

So Laury and I want to tell you a happy new year, this year promises to be a very exciting year, we are going to be having a transition with Tim and Maddie coming on as new lead pastors. Laury and I will be stepping in to more responsibilities with Foursquare and here at LCF, Tim and I have been discussing the role of LCF in planting new churches in our area...

We are starting a fast this week, you can find information out in the foyer and some things to pray about...

So, we have been in a series in the book of Romans, I want to remind you on the 15<sup>th</sup> we will be starting a study in the book of Hebrews...

So, I thought today we would go back and do a recap if you will of the book of Romans, up to this point...

If you think about it, over the last 2000 plus years, we have spent most of our time on the church trying to tell people to “not do bad things” and then scold them when they do and if we are being honest, it hasn’t worked!

We are faced with this dilemma, I want to do what is right, healthy, good but I have old habits and systems of thinking that stop me and divert my good intentions, I am stuck!

***For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. <sup>16</sup> If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. <sup>17</sup> But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.***

***<sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. <sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup> O***

***wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> 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. Romans 7:15-25***

Now after a good dose of scolding to try harder, we grow sorrowful and decide we are going to double down and “try harder”! but all that leads to is feeling like a prisoner in our own body so, we are left with really, at least it feels like, two options; either lead a double life and pretend that we are doing good when others are watching, or become so disillusioned with the Christian life, we just walk away from it all and announce to the world we aren’t able to live for Christ so we are just quitting.

The sad thing is that we miss the point that there really is a way to experience real transformation and that endless cycle of trying and failing and then trying again is un-necessary.

But, to find freedom and live a victorious life, we must learn to “walk according to the Spirit”

Maybe it is time to quit scolding people and start teaching people how to live and access the power of the Holy Spirit!

### **1. Changed thinking.**

If you take a look at the first few verses in chapter 8 of Romans, you find some foundational truths that makes it possible to truly live for Christ.

***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. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh Romans 8:1-3***

- a. **Forgiven.** Vs. 1 as a believer I am not under condemnation because my sins are forgiven and I continue to have my sins forgiven WHILE I learn to escape the cycle of failure we read about earlier.

- b. **Free.** Vs2 being joined to Jesus, my human spirit has been set free from the old rebellion, selfishness and pride that I inherited from Adam. My spirit, now has the governing authority in my life. I can CHOOSE to follow the Holy Spirit.
- c. **Filled.** Vs3 I am no longer powerless to resist temptation, my body has been cleansed of sin and I have become a holy temple in which the Spirit of God can dwell. The Spirit is ALWAYS present to help me.

So in other words,

- I am not under judgement even when I struggle with sin.
- I am not a slave to my flesh even though I may fail in my attempts to change. I just haven't learned how to "walk according to the Spirit" yet.
- I am not alone. The Holy Spirit is always with me and He gives me more than enough power.

## **2. Restored authority.**

When Adam sinned in the garden, he and all of us who have followed him lost our freedom. Sin has enslaved every generation since. When we are born again, Jesus doesn't just set us free from one form of slavery to impose a new form of slavery, (to God) but instead he restored to us the power and the right to choose how we are going to live, whether we will follow Him.

Jesus leads us, He does not drive us, He calls us to follow, He has made it so that my spirit can follow the Holy Spirit and for my spirit to have power over my body and my mind. He puts me back in charge of me and on top of that He gives me the resources to rule over my own body and mind...

I can not only say no to sin, but I can say yes to prosperity in my mind, in my body, I can have control over my thought life, my actions, my expectations, my past and so much more...

***What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? Romans 6:15-***

I have a choice, I can be controlled by my old thought life or draw on the power of Jesus...

### **3. Setting the mind.**

***For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Romans 8:5***

So what does all this mean?

- “mind on the flesh” is our old subconscious thoughts, just the natural way of thinking. It also refers to our “body driven thoughts” referring to our appetites, emotions and impulses.
- Mind of the Spirit is our mind aided by the Holy Spirit that I am able to change what I am consciously thinking about. I can picture Jesus in my mind, I can sing, pray, speak in the spirit, quote the bible and turn off or leave the room...

See, I have a problem, I come in to my new life with Jesus still thinking the same old way and I need to learn to use what Jesus has done for me...

### **4. The practical steps.**

*So, I want you to think about this, throw out to me some things that people struggle with, just yell it out to me.... Unforgiveness, anxiety, anger, lust...*

Now, how do I do this? I want to give you some very easy steps, sometimes the process is easy and sometimes it is not, but I want to go over some very practical steps.

- **Recognize** what is happening. My mind is controlled by my flesh, so I am going to face the truth and not make excuses.
- **Refuse** to keep going. Don't continue to look at the pictures or go where you are going to be tempted etc. there is “inertia” that is going to resist the change!
- **Redirect** my thoughts onto truth. What is God's will here and what is God's promises concerning the situation?

- **Repeat** these steps as often and as much as needed. The mind will drift back to the negative before I even realize it.
- **Repent** tell the Lord exactly what just happened, don't excuse or blame, ask God for help and then obey.
- **Remember** to follow Him, we need to die to ourselves and that is not speaking about religious persecution, it is a lifetime of decisions to crucify the flesh.