

## Overcoming Sin and Temptation I (12/4/22 SS)

(study in JO Vol VI)

(Intro/Exposition of Romans 7:21)

Welcome

Today we begin a series of lessons designed to address the most significant challenge that Christians face as they seek to live for Jesus Christ in this fallen world....."Overcoming Sin and Temptation."

Understanding the nature of and doing battle with.....the remaining corruption that resides in the heart of the most mature believer in Jesus Christ. Touching the deepest experience of our souls.

\*\* That powerful dynamic that often causes us to cry out with the Apostle Paul,

"Oh wretched man (woman) that I am."

\*\* That which still wreaks havoc in our relationship with God and with our relationships with others (family/church/world).

The goal of our studies is not to bore you by telling you something you already know (and you do know it, you are well aware of it).....The goal is to help you better understand the sobering reality of it and to better equip you to deal with it and to make progress in the battle!!

We shall endeavor to accomplish that goal by taking up the story of John Owen found in Vol VI of his works where he treats the matter in a most thorough and helpful manner.

There are three treatises found in Vol VI, and are in order:

- I. The Mortification of Sin in Believers
- II. Of Temptation (The Nature and Power of It)
- III. (The nature, power, deceit, and prevalency of the) Remainder of Indwelling Sin in Believers

Now, before we get into the study, let me ask you a few questions:

- How many have heard of JO?
- How many have read JO?
- How many have read Volume VI?

Allow me to make a few introductory remarks concerning Owen's approach to these important facets of the Christian life. The approach we shall adopt as well as we work through these matters. Along with our vision for these studies.

Owen, like many of his contemporaries in the Puritan era, was committed to Biblical, theological exposition of texts {exhort}. Each treatise is founded upon (rooted in) a text that Owen uses as a foundation pad.

Mortification (Rom. 8:15) "If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

Temptation (Matt. 26:41) "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

IS (Rom. 7:21) "I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand." The one who wishes to do good.

Owen first gives you "the what" of the text!! (expand)

He then, in a very meticulous but helpful manner, gives you "the so-what" of the text!! (expand) {Find the same in his treatment of Psalm 130:1-8, 500 pages in Vol. VI}

That is my burden for this study, to give you "the what" and "the so-what" of these crucial issues. {Expand on this style of teaching}

Now, we are going to approach Owen's treatises in somewhat of an unorthodox manner. Approach them in rearranged order {explain... IS/Mortification/Temptation}

Recommend book {Syllabus for JO study}

{Personal testimony and encouragement, life changing}

## OUR VISION

For these studies is that we all come to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of our own hearts through the enlightening, convicting, encouraging ministry of the Holy Spirit.

No man/no woman will attain to a balanced Biblical maturing in his or her sanctification without a well-grounded knowledge of their own hearts. There is no better guide through the Scriptures than JO to help us to reach that lofty goal!!

Let's begin today with a brief exposition of the foundational text for Owen's third treatise:

The Nature, Power, Deceit and Prevalency of the remainders of IS in believers. {5 lessons}

Turn to Romans 7.

This chapter helps us to understand that we are delivered from the regime of law to the regime of grace (6:14). We see that regime change clearly in (vs 1-6) as he illustrated the change with a woman being delivered by the death of her husband from the "Law" of marriage {free to marry brother} and likewise we have died to the law so that we are joined to Christ.

Now the key to understanding what is going on in the rest of Rom 7 (7a) {Read}... Paul answers the potential charge by using his own experience to demonstrate there is nothing wrong with the law. The problem is with me (& you). He does this in three stages of his experience BEFORE, DURING (7-13), AFTER conversion.

After conversion begins in (vs 14)

{Nature of law and nature of sin do not change when someone is converted (vs 25) {Read}. Paul's problem is remaining sin/corruption.

Our text in (7:21) is in that third stage... "AFTER conversion."

{I know you are aware that good men differ on whether or not Paul is speaking of a converted man or not, (expand/explain)}

(Rom 7:21) {Read} (Four observations)

I. I.S. As a Law

When we think of a law, we usually think of a directive or a rule that regulates our mind and will as to what it requires or forbids.

I.E. "you shall not murder" {promotes the sanctity of life, forbids the taking of life}

OR... We might think of the laws that govern traffic flow.

{Speed limit, stop signs and lights. Laws that are designed to promote safety on the highways... violate them.... Suffer the consequences}

BUT that is not the type of law we are dealing with in (7:21). Law can have another meaning. It can mean an operating principle that inclines and urges certain actions that are in keeping with its nature:

- Law of gravity: what goes up must come down.

- Law of supply and demand in the world of economics as it relates to the price of goods {expand... real estate}

Owen (on 7:21) "And for this reason doth the apostle here call I.S. a law. It is a powerful and effectual indwelling principle, inclining and pressing unto actions agreeable and suitable unto its own nature."

So we conclude that "the law" we have (7:21) is much more than legislative authority commanding and directing us to do this/don't do that. It is in John Murray's words:

"A regulating and activating power"

Not an outward, written, commanding, directing law, but an inbred, working, impelling, urging law. Not just proposed to us, but in us!!

And brethren, it is so by its nature and even though it no longer has dominion in the heart of a Christian, no longer the ruling principle, no longer with the strength that it once had. Its nature has not changed, it is a law still, and therefore powerful!!

## II. How Paul Came to Know I.S. as a Law

The text tells us that he found it, or we might say he discovered it, meaning that he came to know it by experience!!

Think with me a moment...

Paul was a Pharisee “par excellence.” He was not ignorant of what sin was. We see in (7-11) that the law taught Paul that covetousness was sin, but there came a time in his life that he realized that he (Paul) was a covetous man, and the very law that he believed would bring him eternal life by his keeping of it brought him under its power of conviction. {you’re the man}

Owen: “It is one thing for a man to know in general that there is a law of sin; it is another thing for a man to have an experience of the power of this sin in himself, and that is what the apostle affirms, that he found it by experience in himself.”

{illustrate with marriage/children}

Point being – knowledge and experience are vastly different. “They that find not its power are under (LISTEN) its Dominion.” {expand}

## III. The Predominant Desire of His Heart

Note the text... “The one who wills to do good.”

Notwithstanding the sobering reality of the powerful operation of I.S. He had discovered in his heart, the inclination, the direction of his will was “to do good.”

Yes... the law of I.S. was in him, but it did not control him. It was not his master.

Grace was now the sovereign in his soul, and in obedience to the operations of grace, his deepest desire was always to do good. The purpose of his heart was to do that which was morally and spiritually good!!

{Is that your desire, purpose of your heart? Take courage, you’re in good company, with Paul and fellow believers.}

## IV. The Contrary Principle in His Heart

As Paul willed/desired/endeavored to do that which was good. {What does the text say}  
“Evil is present with me”

And what does the operation of that contrary principle produce??

CONFLICT {Read (22-23)}

Same conflict expressed in (Gal. 5:17) “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.”

We will come back to this in a moment, but let’s wrap up our exposition of (7:21) with this brief summary:

1. I.S. is a law that inclines and presses to evil which is agreeable to its name.
2. Christians “find it” by the experience of grace (HS).
3. There is, through grace, the prevailing will to do good!
4. I.S. rebels and inclines to evil whenever the will to do good is active and inclining to obedience.

**\*\*All of that creating Conflict\*\***

Now allow me to close this introductory study with a few brief words of encouragement.

**First:** Do not get lost in the conflict of (Rom 7). There is more to the story. Keep reading and you will move from Conflict to Conquest.

(Rom 8:1) “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”

And you keep on reading and you see the gift of the Holy Spirit to kill sin, joint helps with Jesus Christ, God is for us, Christ is for us. No matter what happens to us we are more than conquerors because of the inseparable nature of the bond of Christ’s love for us.

**\*\*Must believe that too!! \*\***

{Chap 5-8 is a unit of thought and you need the whole thing.}

**Second:** Jesus Christ is King in the Castle.

As we look into the castle of our own hearts with its labyrinth of chambers and hallways, we embrace the reality of the conflict/contradiction. What we read of Paul’s experience in (Rom 7), we confess is our experience!! So we ask who is the head of this house? Who is seated on the throne of my heart?

If you look into the chamber marked “the inner man” the answer becomes crystal clear. That is the throne room of Jesus Christ.

(vs. 22) “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man.”

That part of our spiritual being, that is being “renewed day by day.” (2 Cor 4:16)

That part of us that Paul prays would be strengthened with power through His Spirit. (Eph 3:16)

That place where Jesus Christ rules and reigns through His Spirit... My heart!!

Jesus Christ has captured your heart and he will not let it go!! {expand}

And someone says, “Yeah, but it doesn’t always look like it. Follow me around for a day and you’ll see what I mean.”

That’s true. Sadly it doesn’t always look like it does it?? Is that not our grief?? {Does Jesus Christ rule the universe? Is He sovereign over the creation or not? Always doesn’t look like it.}

Two theological principles you must apply to your own heart:

1. Difference between reigning and remaining sin {expand}
2. Inaugurated eschatology (already, not yet).