying the flesh is sovereign, but he is saying the flesh is surviving. Even though I died in Christ and rose to walk in newness of life and I'm a new creation, I've still got an old flesh clinging to me.

And I'm not saying that the flesh is reigning, but it is residing. Its dominion was broken. We know that from Chapter 6. He says that at least three times in Chapter 6. "Sin no more has dominion over me." It isn't reigning and it isn't sovereign, but it is there. And he says, "I'm fleshy." I am not in the flesh, but the flesh is still in me. I'm not in total bondage to the flesh like I once was, but every once in a while I sell myself as a part-time slave. That's what he's saying.

Verse 14, I find myself sold into bondage to sin, which isn't even my master. How ludicrous, how idiotic, when I have — according to Romans Chapter 6, you'll remember — traded in my servitude to sin for servitude to righteousness. Traded in my bondage to sin for bondage to God and now God is my new master and righteousness is my new master and I've made that exchange. Why in the world do I go back and sell myself to sin as a part-time slave?

This is his lament. And his sanctified conscience keeps a record of his sin. And his sanctified conscience accuses him. And his sanctified conscience judges him. And his sanctified conscience executes him with the punishment of guilt. He's not unlike David who said, "Surely, I have been a sinner from birth."

And so the apostle Paul looks at his own life and he says, "I'm not what I ought to be." It's very much like he said in Philippians 3 when he said, I haven't attained, I haven't reached the mark. I haven't

attained the prize of Christ-likeness. I'm not there yet. I'm still fleshy. I still have two things in conflict and every once in a while I sell myself as a part-time slave to sin. Does that sound familiar to you? Does that sound like life for a Christian?

No unregenerate person can really identify with this. A person who has never come to Christ doesn't understand this because they don't understand the sinfulness of sin, and they don't love the law of God. But when you become a believer and God plants within you the love of His of Word and the love His of truth and love of Himself and the love of His Son, and longings after holiness and righteousness and what is good, whenever you see sin in your life, it is a heinous thing.

The unregenerate man sees only the externality of the law, sees it only as an imposition, sees it only as a threat to his freedom and a threat to his liberty and he doesn't want to conform himself to it. The Christian sees it as that which is totally desirable, that which he and his deepest longings would love to keep all the time and never violate. So you don't have to worry. They'll say if you preach grace, if you preach grace, salvation by grace, salvation by grace, people will get saved and abuse it. No, because when you're truly saved, God gives you a new nature with a new holy longing and a hatred of sin.

Cranfield, writing years ago on Romans, said, quote, "The more seriously a Christian strives to live from grace and submit to the discipline of the gospel, the more sensitive he becomes to the fact that even his very best acts and activities are disfigured by the egotism, which is still powerful within him and no less evil because it is often more subtly disguised informally."

What he's saying is twofold. As you grow as a Christian and become more mature and more mature and more mature and walk with the Lord longer and longer and longer, you're not going to have a decreasing sensitivity to sin, you're going to have an increasing one. And even though sin may be less frequent, it will seem more heinous when it appears. Furthermore, it is also true that as you grow in grace and Satan attempts to become more subtle in your sinning and your temptation so that you tend to overlook it, you'll become more and more sensitive even to its subtleties.

Just know that you'll never get to the place where you're not sensitive to your own sin, where you're not burdened over you own sin. And I would submit to you that every Christian will live his or her entire lifetime on this earth in a certain lament with a certain kind of pervasive sadness, with a certain kind of sorrow that just goes on all the time because you will always be aspiring to a holy standard which you cannot live by completely.

Therein lies the sadness. And so the Christian then laments along with the apostle Paul. I know the law is spiritual and it's holy and it's just and it's good and I love it, but I see myself fleshy, a part-time slave to sin.

The old commentator Thomas Scott said it well when he wrote, "When the believer compares his actual attainments with the spirituality of the law and with his own desire and aim to obey it, he sees that he has yet to a great degree carnal in the state of his mind and under the power of evil propensities from which like a man sold for a slave, he cannot holy emancipate himself. He is fleshy, in exact proportion to the degree in which he falls short of perfect conformity to the law of God." End quote.

That is the sinfulness of sin; that it is residual even in the redeemed and at times it takes us captive. Then Paul says here's the proof of it. Here's the proof that that's the condition. Verse 15: "For that which I am doing, I do not understand. For I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." There's the proof. He says you question that condition, then let me tell you something, I don't even understand myself. I don't even understand what I'm doing. I am not doing what I want to do, but I'm doing the very thing I hate. Can you identify with that?

That's how the believer looks at himself. That's the proof. Hey, the self-righteous, moral man deceives himself; the Christian doesn't. The Christian says I have proof of indwelling sin. I have proof of it. What's the proof? I keep doing what I don't want to do and I don't do what I want to do. Something is at work in me that restrains me. I'm not perfect. I'm not all I ought to be. My will is frustrated. My sanctified conscience speaks independently of my will. Yes, that is true. My...my sanctified conscience is God spy in my heart, God's policemen to arrest me, but sometimes I even overpower my sanctified conscience.

My will is to do what is right, but it gets frustrated. I have a good will and an evil will engaged in conflict and sometimes that evil impulse wins. And then he says, here's the source of it. Where's this coming from? We don't want to blame God. We don't want to say, "Hey, God, you saved me, you sure made a mess out of this. You didn't give me much." We don't want to say, "Well, Lord you said I died in Christ and I was buried and I rose to walk in newness of life. If this is newness of life, something missing here. If this is the new creation doing this, if this is the new me doing this, if this is my redeemed self acting this way, if this is the life of God in me, if this is the power of the Holy Spirit, something isn't right.”

He's not going to blame God like that, because God cannot be blamed for sin. There's no sin in Him at all. So he puts the problem where it has to go. Look at the source of it, verse 16. "If I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the law, confessing that it is good, so now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me." What a statement.

He says the problem is sin is still there. Sin is still there. I was all sinner. Someday I'll be all saint. Now I overlap. That's my problem. I did receive a saintly nature, a new creation. I did receive life in Christ, but the old is still there too. And he says, I do agree with the law, I do love the law. The real I, the new I, the new I that lives — "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live," — and that new I that lives, that new holy, righteous, good creation loves the law of God. But there's something else at work in me and it is, he says, "Sin which indwells me." I still have that.

Where did we get our sin? Remember way back in Chapter 5? In Christ we received life, but through Adam we received what? Death. In Christ came righteousness, through Adam came sin. And so Adam, the father of the race, sends down through the whole human stream sin. And everybody is born a sinner. We're all born sinful. And so he says, I'm...,I still have my Adamic character. I still have human genetics operating in me. I'm still a person. I'm still earthly. And it's in that humanness that my sin dwells.

I see God's holy perfect law and yet I battle to fulfill it because of my sinfulness. And he gets... He gets a little bit frustrated in trying to find where this is. Because he says in verse 17, "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." He almost wants to say, "It isn't really me, it's the sin that's there." It is me, but isn't me. It's not me, the new me, but it's me, the old me.

It's not really the new creation and he's splitting some hairs here. From my salvation on, it's no longer...it's no longer I that does evil, it's sin that's in me. And all he's doing is helping us to locate this so we understand it. After salvation then sin still resides in us. And so he says one, my condition, sorrow. I am a mess because I'm in a spiritual battle. The proof of it? I don't do what I want to do and I find myself doing the things I hate. Where does it come from? It comes from sin that dwells in me. And that's the source. And so, beloved, that's how it is with all us. How it is with me, you, everybody in this life.

You see we're a lot like an unskilled artist who goes out on a beautiful afternoon and looks at a phenomenal scene of mountain, streams, trees, a meadow, on a blue sky with puffy white cloud kind

of day, and as he looks at this marvelous scene, his eyes can see it all and his brain can grasp it all. The picture is clear, it's breathtaking; it fits perfectly into his mind. He can discern it all, absorb it all, and he knows exactly what he wants to put on the canvas, but he's unskilled and his brush won't do it.

There's nothing wrong with the scene, the scene is perfect. There's nothing wrong with his mind, his mind can perceive the scene in its perfection. The problem is he doesn't have the physical capability to transfer the scene to the canvas. And that is precisely the conflict in which a Christian lives. The scene is perfect. It is presented here. This is the perfection of God's scene. The spiritual mind that Christ has given us can perceive the scene. We see the righteous standard. We see what is holy and just and good and noble and excellent. The problem is we have limitations in this flesh that disallow us from getting it from that conception to the canvas.

And so Paul says, I am sorry over this. I grieve over this. And he moves to lament number two in verse 18. This lament follows the same pattern. It's first a condition. "I know that nothing good dwells in me." Now that is an amazing statement. You say now wait a minute. Well, he says, yeah, "that is in my flesh." And now he gives us a further definition.

Back in verse 17, he said "sin indwells me." Here he tells you where it dwells. It dwells in his what? Flesh, that's where it is. It's in my flesh. Nothing good is in there, in my flesh. I'm not talking about the new me, I'm talking about that flesh, that...that locates the seat of this sin.

What is flesh? Listen carefully, unredeemed humanness. It's all you got from Adam folks, that's what it is. It's not just your physical body. It's your physical body, but your emotional, mental impulses, your will, your thoughts, all that came from Adam. It isn't just physical, it's mental, emotional, volitional. All you got in Adam. He says that's where sin is. It's... It's in that part of me that I inherited through the human stream in my unredeemed flesh.

Do you know what a Christian is? In the new creation, perfect, holy, righteous, good, incarcerated in unredeemed flesh, and trying to live through that flesh like the artist who can conceive the scene, but can't make his hand paint it because of the lack of skill in the physical. So he says, that's my condition and he's weeping again. This is sad. This is lament.

And then he moves again as he did the first time from the condition to the proof. You're questioning this? You're questioning that this is true of me. Verse 18: "For the wishing is present in me, but the

doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not wish." Does that give you enough proof? I wa...same story again, I don't do what I want to do and I do what I don't want to do. Does that prove the point?

I suppose there are people in the world who expect Christians to be perfect all the time. I would guess that they don't have the expectation nearly to the degree that we do, right? I expect that of myself, and I can't perform it. And that is my greatest frustration in life. I confess that to you all. I have said through the years I preach a better message than I can live. I set a higher standard than I can attain to. I can see the picture and I can discern it clearly, but I can't paint it the way I see it. Because I'm struggling against my unredeemed humanness just like all of you are. Paul says, I want it, I just can't do it. And then what makes you so mad is the times you want it and do it, you feel proud you did it and that forfeits it.

A godly man is prone to see only his sin. And you see Paul...you say, somebody want to say to Paul, "Paul, you need to go to a counselor, you've got a bad self image." I mean, you can't be pining away about all this pride. Look who you are. Look what you've attained. The godly man is prone to overestimate his sinfulness. Why? Because he hates it. That's the...that's the very, very essence of Godliness. It exaggerates if it could be exaggerated. Or it appears to exaggerate the sinfulness of sin.

By the way this is the real source of humility, may I say. Humility doesn't come from counting up what you've done for the Lord and figuring it isn't that important. Saying well, I don't preach and I don't teach and I don't sing and I don't lead groups and boy who am I? I'm...I'm nothing. That's not the source of humility. The source of humility is not counting what you've done for God and...and...finding it wasn't much. The source of humility is being overwhelmed with what you failed to do because of your flesh.

And then he says, you want to know the source of it again? Verse 20, "If I am doing the very thing I don't wish, I'm no longer the one doing it." It isn't me. I'm wishing to do something else, but sin, which what? Dwells in me, there it is again, same thing. It's amazing how he...he sees himself as this new creation. He says it isn't me. It isn't me. It's not what I want. It's not what I desire. It's almost like there's a stranger in here and this stranger keeps overpowering me. And it isn't me. I don't want to do this. I know what my vision sees. I know what my mind designs and contemplates. I know what I want to put on that canvas, but somebody is messing with me. I can't get it out. The poignancy here is overwhelming.

You come to the third lament in verse 21. It's the same pattern again, the condition. He states in verse 21, "I find there's a principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good." There's something going on in me. I'm the one who wishes to do good, but there's a principle in me, somewhere in there. You say, “Where is it?” It's in my flesh he says.

Back in Chapter 6, he talked about your...the members of your body, your bodily parts, your body. He is absolutely consistent in Romans 6, 7, 8 never to deviate from those terms. He always puts it in the flesh, in the body, in the members of the body. He says in 6:12, "Don't let sin reign over your mortal body." In 6:13 he says, "Don't yield your bodily parts as instruments of unrighteousness." He's very concerned that we understand that this is in that which he inherited from Adam and does not pollute that which he received from God. Understood?

But the condition is nonetheless the same as Pogo faced when he said, “Wwe have found the enemy and the enemy is us.” So he says, his condition, again in verse 21, I...There's this principle of evil and it's in my flesh. He gives the proof in verse 22 and 23. You question that? Well, listen to this. "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." I love the law of God and I... You can identify that can't you? You come to church, you heard the Word of God, and you get exhilarated, your heart burns within you like those in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus. You get thrilled and exhilarated and rejoiced. You're reading your own Bible and God causes things to...to be enlightened to your mind by the quickening of the Holy Spirit. You're thrilled by those things. You sing hymns and sometimes tears come down your cheek because you revel in the truth you sing. You rejoice when you read a good book that it explodes on your mind some grandiose truth about God. You love His law and you love His truth, and yet you can walk out of that environment and something dark happens in your life. And something strange overpowers you.

And so he says, "I concur with the law of God so joyfully in the inner man but” verse 23 "I see a different principle in the members of my body." There he always puts it in the same place, the flesh, the Adamic inheritance, the body. And it wages war against the principles in my mind. Again, I see the picture; I just can't get it through my unredeemed flesh. And sometimes it makes me a prisoner of that principle of sin working again in my bodily parts, the Greek says. That's my conflict. The source of it, right at the end of verse 23, "It's in my members." It's in my bodily parts. It's in my unredeemed flesh. And sometimes it makes me a slave. He said earlier, and here he says, it makes me a prisoner. I can... I can walk in and out of jail on that deal anytime I want, so I'm a self-made prisoner and a self-made slave. How sad. This is every Christian’s biography.

The condition: Conflict between a holy new life and incarcerating unredeemed human flesh. The proof: An inability to do what you long to do. The source: Indwelling sin still there. You can't do much self-exaltation in this can you?

What's the final wail, the final cry, the final lament? Verse 24: "Wretched man that I am." He's miserable folks. He is desperate. He is distressed. You see men perceive themselves to be sinners in direct proportion to how they understand the holiness of God. And he understood the holiness of God and he therefore, understood his own wretchedness. He wasn't as sinful as sinners can be. He wasn't, certainly, as sinful as perhaps we are, but compared to the law of God, he was wretched. And then he cries in verse 24, "In the condition I'm in, who will set me free from the body of this death?" That is an unbelievable term he uses there, the body of this death...death. He says, I've got...I'm a prisoner to the body of this death.

It is reported that near Tarsus, ancient city, where Saul was born, then became Paul, there was tribe of people who lived there and they inflicted the most unbelievable punishment upon a murderer that I've ever read about. They took the body of the victim, the dead body of the one murdered, and they strapped it to the murderer, shoulder to shoulder, back to back, thigh to thigh, leg to leg, and arm to arm. And they sent him out of the community. So tight were the bonds that he could not free himself and after a few days the death in the body he had killed began to take his life. Paul says that's how I see myself. I'm this living person, but shoulder to shoulder, back to back, thigh to thigh, leg to leg, arm to arm is strapped to me a dead body, and it keeps me from being what I want so much to be. Oh what wretchedness.

Who will deliver me from this? Then the answer comes in verse 25. "Thanks be to God, deliverance will come through" whom, "Jesus Christ our Lord." You say what's he talking about? What does he mean? He already knows Christ. He's already a Christian. What do you mean, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord"? Listen, beloved, He is looking future. He's looking down the road here and this is triumphant hope there will come a deliverance.

Go over to Chapter 8. Let me show it to you. Verse 23, Romans 8, again watch how consistent his terms are. Paul says, "We ourselves groan." That's right. He's been groaning right here in Chapter 7 hasn't he? We're groaning within ourselves. Why are you groaning? Because of this conflict, because I'm strapped to a dead corpse, I'm groaning. What are you waiting for? He says, "We're waiting" end of verse 23 "for the redemption of" our what? "our body." That's his whole point. You see the part of us that hasn't been redeemed is the body, the flesh. That's why, though you have been saved, you

will yet be saved. That's why Paul says in Romans 13, "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." You haven't entered into your full salvation yet, because you have...you have, you might say, a saved spirit, but not a saved body. And that's why the apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3 says, boy we are looking, we are looking and we're looking to the future when we will turn in as it were or drop off or discard this body. He calls the body of our humble state and we'll receive a body conformed to His glory, the new body that knows no sin, knows no decay, knows no death, experiences no temptation. That's when, Paul said, "This perishable shall put on the imperishable, this mortal shall put on immortality." That's coming, beloved.

Some day in the future to go along with our glorified spirit will come a glorified body. To go along with our transformed inner man will come a transformed outer man. Paul wanted it so badly. He calls it the glorious manifestation of the sons of God. And he even goes on to say, you know, that people in the world they don't know who we are. They look at us and they don't think we're any different. You know why? Because all they see is our what? Our flesh, because that hasn't been redeemed. That's why "it doesn't yet appear what we shall be but when he appears then we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." Then will be the glorious manifestation of the sons of God. In the meantime, we look pretty plain, because they can't see the inner man and because the battle sometimes is lost and we don't look that different. But someday, Paul says, the transformation comes.

That is our hope. That is the Christian's hope, every believer's hope. The words of Tennyson kind of sum it up, that famous line where he said: "Oh for a new man to arise within me and subdue the man that I am." Maybe he'd been reading Romans 7 when he wrote that. You say, John, in the meantime, while I'm still strapped to the body of this death and while I see the picture and it's in my mind clearly but I can't make myself paint it perfectly on the canvas, how do I gain the victory? How do I gain the victory? Come back next week and I'll tell you and we'll go into chapter 8 and learn about the Holy Spirit's ministry.

I want to mention something to you. We have a new little two-tape album called "Breaking Sin's Grip," and on the back it says, "We spend a lot of time and energy in our Christian life battling sin. How can you keep sin from robbing you of the joys and blessings that come from obeying God?" This gives the six powerful truths that lead to holiness out of 1 Peter, chapter 4. It kind of goes along with what we said this morning.

Let's bow together in a word of prayer. Father, it's been so good to just get in contact with your Word and hear the cry of the dear apostle Paul as...as he spoke about the struggle of his own life. There was hope there because he knew his salvation was real and he knew that his glory would come in the future, that someday he would leave the corrupt flesh in a grave and his glorified spirit would enter

into the presence of his Lord. And that the day would come when he would get a new and glorified body so that in all of his being he could express praise and glory and render service throughout eternity to You.

We rejoice in that same reality, oh God. We don't relish being strapped to the corpse and we long for the day when we shall leave this world and enter into the presence of Jesus Christ, to be made like Him who knew no sin, and are free forever from encumbrance, can take up the brush and paint the picture as perfectly as You have laid it out.

Father, we pray that You will bless every person who is here who knows You, who struggles in this battle, fill their hearts with hope, deepen their love for Your truth, give them triumph over the flesh. For those who do not know Christ, who do not even know the struggle, may they come to know the One who alone can give them victory over sin, death, hell, and who can usher them into Your eternal presence in the full glory of eternal life. We pray in the name of our Savior. Amen.

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