

## **“More on Sanctification”**

### **Romans - the Gospel of God**

Romans 7

Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

April 14, 2023

**Jeff:** Our gracious God in heaven, we give You thanks that we can gather together on a morning like this, and what a beautiful morning it is! We're thankful for it. And we can praise You that we can gather together as men of like faith from different backgrounds but rejoicing in Christ. And we ask, Lord, that You will continue to bless and encourage us. Father, as we look forward to the Lord's Day, as we look forward to gathering together with Your church, we pray that would be a time of real blessing. And Father, as we meet our families and as we go in to worship with Your family, as we collectively lift up praise to You, we ask that You will use that time in our lives because You have promised to use Your means of grace to strengthen and refresh us. And Father, we're thankful for the opportunity that we have on this Friday to come and open Your word, another means of grace, and study it. But Lord, not only are we edified in our minds by it, but we are also brought to embrace the truth of it in our hearts. And we pray, Father, that You will continue to bless and strengthen us as we work our way through this beautiful book of Romans.

Father, we ask that You will continue to bless Your people around the world. And we think about Carol Wharton and Favor International Ministries. We pray, Father, that Your hand of blessing would be upon her. We pray, Father, that as she goes about the country looking for churches to support her ministry that she would find willing support. We pray, Father, that the work would continue to move forward.

And Father, we're thankful for our brother Kevin and for the good report that we had. Father, we just ask that You'll strengthen and bless him. And Father, as You are already doing, we pray that You will strengthen and bless him and make him ready for heaven, as You've made him fit already for that.

And Father, we ask that You will continue to bless us and strengthen us by Your grace as we minister to those with whom we will have relations today. And we ask, Lord, that they would experience the grace of God through our very lives. And Lord, we pray that You'll do that for Your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, before we actually get into Romans 8, I started to think to myself that I don't think I've said all that I wanted to say about Romans 7. And I was trying to think about this. And so if this is a repeat, then don't listen to me. *(Laughter)* You can just check me out for a while. But I think there are some things I wanted at least to go back over and think about with you. So let me do that now.

I want us to think for a minute about this whole idea of sin. You'll remember that he said in Romans 7 that he is struggling because the law is spiritual, but he is fleshly. And what I want to ask is this; I want to ask the basic question: What does he mean by "fleshly?" In other words, what does he mean that he's fleshly?

We already noticed last week, and you remember this. Fleshly doesn't mean Non-Christian. What does fleshly mean? And we're going to talk about this irreconcilable war

## **“More on Sanctification”**

that’s going on within him. But I think we basically need to understand what it means for one to be a Christian but fleshly.

I’m going to put something out there. And maybe you’ll want to push back on it; that’s fine if you want to do that. But I want to put out there that sin is not the flesh. That is to say that sin is not our body. Or let me put it this way; this would be another way of saying it. There are some Christians out there who believe that we just have to get free of this body, and we’ll be good.

And that is not Christianity; that is Greek philosophy, because there was an old expression in Platonic philosophy that went like this: *Soma sema*—the body the prison. And so if I could just extricate myself from the body that I’m in, that would be great. I’ll get into the world of forms, the realm of forms. I’ll be able to gaze upon the forms, and I’ll be fine.

But that’s not Christianity. Christianity says that when I die I am present with the Lord. But my body is kept in the grave, still united to Jesus Christ. And as it’s united to Christ, because it’s united to Christ, my body and soul will be reunited when the Lord returns. Or if I’m still here when he returns, my body will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye.

So I don’t believe that what we’re dealing with is that the body is just bad and that I’ve got to get rid of this body; I’ve got to put it off; I’ve got to be done with it. But he does say that he’s fleshly. Now like I’m arguing, if he’s not identifying sin with the body, what is he saying when he says “I’m fleshly?” Well, I think he’s saying the very thing that he was saying in Romans chapter 6 if we think about it. In other words, what he’s saying is, if I offer my body as an instrument to sin—that is, to engage in sin,—then I am fleshly.

In other words, let me put it this way and I’ll get to this. I’ve got this war going on in my mind. Do I do it? do I not do it? When I decide to do the thing that I don’t want to do, I offer my body as an instrument to do the very thing I don’t want to do which is sin. And Paul says that I am fleshly; that’s the idea. So being fleshly is when I lose the war in my mind and offer my body to do the thing I don’t want to do. That’s the idea of what it means to be fleshly.

So it’s not that my flesh is inherently evil. It’s that my flesh is how often I give expression to the sin in me by my body, okay?

So that’s first. I’ll stop there and just see if there’s any pushback on that, or anything you want to flesh out and talk about a little bit more, maybe even elaborate on.

**Jim Hamilton:** Where in chapter 7 does he use the word “fleshly?”

**Jeff:** Yeah. You may have “sinful nature.” For instance in verse 14 I have “*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh*”; I’m fleshly.

**Don Maurer:** My translation says “*carnal*.”

**Jeff:** Yeah. What’s your translation? Never mind. (*Laughter*)

**Jim:** “*Unspiritual*.”

**Jeff:** Unspiritual? Okay. So “carnal, fleshly, of the flesh, unspiritual.” Yes?

**David Miller:** Verse 5 also says this. “*While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions produced by the law were at work in our members, to bear fruit to death.*”

**Jeff:** Yes. And the fact of the matter is, remember, that verse 5 is a flashback. In other words, there was a time where I was continually happy to offer my body as an instrument

## ***“More on Sanctification”***

of sin. My body was an instrument by which I carried out my fleshly desires. Okay. All right, Matt, go ahead.

**Matt Reichart:** No, he’s first.

**Jeff:** Apparently, it’s dueling kindness. *(Laughter)*

**Ted Wood:** I’m trying to get my thoughts together.

**Jeff:** Okay, Matt.

**Matt:** With what Paul says in regard to the body, is the body that we have now the same body that we have in heaven?

**Jeff:** Well, it’s not the same body that we have in heaven when we’re absent from the body and present with the Lord, right? There we are disembodied souls. But at the return of the Lord, at the consummation, our bodies—

**Matt:** Ultimately.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** Good; praise the Lord! My body will be like Christ’s body; it will be changed.

**Jeff:** It will be. But it will be changed not so that—You know, Matt, I’m hoping that I have the face of Jeff, but the body of Arnold. *(Laughter)* I don’t think that’s going to happen. I think that the change that’s probably going to happen is that I’m going to lose my infirmities. I’m going to be changed so that I can live forever. I’m going to be a different/same person.

**Matt:** How tall are you?

**Jeff:** Not tall enough, Matt. *(Laughter)*

**Matt:** You’ll still be that height.

**Jeff:** Yeah, right.

**Matt:** So the other question is related to Jesus and the victory we have in Him. When we come to Christ, is it not true that our spirit is changed? We were dead before Christ; He makes us alive and gives us a new spirit, a new heart and a new soul.

**Jeff:** Well, here’s the way I would describe it. I would describe it that I have the same brain, the same thoughts; I have the same will and the same desires. In other words, the thoughts that are in my brain are now changed. The things that I used to condone I think are now sins. The things that I used to not want I now want. The things that are holy I want, and I love those things. Before I used to hate those things; now I love those things. And now I want to choose those things. So it’s not that I’m the one that’s right; it’s not that I’m a different person now. I’m the same person, but I think different thoughts; I love different things and I choose different choices.

**Matt:** Our mindset changes.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** But where do these desires come from? If our minds don’t change, where else do they come from?

**Jeff:** Yes, but you have to remember—

**Matt:** It comes from the body, too.

**Jeff:** Yes. But you have to remember this though. Think about what the fourfold state of man is. In the garden Adam was able to sin and able not to sin. After the Fall he is only able to sin. After conversion man is able to sin and able not to sin. So where does that sin come from? Where does the desire to sin come from? And what I’m arguing is, it’s not in the body per se, because my body doesn’t have a mind, a will and affections of its own.

## **“More on Sanctification”**

My body is really an instrument that does my bidding, right? And so there’s a war within me. And that war within me is in my mind; it begins in my mind.

**Matt:** You might have gone over that anyway. But in Romans 8:16 it talks about the Spirit groaning within us. But it also talks about the creation groaning within itself. But we also groan, waiting for the redemption of this body, because the body right now is corruptible flesh.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** So when I hear the word “flesh,” the first thought that comes to mind is the chicken wings.

**Jeff:** Yeah, right. *(Laughter)*

**Matt:** I have to fight that internal desire to have them. To me the battle of the flesh is from my body.

**Jeff:** I know. But you just said it, though. Your desire is for chicken wings; your body is your servant. And you’ve made it a slave to chicken wings. *(Laughter)* I mean, think about it. In one sense your body is saying, “Come on, serve me!” And you’re like “Oh, yeah!” *(Laughter)* So there’s a sense in which I think that, for instance, just think about what Paul says when he says that there’s this irreconcilable war.

Think about the conflict. Remember, the conflict in Paul doesn’t disappear; it only enlarges. For instance, let’s think about this. When the law in pre-conversion Paul said, “*You shall not covet,*” before he was enlightened by the Spirit he was able to reason that away: Of course I don’t covet, right? Or “what is coveting?” And then he was able to make loopholes in the law.

But when the Spirit brought forcefully home to him the law that “*Thou shalt not covet,*” when he was standing there, holding the coats of Stephen’s murderers, he realized what coveting was, and it enlarged, right? Sin proliferated; sin expanded.

And so now because of his condition in Christ, sin is not a little thing; sin is a big thing, right? And as a result of that, look at what he says. In verse 15 Paul says, “I don’t understand my actions. I don’t desire it, but I continue to do it.”

**Matt:** Right.

**Jeff:** And then he says this: “I agree with the law and I delight in the law.” “*Nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.*” But notice; look at what he’s running against. He says this in verse 14: “I am of the flesh.” Verse 15: “*I do not understand my own actions.*” “What I do not want to do is the very thing I hate.” Look at what he says in verse 16: “The law is good.” Verse 17: “*So it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me—that is, within my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*”

And so that’s where he goes on to say this; let me continue reading. “*So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.*”

“*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*”

## ***“More on Sanctification”***

Now go back to chapter 6 and look at what he says. He says that the war is in the mind. In other words, look at verse 8. *“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.”* Verse 9: *“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him.”* Verse 10: *“For the death He died He died to sin, once for all. But the live He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God.”* And then verse 12: *“Do not let sin reign in you.”* Verse 13: *“Do not present your bodies as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God.”*

And that’s when he gets into this. “Don’t you know that the one you offer yourselves to is the one you’re a slave to?” So the body seems very much to be that instrument by which the desire for sin manifests itself. So what he’s doing is, he’s pitting the inner man renewed against the body—the fleshly man, the carnal man. But the body is only the instrument of the inner desires that remain unsanctified as of yet. And so it’s a war in the mind, with a manifestation of offering the body as an instrument of righteousness or an instrument of unrighteousness.

The body is an instrument, a tool. In other words, what I’m saying is this. There is a reciprocal relationship, right? For instance, I may desire chicken wings. But let’s say it this way. Maybe they put something in the chicken wings—MSG or something like that—that make my flesh addicted to it.

For instance, I know that some of you guys are addicted to coffee. I’m not. *(Laughter)* Do you know what I mean? It’s not just in my mind that I want coffee, but my flesh is addicted to coffee. So we can’t make too large of a distinction between mind and flesh, because there’s such a union between our mind and our flesh that we just can’t do that. We’re simplifying it. And I think Paul is simplifying it for us to think about it.

Why would he do this? Let me ask this question. Let’s pause and hit the breaks for a minute. Why worry about this at all? I mean really, why get into talking about something like this? I mean, maybe you’re thinking to yourself, who cares? Why does this distinction matter?

**Matt:** As new creatures in Christ He gives us the power to overcome those fleshly desires. It makes it easier for me to say that though there’s a traitor that is in us, there’s a Savior who is with us, because in my mind on the one hand I want to please God. But on the other hand there’s something whispering to me to please myself. So to me it says “the body.” When I go to heaven and get transformed, whether I am raptured or die and am resurrected when Christ comes back, I will have a new body that will have no fleshly desires.

**Jeff:** Yes. But do you think that right now your mind is totally pure, totally sinless?

**Matt:** My mind has been transformed, yes.

**Jeff:** Totally transformed? That it’s in the prison of your body—

**Matt:** I don’t understand the inner workings, but I just know that concept. And I know that this all takes place: that on the one hand I want to please God, but with my flesh I—

**Jeff:** Okay, but let me ask you this. What do you do when you get to James? When you get to James he doesn’t talk about the body anymore. James says this. He says—

**Matt:** *(Unclear)* You are redeemed in Christ, and He has set you free, and you are no longer slaves to sin. *(Unclear)*

## **“More on Sanctification”**

**Jeff:** It says this. *“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”*

**Matt:** My corruptible flesh.

**Jeff:** No, no, no; desire is not flesh. Desire is inside.

**Matt:** It’s flesh. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** That’s not what it says. It says it’s your desire. *“And then desire when it is conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”* Yes, Gary?

**Gary Craig:** I don’t see things like ego and the desire for power and that coming from the flesh. I see that as coming from the mind.

**Jeff:** Yes, and that’s what I’m saying. There’s a relationship between the two that you can’t separate. But I think that the desire has to be in the mind for sin.

**Matt:** You have *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”* So those three things are the cause of ego and power for all of us.

**David:** I’ve heard that our brains have pleasure centers from chemicals that are actually active. When we are indulging in habits we cultivate this filling of our brains with natural chemicals, and there’s a kind of excitement for it. We want more, so we keep doping or looking at pornography, or whatever we do.

**Jeff:** I totally agree. But the thing that you have to ask yourself is where that dopamine cycle started. Who chose it to be there? We found it useful, looking at that woman, right?

**David:** Right. And it’s not just when you start it. It’s true that your mind is always seeking to take you back to the pleasurable feelings.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right. And where is that? You’ve just described the relationship between the two. Sometimes my mind chooses to the contrary, and my body becomes an instrument of its own choice. And the body says, “Hey, this is a rewarding thing.” And so the mind says, “Hey, if the body likes it, and I enjoy it, “ the irreconcilable war is wait a minute! I also delight in the law of God and I know I don’t want to do this and I shouldn’t do this, right? And so there is this irreconcilable war; that’s Romans 7.

Why is this important? Why is it important that we even talk about this?

**Don Bishop:** Because we’re to obey the law. And if we keep abjuring to that, we disobey God who sent His Son to die for us.

**Jeff:** Okay, let me ask this. Why can’t we just go out and not worry about God and not worry about living according to His law, and just go out and at the end of the day ask for forgiveness, and it all goes away, and then get up the next day and continue to sin and come home and pray for forgiveness, and it all goes away? Why not do that? It sounds easier and a lot more satisfying. *(Laughter)*

**Jim:** That’s how I live.

**Jeff:** Is it?

**Jim:** I think so.

**Jeff:** So you go out and you live like you don’t know God all day long?

**Jim:** None of us are sinless.

## ***“More on Sanctification”***

**Jeff:** No; that’s different. The Old Testament makes the difference between intentional sins and unintentional sins. And remember that the sacrificial system is for unintentional sins. What is the only day for high-handed rebellious sins?

**Paul Deffenbaugh:** Yom Kippur.

**Jeff:** Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is for rebellious, high-handed sins; Leviticus 16, I think. That’s the day where rebellion is forgiven. So the idea is that the regular believing life of the Old Testament believer was a faithful life. And he was forgiven daily—morning, evening and in between—for unintentional sins.

Now he was also forgiven for high-handed sins, right? But the point of the sacrificial system was to be arranged so that you would see that steadfast faithfulness was to be the mark of character of the believing life. That hasn’t changed in the New Testament. Yes, our high-handed sins are forgiven in Christ. But the idea of a faithful steadfast life is what is to characterize the believer. All sins can be forgiven in Christ and are forgiven in Christ. But the way the sacrificial system was arranged was to teach us what the character and mark of the Christian life ought to look like.

Where do we see that? Well, we see that for instance in Galatians chapter 5. Patterns of sinfulness are said to be outside of and incompatible with union with Christ. Faithfulness—the fruit bearing of the Spirit—is said to be within the Christian life. In other words, if I can say it this way, Galatians 5 is very clear. Incidents of sin are expected. Patterns of sin are not consistent with the Christian profession. And that’s simply the Old Testament sacrificial system being played out in the New Testament.

**Ted:** But you have patterns of sin in your life.

**Jeff:** That’s why I need Leviticus 16. I told Gary I would call on him. Hold on; I’ll come back to you.

**Ted:** I’m sorry.

**Jeff:** That’s all right.

**Gary:** I just want to say that part of the reason that we need this is to know that even though we are flawed, we can still be saved.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Gary:** And the whole thing kind of ties into the bottom versus top down type thing, where we have to bring the body in harmony with the mind and spirit. That’s a struggle.

**Jeff:** Good. Ted, what were you saying?

**Ted:** I just think this whole section is so important. I mean, I had gone through this in my mind many, many times. And we talked about pornography. Pornography is an easy target. Every man lusts after a woman. We’re kind of wired to do it; some either grossly, or—

**Jeff:** Yes; I was going to say—

**Ted:** Or just in passing. We all do it.

**Jeff:** Incidentally, or as a pattern.

**Ted:** And sometimes incidentally falls into intentionally. If you say “unintentional and intentional,” that line is, you know,—

**Jeff:** I would say this. I would say that intentional can be incidental. But patterned sins are clearly intentional.

**Ted:** So we talk about that. Forget the pornography. Let’s go to a more subtle sin—and I’ve talked about this before—worry.

## **“More on Sanctification”**

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** Why do you worry? Why do you worry about your life? It’s a pattern of worry all the time, for some of us more than others. I mean, as you get older you worry less. It’s like what Bishop Rodgers used to say: “sanctification by aging and loss of testosterone.” *(Laughter)* you get the idea; that has certainly been my experience. It’s worry or watching YouTube. Not pornography, but watching Charlie Kirk take liberals apart. That’s very satisfying. I mean, this is under dopamine. The thing is, we think that if I could only control these sins, then I’m in good shape. But the problem is that it’s more subtle than that; it goes on to all kinds of circumstances.

**Jeff:** Yes. And I think that what you’re saying is, this is the idea of sin proliferating in life.

**Ted:** Right, exactly.

**Jeff:** This is the expansion of the conflict. And you and I are going to see the expansion of the conflict.

**Ted:** Yes. And the thing is that we are so eager to self-justify.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** You know, I used to be that way. But now I’m not that way; I’m a better person now.

**Jeff:** Yeah, but don’t you think—Let me ask this. And again, this may be more autobiographical than it is guidance.

**Ted:** Sure.

**Jeff:** But what I have discovered about myself is that the Lord will introduce to me: Hey, have you noticed this going on in your life? And I’ll be like “Oh, yeah, I have,” right? And then you start dealing with it, right? And you gain some victory over it. And then you eventually mortify it, right? But then, almost before it’s over, the Lord is like hey, have you noticed this?

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** And it’s like oh, I don’t think I noticed that before. I think I’ve been doing that, right? And so there is this continual kind of weeding the garden.

But the Lord doesn’t expose your mind to everything all at once, right?

**Ted:** Absolutely.

**Jeff:** But that’s my point. You can say that unintentional sins are patternesque, right? You just don’t realize the ones you participate in that are patterns. But my point is, that wouldn’t be high-handed, right? If I’m just doing something that’s not even within my framework,—for instance, have you ever been with a person, and he’s doing this?

**Transcriber’s Note:** Jeff takes keys and shakes them.

**Jeff:** He’s jiggling the keys, right? And you say, “Please, would you not do that anymore? You know, that affects my testosterone levels.” *(Laughter)* “So don’t do that anymore.” *(Laughter)* And they never knew that was a problem, right? And now every time they get around you, their hands are drawing into their pockets. And they’re like no, I don’t want to do that! *(Laughter)* And I was like ohhh!; that sort of thing, right? *(Laughter)* And so now it becomes a struggle because they know “Don’t do that,” right? And now it’s been brought to their attention, and they struggle not to do that.

And so that’s how it often is in our own believing life you know, where the Lord brings to our attention something that needs sanctified, and we deal with it. And then He brings



## ***“More on Sanctification”***

something else to our attention. And oftentimes it’s multiple things all at once. But He doesn’t reveal everything that we’re doing as a high-handed, rebellious pattern of sin all at once, right? We would crumble if that were the case, right?

**Jordan Obaker:** You did ask the question why. And I know that at some point you’ll give us your perspective on why.

**Jeff:** Well, I don’t know; I haven’t decided yet. *(Laughter)*

**Jordan:** This has just been a really encouraging passage for me. You know, time and time again I have to repent of this particular sin. Why am I doing what I’m doing?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** Why do I continue to sin? And you know, you can get really beaten down by those passages in 1 John. If you love the world, you don’t love God.

**Ted:** Right; exactly.

**Jordan:** And you start to battle with your assurance. And you say, “Am I or am I not saved?” And you come to this and you see Paul. Even Paul is saying, “Sometimes I do what I don’t want to do.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** And I guess—

**Jeff:** You can take out the word “sometimes.” But anyway—*(Laughter)*

**Jordan:** And you know, you challenge us to think about why. And I think what has always been most comforting about this passage is when you get to the end of it. He says, “*Wretched man that I am!*”

**Ted:** Yup.

**Jordan:** “*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” At the end of the day, that’s the bottom line. All of us realize how wretched we are. There’s nothing that we can do about ourselves trying to justify our sins. And I’ve been thinking about this the last couple weeks. You know, you were talking about the Pharisees; they were trying to make loopholes. If you’ve ever read *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, how they define what is forbidden in each of the Ten Commandments, you can really get beaten down. With the one that says, “*Do not murder*”, it basically says anything uncharitable toward your brother breaks this commandment. So it’s any thoughts, any lack of cheerfulness in your own spirit, any lack of sleep if you’re not taking care of your own body.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Jordan:** And you can read through that and go, “Oh, I didn’t realize that! What does that whole thing involve? I didn’t even realize how much I had been sinning.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** And I think that for me it’s just so encouraging that when you sin you can still come to Christ. That’s how wretched we are.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And so I think I will answer it because you’ve nailed it. And that is the idea where Paul talks about the proliferation of sin, that sin came alive and I died; this is verse 9. “*I was once alive apart from the law. But when the commandment came, sin came along and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death for me. For sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.*”

Look at verse 8. “*But sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness.*” In other words, it wasn’t something that I

## ***“More on Sanctification”***

could rationalize or reason away. It produced in me all kinds of covetousness; I couldn't get away from it. And the idea is that if I understand that about myself and my relation to the law, that is that the law will always point out where I'm wrong. And if I look at the law long enough I will see just how wrong I am. And I could read through the Larger Catechism, read the Commandments, and come away despairing.

But the point is not for me to despair. The point for me—the reason for all this—is not to say, “Forget the law.” The point for me is to say that there is more grace in Jesus Christ than there is sin in me.

And if I can put it this way, what was the problem with Judas? I mean, it says that Judas repented.

**Ted:** Did it say that? Where does it say that?

**Jeff:** Matthew.

**Don Maurer:** Yes, it does.

**Jeff:** Matthew.

**Don:** Matthew 27.

**Jeff:** I was going to look, but I have Don. (*Laughter*) In Matthew 27 Judas repented. But Judas didn't repent savingly. What was it that kept Judas' repentance from being a saving repentance?

And I'll tell you what. Thomas Watson, a great Puritan, said this. He said that the reason Judas was not saved by his repentance was that he believed that his sin was greater than any grace God could afford him. Have you ever met somebody like that? “Oh, I can't be forgiven! I've done too much! My sins are too bad!”, right? That's the person who doesn't really understand sin. Nor does he understand the grace of God revealed in Christ.

And I think that the great thing about it is not that you go, “Man, am I a sinner!”, as if that's an excuse to keep on sinning regardless of anything. No, the third use of the law is my guide for living. But where I seek to follow it I realize how unrighteous I am. And it's a good thing that I have that imputed righteousness that was given me by Christ, because it's only by that righteousness that I stand before God.

And so why is this important? It's not so we can eschew the law, but so that we can see how great the grace of God is in Jesus Christ. I think that's Paul's point.

**David:** I believe that God intentionally lets us in the flesh, in our bodies, with all the other accoutrements added, for an eternal purpose for His kingdom. And part of that purpose that we've been talking about is that He desires to live within us, but also that we as people are the only creatures in all of creation who have the ability to appreciate God. And it was a raw ability when we started out. But it's growing to be a developed ability which is going to be a thousand times better than our raw ability, increasing throughout eternity. It's like preparing for a golf match. You can go to the golf course unprepared you enjoy the scenery and everything. But it's a totally different experience when you come prepared with a buddy and do the best you can. We're to be the best that we can be.

**Jeff:** Yeah; I agree with you. When we come to the new heavens and the new earth, we'll know the joy of the Lord more a thousand years from then than we will know it on the first day. Yes, Don?

**Don Maurer:** Yes. If that passage were not there, and you were just left, for example, with 1 John 3—“he who sins or continues to sin is not of God,” etc., then you have only

## ***“More on Sanctification”***

despair. And so while this passage cannot be used, as you were saying, as a pattern for sin, it is a great comfort. I would say that Paul who was arguably the most sanctified sinner could still say that he struggled with sin, and apparently did all his life.

**Jeff:** Yeah. I mean, I want you to think about it like this. If you were just left with Romans chapter 6 you might even feel defeated. *“Hey, reckon this to be true. Don’t offer your bodies as instruments of unrighteousness, but of righteousness.”* And then you’re like “Okay, great!” And then you keep offering your body as an instrument of unrighteousness and you’re like “What is going on here? I thought I was reckoning.”

And then you get to Romans chapter 7 and it’s like, “Now let me give you the experience of this,” right? And in 13-25 it’s like this is the problem; this is what you’re going to experience, even as you attempt to put chapter 6 into play. And it’s an encouragement. I mean, it’s not an encouragement to sin. It’s an encouragement that this is the Christian life, right?

Let me end on this. We have time, so let me end on this so I can show you what I mean by the difference. We’ve been talking about the expanse and nature of sin. The more sin expands, the more I need the grace of God. The more I realize how wretched I am, I need the grace of God. I can’t make loopholes, and so give the appearance of having kept it like the Pharisees, and so on.

Now think about it like this. Here I am; I’m in my first pastorate. I’m teaching through 1 John. And this guy raises his hand and he says, “You have the wrong doctrine, son.” It was an older guy.

I said, “I’m not sure what you mean.”

He said, “I have attained sinless perfection.”

**Ted:** Yeah, sure! *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** And if I had been a little older I’d have looked at his wife immediately after he said that. *(Laughter)* I wonder if later she looked at him and said, “He’s my little sinless man.” *(Laughter)* But I digress.

Anyway, the more we got to talking, the more I realized that he had not attained sinless perfection. What he had done was that he redefined sin so that it was manageable. So it was almost Pharisaic in what he was doing.

**David:** It was completely off the mark. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Thank you. It was completely off the mark. But that’s my point, right? My point is, would you rather deceive yourself into thinking, “I’m all good!”? Or would you rather say, *“Wretched man that I am!”* “And I’m saved by Christ.”

**John Gratner:** You know, all through this discussion I think we should be reminded that God made us this way. The prohibition was the same thing in the Garden. And they ate things—not the fruit of the one tree—but they ate other things, and they tasted good. I dare say that Adam was white in the garden, and that was probably good.

**Jeff:** No, that was the sin, brother. *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

**John:** Along this false line,-- *(Laughter)*, even in Romans 6 we’re lucky that we have verse 14: *“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”* And when we look to what Jesus said to His disciples over and over and over, He said to them, *“Follow Me.”* There is this understanding that *“you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* But He never really chastised His disciples for that.

## ***“More on Sanctification”***

Think about this for a second. What if the rich young ruler had heard Him say, “Sell half of your possessions, and then follow Me?” Would he have been chastised by the Lord? Or would he have been blessed with following Him? And the longer that he followed Him, the more likely he would have been to sell the rest of his possessions.

**Jeff:** Jesus gave him the option at the very beginning to not sell any of his possessions, right?

**John:** Right.

**Jeff:** Go ahead.

**John:** It’s such that it’s back to the reward/pleasure thing. Well, we’re told that “at His right hand are pleasures forever.” It’s like C.S. Lewis saying that a child has been offered a great vacation. But we’re asleep; we’re content to play in the mud puddles, or in a slum.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** No, we’re made for more.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** And in Galatians 5 there is this other step. The more eager we are to enjoy those things of the Spirit, the more you find that is the real joy. And we’re made for the joy in following Him.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**John:** Yet it comes back to this idea of where am I going? Well, what’s my assurance? Well who do you want to follow? And we’re blessed to know this. Even Peter says, “I believe; I love following You.” Are we following Him?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** I need an answer to the question to what you define as flesh; that’s how this all started. But I think we would all agree with verse 21, where it says that “evil is present in me, but I could wish to do good.”

**Jeff:** Yes. I think that to be fleshly, carnal, unspiritual—any of those words that you want to use—I think that is to be characterized by a person who lives according to the sin that remains in him. How so? By offering his body as an instrument in service of those desires of sin that remain.

**Matt:** And the difference between me and the non-believer is that I do have the desire to please God.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Matt:** But I don’t always do it.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Ted:** And more of the desire comes from Christ in you.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Ted:** I mean, all my confidence is ultimately that; 1 John, everything. All the commendation I may feel, all of what has to come back for me, Ted Wood, I say, “But my life is Christ.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** It’s not that my life is Christ because or if I perform very well.

**Jeff:** And I want to say this again. And I think you guys know this, but I want to say it again. This is union with Christ, right? Union with Christ is all of the forensic—forgiven, righteous, declared righteous—all of that, right? But it’s also transformative.

**Ted:** Yeah.

## ***“More on Sanctification”***

**Jeff:** That is to say, my life should be different from year to year as I grow in Christ, right? I can cast myself back on the forensic—and should, right? 1 John 1:9: “When I confess my sins He is faithful and just to forgive me my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.” That’s the forensic. But John is also talking about the transformative; it’s about my life changing and becoming more like Christ.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** And so that’s the idea, right? But in the process of changing Romans 7 says I’m going to have many failures. And I’m going to have to always remember that it’s not me that’s saving me, right? And it’s not me that’s transforming me. It’s the grace of God in me that is saving me and that is transforming me.

Let me pray and I’ll let you go. Father, thank You for this day and the blessing of life in Christ. Thank You, Lord, that You save us and that You transform us. Thank You, Father, for this good passage that reminds us of these really vital and practical truths that remind us that we struggle with sin, and that we’re saved by the greatness of Your grace revealed in Christ. Lord, continue to remind us of that and help us to grow in that, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen. Hey, have a good week. *(Applause)*