

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 9



MAN'S FLESH VERSUS MAN'S SPIRIT

Scripture Texts: Romans 7:18-25; Romans 8:1-9

There are two forces or natures which control people—the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit. Unsaved people live after the flesh and are in bondage to sin. People saved by faith in the blood of Christ have spiritual life, live in the Spirit, and are free from sin.

Looking back on his own experience, Paul used himself to illustrate the difference between the flesh and the Spirit as guiding principles of life. The opposite characters of the mind, through which the Spirit and flesh both work, are shown in **Romans 8:6**. This is why the Christian life is referred to as a constant battle.

MEMORY VERSE: *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.—Galatians 6:8*

Paul Describes Life in the Flesh

Romans 7:18-24 There are but two ways to live in this world—in the flesh or in the Spirit. These two ways produce two kinds of people—fleshly (carnal) or spiritual. The two kinds are also called sinners or saints.

Paul said there are two forces present in a natural person, **the law of the mind** and **the law of sin** in his **members**. The mind wills to do good. The mind **delights in** or desires **the law of God**. It hates the evil yet does it. A natural person is one living in the flesh, separated from God, and devoid of the Spirit of God. Anything a natural person does can only be done by human strength which is unable to reach God's standard.

One living in the flesh is **sold under sin (Romans 7:14)**. He is not free, but a slave. His heart cries out if he wants to be delivered, **O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?** for there is a Deliverer. Thank God! The next verse answers the cry. **I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord**. Through Him every repentant sinner will be freed from the bondage of sin, **the body of this death**.

Paul takes us back to his childhood innocence—I was alive without the law once. Then God's Law came; he heard it, he disobeyed it and fell into sin, **sin revived** (or came alive), **and I died (verses 9-13)**. The effects of sin worked **death in me**. Paul went on to describe his old, sinful life to show the character of sinful flesh wherever found. Paul did not mean he AT THAT TIME was in bondage to the flesh. He went on to say he was **free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2)**. Some use Paul's words to excuse sin and deny the possibility of holy living. But he said the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us when we walk **after the Spirit**. Paul's flesh was just as he described it. So is yours. Don't live in it. There is an escape from it.

Paul Describes Life in the Spirit

Romans 8:1-2 **Now no condemnation**. Condemnation is sin—damnation. Those **in Christ Jesus** escape this because they walk **after the Spirit**. God holds no blame for them. What is **the law of the Spirit?** It is **of life in Christ Jesus**. A sinner is a dead soul. When a sinner repents and trusts Christ, Christ gives life to his soul. He is regenerate or born anew. He then lives in the Spirit and is **free from the law of sin and death**. He lives holy. His thoughts are pure. His actions are good. He lives each day with his eyes on the goal of his eternal inheritance.

Paul Contrasts Flesh and Spirit

Romans 8:3-9 **For what the law could not do**—the Law that God gave Moses, and by which Israel was to live until Christ came, **was weak** because man had only **the flesh**—his own human strength—with which to

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obey it. This was not enough, so man failed. The law could not save people from sin. But when Jesus came and died, He **condemned sin**, dealt it a death blow. He saves sinners and enables them to walk **after the Spirit**.

Christ gives this new power by sending the Holy Spirit to live in and guide His saints. This gives them the ability to fulfill God's Law and live righteously. It gives power to one to bring into subjection the **carnal mind** which is **enmity**— hostility—at war **against God: for it is not subject to the law of God**. As long as we are corruptible (or carnal), the battle will go on for the soul of man to obey the Spirit's command or to obey the carnal mind which cannot be made subject to the law of God. If this were not true, man would have no power of choice. The spirit of Satan has from the beginning battled against the Spirit of God. This is the spiritual battle which we face every day as saints (**Ephesians 6:10-13**). This battle is not over when one obtains salvation from sin but has just begun. Fleshly living **cannot please God**. It cannot lead to Heaven. But when we **live in the Spirit**, we do please God because we walk in the Spirit, the opposite way the flesh tempts us to go.

Two natures are seen here—the rule of the flesh and that of the Spirit. God's Holy Spirit will not live where sin is.

The Cry of the Conscience

The man in our Scripture cried, **Who shall deliver me?** This is a first step. It comes from a conscience stirred by the Holy Spirit Who reproves **the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8)**. Sinners will not turn to Jesus until they feel the pain of sin, until they desire righteousness, and until they feel keenly His judgment. Feeling these, what is next? They must be brought to repentance. They must transfer from the flesh to the Spirit.

As long as one is living in his own strength, he is fleshly. By training and by trying, he may reach a high standard of morality and what the world calls goodness. This is self-righteousness and does not save. God calls it good when he lives after the Spirit.

JUST A THOUGHT

"One may be almost saved but altogether lost."

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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