



**LESSON 2**

# **The Battle Within**

# Introduction

Hopefully, since last week's lesson we are more interested in experiencing the Holy Spirit in our lives; he is so much more than we realize or understand. We touched on a variety of ways in which the Holy Spirit helps us grow in our relationship with God. He is truly the source and strength of our spiritual life. The chocolate milk analogy emphasized the importance of inviting the Holy Spirit to be active and influence our lives on a regular basis.

Despite genuine desires and attempts to follow God, sometimes—deep down—we aren't sure how good we are at it. We don't seem to be able to be as spiritual as we think we should be. Perhaps we struggle with discouragement, feeling defeated or lack of motivation.

Today's lesson aims to expose this “battle within” and assure us that it is quite normal and, frankly, to be expected. It is precisely when we realize our weakness and inability to master the Christian life on our own strength that we realize our need for God's grace and help. We receive this grace in the Person and presence of the Holy Spirit.

**2** What are some obvious obstacles that might cause someone to struggle in faithfulness to God?

**3** What helps you make a spiritual turnaround?

# Struggles and Our Relationship with God

**4** If you were struggling spiritually, which image would best represent your relationship with God?



**OUTSIDE OF MY LIFE**



**PART OF MY LIFE**



**CENTRE OF MY LIFE**



**OUTSIDE OF MY LIFE**



**PART OF MY LIFE**



**CENTRE OF MY LIFE**

**5** Does this explanation change the way you would answer which image best represents your relationship with God? Why?

We are bound to encounter challenges along with growth in our relationship with God. Even with sanctifying grace in our souls, we still have to struggle with our personal weaknesses and temptations. In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul shares his own struggles with the ups and downs of the spiritual life.

# Paul's Struggle

## **6** Read Romans 7:18-25. What problem is Paul experiencing? Can you relate to his struggle? How?

<sup>18</sup> Yes, I know that nothing good lives in me—I mean nothing good lives in the part of me that is earthly and sinful. I want to do the things that are good, but I do not do them. <sup>19</sup> I do not do the good things I want to do, but I do the bad things I do not want to do. <sup>20</sup> So if I do things I do not want to do, then I am not the one doing them. It is sin living in me that does those things.

<sup>21</sup> So I have learned this rule: When I want to do good, evil is there with me. <sup>22</sup> In my mind, I am happy with God's law. <sup>23</sup> But I see another law working in my body, which makes war against the law that my mind accepts. That other law working in my body is the law of sin, and it makes me its prisoner. <sup>24</sup> What a miserable man I am! Who will save me from this body that brings me death? <sup>25</sup> I thank God for saving me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So in my mind I am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful self I am a slave to the law of sin.

## **7** What do you think Paul means by *the flesh*?

## **8** How can Paul's experience give us hope?

# Paul's Solution

9

**Read Romans 8:1-17. Identify (by colour coding, circling, etc.) what Paul says pertains to the flesh, and what pertains to the Spirit.**

## Be Ruled by the Spirit

**8** So now, those who are in Christ Jesus are not judged guilty. <sup>2</sup>Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit that brings life made you free from the law that brings sin and death. <sup>3</sup>The law was without power, because the law was made weak by our sinful selves. But God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son to earth with the same human life that others use for sin. By sending his Son to be an offering for sin, God used a human life to destroy sin. <sup>4</sup>He did this so that we could be the kind of people the law correctly wants us to be. Now we do not live following our sinful selves, but we live following the Spirit.

<sup>5</sup>Those who live following their sinful selves think only about things that their sinful selves want. But those who live following the Spirit are thinking about the things the Spirit wants them to do. <sup>6</sup>If people's thinking is controlled by the sinful self, there is death. But if their thinking is controlled by the Spirit, there is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>When people's thinking is controlled by the sinful self, they are against God, because they refuse to obey God's law and really are not even able to obey God's law. <sup>8</sup>Those people who are ruled by their sinful selves cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are not ruled by your sinful selves. You are ruled by the Spirit, if that Spirit of God really lives in you. But the person who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup>Your body will always be dead because of sin. But if Christ is in you, then the Spirit gives you life, because Christ made you right with God. <sup>11</sup>God raised Jesus from the dead, and if God's Spirit is living in you, he will also give life to your bodies that die. God is the One who raised Christ from the dead, and he will give life through his Spirit that lives in you.

<sup>12</sup>So, my brothers and sisters, we must not be ruled by our sinful selves or live the way our sinful selves want. <sup>13</sup>If you use your lives to do the wrong things your sinful selves want, you will die spiritually. But if you use the Spirit's help to stop doing the wrong things you do with your body, you will have true life.

<sup>14</sup>The true children of God are those who let God's Spirit lead them. <sup>15</sup>The Spirit we received does not make us slaves again to fear; it makes us children of God. With that Spirit we cry out, "Father." <sup>16</sup>And the Spirit himself joins with our spirits to say we are God's children. <sup>17</sup>If we are God's children, we will receive blessings from God together with Christ. But we must suffer as Christ suffered so that we will have glory as Christ has glory.

# Paul's Solution

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<sup>5</sup> Those who live following their sinful selves **think only about things that their sinful selves want**. But those who live following the Spirit are **thinking about the things the Spirit wants them to do**. <sup>6</sup> If people's thinking is controlled by the sinful self, there is **death**. But if their thinking is controlled by the Spirit, there is **life and peace**. <sup>7</sup> When people's thinking is controlled by the sinful self, they are **against God**, because they refuse to obey God's law and really are not even able to obey God's law. <sup>8</sup> Those people who are ruled by their sinful selves **cannot please God**.

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## **10 We are no longer condemned to hopeless despair as slaves to sin. How were we freed from slavery to the law of sin and death? (Especially in verses 1-4.)**

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## **11 How does Paul counsel us to live in this truth and fight “the flesh” from ruling our lives?**

### **A) 8:5-8.**

<sup>5</sup>Those who live following their sinful selves think only about things that their sinful selves want. But those who live following the Spirit are thinking about the things the Spirit wants them to do. <sup>6</sup>If **people’s thinking** is controlled by the sinful self, there is death. But if their thinking is controlled by the Spirit, there is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>When people’s thinking is controlled by the sinful self, they are against God, because they refuse to obey God’s law and really are not even able to obey God’s law. <sup>8</sup>Those people who are ruled by their sinful selves cannot please God.

### **B) 8:12-13.**

<sup>12</sup>So, my brothers and sisters, we must not be ruled by our sinful selves or **live** the way our sinful selves want. <sup>13</sup>If you use your lives to do the wrong things your sinful selves want, you will die spiritually. But if you use the Spirit’s help to stop doing the wrong things you do with your body, you will have true life.

### **C) 8:14.**

<sup>14</sup>The true children of God are those who **let God’s Spirit lead them.**

### **D) 8:15-17.**

<sup>15</sup>The Spirit we received does not make us slaves again to fear; it makes **us children of God.** With that Spirit we cry out, “Father.” <sup>16</sup>And the Spirit himself joins with our spirits to say we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup>If we are God’s children, we will receive blessings from God together with Christ. But we must suffer as Christ suffered so that we will have glory as Christ has glory.

## **12** What have you learned from this lesson and from reflecting on Romans 7 and 8?

### **Summary**

The spiritual life is a battle—we must constantly struggle to overcome our sinful tendencies. This battle is not only experienced by those who are far from God—even saints like Paul had to fight to stay faithful. Thankfully, in the midst of our struggles, God is our great encourager. Through Jesus we have been set free from slavery to sin, and through the Holy Spirit we are given the means to live a life pleasing to God.