

Essential Truths for Living for the Lord

Part I: The Strength in Being Helpless

How many of us have tried to live right, only to be frustrated with ourselves, with God, with the Christian life? There's a reason. Scripture is very clear on the issue of whether Christians can try really hard and be godly.

They can't. It just doesn't work. For many of us, it's never been more obvious than now. Simply deciding to be good just doesn't bring good results.

Paul makes this very clear in Romans 7:14-25. Please grab your Bibles and follow with me. Let's highlight Paul's key points. A word of caution: because Paul is talking about two conflicting realities within every believer, he appears to be contradicting himself at times. The reality is the believers' lives contradict themselves all of the time.

- Believers are enslaved to sin (14-15, 19, 23).
- Believers have two principles at work within them (17-18, 20-23).
- The flesh in us wants to sin (17-18, 23).
- Our inner self is perfect, agrees with the Law, and wants to do good (21-22).
- Our inner self doesn't know how to do what it wants to do because of enslavement to the flesh (18).
- The flesh holds our inner selves captive and wins the battle (14-15, 19, 23-24).
- This is the same conclusion reached in Gal. 5:17; we "do not do the things (we) wish".
- This is not the experience of an unbeliever (v. 22), as believers reading this know.
- This is an emotional issue for Paul and the rest of us (24).
- Our one and only hope for freedom is in Christ (25).

It's valuable to see that this is where Paul is headed in Romans 8:10. The body of every believer is "dead" or uncooperative. The only answer is found in the power that raised Christ from the dead (8:11). We'll look at that together later. For now, I want to encourage you with a few points.

1. This is the experience of all Christians (Rom. 8:10). My guess is that, if you are a Christian, you know this only too well.
2. Be encouraged. It is in coming to this point that Paul, and the rest of us realize trying hard doesn't work. Failure properly responded to can be helpful.
3. God allows people to get to a place of frustration so they can come to the right place for help. Not only is there hope, there is confident hope.
4. If Paul couldn't simply decide to be good and be successful, neither should we.
5. Paul is leading us to a key point in Romans 8:10-11 and it's this: The Christian life is successfully lived, and only successfully lived, as an on-going miracle. The

Spirit of God gives life to our dead, uncooperative bodies.

Summary

- Our bodies are “dead”, uncooperative and we are unable to “resurrect” them by trying hard to do what is right.
- Simply put, Paul explains that the normal Christian life, apart from the Spirit, is a life in which our inner self loses to the flesh.
- It’s critical that we understand that. The only alternative to the Spirit’s work is failure.
- The Spirit of God can give life to our dead bodies just as He gave life to the dead body of Jesus.
- We must understand that the first essential truth of Christian living is that it is a resurrection miracle!
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God will often allow us to try to run our lives in the hopes of bringing us to Him. Because that is true, there is strength in being helpless. Remember: He loves us and wants us to be spiritually successful.

We will explore more of these realities together in the coming days. For now, realize that godliness starts with the realization of our helplessness. Grace and faith are how we began our Christian life. They’re also the way we continue it (Gal. 3:1-3).

Every once in a while, I like to revisit these truths for our church family because they are so easy to forget. Remember this: We have a Savior who not only can save us eternally, but daily. So, in one sense, helplessness can become a strength.

We’ll meet again soon to explore the next truth together. Our love and concern for you all!