

Who Is in Control?

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Often, we face problems when the doctrine we perceive in our intellect does not become resident in our frame of reference. Because truth is not circulated through the five parts of the soul by mixing faith with the Word we hear, we lack the authority necessary to deal with what the enemy has planned to use against us.

God has given so many admonitions in His Word to treat each other in the spiritual light of God's nature in us. This reveals who is really in control of our soul (Philippians 2:15). In spiritual light, we know how to use the Cross in our lives. This booklet shows that the battle for control is between the Spirit of God and the flesh, which is our old sin nature energized by the satanic atmosphere. Since the Lord already won the victory on the Cross and condemned sin in His own body, the key for us is to stop thinking in the human realm and to begin thinking in God's realm. Once we do that, our "cup"—which

equals capacity—will be filled with the fullness of God, till it runs over.

Chapter One

PUT CHRIST AT THE CENTER

“For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

“If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

“For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

“For I delight in the law of the God after the inward man:

“But I see another law in my members, war-

ring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

“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).

Romans chapter seven deals with the problems experienced by one human heart after another, inside and outside of the Church of Jesus Christ. It speaks of our attempts to control truth, obedience, and transformation, and the battles that ensue.

One Man's Struggle

A man told me about a tremendous internal battle he was fighting.

“First of all, I tried to control God by performing, thinking that my performance would please Him,” he said. “The result was sheer frustration, and it was not at all enjoyable.

“Then, I tried to control my wife. Looking back, the way I tried to control and manipulate her was amazing. I had no idea what I was doing to her.”

He continued, saying, "I was in a restaurant where I knew that other people from church were present, so I raised my voice as I built up my daughter, bragging about all of her accomplishments. I just wanted to control their impressions of me. All my life I have done things to control what people think of me. I actually lie sometimes to try to make people have a good image of me."

Satanic Influences

The Bible says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

"Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

"Neither give [a marked off] place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:25-27).

When we give a place to the devil, he uses many strategies to start controlling us, and we are left feeling powerless and helpless. Each one of us has felt the pains of helplessness in trying to be the best we can be for God. But if we give a place to the devil today, guaranteed, he will approach us tomorrow. Even if we have gone months without giving him that place, he will intensify his approach because we gave him that

place in the past. *“Neither give place to the devil.”*

Now that man said to me, “As I tried to control my marriage, my wife fought back and controlled me by defrauding me. I started it all, and she got even. I don’t think she even realized that she was controlling me. I surely deserved it.

“I even wrote a check to a missionary, and I did it to control his response, so that I would be liked—I didn’t do it because of God. My motives were not pure.

“As I continue to try and control people, in comes failure and sin. And as I fail and fall deeper into sin, I try to control my guilt, my shame, and my heartache. It’s terrible—I can’t do it!” He went on to say, “The shame that I have experienced is so great, and I have tried so many things to get some relief. I can’t continue to play these terrible games.”

I just let the man talk because he was still trying to control the outcome of our conversation. Then he said, “I tried to increase my prayer life, trying to convince myself that I am spiritual. But in everything I do, I see that I am trying to control my spiritual life and people’s impressions of me. If they get close to my defense mechanisms, I push them away. I don’t want people to know the real me, I don’t want them

near my protective 'fortress,' even though I know it's not right."

Sadly, all the time this man talked, he never mentioned a single thing about the Word of God.

Issues of Control

The apostle Paul said, in so many words, "When I do something that I shouldn't do, I hate it." In Romans 7, Paul was trying to control himself through self-righteousness. After being taught about the grace of God for three years in Arabia, by Jesus Christ Himself, Paul was still trying to exercise pharisaical principles. He tried to follow the letter of the law, but he could not put grace into practice—and he was an apostle. "For to will is present with me, but how to perform it, I just don't know," Paul admitted.

Imagine that! Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus and was saved. Soon after, he spent three years in Arabia being taught by Jesus Christ, and was given amazing revelations about spiritual victory through the Finished Work. Still, the first time Paul tried to apply it, he could not make it.

"When I try to do good, I do evil instead. When I don't want to do evil, I do it anyway, and I am in trouble. My head hurts, my soul

hurts, and my body hurts because I do have God, and I really want to have fellowship with Him again.” This was the experience of the apostle Paul: “When I honestly try to do good, evil—satanic infection—is with me.”

Finally, all he could do was cry out: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).

Chapter Two

POWERLESS, HOPELESS: A GOOD PLACE TO BE

Paul was powerless and hopeless—and he was an apostle! These were not the words of a new believer. Yet, twice he said something that was foreign to Adam’s natural way of thinking:

“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:17).

“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:20).

God was trying to get through to him. Paul needed to know that when he sinned, it was no longer Paul who sinned, but sin that dwelled in him. Paul understood academically that Jesus Christ, who paid for every single sin on Calvary, can never again punish a person’s sin, ever.

Of course, He can deal with us if we grieve the Spirit, if we quench the Spirit, or if we start sowing negativity to ourselves. He will deal

with us individually, and we will be chastised—not because of our sin, but to make us like Him. Even unbelievers who are not forgiven will never have to pay for their sins. They will, however, have to face the fact that they rejected Christ. Even though He died for them, too, they will go to hell, because they didn't receive Him into their hearts.

The apostle Paul made a wonderful discovery, and he confessed, "With my mind, I serve the doctrine of God; but with my flesh, I serve my old sin nature" (see Romans 7:25). At last, the apostle was getting these two laws straight! He was desperately trying to overcome by himself, and he was very sincere. But he was trying to make it through carnal morality, the dark side of morality, without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.*

"With my mind, I serve the doctrine of God; but with my flesh, I serve the law of sin." This is why he said in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He was no longer helpless, hopeless, or powerless. Paul recognized that he was hid with Christ in God and that God was in control.

Ruling Your Spirit

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

“But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Galatians 5:17-18).

The battle between the flesh and the Spirit happens within many precious Christians. It doesn't matter what your situation is, there is a way to be completely victorious in it. We have a magnificent provision with God.

That man we were referring to earlier said, “I can't eat; I can't sleep. Even my edification is not from the heart; it is just my way of trying to control people. Oh, how I wrestle with my emotions; I fail all the time.”

Proverbs 25:28 says, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”

And in Proverbs 16:32, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”

How do we rule our human spirit? We have to realize what Paul discovered. The way out is to begin to grasp the truth of Romans 8:1a: “There

is therefore now no condemnation.” The Word of God makes it crystal clear that this doesn’t mean we should continue in sin that grace may abound. God forbid! (See Romans 6:1, 6:15.) But while we don’t continue to sin willfully, we must see that there is no condemnation if we do sin. Happy is the man who condemns not himself (Romans 14:22).

The fact is, no man has power over his human spirit, neither has he power over death (Ecclesiastes 8:8). God does. Therefore, the answer is to be God-conscious. Satan, the world, and the flesh want you to try to control your spirituality. They want to see you try to control your victories. They want you to strive, and try, and fail, and become frustrated. They want you to frustrate the grace of God (Galatians 2:21). What we need is to see things in the light of God: We already have the mind of Christ, so now we need to think with God.

Back to the man who was so frustrated. He said, “I go to God and say, ‘I am so weak, Lord. I am so absolutely paralyzed.’ But even with that, I realize I am trying to impress God, hoping He will say, ‘You are so humble!’ I am at a crossroads. I try to control how I serve God. My wife doesn’t say anything anymore. My son seems to

be very passive, but inside I know that he knows what's going on. He knows exactly what I am doing. He reacts in passivity, but I believe that inside he is still angry."

People often use jealousy to control their loved ones. No matter how accommodating and trustworthy the other party is, when a person is troubled in his own soul, he will try to find a scapegoat so he doesn't have to face his own weakness.

What everyone needs is to come to the end of his natural strength. When we finally arrive at the place of powerlessness and hopelessness as broken vessels, our own natural ability smashed beyond recognition, we are ready for a promotion. When God is in control in us, then we are finally in control.

**Be sure to read The Dark Side of Morality, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Three

LET THE SPIRIT POUR OUT HIS POWER

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:3-4).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

Thank God that the precious Holy Spirit of the living God came down upon Paul to say, “Paul, the righteousness of Almighty God is in you. Now be led by the Spirit of God, and do not go back into the spirit of bondage again to fear. Don’t go back into self-righteousness. I want you to talk to *Me*. Call Me ‘Father.’ And I want you to know, Paul, that there is nothing that can separate you from My love. Nothing

can condemn you. Now just relax. Let Me become the center of your life. Let Me take control, so you can have divine control in every situation you will face.”

Paul had tried to be at the center and take control through his religious background. Others use their failure to take control and to be at the center. They don't mean to do it, but the frustration is absolutely overwhelming and exhausting. For example, a person becomes depressed because he can't control his circumstances. Someone didn't say the right thing, so he becomes depressed because he cannot control the people around him. He can't control a relationship, so he gets moody and negative. It is a very sad position to be in.

Jesus poured power into His disciples (Mark 6:7*b*; Acts 1:8); He just poured it into them. Their morality had nothing to do with what He gave them. He sent them out and gave them power. That is how it happens. It all comes from God.

Recently, a man from another state who had a serious problem with nervous twitching in his face came into my office. I found out that he also was seriously ill in many other areas. Though he had always been a good worker, he had not worked for a year and a half and was totally

frustrated and ashamed. When I saw him again that night at church, I said to him, “After the service, we are going to pray, and that the problem will be gone immediately.” In tears, I looked him in the eye when we prayed and said, “I don’t understand how it will happen, but it is done.”

On his way home, the power of God came upon him, and he knew he was healed. He called our radio program to give his testimony, and he is like a brand-new person. He is so happy! He says that he feels like a million dollars. With several applications in for work, he has no more twitching, no more disease—none of it remains.

Our faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6); however, that is not how we are healed, and it is not how we gain victory over sin. Make Christ the center, no matter what the odds are against you, no matter what the problems may be. That man was *trying* to please God with his faith. But he was healed by making Jesus Christ the center of his soul through the human spirit.

Christ’s Pleasure Is to Work in Us

A woman was getting ready to take her life. She had her pills and a glass of water ready, yet she waited to hear our daily radio program. She

managed to call during the program, and she poured out her heart. We talked with her then, and another pastor counseled her that night and again each day, encouraging her with the Word spoken in love and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When she called again the following week, she sounded just like a little girl. She said, "It's over! Now I am rooted and grounded in love, and I am completely free." She admitted that the enemy had tried to come in one day. "But," she said, "I just stood in the love of God. The enemy left. I didn't give in, and now it is over. I am healed!"

God's Spirit was poured into her vessel. Zechariah 4:6 says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" and, dear friends, that is the truth.

Working Out What God Has Worked In

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13).

The beautiful part of this verse is revealed in their exegesis. To “work out” your own salvation sounds like a works program, until you study the meaning of the original language. “Work out” is *katergazomai*. Paul was not advocating a works program. This verb speaks of working out the result of something that happened in us. That something is God working in us, *energeo*, in verse 13. *Energeo* refers to the operation of the Holy Spirit taking the Word and transferring it into the memory center by way of the human spirit (Ephesians 1:19). The Word is transferred into the five parts of the soul, including the conscience. This is strictly the work of God, not of us. We let the Holy Spirit work in the transfer, and we receive the power to implement it.

He is here! Christianity is real—it works. Faithful is our God who calls us who also will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24). He will do what He asks us to do. *He* will perform it. God is in control.

When we understand this, we can work out whatever is wrong by a transfer. “For it is God that worketh in us.” This means that God has a precise plan and purpose at this moment, working something out of your life forever to work something else in. God has designed an amaz-

ing provision of grace for you and me.

In Philippians 2:13, “to will and to do” means that God is so willing to do His work in us right now! It pleases Him to give us victory from something that is tearing us apart and from the various controls that we may not have noticed. The Word of God says that it is His “good pleasure.” God is saying, “That’s fun for me! It’s wonderful. I enjoy when you let Me take control of your life.” That is when we have *real* authority in every situation. We have divine ability derived from the One who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

After all we have said and done, having gone so far astray, we can still please God. What an awesome salvation! What an awesome God.

CONCLUSION

Think of how the Lord Jesus Christ alone can work out the wrong things in our lives just by coming in as our center. When self is at the center, we frustrate the grace of God. Deep down, we hate what we are doing, just as Paul did in his Romans 7 dilemma.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord, be my center. I don't care what the need is. You are working in me. I am going to trust you and let You do it." God will answer, "I will do it, for it is what I have asked you to experience."

We cannot judge the sins of another Christian. We cannot even bring up a sin. We can address a need and go to people alone to restore them. We restore them because their sins have already been judged. Our sins have been blotted out absolutely. Jesus took everything about our sins upon Himself, and now He wants the privilege of doing everything for us.

We were saved when we entered into a personal faith in the Person of Christ. Now the way we are healed is through our personal faith in a promise, by believing it with all of our heart. In Mark 5:36, Jesus said, "Only believe." By His exceeding great and precious promises, we are made partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Don't strive. Don't worry. Just rest and believe God, and you will be amazed. Personal faith in a personal promise brings in God's character, acting on your behalf. Just as He did by grace at salvation, He does it now with the gift of healing for whatever the need is.