

**Title:** *The War Within*  
**Series:** *Living Free*  
**Text:** Romans 7:14-8:2

**NOTE TO LEADERS:** This is an abridged version of Pastor Dan's sermon notes, with the addition of possible discussion questions, for your own personal study and to use in your life group meeting. Please review these notes well in advance of your meeting, add your own questions and direct the discussion as you see fit. The key to a good discussion is to keep it simple, to ask several "open-ended" questions and to give opportunity for everyone in the group to contribute.

**OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- What has been the most significant insight that you have gleaned from this series on Roman's so far and why?
- What are some of the key truths previously covered in this series?

**Review:** When we are baptized, the Bible says we are baptized into Christ's death. We are spiritually united with Jesus Christ by faith as evidenced through believer's baptism. Through faith we participate with Christ in his death, burial, resurrection and glorification.

These truths could be called *positional truths* since they are *declared* to be true of us by God the Father. The complete out-workings of this identification with Christ, however, are only fulfilled completely in the life to come and yet we are to begin to experience the promises in this present life in a very real way.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:**

- Pastor Dan described some of the truths we've seen in the previous chapters of Romans as "positional" truths. Can anyone explain this idea of "positional truth"?
- Pastor used the example of D-Day to illustrate "positional" truth. When the allies landed in Normandy, the war, for all intents and purposes, was over. But there were still many battles to be fought before the victory would be completely realized or appropriated. How does this relate to our own experience as believers? How have you seen this reality in your own life?

Paul says we now ought to walk in *newness of life*. **Romans 6:4** it is **conditional on our appropriating the benefits of Christ**. We are to *reckon* and *present* – i.e. consider what Jesus has done and yield our full body, soul and spirit unto the Lord.

**Illustration of Joni**

**Text: Romans 7:14-8:2** – Ask someone to read the text or read it together as a group.

**I. The War Within - 7:14-24**

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Can any of you relate to the personal battle that Paul describes in these verses? Explain.

### A. The Battle is Real

Paul speaks in past tense in the first part of chapter seven (e.g. *I was once without the law v 9*) but changes in verse 15 to *present tense*. This indicates he is describing a present battle not a past battle. He faces a real struggle on a daily basis.

Paul really wants to do good but finds himself continually doing evil. This is not in regard to all sin but *'besetting sin'* – the stubborn sin in his life or the principle of sin.

It is an existential **battle** (something he experiences in his life personally). It is not simply theoretical or theological. It is about people truly wanting to do right and good and failing to do so. As a result there is pain, disgust, anxiety, and shame.

**TEXTS:** Ask two group members to read these texts below.

- **Romans 7:23** *Warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into **captivity** to the law of sin*
- **Galatians 5:17** *For the flesh lusts (wars) against the Spirit, and the Spirit (wars) against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*
- *One of the laws of physics is that anything in motion causes friction. Similarly one of the laws of the supernatural realm is that any motion or progress in the pursuit of godliness will produce 'friction' as it confronts the carnality of our human nature.*

Jack Hayford

There are two natures in the believer. There is a war between the 'inward man' (v 22) or 'spiritual man' that truly delights in serving God and the 'flesh' (v 18), 'old man' (6:6) and carnal man (v 14) who ultimately practices evil.

### B. The Will is Weak

- **Romans 7:15** *For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate that I do*

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How many of you have discovered that there are limitations to your own will power? Can you share an example from your own life of how you came to the end of your own will power in a particular area of struggle, only to find the grace of God bringing victory in that area?

In this moral/spiritual battle it is interesting that Paul doesn't reference the power of the Spirit but the focuses instead on the inadequacy of the law (*I ought to do such and such*).

- Humor: "So far today, Lord, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped; I haven't lost my temper; I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overindulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few moments, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed. And from then on, I'm going to need a lot of help!"

### C. The Law is Powerless

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** As a matter of review, who can explain the purpose of the law?

The law is a great blessing if we understand God's purpose for it. The Law shows us our need for something more. It can not change our nature. It arouses in us the knowledge of our selfishness by showing us God's moral requirements.

- **Romans 7:12** *the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*
- **Romans 7:14** *I know that the law is spiritual*

Sin, however, is said to  *dwell in me (v 20)*  like a **monster** and is  *evil present with me (v 21)* . Paul says he remains culpable for all his actions – he knows he is sold under sin (v12) – but he says “it is no longer I who do it but sin in me’ (v 20). He wants to stop but can't.

### D. Anguish is Inevitable

This struggle takes its toll. In frustration he says in **7:15** *For what I am doing, I do not understand*

**Amplified version of 7:24** : *O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death?*

*Wretched* means afflicted, miserable, in a distressed condition. It describes a very unhappy or unfortunate state in poor or pitiful circumstances. It is used in pagan Greek drama to express tragic misfortune and woe. One is wretched through the exhaustion of hard labor.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- How does Paul's candid confession of his own struggle with sin impact you as you consider your own struggle?
- How should this influence our approach in counseling and encouraging *others* who are struggling with an area of sin in *their* lives?

### E. Sin as Addiction

We are all addicts in one way or another. An addict is someone has lost control of her life and is becoming more destructive in her behaviors.

Sin seen as an addiction involves a progressive enslavement to our compulsions. The sinner continues to suffer from the illusion that "liberty" can be gained on his or her own terms.

With the growth of sin's power the sinner becomes less able to change, grow, or act. Instead there is a hardening of the heart, a deadening of one's soul. These are the same conditions that describe the addict.

In **Romans 7**, I see a person who is out of control and is hurting herself but can't stop. She's an addict. She wants to stop but can't. She doesn't want to hurt her family but she does. She wants to be responsible but she never can.

There is a great deal of overlap with the description of Romans 7 and a **12 step approach** to addiction. Here are four of the 12 steps that come straight out of our text.

- Admitting you have a problem
- Admitting you are powerless to change
- Looking to God for help
- Confession – Paul here makes confession to everyone on the planet!

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Regardless of whether you've been through a 12-step program or not, can anyone share an example from your own life that illustrates the power of confession?

## II. The Deliverer is Jesus Christ our LORD - 7:25

Paul poses a desperate question in verse 24 – *Who will deliver me?*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- This is the crux of the matter. **It's all about relationship!** It's not about following an intricate set of rules and regulations or self-help programs. These are completely powerless in bringing victory. Our redemption, salvation, justification, forgiveness AND our freedom are based COMPLETELY on a relationship – our relationship with Jesus! **How should this understanding impact our approach to overcoming sin patterns in our lives?**
- How could you use this truth to explain the gospel to an unbeliever, or, more specifically, a person from another faith?

*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.*

The answer to Paul's self-despairing question, “*who shall deliver me?*” is a person not an object or law. It is interesting Paul doesn't ask ‘**what**’ can deliver me but rather ‘**who**’ will deliver me. **Our answer is always a ‘who’ not a ‘what’.**

Verse 25 is essentially saying, “**Thank God that Jesus Christ is Lord**”. The key word here is LORD. Jesus is the one who is our master, benefactor, king and deliverer. He is Lord over all things, all situations and all problems and, of course, all sin. **He is Lord over all.**

Just as the non-Christian struggles in vain to find forgiveness and peace, **until he looks outside himself to Christ** who made peace by the blood of the cross, so too the Christian

struggling in despair to find victory over sin by self-effort, needs to look outside himself to Christ the Lord, as well..

In the final verse of this section the apostle breaks forth with a **cry of victory**, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." There is such a man! Trusting in Christ's righteousness by faith is the answer to the longing for deliverance.

### III. Walking according to the Spirit - 8:1,2

1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*
2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

The word "Spirit" which was so obviously missing in Romans 7 is now the main theme of Romans 8. It is used 12 times in a single chapter.

#### A. The great adversary of condemnation

**Now** – this critical word indicates not the past nor the future but the *present*.

There is now **no** condemnation—**none** whatsoever—for the believer in Christ Jesus.

Condemnation is the idea of **judgment coming upon someone**. Paul says God's judgment is not going to come down upon you, not now, not ever! From the valley of despair and defeat of living under the Law in Romans 7, the apostle now climbs the heights with the triumphant shout, "No condemnation" because of the believer's justification by faith. Those in Christ are not condemned, because Christ was condemned in their place. There is no punishment for them, because Christ bore their punishment.

*Do you know what that means?* We may stumble, we may fall, we may trip, we may make a thousand mistakes, we may sin and we do, we may get off the path, we may go astray, we may have a thousand problems, but for the believer in Jesus Christ, there is, therefore now, no condemnation because God has said it is so.

You can struggle, but you're not condemned. You can fall, but you're not condemned. You can trip, but you're not condemned. You can stray off the path, but you are not condemned because God has said He will not condemn those who are in Christ Jesus.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Pastor Dan described condemnation as "the great adversary." What does he mean by this?
- How is a sense of condemnation such a powerful instrument of the enemy in keeping us "stuck" in patterns of sin?
- Romans 8:1-2 has been such a powerful passage for so many of us in our walk with God. Would anyone like to share about how this passage has impacted your life?

## B. The Law of the Spirit

**8:2** *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from law of sin and death”*

*“the law of the Spirit”* is a phrase that means there are irrevocable principles that apply to the life in the Spirit. Paul drew our attention to the contrast earlier when he referred to *“the newness of the Spirit and the oldness of the letter”* **Romans 7:6**

This verse re-emphasizes the two basic equations of Romans 6-8. Spirit = Life and Sin = Death.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- “Another law...” You could liken this to the contrast between the law of gravity and the “law” “written” into our muscles that cause them to become stronger or weaker based upon how much we use them in resistance to gravity. One well-known Christian pastor has likened this to the idea of **“training” versus “trying”** in our Christian walk. What do you think this means – training vs. trying?
- How could this impact our approach to overcoming sin in our lives?

**APPLICATION:** Break up into groups of 2-3 and have everyone share their response to this question: What is one truth that impacted you from this week’s message and discussion and what is one way you can apply it to your life this coming week in a very practical way? Have each group pray for each other after they have shared.