

Rebuilding the Foundations - Romans
Part 14
“Two Spiritual Laws”
Romans 7:15-25
Pastor Charles Price

Now, before I read some verses, some of Romans 7, let me just say something. There is always a reason why people behave as they do, always a reason. I once heard about a man who was found facing, lying face down in the aisle of a theater. And the usher came along and said, “excuse me, sir, you're not allowed to lie on the aisle like that, would you please get up and sit in the seat?” And there was no response. So she said, “sir, you may not lie in the aisle. If you don't get up and sit in the seat, I'm going to call the manager.” Well, there was no response.

So she called the manager, the manager came and said, “sir, you may not lie in the aisle. Would you please get up and sit in a seat?” There was no response, “sir, if you don't get up and sit in the seat, I'm going to call the police.” Well, there was no response. We called the police. The policeman came and said, “sir, you might lie in the aisle. Would you please get up and sit in the seat?” Still no response, “sir, if you don't get up and sit in the seat, I'm going to arrest you” while there was no response. So he said, “right, I'm going to arrest you first. I have a few questions. Where did you come from?”. At that point the man moved, looked up and said “the balcony”.

There's always a reason why people behave as they do. Do you ever wonder why you behave as you do? Because I want to talk to you this morning about why you behave as you do. Because here in Romans 7, let me read you part of it initially from Romans 7:15 on. When Paul says something that most of us will probably identify with, he says this,

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin

living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature. For, I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do - this is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do it's no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”

Does that make sense? You understand what he's saying? Let me put it simply. He's saying this, there's certain things in life that are good and I know they're good and they're right. And I know they're right. And I plan to do them, but I don't. There are other things in life that are wrong. I know they're wrong. They're bad. I know they're bad. And I say to myself, I will never ever do them again. You never guess what happens. I do them. Anybody here got that problem? Just put your hand up. If you're – let's see how honest you are this morning. That's most of you.

It's a problem you've got. It's a problem I've got. It's a problem Paul talks about here. But what exactly does Paul mean when he talks about it here? Many of you will be aware that this passage has been a source of some controversy, especially in the whole question of holiness of life and dealing with sin. What is Paul talking about? Who is the person he's describing here? Some people say, ‘well he's describing somebody who's not a Christian.’

Well, some of it looks as though he may be, for instance, he says in Romans 7:14, “I am unspiritual. I'm sold as a slave to sin.” If you met somebody on the street, who said to you, “I am unspiritual. I am sold as a slave to sin”. You've probably said to yourself; I don't think they're a Christian. It doesn't sound like one does it? So some people say, he's talking about somebody here before they become a Christian. Other people say, no, no, it's a Christian, but it's a defeated Christian. It's a back-sliding Christian. Well, it might seem that way when you read Romans 7:21 and Romans 7:25, he says, “I delight in the law of God, but I'm a prisoner to the law of sin”.

Well, the fact he delights in the law of God is a good sign. Maybe he's a Christian, but the fact he's a prisoner to the law of sin doesn't sound very good. He's obviously a defeated Christian. So some people said this is about a defeated Christian experience. The third option is that this is actually talking about a normal Christian experience. And when you read verses like Romans 7:18, "I desire to do what is good". You said yourself. Well, that sounds like a Christian. Especially when back in Romans 3:12, Paul said, "no one desires what is good?" He says in Romans 7:22, "I delight in God's law". That sounds like a Christian to me. Says Romans 7:25, "In my mind, I'm a slave to God's law". That sounds like a Christian.

Now most of you put your hand up just now to say, this is your experience. And that probably means that most of you agree with me. This is about a normal Christian experience. It's about a civil war that takes place in the soul of every Christian. Now I want you to notice a couple of interesting things and very important things. In Romans 7:17, for instance, when Paul talks about this, he says "it is no longer I who do it, but sin living within me". Well, that sounds a very convenient cop out doesn't it? He says the same thing in Romans 7:20 "it is no longer I who do it, but sin living in me that does it".

Now, what does he mean? That sounds like a very convenient excuse. I'm sorry. It wasn't me. Who did that? No, no. It was sin living in me that did that. I mean, if I came here at the end of this meeting and we got in conversations, suddenly I clenched my fist and I'd punched you right on the nose. Oh, sorry. That wasn't me though. That wasn't me. No, it was sin living in me that did that. Wasn't me. And suddenly - "waho" - hit you again? Oh, sorry. That wasn't me either. That was sin living in me. You probably said to me, listen, chum, there's a bit of sin in me too. "Pow". I mean what is Paul saying here? It sounds as though he's saying I don't do what is right. I do what is wrong, but don't blame me. It's not me. It's sin living in me, whatever that is that does it. What does he mean? Well he's not talking about sin as actions here, but sin as a principle, he describes in Romans 7:23 as the law of sin. The law of sin, the best way I can illustrate this is by the law of gravity. If I hold this pen in the air, it's gonna fall. Not because I give it a

push, but because of the law in the heart of the earth called gravity, which says, if it goes up, it'll come down.

Now it says, Paul, there's a very natural law in me called the law of sin. When I was a boy, my parents tried to bring me up properly. And they taught me as a boy, there's certain things that are good and certain things that are bad. You must do what is good, you must not do what is bad. When I went to school, my teachers took up the same process. There's certain things that are right and certain things that are wrong. You must do what is right. You must not do what is wrong. You must not tie the girl's hair in front of you to her chair, for instance, that's wrong.

And all the instruction I ever had was how to do what is good, how to do what is right. But I'll tell you something, I've always found it a lot easier and a lot more fun usually to do what is wrong. And so have you, why? No one taught me this, no one came to me as a boy and said, let me tell you how to let me teach you how to tell a lie properly with a straight face. Let me tell you how to, how to cheat a little bit. Let me teach you how to fight. Nobody ever taught me that. I had a natural gift for it.

And so have you, before you start smiling too securely. And if you've got kids, you'll discover so have they, and they got it from you. Because there's a natural law, says Paul, which he calls the law of sin and we'll never understand ourselves until we understand and accept this fact about ourselves. So much so in 7:18 Paul says, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature." That is my natural self. My flesh, as some translations put it, meaning my natural self apart from God.

Now, if you don't believe that, you'll try to refine yourself. You'll hold onto the hope that maybe one day you'll change. If you make new resolutions with enough determination, you'll be able to bring it to pass. You'll probably make promises to God about how good you're going to be starting from today. But despite the greatest intentions, you will fail. But don't be too disappointed by that because none of us here will

ever be a bigger failure than the one God already knows that you are. See you and I may become disillusioned with ourselves. God is never disillusioned with us for one simple, straightforward reason. He never suffers from any illusions about us in the first place. He knows exactly what we're like. And we're corrupt. You see, be very careful of blaming the devil for your sin. I know the devil is active of course. I know he tempts. I know that's all part of his work.

But in the book of James 1:14, it says "each one is tempted when by his own desire, he is dragged away and enticed." His own desire drags him away. It says in James 4:1 "what causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the evil desires of battle within you." And the battle is within because that's where the evil desires exist. That's why temptation is a problem to you - and to me. Temptation is only a problem because sin is attractive to us. Otherwise it wouldn't be a problem. Temptation by definition is attractive. Otherwise it's not temptation is it? I'm never tempted do things that are not attractive to me.

I'm never tempted to walk in front of a moving bus. I don't stand on the sidewalk, struggling with that one. It's not attractive. I am tempted sometimes to push somebody else in front of a moving bus, depending who it is. Every temptation I face is a temptation only because if I could, if I can get away with it, if there were no consequences, I would do it. That's why it's a temptation. And every sin you commit and every sin I commit, let's be utterly honest about it. You commit because you actually want to - at the time. Because we have a nature that is corrupt.

I had a colleague in England who was speaking one day at a church in the south of England. And a lady came to talk to him at the end of the service and said, "would you pray for me?" He said, "well, certainly, but tell me what your need is". And she said to him, "I am troubled by demons". He said, "tell me more". She said, "well, I have a demon of greed and I have a demon of pride. And I have a demon of envy and a demon of lust and a demon of this and a demon of that." She gave a whole catalogue of demons. And my friend said to her, "you mean to tell me you have a demon of greed and another demon of pride and

another demon of lust and another demon of envy and another demon of this and another demon of that.”

And she said, “yes”. He said, “that is incredible”. She said “why?”.

He said, “because I can do all these things all by myself. I struggle with every one of these things, but it's nothing to do with demons. It's to do with me”. He said, “Madam, your need is not exorcism. It's repentance”. And one of the leaders of that church who told me that story said, you know, every visiting preacher that came, she went with the same story and most of them danced to her tune, he was the only one who talked sense to her.

Now, of course there are demons, but actually in the New Testament, demons are never responsible or never credited with moral power. There are 32 references to demons in the new Testament and I've checked every single one of them. And they have all kinds of physical powers. They can cause blindness, dumbness, severe pain, physical suffering. They can give unusual strength. They can cause convulsions. They can throw a man to the ground. They can drive pigs into a sea. They can predict the future, but demons are never held responsible for moral behavior.

Nobody ever committed adultery because of a demon in the New Testament. You committed adultery because you're a sinner, that's why. You tell lies because you're a sinner because your nature is corrupt. Now this is really encouraging stuff isn't it? You're sitting there saying, I'm so glad I came this morning, it's exactly what I needed, my nose rubbed in the dirt.

But if that is true, there's something else which is equally true. If there is a law of sin that Paul talks about in this passage, there is also another law, the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. He talks about in this passage, we'll look at that verse in just a moment in particular. But you see when a person becomes a Christian, what happens?

It's not just that their sins are forgiven. That's a wonderful necessity in becoming a Christian - to be cleansed in order that we might then become recipients of the Spirit of God himself. He might come to live within us. Romans 8:9, the next chapter tells us, any man who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ. It's the Holy Spirit's presence that makes a person a Christian. And when you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to live in you. A life that is the complete opposite of what we are by nature.

Let me read you one or two verses that occur in, 1 John, a letter towards the end of the New Testament. And these verses on first reading may seem very confusing. 1 John 3:9, for instance, says, "no one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in him. He cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God." Now what in the world you make of that verse; the one born of God will not sin and cannot sin he says? In 1 John 5:18 of the same letter, he says, "we know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin".

Now, does that mean that the real evidence of being a Christian is that we will not sin and do not sin and cannot sin? Well, you know, and I know fine well, that is not true. So what does John mean? In fact, elsewhere in this same letter, John says in 1 John 1:8, "if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us". So John says in this same letter, if anybody claims to be without sin, he's kidding himself.

Now, how do you reconcile these verses? The one born of God does not sin and will not sin and cannot sin, it says in 1 John. It also says in the same letter, if anybody claims to be without sin, he's kidding himself. How do you reconcile those verses? Well, the satisfactory only answer is to be found in asking the question who is born of God and discovering that John's answer in that letter is that the one who is born of God is Jesus Christ born into you. When you became a Christian.

Let me read you some of what he says. 1 John 5:11 “this is the testimony God has given us eternal life. And this life is (where?) in his Son. He who has the Son has life. He who was not of the Son of God does not have life”. Spiritual life, he says, eternal life is in the Son. It's the life of the Son.

Now earlier in that same letter, 1 John 1:2, John says “that, which was from the beginning, which we've heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we've looked at and our hands have touched this. This we proclaim concerning the Word of Life. The life appeared. We've seen it. We testified to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life, which is with the Father and has appeared to us.” There says, John, this life we've touched it. We've handled it. We've seen it. This life is Christ. At the end of his letter, 1 John 5:20, he says “He is the true God and eternal life”. He is eternal life. Eternal life is the life of God.

Now some of you may know that the word ‘eternal’ and the word ‘everlasting’ are two different words. The word eternal, if you consult any good dictionary will tell you the word eternal means to have no beginning and no end. That's the meaning of being eternal. There's only one eternal life. It has no beginning and no end. That's God's life. The word everlasting means to have no end, but it presupposes a beginning. You and I become everlasting by the reception of the only one eternal life there is; the life of God.

At the day you become a Christian, what happens is that we become indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God who comes to live that divine life in us. We become partakers of the divine nature, as it says in the book of 1 Peter. And that life that comes to indwell you is a life which does not sin and will not sin and cannot sin for it is the life of Christ. That's been born into you. The new birth is the reception of that life.

Jesus didn't simply come as the giver of life. He said, “I am the life.” Roman 6:23 says “the wage of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life”. Not the gift from God is eternal life though, of course he is the giver, but this is saying more than that. He is the gift. The gift of God is eternal life. The gift is God

himself imparted to you and to me. And that life given to us is a life which cannot sin, does not sin, will not sin. But you and I do sin. It is our nature to sin. We actually enjoy the sin, if we can get away with it.

Now, let me just read you again, just listen carefully, some of those verses in Roman 7. And this time, see if you can pick out a recurring word, just listen carefully to see if you can catch it. I'll read from Romans 7:15-24, just listen;

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but sin living in me. For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, no the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am!”

Anybody pick out the word? I will try to give you a clue. 38 times 38 times: I, I, me. Zero times: Christ, God, the Spirit. You see, this is a man saying, let me, in my natural self, by my human ability, try and live the Christian life. And it is a total disaster. I can't do it. This is a Christian. This is Paul. Say for a moment. Let me show you what its like trying to live by human effort, depending solely on human resources. And I end up saying what a wretched man I am.

Notice Paul's question when he asks, when he says that. He says, (Romans 7:24) “what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” Now notice he doesn't say, what will rescue me? Is there a technique? Is there a program? Is there an experience? Let me say all those things are made available to us in the evangelical marketplace. But every once in a while they have to be updated because

none of them work. They don't last. The question isn't what, it's not a technique. It's not a program. It's who, someone who will rescue me. And he answers his own question, thanks be to God he says "is through Jesus Christ, our Lord" and two verses later in Romans 8:2, Paul didn't put these chapter divisions here these have been added later, and in Romans 8:2, he says "through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death".

What a wretched man I am, I am bankrupt when it comes to living the life I should live, he says. Is there someone who can rescue me? And the answer is yes, there is, it's Jesus Christ. How? By the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, setting me free from the law of sin. There's this law of sin a bit like gravity as I described earlier, but there's a new law, says Paul, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which sets me free from the law of sin and death.

Let me try to illustrate this to you. Last Monday, I was in England with my family and we were returning to Toronto. And to get back to Toronto, there are several ways we could have attempted to do that. For instance, we could have gone to the west coast of England, gone to a cliff on the Cambrian coastline, which is near where we were staying and get a compass and work out that Toronto is sort of west, southwest of here. Go back maybe a hundred meters and then I could have run as hard as I could on the top of this cliff and leaped in the direction of Toronto. And I go, splash. I think, oh, I've hit lake Ontario. Oh no, I haven't, there's England, six feet behind me. That wasn't very good. So I go back and get fit. And this time I run 150 yards and I leap off the cliff and I end up, you know, splashed back in the sea again. Why? Because no matter how hard I tried, there's nothing I can do that can break the law of gravity. Gravity says, if you're going up chum you're coming down.

But we didn't do that. You'll be glad to know. I'll tell you why, because I happen to know there's a more powerful law than the law of gravity. It's known as the law of aerodynamics. And so instead we went to London airport and boarded an aircraft. I went to my seat, put on my seatbelt, sat back, this great aircraft

began to speed down the runway. When it reached about 35 seconds, it was now burst 330, that's about the point of no return. It lifted off the ground, soared up into the air and after a few minutes, at the height of 30,000 feet, I could look through my window and there below was the west coast of England. And I could say the law of aerodynamics has set me free from the law of gravity. What Paul is saying is this; there's a law called the law of sin in my natural self and there's nothing I can do to violate that and break that nothing I can do. But there's another law, more powerful than the law of sin, it's called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

And when Jesus Christ is my life and my strength and my dependency is on him I discover that he sets me free from the law of sin and death. You see the Christian life is not about reforming your old nature about replacing your old nature with the nature of Jesus. Now, if you don't understand that you'll struggle with your Christian life, it's not about reforming the old nature. Your old nature will be corrupt until the day you die. It's about replacing it. Where your dependency is not on I, I, 38 times, but on Christ. And we'll look into Romans 8 in the next few weeks and we'll see in Romans 8, it's all about the Spirit. Not that you move from one to the other, but you live with both. You live with the old nature and you live with the spirit and you find His strength, His power work within us. You see there are those who have taught that you might eradicate the old nature. There are those who try and encourage us to suppress the old nature. But the reality is the Holy Spirit counteracts the old nature. And I think that's the best way to understand it. He counteracts. The old nature is there, but the Spirit of God in us sets us free.

You see, when I flew across the Atlantic last week, gravity did not cease to function for one minute. When that aircraft took off, gravity didn't say, 'oh man, that's another one that's got away, let's give up.' Gravity went on functioning. In fact, we were very conscious of, we had a bit of air turbulence at times we were very conscious of gravity. But it was the new law of aerodynamics. It was liberating us and setting us free. And in the midst of the pull of gravity, we could enjoy the ability to fly. But not for one moment of that journey could I fly. You see, I can't fly. I've never flown in my life. When I left my seat to go to the

washroom for instance, I didn't sort of float over everybody's head because I can fly and float to the back of the plane. I can't fly, but I was being flown. You see, you can't live the Christian life. That's why Jesus said 'without me, you can do,' do you remember how much, 'nothing'. You can be religious without Christ. You can make resolutions without Christ. You can try to engage in Christian service without Christ as your strength, but ultimately there'll be nothing to show for it.

When you come and say, I cannot live this life Lord Jesus, but thank you so much You've come to live in me today. He'll liberate you and set you free. I sat on the front seat here with somebody this morning and we talked and we prayed together and she opened her life to Jesus. She said, "I've been trying to live as a Christian and Christianity seems so elusive to me, it's just out of reach and I reach and miss it. And I reach and it's just out of reach". I said, you're looking for the wrong thing. You're looking for Christianity. Look for Christ. And we prayed together and she gave her life to Christ and said, 'Lord Jesus, please come and be my life, my savior, my strength.'

You see, don't ever ask God to give you strength. Do you ever ask God to give you strength? Do you know what the Bible says? It says, the Lord is our strength. That's not just a semantic. Exodus 15 says, "Lord is my strength and my song". Psalm 28; "the Lord is my strength and my shield". Psalm 118; "the Lord is my strength and my song". Isaiah 12; "the Lord is my strength". There are other references. Here's a great one. Habakkuk 3:19; "the sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to go on the heights."

He enables me to fly. Of course, they knew nothing about flying the way we do then. But that's the picture there. You see, the aircraft doesn't give me the ability to fly. I never have the ability to fly, but it flies me. When I go to check in at an airline counter; so would you please give me the ability to fly to Toronto today. They'll say, 'sorry, we can't give you the ability to fly anywhere. But I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll fly you, you get in our plane, you sit down, you relax. We will fly you, but you'll never fly.'

And every day we recognize our own weakness and our own bankruptcy. And we say, 'Lord, Jesus Christ. I realize I cannot live the life You've called me to live today, but You never said I could in the first place. But You did say that Your Holy Spirit will come and live in me. The life that's impossible to me, the life of Jesus'. As you depend on Him, He works in us to will, giving us new appetites, and to do, giving us new enabling of His good purpose, we're told in the book of Philippians. But you won't see that in yourself. You know, you'll never look inside yourself and say, my, I am really spiritual today. You'll never look in a sort of spiritual mirror and say, boy, am I Christ like today? This is fantastic. You'll never see that. You'll look in your own heart and you see an old nature alive and well, hankering for a good sin, if nobody's watching, because we're corrupt.

But the marvelous thing is, is other people will see the presence and the work of Christ within you. When Moses came down the mountain, having collected the tablets of stone from God on Mount Sinai, with the 10 commandments, he came down into the valley and they built a golden calve. Moses was so angry he took the tablets of stone. He smashed them on the ground and then he ground the golden calf into powder, put it into the drinking supply. And probably half the Israelites went to bed sick that night with a contaminated water. And I imagine if you went to Moses tent that night, he'd be sitting with his head in his hand saying what a fool I am. I've been with God on the mountain for 40 days. And now I've smashed the top of the stone. I smashed the golden altar at the golden calf and contaminated the water. What a fool I am. I imagine Moses probably was saying that. But if you went to a tent of any Israelite in the camp that night and listened to what they were saying, they'd be saying things like this; did you notice Moses' face? Because the Bible says, Moses did not know that his face shone with the glory of God. Moses didn't know. Everybody else did. And neither will you. You'll never have the satisfaction of saying I am so like Jesus today. You'll be aware of the battle, but it's other people, they may not know why it is that you are what you are, but they will see, why is this person different.

I, hesitate to tell you this, but I will. Many of you know, Alan Redpath, who was a very godly man, I know he came to preach here on a number of occasions. He was an Englishman, but he was a pastor of Moody Church in Chicago for a number of years. Just before he died, about 10 years ago, he had suffered a stroke. He was in hospital, and my wife and I went to visit him. And he was in a wheelchair. He was very thin, very weak. And he said to us, something like this, he said, 'I've never known such spiritual warfare as I've experienced in this wheelchair'. He said, 'there are battles I thought I'd won 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago. And they are back with a vengeance. There are temptations I thought I'd never face again and I'm facing them. I didn't know my heart and my mind was so dirty'.

Well, I felt a little embarrassed. I loved Alan Redpath and I was embarrassed him talking in this way. We said something silly like, 'well, you know, you've given the devil a hard time most of your life, maybe now you're weak he's putting the boot in'. But I'm sure that didn't help him at all. Then we prayed together before we left. And his voice had been frail as he began to pray, his voice became strong again. And he prayed as though he knew God. He did know God. We left and that was last time we saw him. He died within a few weeks. And on our way out, we passed a nurse coming to his room. We thanked her for letting us come. We'd come out of the normal visiting times and said something like this, 'you look after him, won't you say?' 'Oh yes, we look after everybody here.' 'Well, he's a very special man'. And she stopped. She said, 'you know, he's a special man. Isn't he?' I said, 'we think so.' She said, 'why is he special?' I said, 'well, you, you know, he is a Christian, do you?' 'Oh yes,' she said, 'we know he's a Christian. We have lots of Christians here though.'

I said, 'well, why do you say he's special?' She said, 'some of us were talking about him. Some my colleagues were talking about him the other day and we love working with him. And one of my colleagues said, whenever we spend time with Alan Redpath, I always come away feeling clean.' She said, 'there's something about him that is clean'. And as Hillary and I went to our car, we thought, isn't

that interesting? Alan said, I've never known such battle. Didn't know my heart was so dirty. And she said, what is it about him that's so clean?.

You'll never see that in yourself. But other people will. This doesn't mean we go into some passive neutrality or we just, well, it's not, I it's the law, the Spirit of life in Christ. We're going to see in the next part of Romans 8, it's not a passive neutrality. There is discipline involved, there is. But discipline never puts godliness into our lives. Discipline enables the life of God in us to get out of us. So, the discipline allows God, the Holy Spirit to express himself through us; from the inside out, not from the outside in, we'll talk about that in the next couple of weeks.

But it may be there's somebody here this morning and like the person who already came to Christ this morning, you say, I've been trying to get hold of Christianity, but it's like getting hold of a piece of soap in the bath. You get your fingers around and think I've got him and it's gone again. And then you try again. It's gone that way this time. You see, forget about Christianity and start to get interested in Christ because it's Christ himself, who is the substance, the content, the power, the enabling of the Christian life.

If you've got the Son, you have life. You can grieve that life, you can quench that life, or you can liberate that life. As you live in that Spirit of repentance and dependence you say, 'Lord, you today have your way in me and through me'. And the marvelous thing is, although there'll be air turbulence, the law of gravity keeps kicking in, the law of sinful nature is there pulling all the time. But you can go through the most violent of air turbulence and still be flying and you get your destination.

As you trust the Lord Jesus, no matter what happens in you, he is totally committed to expressing his character through you. Totally committed to doing that. As you allow him to. You see the battle, you feel the turbulence, others see the victory. You can be on the ground and the plane flying at 33,000 feet overhead and you see its white vapor trail cut across the sky and you say, 'man, look at that thing flying.'

The people in the plane, maybe have their seat belts on. Maybe they've stopped the meal service because the turbulence is too hard and the thing is bouncing. But down here, you look up and say, 'look at it flying'. And you'll experience the turbulence but others just look at you and say, look at him fly, look at her fly. And they'll see the reality of Christ. If you don't know Christ for yourself, you need to know him.

As we've seen through the book of Romans, we are separated from Him by nature, we are under His wrath by nature. But Christ came and endured the wrath of God on the cross, was buried, rose again to impart His life to us in the form of the Holy Spirit. And He in us, will set us free as you come and say, 'Lord Jesus, I need you, please forgive me and I'm separated from you. Cleanse me of my sin, come and live within me. He will do that.'

For those of you who are already Christians, it's understanding He's there. Trusting him, living in the good of it. Every day acknowledging Christ is in me, a life which cannot sin is there to control and direct me and lead me.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you that the Christian life is not simply an ethical pattern that we would've tried to follow through discipline and human efforts. Some of us would have had to give up long, long ago if that were the case. But thank good everything to, to which You call us. You by the gift of your Holy Spirit enable us. And I pray that across this place this morning, there will be many who in a new way will begin to seek your fullness, your enabling, your empowering to live holy lives, that liberate us from this law of sin to exhibit that life of righteousness that You give to us. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.