

FLESH-WALKERS & SPIRIT-BREATHERS PT2, ROM.8:1-17

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◆2. I have a superior weapon in the Holy Spirit.

◆**A.** Jesus has made us free from the penalty of sin. We have now the eternal consequence of his righteous life, death, and resurrection. The next step is freedom from the bondage of sin in this life. We have a power for that too. Now God in his wisdom has not chosen to make us holy robots. He has given us help, available training, spiritual weapons, and his Spirit. As believers in Jesus, we have come to a place in existence where we can, with the presence of the Spirit of God, say no to sin and yes to righteousness. We couldn't do that before (v7). We didn't even really care about it. But now we care. And now it can happen (v8), but God is letting us cooperate.

◆“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,” Romans 8:12, 13, NIV.

◆I believe Paul is talking here about our experience of growing holy (sanctification) on this earth. Sin always leads to some kind of dying. Seeking the Holy Spirit always leads to some kind of living.

◆**B.** So it's a continuation of what we began to think about last week: death of the old self, coming to life of the new self. The inner spiritual war. We call those two things mortification and vivification. Mort-ify: to cause to die. Mort-al: able to die. Vivify:

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to bring to life, to re-vive. This is how the Heidelberg Catechism puts it.

- ◆88 Q What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?
 - ◆A. Two things: the dying-away of the old self, and the coming-to-life of the new.
- ◆89 Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?
 - ◆A. It is to be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to run away from it.
- ◆90 Q. What is the coming-to-life of the new self?
 - ◆A. It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ and a delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to.

◆What, or who can enable us to actually do good and right, to mortify and to vivify? The answer is the Holy Spirit. Paul mentions the Spirit 17 times in the 17 verses of our text. The Spirit is how we win the war over the sinful nature. The Bible says the Holy Spirit actually lives inside every Christian. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is in the earth. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit speaks, and reminds us of things, primarily and always consistent with the things Jesus taught when he was here. (John 16) Now ever since chapter 6 Paul has been writing to the Roman Christians about putting sin to death, and coming alive in Christ.

- ◆Every time the NIV translates “sinful nature” that is the word “flesh”. The “flesh” is always contrasted with the “Spirit”. Please understand that by flesh Paul means more than the meat on your bones. He is not saying that the

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body is bad and the spirit is good (the gnostic heresy). And the gospel of Jesus is not that God redeems your soul but not your body (cf.v11). *By flesh he means this lower, fallen, frail, broken existence, in contrast to the higher, heavenly, holy existence in which God lives and in which he intends for man to live with him. That, he calls life in the Spirit.*

◆ Our daily question is will we live according to the the flesh (5) and experience dying (6) or will we live according to the spirit (5) and experience life and peace (6)? Will we be “flesh-walkers” or “Spirit-breathers”?

◆ C. We can win over sin as we guard what we put in to our mind. Flesh-walkers are “minding” the flesh, this frail, less-than, stained existence. Spirit-breathers are “minding” the Spirit. Flesh-walker accept sin as the inevitable slow leak of life. Spirit-breathers have connected to the high volume, fresh air pump of holiness because they don’t like the leakiness of this broken world.

◆ *“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” Colossians 3:1, 2, NIV.*

◆ He’s telling us to be far-sighted. To have vision! To look at the bigger picture. He’s also reminding us that we are what we think about, which has huge implications for the music we listen to, the books we read, the shows we watch. Put garbage in, when you look inside what do you find?

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◆**D.** Killing sin takes more than a few gentle strokes. Thankfully our two selves are inversely proportional. That is, as one grows the other shrinks. As we feed the one the other starves. So let's get practical. Here are some starters to get going.

◆1) Find the corresponding grace to whatever sin you are struggling with and feed the grace. Are you hot tempered? Practice answering in full sentences as politely as possible in norm situations. Do you know yourself to be tight with your money? Share, give, tithe as a habit, a spiritual habit. Are you constantly looking for glory and praise? Make it your mission to praise others as often as you can today.

◆2) Call on the Holy Spirit. A lot of Christians, though they say they believe the Bible and that it tells them the Holy Spirit lives in them – still “live in the same house but never talk”! Pray every morning for a week, before anything else and ask the Holy Spirit to rule your day, to invade your mind. Offer him your thoughts. Invite him to show you things, or to tell you things. Say it in so many words. Write it on a note if you can't concentrate. I don't mean “Holy Spirit bless this day, thank you for this food. Amen.” (unless you're eating in bed). I mean, “Holy Spirit, you say your inside of me. Well then talk to me today. Tell me what to do. Take ownership of my body. I invite you to control my mind. Show me what you want to change in me.” If as many did that with the Holy Spirit as

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do that with evil spirits our world would change in a hurry, I think.

◆And **then, see** if you want the same things your wanted before. See if things you used to be fine with start catching your notice. And the best part is, as you ask about specific things, and as God answers specifically, you are gathering your testimony! You are interacting with God and you have something to share when you or your friends wonder if he's real or not!

◆**Conclusion:** Listen, God's people are not destined or condemned to a life of defeat in the war with indwelling sin. We have the indwelling Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God. Paul said clearly that if we don't have the Holy Spirit we don't even belong to Christ! (9) But so little do we think about him that Francis Chan wrote a book about him and called it "The Forgotten God." If there was a chance of an oil well under your property wouldn't you want to start digging? I urge each of us to start digging into, praying to the Holy Spirit!