

Overcoming Sin and Temptation 2 (12/11/22 SS)

(study in JO Vol VI, Characteristics of the Law of Sin, Chapter 2-3)

In our study last week we focused upon the Biblical text that serves as the foundation of the treatise we are presently considering in our class “Overcoming Sin & Temptation.”

The treatise is John Owen’s consideration of I.S. (Indwelling Sin) in the hearts of believers in Jesus Christ.

The text (Rom. 7:21) {Read}

1. It is a law that inclines and presses which is agreeable to its nature.
2. Christians “Find It” by the experience of Grace (HS).
3. There is, though Grace, the prevailing will to do good.
4. It rebels and inclines to evil whenever the will to do good is active and inclining to obedience (Gal. 5:17)

This week we will seek to better understand the characteristics of this law, along with (Owen’s words “seat and subject” – explain)

I. Characteristics of the law of I.S.

1. The Law of I.S. Exercises Dominion (seeks to rule over its subjects). (Rom. 7:1) {Read NKJV}
 - a. Now as you trace the Apostle’s analogy it becomes clear that as the woman is delivered from the marriage “law” through the death of her husband and is free to marry another, so we have been delivered from Law’s dominion to marry another, even Jesus Christ!
 - b. We have now died to that by which we were once bound and the law of sin and death no longer has dominion over us (Rom 6:1-11).
 - c. **BUT**
 - d. Owen’s point is this:
 - e. Owen, “And though it does not have a complete dominion over them, it is still a law and all its actings are the actings of a law. That is, it acts with power, though it has lost its complete power of ruling in them, though it is weakened, yet its nature is not changed!! It is a law still, and therefore powerful.”
 - f. IN OTHER WORDS:
 - g. Though we are no longer under the rule and reign of sin, but under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, the nature of the beast has not changed!! It continually seeks to regain the throne.
 - h. Regain Control {Therein lies much of our trouble. As law it actively seeks dominion. It is timeless in its efforts.

- i. Also it is effective in seeking to exercise its dominion by enticing obedience through making sin attractive by its reward of pleasure. All the while presenting obedience to God as obnoxious. {Enjoy yourself, live life to the fullest, take the pleasure, easy road}
 - j. (Heb. 11:23-26) {Turn, Read, Expand, Garden?}
 - k. Owen, "Unless a man be prepared to reject the reasonings that will offer {?} from the one and the other of these, there is no standing before the power of the law."
2. The Law if I.S. is in Us!

Even a casual reading of (Rom 7:14) demonstrates this point with redundant clarity.

- (vs 17) "sin which indwells me"
- (vs 20) "sin which dwells in me"
- (vs 23) "law of sin which is in my members"

You get the picture!!

In the words of Owen...

"I.S. is not an outward, written, commanding, directing law, but an inbred, working, impelling, urging law, a law proposed unto us is not to be compared, for efficacy, to law inbred in us."

We can illustrate Owen's point by going back to the beginning (Gen 1-3).

Adam & Eve had no sin. Law of God {?} and natural to them. {expand}

The law of sin was then proposed to them by the devil, but there was no indwelling corruption, no hook in them for sin to latch on to. They have withstood the temptation. And you know the rest of that story.

Sin becomes the master of their soul. That "inbred, working, impelling, urging law" overtakes them and the only remnant of God's law that is left is that which the Apostle Paul refers to in (Rom 2:14-15) as "conscience, accusing/excusing." {expand}

God then codifies/publishes/and proposes his law to the Jews at Sinai, who, even in light of that revelation of the will of God, they remained (by and large) a "disobedient and stiff necked people." {expand}

So as you witness God's progressive revelation through covenant in our Bibles, we come to this glorious prophecy of Jeremiah that changes everything.

"New Covenant" where God promises (Jer. 31:33) "I will put my law within them and on their heart I will write it, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

The law must be “internalized” again to have any saving impact upon hearts of the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve!

And that is the character of this law of I.S. It is in us, a part of us, as is the law of God is now in us and part of us. Therein lies the conflict. Inner man joyfully concurs with the law of God. “In the flesh” dwells no good thing. “Holy War” (Eph. 6:10-13)

Now the characteristic of the law of I.S. being “in us” gives it several advantages we need to take note of:

First: It is always there/ It is never absent (never a vacation/true cause of fire for Christians)

Owen, “If it came upon the soul only at certain seasons, much obedience might be perfectly accomplished in its absence. But the soul is its house, there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Wherever you are, whatever you are about, this law of sin is always with you; in the best that you do, and in the worst! Men little consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them, when they are in company, when alone, by night or by day, all is one, sin is with them!!”

In light of that reality, Owen goes on in exhorting us to watchfulness, “How little, for the most part, does the watchfulness of any professors answer the danger of their state and condition.”

Second: It is always ready to do its work.

You see, there is more to it than sin just being in us. The Apostle Paul makes that clear.

(Rom. 7:18-20) {Read, expand on Active (Gal. 5:17)}

Reasoning from those texts.

Owen writes, “Would you pray, would you hear, would you give alms, would you meditate, would you be in any duty acting forth on God and love towards Him, this troublesome, perplexing indweller will put itself upon you and be present with you; so that you cannot perfectly and completely accomplish the thing that is good.”

{Like a vile and corrupt neighbor, roommate, if just there, might be able to survive in. Not the case. Active in there corruption.}

Third: It operates with ease and efficiency.

(Heb. 12:1) “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily (ensnares, entangles, besets, clings closely) and let us run with endurance the race set before us.”

I.S. operates with such ease and efficiency because of the intimacy it has within us. Woven into the fabric of our very being. It just does what is natural to it, like breathing, like a beating heart, like a crying baby.

TRANSITION – Now those are the characteristics of the “law” which Paul affirms that he found in himself (Rom. 7:21).

1. Like any law, it exercises dominion.
2. It is in us “sin which dwells in me” (7:20).

Furthermore, because it is in us, 1. It’s always there, 2. Always active, 3. Does so with ease and efficiency.

Before we move to our second major heading, let’s take a little break here and talk about something that is probably on your mind. This material can hit you as an avalanche of depressing/discouraging/negative news.

I know that, sympathetic to that. I just want to encourage you to keep this all in a positive light {explain/expand}

- Victory against an enemy lie in understanding its ways
- Success in the struggle is rooted in a renewed mind
- What we are after is a “Biblical Psychology”

II. “The Seat and Subject” of the law of Sin

In other words, where is sin to be found? Where does it set up shop? And what is the target of its malicious activity? {Ask}

The Heart

(Matt. 15:18-19) {Context} “The things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart and those defile the man.” “For... out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immorality, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things that defile the man. {expand}

** Let me ask? What do you think scripture is describing when it refers to the heart??

As you seek to establish a Biblical understanding of “heart” you will find it sometimes may refer to the 1) mind and understanding (thoughts) (Gen. 6:5), 2) will, 3) affections, 4) conscience (Acts 2:37), 5) whole soul (1 Sam 16:7) “the Lord looks at the heart”

Therefore we conclude that “the heart” is describing the faculties of the soul – mind/will/affections – whole inner being.

Owen writes, "This is the subject, the seat, the dwelling-place of this law of sin, the heart; as it is the entire principle of moral operations, of doing good or evil. Here dwells our enemy; this is the fort, the citadel of this tyrant, where it maintains a rebellion against God all our days."

Now at least that gives us some direction/ some focus as to gaining insight into the operations of I.S. in believers. We must come to a clearer understanding of our own hearts.

But, we are faced with another issue as we seek to awake progress in that endeavor.

Turn to (Jer. 17:9-10) {Read}

Three matters worthy of note:

1. By nature our hearts are deceitful.

On our best day we all find our hearts full of contradictions and confusion over an endless number of thoughts and propositions that confront us which causes us uncertainty as to what is right/what is best.

And many times in the midst of that confusion, we find our hearts resonating with (Prov. 28:26a) "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool."

2. Our hearts are unsearchable.

Considering this deceitful/sick condition, the text asks, "who can know it?"

Who can track down all the secret intrigues, the windings and turnings, the various actings found in the deepest chambers of his heart??

Owen, "In this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin; and much of its security and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past our finding out."

3. The prerogative of searching the heart belongs to God. "I the Lord search the heart, etc."

There is one who does know the heart and searches it as well, and thus this self-declaration from God finds its way into the NT.

(Heb. 4:12-13) {The writer speaks of the Word of God being "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" in v 12}

I want to close out this second major heading of "the heart being the seat and subject" of the law of sin with some Good News for you!!

** The reality that God knows our hearts/searches the innermost chambers of our hearts should be a great encouragement to you this AM!!

** The remaining sin/corruption/impurity that God sees there is covered over by the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord!!

(Ps. 37:1) "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

What does He see?

He sees that with Paul, you "Joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man." (7:22)

How else can it be that God said David was "a man after my own heart." (1 Sam. 13:14)

{Abraham a friend of God} Identifies

Or that He Himself as "The God of Jacob"

Or that the Lord can recommission Peter to "feed my sheep" after such a catastrophic public failure.

** He sees the purpose of your heart. {Expand/exhort to open transparent dealings with God. (Psalm 139:23-24) "Search me oh God and know my heart and know my anxious thoughts and see if there be any wicked...etc." God sees it all and He loves us anyway. Nothing more encouraging for the Christian struggling with I.S.}