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Okay, we're back from our break now. We're ready to resume. We had refreshed our minds about the flow of the argument here in Romans through the first five chapters.

Paul begins by talking about the wrath of God. Jewish people weren't necessarily accustomed to talking about the wrath of God, even though they got a big dose of it in the messages of the major and minor prophets in the Old Testament. They didn't really dwell on that so much, and they were more interested in achieving God's approval by obeying the law.

So Paul introduces, and this is a standard rule in instructing anyone who's had any training in teaching or classroom instruction. One of the first things that is instilled in your mind as a teacher or an instructor is you've got to create the need. You've got to present the need in the mind of the student.

Why should anyone listen to what you're saying? When I used to instruct lieutenants in artillery, they would come in, and they'd been doing a lot of other things, and they didn't necessarily have a lot of enthusiasm for learning a complementary angle of sight or something as a part of ballistics and gunnery. And so a lot of times I would start the class, and I would say, Okay, Lieutenant Willems, you are in a foreign country on a hill, and you see an enemy BMP with troops dismounting, and they are headed your direction. You have a radio, and you have an artillery battery on call.

What are you going to do? There's an intervening crest, and the artillery fire can't hit that target directly. What are you going to do? This is a situation you will face as a lieutenant. This is a situation you're going to encounter when you hit the fleet, when you're in the field.

You will have the need to deal with a situation where you've got an intervening crest. This is going to recall for the battery to go into high angle fire, and your sight and complementary angle of sight are going to be important, because if those aren't factored in, you'll never be able to attack the target effectively. And try to create the sense in someone's mind that this is important.

Well, that's what Paul is doing in chapter 1 of Romans. The wrath of God is not something to dismiss lightly. So he starts with that.

He says it applies to everyone who suppresses the truth. Chapter 2, that includes believers. If you're hung up on the law, you need to keep in mind in chapter 3 that the law isn't a way of righteousness.

The law is a way to demonstrate sin. That's why God introduced it. Righteousness doesn't come by the sin-demonstrating mechanism.

It comes through faith in Christ. Chapter 4, look at Abraham. Go back as far as you want in the

Old Testament.

Righteousness has always come by faith. In chapter 5, we had two main points there. Sin, condemnation, and death came through somebody else, and so does righteousness, approval, and divine life.

It comes through someone else. It doesn't depend on you. It depends on who you partake of.

If you partake of Adam, you have condemnation and death. If you partake of Christ, you have approval and life. And that not only applies at the point of deliverance, at initial salvation, but it applies in daily life.

Who are we partaking of? Are we partaking of the old nature or the new? The old man or the new? And secondly, God's love and grace delivered us. God did the work. God produced the righteousness that was necessary.

God solved the problem when we were enemies and pagans and without any hope in the world. Now that we're his children, that same mechanism is going to apply. It's in the same way that God's love and grace delivered us from eternal judgment and death when we were his enemies, how much more will his love and grace deliver us from operational judgment and death now that we are his in Christ? The eternal judgment and death problem is solved.

Now we face the operational judgment and operational death as believers. The same God that delivered us from the first will deliver us from the second, and how much more because we are now his children? That's chapter five. Then chapter six, and once again, Paul is taking this fundamental idea, what does it take to have a life that counts? What is life about? This is the fundamental question that everyone asks.

What is the meaning of life? If you read B.C., the comic strip, you see that blond-haired guy that sits on the hill and he writes a question on a tablet, floats it across the water, goes over the horizon, the moon comes up, and the next day the sun's up and the tablet comes floating back, and he'll send some deep question off and get some ironic answer back. Well, this is the question everyone is writing on the tablet and sending off. What is the meaning of life? What's the purpose? And all of us, in some way, shape, or form, the things that we pursue each day, that's the question we're answering for ourselves.

We think, well, life is security. Life is financial stability. Life is the approval of others.

Life is being recognized for my gifts or my talents. Life is achieving some particular goal. And for the believer, there is only one goal, and that is God's approval, being declared righteous in God's eyes.

So there's nothing more important to us than this message. So in Chapter 6, Paul is going to give us the answer to this question. He says, the main point of Chapter 6, Christ, when He came, He

lived the life that counts.

He is the embodiment of the life that counts as a human being. And Christ came, and what did He do? He died. When Christ came, He died.

He died to sin, and He died to the law. Christ didn't come and live to the age of 70 and keep every single commandment and bring about righteousness in that fashion. Has it ever occurred to you that Christ didn't bring God's righteousness into the world by coming and perfectly fulfilling the law? You sometimes hear that point made, that Christ absolutely fulfilled the law and never broke it.

It's true that He never broke the law. He lived 30, 33 years. But is that the means by which He brought righteousness into the world, by perfectly keeping the law? He didn't.

He avoided the declaration of sin. We talked in the last session about the fact that an external standard is a way of finding out sin, of measuring sin, of observing and perceiving sin or evil. That's what an external standard does.

Christ, by keeping the law, indicated there was no judgment that could come against Him that He had sin or that He had evil. But that's not the way righteousness came. Christ died to sin, and Christ died to the law.

Now He lives. God resurrected Him and gave Him new life. And that new life, He lives to righteousness to God.

He died to sin, He died to the law, He lives to righteousness, and He lives to God. We are to do the same. We are to follow in His footsteps and emulate His example.

If you want to talk about discipleship and the personal meaning of Christianity, it is not to emulate another Christian. It is to emulate Jesus Christ in the death that He died to sin and the life that He lives to God. There is no mandate in the New Testament for us to become disciples of one another.

We are to be disciples of Christ. Christ didn't say, by this shall all men know that you are discipling one another. He says, by this shall all men know that you are My disciples, that you love one another.

Now love is an attitude, and you can't be told to love. You can't love by example. You can't decide to love.

You come in contact with another person, you can't say, you know, this is a worthy person, I'm going to love them. And you suddenly are filled with a tremendous, deep, abiding love. It doesn't come by decision, does it? We can't decide however much we want to.

We can't get someone else to decide to love us and have that love spring up and be generated simply by decision. All of us have probably had this experience. I can remember back when I was in my teens and twenties and meeting some terrific girls who were Christians and from great families, and their family were friends with my family, and everything was great, and we had a lot in common, and they were beautiful, and they could stand me, and they wanted to spend time with me.

And I thought, boy, here's a rare and precious thing. And I wanted to fall in love. I wanted to have that fulfillment and get married and everything else.

And it just wasn't there. And I kept asking myself, why don't I love this girl? Why aren't the stars streaking and the fireworks going off? And I want to. I will.

And it just wouldn't happen. We can't decide to love. Love doesn't come by decision.

It doesn't come by example. It doesn't come by exhortation. And yet Jesus says, the way that you become a disciple is to love.

So that's what we're going to get the answer to in Chapter 7. But in Chapter 6, Christ died to the sin and to the law. He lives to righteousness and lives to God. We are to do the same.

The key verse here, Chapter 6, verses 10 and 11. The death that he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life that he lives, he lives to God.

Likewise you also, reckon yourself to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The seed to the answer to our question, how do we bring about this change in attitude, is right here in this verse. Reckon yourself.

We have to modify our view of the universe. We have to modify our perceptions. One of my favorite examples of this, I can take a 2x12 and lay it here on the floor.

This house has a concrete foundation. It's got a nice carpet here. I can take a 12 foot board, 2x12, lay it out here, and ask each of you to walk the length of it.

Well, you know that you're in a house that's got a solid foundation. Here's a board. It's not going anywhere, and each of us could walk that board from beginning to end, I think, with no real crisis of conscience, no real problem.

I could take that very same board, and I could put it across two five-story buildings that have a gap of 10 feet between, get up on the roof, and ask each of you to walk across that board. There's maybe an inch and a half of the end of the board lapping on each building. Now it's an entirely different proposition.

Same board at the same angle. You've got the same feet, same sense of balance. Why is it such

a big deal now? Well, I have the perception that there's this five-story drop, and that if I misstep, if a little puff of wind comes along here, I can die, and my natural, inborn, proper fear of heights is kicking in, and it's an entirely different thing.

Now, a hypnotist could come along on the top of the building and hypnotize us and say, picture yourself, you're now in the living room, and this board that you're trying to walk across is on a concrete foundation in the living room. Walk across. And under hypnosis, someone can suggest and plant in your mind a different reality than what's really there.

They make people bark like a dog and so forth. Well, you can be told that you're in the living room, and you can walk in absolute calm and peace of mind across this great chasm because you are no longer concerned or even aware that there's a five-story drop. Well, these are crude examples, but this is the concept in righteousness and faith in the Christian life.

We start out, and the reason we have corrupt attitudes, and the reason we fail, and the reason we sin, and the reason we have no love, the reason we are self-centered, self-pitying, arrogant, confused, and producing nothing but death in our lives is that all of our assumptions in our universe is constructed out of bad beliefs, false truths, the false idea that happiness will come by achieving certain goals, that happiness will come by committing certain sins, that happiness will come by getting other people into a certain position in our universe. That's false. And no matter how hard we try and how many goals we achieve, we never escape the corruption and the inherent sinfulness of our nature.

But there is something of God's power in the Word of God, and when we look at it and when we accept it as our reality, it changes the landscape. Now the fears that we have had before, the concerns that we have had before, melt away. In my example, the hypnotist introduces a false truth that gives us peace and calm.

They do this for sports teams and all kinds of people. I told you before about my roommate at the Naval Academy that had to have some dental work done and the anesthetic wasn't working, and he was so panicky. He had been anesthetized on one side and been drilled on the other side and he had this morbid fear of dental work of any form.

And they couldn't get him calm and they couldn't work on him, so they brought in a hypnotist and hypnotized him and told him that he was out in a lake, he was in a rubber raft, the sun was shining, a light breeze was blowing, and this was real. And he related this to me afterward that he could see the bark on the trees and the leaves fluttering in the wind. He could see the sand and the pebbles.

He could see the sun glinting off the waves. And it was so real to him that his head was rocking from side to side on this rubber raft and the hypnotist had to say, the water is still, to get his head to quit moving because the dentist had to follow his head as it was rocking back and forth on this rubber raft. It was very real, but it gave him a sense of peace.

Now he was aware that they were working on him. He was aware that he was in the dentist's chair, but the thing that filled his mind was this peaceful scene. And it gave him calm, he felt no pain, there was no anesthetic used, and yet he felt no pain as they reconstructed this tooth because this other reality was more real to him than the reality that he could perceive but wasn't his priority.

That's the reverse of what happens in our life as believers. This life that surrounds us seems like the real thing, but the genuine truth is God's truth. The genuine truth is the truth that's in God's word.

And the real priorities and the real values in the eternal things are what we see in God's word. And so we've got to get that truth into our mind and that's what we do by faith. When that takes place, things that seemed important no longer seem important.

Things that we ignored before now take up more and more of our time and we become oriented to the plan of God and the purpose of God and what happens. As a result of perceiving a different reality, we have new and different attitudes. We have new and different priorities.

Things that didn't used to be important to us, things that we didn't used to enjoy very much, suddenly are important and are enjoyable. Things that were awkward and unnatural for us before because we were living in a false universe become natural. And if an opportunity to communicate the truth of Jesus Christ comes up, it's unnatural and a wonderful thing that God can superintend and that can be used by God to bring about eternal change.

So this is why we have to reckon. The first imperative in the book of Romans is in chapter 6 when Paul says, you see that Christ died to sin and lives to God and he says, likewise reckon yourself. That is the first command in the book because that is the first place where transformation in our life begins.

We have to think a different way. We have to accept a different reality. It's the reality that's presented by the Word of God and when we accept it, that's called faith.

And that faith transforms us. Our mind is renewed and our attitudes will change. And we don't have to try to generate love.

We don't have to try to decide to have love. When we see the world the way God sees it, our concern for other people, our regard for God and for Jesus Christ will be the most natural thing in the world. It is the result of observation of what is true and right.

And it is enabled and empowered by God the Holy Spirit and by the divinely inspired Word of God. And God's power is behind it and it is a more real reality than what our senses tell us. So this is the subject of chapter 6. We are to reckon ourselves in verses 10 and 11 to be dead

indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we look at ourselves the reality is we are in Christ. We are a new creature. We have the power of God.

We live in a different age. We're not under the law. We're not making the point that everybody is corrupt.

God's already done that. That's finished and there's a period at the end of that sentence. God is now making the point that He is the source of righteousness and we have the opportunity to participate in that through faith.

So that's the background. That's the flow of the argument. We've seen that Paul is going somewhere in this book and notice he is not primarily trying to evangelize the world in this book, is he? He's talking to believers about how to live life.

How to please God. How to have eternal impact. And so now as we get into chapter 7 of Romans in the first six verses here Paul makes it clear that and once again he's turning this three-dimensional object in another light.

How many different ways is Paul going to get across to us as well as to the believers in Rome that righteousness doesn't come by what you do. That you're not under this code of behavior represented by the law of Moses. Chapter 7 verses 1 through 6 he gives an illustration.

He says a woman is married to a man. She stays married to him as long as that man is alive. When that man dies she's free from his authority.

His death changes her relationship to the law. Death changes the applicability, the relevance, the pertinence of the law in her case. And he says look at yourself.

You've died with Christ and Christ's death changes your relationship to the law. It's not the same as it used to be. And so 7, 1 through 6 makes it clear that the authority of the law and the authority of Christ are mutually exclusive.

In his illustration he says as long as the lady is married to this living man she can't marry anyone else. She's bound to her husband. When the husband dies she is free from his authority and now she can marry another and everything is fine.

People under the law could not be in union with Christ. They're in a different economy. They're making a different point in God's plan.

Christ died and ended that phase of God's plan and we died with him and the law is not pertinent to us. We're not under its authority and because of that we are free to be joined to Jesus Christ. So the two authorities are mutually exclusive.

You're either under the authority of the law or you're under the authority of Jesus Christ but you can't do both. And you can see how important a point this is for Paul to make for these first century Christians and it's equally important for us. If we stop and think about it you can't try to meet people's external standard of righteousness and God's internal creation of righteousness at the same time.

You're going to be doing one or the other. They're mutually exclusive. The authority of the law and the authority of Christ are mutually exclusive just like a marriage.

You're either married to one person or the other. And to try to do both to try to establish your righteousness by works is tantamount to bigamy. Our second point here this is the culmination of the many arguments that Paul has made to the effect that believers are not to function under the law as a means of achieving righteousness.

It doesn't mean the law has no value. It doesn't mean that the law is not holy righteous and good. It means that it's not the means of righteousness.

It never was and it never will be. And this is many arguments. These arguments have been made.

You might just make a note of these. We've studied them before. Chapter 2, verses 28 and 29.

Chapter 3, verse 20. Chapter 5, verse 20. And we just saw in chapter 6, verse 11 and verse 14.

In each of these chapters Paul keeps coming back and hammering on our heads you're not under the law. Each time he presents it a different way. He gives a different argument.

He demonstrates it from a different aspect of God's truth and God's plan. Believers are not to function under the law as a means of achieving righteousness. One of the ways that the law is still useful to us is in establishing sin and establishing participation in evil.

We know that someone who serves in a leadership position in the church is to be above reproach. What is the standard for establishing reproach? If you are violating the commandments of God relative to adultery, relative to stealing, relative to bearing false witness, relative to pursuing things other than God and putting things ahead of God and so forth, we can still use that as a great standard for establishing that someone is in error, that someone is not above reproach. The law is still a great way of telling if you are in some sort of gross error, the moral code of the law.

But it never was and never will be a means of achieving righteousness. Paul has told us our third point here. The law came in because of sin.

The law didn't come in because of righteousness. The law came in because of sin. We have been delivered from sin through the death of Christ.

Therefore, the law no longer pertains. And this is what Paul sums up here in chapter 7, verse 6. Now we have been delivered from the law having died to what we were held by. We were held by sin.

We died to sin. We're not held by sin anymore. The whole purpose of the law was to establish sin.

Sin is a moot point for us in this regard. And so, we've been delivered from the law. When we died to sin, the pertinence of the law went away.

So that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. New phase of God's plan. New point to be made here in human existence.

And it's about righteousness. It's not about sin. So that's chapter 7, verse 6. Again, as Paul has demonstrated many times, the law was the means of identifying and quantifying sin.

This is what he says in 7-7. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not. On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law.

I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. So the law is a means of discerning failure, sin, error, corruption. That's what it's for.

Then he goes on to say, Sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of coveting or evil desire. Apart from the law, sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

And as we discussed last time, what Paul is doing is stepping back and as a Jew, as a believer, he is universalizing himself. He's using himself as a person in all of the different ages of God's plan. He says, I was alive once apart from the law.

This is back before the law came. Obviously, Paul was not born before Moses. Paul wasn't born before the commandment in the garden not to eat of the fruit of the tree.

But Paul says, there was a phase of God's plan where humanity was alive and there was no commandment. We were alive and sin was dead. Sin wasn't an issue.

Sin wasn't producing any bad effects. But the commandment came, sin came to life, and I died. It's an either or thing.

If sin is alive, we're dead. If sin is dead, we're alive. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

And of course, that was God's purpose. God said, if you do these things, you shall live. And we found out that we couldn't do these things because we were corrupt.

Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. We basically deceived ourselves. We thought that the commandment seemed relatively simple.

It's just a standard of behavior. But what Israel discovered under the law is the same thing that we discover. Our actions betray the fact that we are corrupt.

Therefore, the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good. That's the means by which it demonstrates sin. It's the contrast between what it specifies and what we produce.

And when I say that, I'm talking about the age in which those things took place, which is the Old Testament age, the time from Adam through Christ. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not. But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good so that sin, through the commandment, might become exceedingly sinful.

It identifies sin. It quantifies sin. It shows us the grossness and the universality of corruption.

We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. Paul starts out talking about I was alive once apart from the law. You can take this as Adam and Eve in the garden.

Before the commandment came, don't eat of the tree. And before the failure, Eve had no desire to eat of the tree. The tree was not an issue until the commandment came, don't eat of the tree.

Then it became a potential. Then it became a possibility. And through the activity of Satan and the serpent, it brought out sin.

And so this next section here in chapter 7, when Paul says, I am carnal, sold under sin. The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. We're talking about the law as an active, pertinent factor, aren't we? And we're talking about sin as an active, pertinent factor.

This is what pertained in the age before Christ. This is what pertained under the law of Moses. This is the earlier phase of God's plan.

And it's important to keep that in mind because as we will see, this does not pertain and should not be applied to our status now. And Paul is going to go on to make that very clear. You hear a lot of people talk about the fact that, well, this is the inner struggle, the flesh wars against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh.

That is true, but that's not what this passage is talking about. This passage is talking about the law being applicable and sin being an active authority in the lives of believers. That's not the case today.

Paul has spent six and a half chapters establishing that. We're not under the law. We've died to sin.

We've died to the law. The law doesn't pertain. He's turned this thing six different ways to

establish that before he says this because he wants us to understand as he goes through this, this is the way it used to be.

Now stop and think. You're facing a crowd of people. You're communicating and writing a letter to a group of people who think that you have to live under the law to be righteous.

So Paul is going to say, look, this is what it's like under the law. You're big fans of the law. Let me tell you what life under the law is like.

Let me remind you, some of you who have this in living memory, of what life under the law is like. The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. We are not sold under sin, are we? We are not prisoners of sin.

We're not slaves to sin. We as believers have been delivered from all that. But Paul is saying, here's what it's like under the law.

We're carnal. We're sold under sin. What I'm doing, I do not understand.

What I will to do, that I do not practice. But what I hate, that I do. This gives us some great... We've often wondered what exactly was it like in the Old Testament age? What was the ministry of the Holy Spirit and so forth? If you want an idea of what it was like in the age of Israel, here's a graphic description.

Paul knows this. Paul lived in that age and he says, this is what it's like. I know what's right and I want to do it, but I can't do it.

What I will to do, I don't practice. Do we find this today? There are certain things we want to exercise and lose weight, even in a completely human realm. There are certain goals that we set for ourselves that we don't achieve.

It's also true in the spiritual realm. There are certain besetting sins that we want to shake and we want to get rid of. We don't want to do those things and they happen anyway.

We have things that plague us. We have perspectives that keep coming up. We keep being plagued with a sense of insecurity and we know better or we keep getting aggravated in a certain situation and we know that should not take place.

Paul says, well look, this is what it was like under the law. You could desire all you wanted to do the right thing and it just wouldn't happen. So now we've all got our ears perked up because we've had this experience.

What I will to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate, that I do. Now this tells us, and this is what the law came to demonstrate. Even when we know what's right and even when we want to do it, we don't have the power to perform it.

The law set the standard and no matter how badly we wanted to jump over that bar, we could never clear it. And that was the point. That's the reason the law came to establish that.

No matter how high you jump, no matter how hard you try, you're never going to clear the bar. Now it is no longer, he says in verse 16, if I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. Because I'm willing to do what the law says is good and I'm not doing it, so I'm agreeing that the law is right.

I know that's right and I'm trying to do that. But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. And we get a little nervous here and we think, well, is Paul saying that I don't have responsibility for these sins now because, well, it's really not me doing the sin, it's sin dwelling in me and it's my old sin nature that did this, it wasn't really me.

Not at all. He's not talking about responsibility for the sin. He's saying, take a look at this.

If it's just me and the righteous standard and if there was no other factor involved but my decision and I see something that I want to do and I decide to do it, if there was no other impediment or no other obstruction, I could do it. I could decide to do it and I could do it. However, I'm deciding to do something and I can't do it.

Even though I've decided to and I recognize that it's the right thing, I'm not getting it done. There's some other factor besides just me and the standard that is preventing me inhibiting me, making it impossible for me to do what I want to do. What is that thing? It's sin.

It's the corruption that we inherited from Adam. We know what's right, we desire what's right and yet the ability to do it we don't have. So there is a problem and that's what the law was supposed to point out.

That was its purpose. This isn't dodging responsibility for sin. This is demonstrating that we've got a big problem.

Creating the need. Any good instructor creates the need in your mind. Why do I need to worry about righteousness by faith? Why can't I just go merrily along trying to keep the law? The law shows you that you've got a problem you can't fix.

No matter how badly you want to please God, you can't do it. Every time you try to keep that standard you fail and it demonstrates that you've got a problem. Now it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me.

For I know that in me that is in my flesh nothing good dwells. How do I know that? That's what's impeding me. That's what's showing up every time I try to keep this righteous standard.

To will is present with me but how to perform what is good I do not find. Now note two things here. First of all, this is exactly the case for people in the Old Testament economy.

In my flesh nothing good dwells. That is not the case in this age. Remember your five salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit? What happens at the point of salvation? Pop quiz.

Five ministries of the Holy Spirit at salvation. I'm not going to give them to you right away. I'm going to let you think about that.

You should know this. Five ministries, five salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit. Think about it.

One of those five is indwelling, right? If you're saved you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. What does He indwell? Your soul or your body? He indwells your body. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? So guess what? It is impossible for any believer in Jesus Christ to state truthfully that in my flesh nothing good dwells.

That's just not true for the believer because the Holy Spirit is something good and He dwells in our flesh. If nothing else, that should tell you that Paul is talking about the Old Testament age because it was true in the Old Testament. And if you review your five salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit you will discover that none of those ministries took place in Old Testament days.

You were not regenerated by the Holy Spirit. You were not baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. You were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

You were not sealed by the Holy Spirit and you were not gifted by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament age. All of those salvation ministries of the Holy Spirit are unique to this age. Because none of those things took place you could be a believer in God and bound for the promised land and a partaker and an inheritor in the millennial kingdom and be able to say in my flesh nothing good dwells.

Unless you were a tabernacle workman, King David and a few others who had the endowment of the Spirit nothing good dwelt in your flesh. And you could will to do things and yet how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do I do not do.

The evil I will not to do. That I practice. Now in verse 20 if I do what I will not to do it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me.

I have got this sin problem that I can't shake. My volition is not sufficient to overcome this sin problem. Now, there is a school of thought that says by a simple act of will I can be righteous.

It's called Pelagianism. And some forms of Arminianism partake of Pelagianism that says it's just a simple matter of deciding. If you choose to please God you can do so.

There is no impediment. It's simply a matter of choice. And that is heresy.

It is blasphemy. It is wrong. It flies right in the face of this verse.

You can't choose and make it happen because there is this impediment and it's sin. And we can't get rid of it by an act of will. And that goes even in this age for any system that seeks to eradicate sin or eradicate evil by an act of will.

It didn't work in the old age and it won't work in this age. You can't shake your besetting sin by an act of will. And you can't shake a pattern of evil by deciding to do so or by praying to God for strength and facing it time and again and saying well maybe this time I'll win.

That is not the way that sin is defeated in the life of a believer as we'll see in the upcoming material here. But in this age in verse 21 Paul says I find then a law that evil is present with me. That's the whole point.

Even when I will to do something I can't do it. Why? Because evil is present with me. The one who wills to do good.

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man 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. Bringing me into captivity. This is the situation of the Old Testament saint.

This is the situation of the Jewish believer. The proselyte to Judaism in the Old Testament days in all of the ages up to the day of Pentecost. This is the situation.

How frustrating. We can begin to see why the Old Testament saints longed to see our day and why those that lived in the other age none is greater than John the Baptist and yet the least in the kingdom is greater than John. Why is that? Because there is a new and different opportunity for us than what pertained in the Old Testament age.

And this is why the Old Testament believer in verse 24 could say O wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death? Now you don't see Paul or Peter or John or any of the other apostles or any of the other believers saying O wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death in this age? Because we have been delivered. And this is why he puts in a parenthesis here in verse 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord because that is where we get the deliverance. But Paul is putting himself back in that previous situation.

He says this is how it was. I am wretched. Who will deliver me from this body of death? I know what is right.

I want to do what is right and I can't do it. Somebody help me. Somebody deliver me.

And he says I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord this has come. But in the Old Testament days Christ had not yet come. So then with my mind I serve the law of God but with the flesh I serve the law of sin.

That is the situation. And when you go to Romans 7 don't let anybody tell you that that is our

situation now. It need not be.

If that is your situation today if that is our situation today it is our own fault. Because look at Hebrews 8 verse 1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

This is a contrast. This is the now as opposed to the then. We are free from the law of sin and death.

We are not captive. We are not in the case where nothing good dwells within us. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus the Spirit of life didn't pertain in the Old Testament days.

Christ had not yet come. The Spirit was not given. Christ was not yet glorified.

What the law could not do in verse 3 in that it was weak through the flesh God did. We didn't do it by keeping the law. Christ didn't bring it by keeping the law.

God did it by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin. He condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. What a wonderful opportunity we have in this age to pursue and achieve the righteousness of God by faith.

We are not in the situation where we desire to do what is right and we know what is right but we can't perform it. We can perform it because the power of God is present with us. Righteousness is achieved by the power of the Spirit and the power of the Word of God.

The power of God enters the life of the believer through the Spirit of God and the Word of God in no other way. It doesn't come by prayer. It doesn't come by personal discipleship.

It doesn't come by works. It doesn't come by fellowship. It doesn't come by a program.

It doesn't come by reading a lot of books. It comes through the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Now we in our particular tradition have emphasized and made a priority out of the Word of God.

It is equally important for us to understand the ministry of the Spirit without which the Word of God does nothing for us. I would point out to you that there were people who knew the Scriptures inside out in the Old Testament age and yet they still could not perform what they knew to be good. And why was that? They had one half of the epoxy.

They had one half of the equation. They had the Word but they did not have the Spirit. And I say this in a general way because the Spirit could be had by request and those who pursued faith and pursued righteousness could achieve it even in the Old Testament age.

But that wasn't the point of God's plan in that phase. It is now. And we have dwelling in us the

Spirit of God and all we need is the Word of God and to be in a position for both of those to do their work and we can live a life that has eternal impact.

We have no idea of the implications of simple decisions that we make in this life, simple attitudes that we develop and actions that we pursue in this life as a result of faith. We have no concept of what a difference it makes in God's plan except as we pursue the study of God's Word. We will pick up here in Chapter 8 next time and one of the things we are going to do in the course of studying Chapter 8 is take a close look at our relationship with God the Holy Spirit, the contrast that we have in this age with the previous age and the practical means by which we ensure that the Spirit is active in our lives.

But this is a good place to pause and close in prayer. Father, we thank You again for the privilege of studying Your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will take the truth of Your Word and activate it in our souls, that our perspective and our priorities in life will change and that as a result we will live in a way that pleases You and glorifies our Savior Jesus Christ.

We ask it in His name. Amen.