

the law of the Spirit who gives life in Jesus Christ

Hello everyone. There are no slides this time, so please bring your own Bible. This part is the most difficult in chapter 7. But don't worry, when you read a difficult book, if you approach it as if it might actually be very simple. And you will be able to see the whole content of the book. I will lead you into this part like a forest, so please follow me. ^^

Verse 14: "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin."

We all learned the other day that God's law is good, but legalism is bad. God's law is spiritual. The word "spiritual" refers to the law that comes from God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. But we are guilty of sin and unspiritual. We sinned and were sold into slavery to sin. Genesis 3 tells us the origin of human being's sin. Therefore, we are unfortunately born as sinners, placed under the dominion of sin for our whole lives, and eventually die.

Verse 15: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but I do what I hate."

From this we can see Paul's struggle. He wants to do what God wants, but instead he does what is not pleasing to God. For example, we want to obey God's words, "You love your neighbors," but it is difficult to do so.

Verse 16: "And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good."

For example, 1 Corinthians 13 says, "Love is patient," but when we can't be patient, we find ourselves unable to do the deeds that keep the law, and we realize, "Oh, the Word of God is good!" But we feel powerless to actually keep it.

Verse 17: "As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me."

Verse 20: "Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it."

Verses 17 and 20 overlap. They are saying that it is sin, not I myself, who commits the "sin." It sounds like Apostle Paul is shifting the blame to sin, but he is saying that humanity is under the control of sin and is suffering. For example, the alcoholic wants to stop drinking alcohol, but they cannot; they are fighting against their other self, which is against their will.

We say "living" when we stay for a long period of time. And Paul describes "sin" as living

in him. For example, have you ever experienced a feeling of hatred toward someone for many years? People suffering from trauma often experience this. I have seen victims who suffered from the pain of being abused when they were small, and they continue to suffer until they are over 50 years old. This world may make you think that because you are a victim, it is natural to hate the offender. But Christians know God's Word and struggle when they cannot forgive others from the heart.

I would like to think about the long-term stay of "sin" in us. In Matthew 12:43-45, the habit of evil spirits comes up. Jesus says that the evil spirit leaves a person, but then returns to take up residence with that person. This shows that both evil spirits and sin can take up residence in a person. It is invisible, but it is a terrifying spiritual world. For example, imagine that sin is dirty raw garbage. A vinegar fly somehow flies into this garbage. This fly is like an evil spirit. If you left it unchecked, the fly will use the food scraps as a source of nourishment, lay eggs, reproduce, and eventually the house will be in serious trouble. Our sin attracts evil spirits and causes them to live in our heart.

Therefore, we should quickly clean up our sins like food scraps. This putting away is repentance. In Matthew 5:23 and 24, Jesus tells us that when we make an offering at God's altar, if we remember that our brother hates us, we should first make peace with him. Jesus urges early repentance. This is because sin becomes more and more serious as it takes up residence in our hearts and becomes a target for evil spirits.

Verse 18: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good. For I have the will to do good, but I cannot do it."

Paul refers to himself as "flesh" and says that "good" is absent in him. For we have the will to do good, but we cannot do it. It means that even if you make a decision, you are quitting maybe after three days. As we experienced with the Covid-19, bad germs are highly contagious, spreading at once. In the end, the pandemic sat around for three years. We say that let us live with corona! Our spiritual battles are like this, too. Sin tends to take root in bad habits. It takes a lot of effort to fix them and return them to a healthy environment. It is not always possible by ourselves to make goodness dwell within us.

Verse 19: "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want."

In verse 17, he said he was passive, blaming sin for the bad things that sin does, not himself. But in verse 19 he said that people are somehow active and take initiative in sinning. We gradually sin more and more boldly, and we lose our sense of guilt. For example, a boy who is hungry and steals a loaf of bread cannot be rehabilitated and continues to commit

crimes as an adult, eventually becoming a robber without guilt.

Verse 21: "So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me."

There is a Disney cartoon "Tom and Jerry". They always have "angels and demons" around their heads when they do something. That is similar to the situation. The Apostle Paul called it a 'law', so much so that this state of being is a fixed occurrence. It is hard to be in a state where evil follows you around. For example, even if we try our best to get good grades this semester, there is a negative thinking in our mind that says, "You can't do it anyway". Some people are decidedly negative like that. It is helpful that we should recognize our sin tendencies. For instance, others have a habit of controlling and manipulating people. Some people are quick to anger with temper, some are violent, etc. Each of us has a different pattern of evil that follows us. What is the evil that is following you?

Verses 22-23: "For in my inner being I delight in God's law; But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me."

Our "inner being" delights in God's law, which comes from the Holy Spirit. However, "another law" or the "law of sin" prevails over the law of our mind. We have lost the battle against the "law of sin" and have become captive. For example, as I mentioned earlier, as Christians, we have a "law of the mind" that says we must forgive those who have hurt us. This is because this is God's law. However, even though we try to forgive, we still have flashbacks of the painful past caused by the offenders' sins. This is a time when we still struggle from the law of sin.

Look at verse 24. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body, that is subject to death?

The Apostle Paul laments his suffering under the law of sin. "Oh, this tunnel of darkness against sin! I have already been defeated by sin. How miserable I am! I am doomed to death because of sin. Somebody help me!" This cry is not only Paul's, but the cry of all mankind. We, human beings, cannot save ourselves by our own strength because we all are sinners. We cannot come to God through our own deeds. We need someone's help to save us from our sins.

This state may be Paul's deep repentance for his sins after encountering Jesus. It could also be the feelings of Judas right after he sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. It could be the feelings of Peter right after he denied Jesus three times. Even looking at these three people, they are really in a miserable state of feeling their limitations. Have you ever been in this

situation? I felt this way just 6 years ago when everything was going wrong and I couldn't do anything by my own efforts. 'Oh, it's over!' I thought at that time.

Verse 25: "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."

Paul realized that the only person who could save him from sin was Jesus Christ. Paul really thought that keeping the law was pleasing to God, and he did his best. So, he persecuted Christians who believed in Jesus, who taught that one could be saved by believing in Jesus, not the law. This Paul was like the chaos before creation (Genesis 1:2-3). In this chaotic state, God the Creator said, "Let there be light." This light which the beginning of creation is Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 9). Paul met Jesus Christ, the Creator and Savior, who became the light, understood his own sin, and devoted his life to being a servant of Jesus.

Like Paul, we too have encountered Jesus Christ, the Light, out of chaos. Only Jesus Christ can be the light of our lives. Jesus Christ, who came as the Light, is the very "Truth, the Way, and the Life" (John 14:6). The Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter gave thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ! and met Jesus Christ. But Judas was miserable and did not encounter Jesus Christ who was resurrected. This difference changed their lives.

Have you really encountered Jesus Christ? Those who have truly encountered Jesus are not in a state of chaos any more. They are clear that they are sinners before God and that they have been forgiven by the cross of Jesus Christ. Once you understand this truth, you cannot be lost in life. The darkness and chaos of life is totally transformed into light.

Look at chapter 8, verse 1. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We are firmly united with Jesus Christ through faith in Him. God has justified us and made us sinless. We are to remember this grace every day and live thankfully.

Chapter 8, verse 2: "Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death." We were ruled by sin and enslaved to sin by the law of sin. But Jesus Christ has freed us from sin by grace, the law of the Spirit. The grace of Jesus Christ won from sin and gave us life.

Chapter 8, verse 3: "For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And

so condemned sin in the flesh." Even Paul, who was well versed in the Law and tried his best to keep it perfectly, could not save himself. He could only lament, "Oh, how miserable I am!" No human being can ever save himself. From this situation, God reached out His hand to human beings. He sent Jesus Christ into the world. Jesus who is God himself, the Creator, came to this world in human form. This is unfailing love from God. There is nothing more wonderful than this love.

For example, a house is burning in a big fire. Inside it, a baby is sleeping. At this time, the father jumped into the flames and went outside with the baby in his arms on his chest. However, the father was burned to death and only the baby in his chest was saved. The one like this father is our God father, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We human beings are born sinners from birth and eventually die. From the time we are born, we are living in the flames. And after we die, a second death of the soul awaits us (Revelation 20). We were destined to suffer God's wrath on the day of His righteous judgment (Rom. 2:5). But we are saved by the "law of the Spirit," the "grace" by which we are saved only by believing in Jesus Christ. We thank God for this unfailing love of God. Currently, the world population is about 8 billion people. I pray that all people on this earth can believe in God's love and be saved.

Let's pray.

Loving Heavenly Father. Thank you for the love of Jesus Christ. We pray that our families and friends who do not yet know Your love, as well as all 8 billion people on earth, will believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. And for those of us who already know the love of Jesus Christ, we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us so that we may be more firmly united with You and have a closer relationship with You. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.