

## ***A BATTLE TO THE PEARLY GATES***

In Matthew 26:41 Jesus said to Peter, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” This is telling for every believer. Truly, as converted people in our spirit, we want to do what is right, but in our flesh, we are weak (cf. Mt. 26:69-75).

After explaining the struggle and frustration with the flesh in Romans 7:15-25 Paul in Romans 8 goes on to address the empowerment that comes from the Holy Spirit which is KEY to victory. The believer’s **new nature** loves righteousness and hates sin which accounts for the desire to do right (Rom. 7:15).

However, the believer still has indwelling sin related to the flesh in which “nothing good dwells” (Rom. 7:18). The result is the ensuing struggle within (Rom 7:25). The new nature always wants to do what is right. The old sin nature (flesh) always wants to do what is wrong. The new nature has holy desire but no power.

Therefore, we need the Holy Spirit to empower us in order to have spiritual victory. Praise the Lord that He not only gave us a new nature but also the Holy Spirit to empower us. We are freed from both the penalty (Rom. 5), and the power of sin (Rom. 6), but not yet from the presence of sin. So even though the power of sin is broken, its relentless presence means we always feel the pull of its influence and sad to say often succumb when we fail to rely upon the power of the Spirit and the spiritual resources God has given to us.

The first-person singular is mentioned in reference to Paul all over Romans 7. However, there is no first-person singular in Roman 8. In Romans 8 the Holy Spirit is the dominant person. He is mentioned 19 times which is more than in any other chapter in the Bible. Romans 8 begins with "no condemnation" and concludes with "nothing can separate us from the love of God", and in between we find that "all things work together for good to those who love God". What a GREAT chapter!

Galatians 5 also references the struggle depicted in Romans 7. In Galatians 5:17 Paul says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” And the answer to this struggle is found in Galatians 5:16 where Paul says, “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” The struggle is real. Victory is found by walking in the Spirit.

In Ephesians 6:12 Paul explains that, “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” This struggle in spiritual warfare is real. Therefore, Paul exhorts believers to put on the full armor of God as described in Ephesians 6:13-18.

If one has a genuine desire to live for the Lord but often struggles or fails in the process, the struggle is a good sign. At least this person is in the battle. And it is a battle to the pearly gates!

Peter had the desire, but his flesh was weak. Lot was bothered by the sin around him daily. Paul knew what struggling and failure were, and James says that we all stumble in many ways (James 3:2).

However, a regenerated person (the new nature), even in failure, desires to be obedient simply because they are a new creation in Christ.