

THE FLESH AND SALVATION

The word flesh is basar in Hebrew and sarx in Greek. This word is often seen in the Bible and is used in various senses, but chiefly in reference to an unregenerated person. If we take a look at what Paul has said, we shall have a clear insight into its meaning. He said, "I am fleshy" (Rom. 7:14). It was not only his nature or merely any one part of his being which was fleshy; it was "I" as a person, the whole being of Paul was fleshy. In verse 18, in further clarification of his meaning, he declared, "In me, that is, in my flesh." It is very clear here that the flesh in biblical usage refers to all that is in man when he is still in an unregenerated state. Apart from such usage, it is sometimes used (1) in reference to the flesh of the human body, that is the soft part of the body besides the blood and the bones; (2) to denote the human body itself; and (3) to denote all the people of the world. These several different connotations are interlinked one with the other. In the beginning man was created a tripartite being, consisting of spirit, soul, and body. The soul, as man's personality and feeling, on the one hand, affiliates with the physical world through the body, and on the other hand, affiliates with the spiritual realm through the spirit. Thus, the soul has to decide whether to submit to the spirit, so as to be identified with God and His will, or to yield to the body and all the temptations of the material world. At the fall of man, the soul rejected the authority of the spirit and became enslaved to the body and its lustful desires. This is how man became fleshy. Since the spirit has lost its noble position and become a captive, and the soul is subjected to the power of the body, man is regarded in the Bible as being fleshy, even as having become flesh. As the soul is subjected to the flesh as its bondservant, so all that is of the soul has become of the flesh.

(1) The human body consists, as it is, of flesh, bones, and blood. Flesh is that part of the body which is full of consciousness, and it is through the flesh that we receive our feelings of the physical world. A fleshy person is therefore one who follows after his world-consciousness. What the flesh consists of is not "flesh" alone, although it includes "flesh," but also the man who walks after the consciousness of the "flesh."

(2) The human body, whether dead or living, is flesh. But in the spiritual sense, "flesh" refers to the body which is alive, and the life that makes the body alive. From the passage quoted below from Romans 7, we know that there exists a relationship between the sins of the flesh and the body of man: "But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members" (v. 23). In chapter eight the apostle goes on to discuss how one can overcome the flesh. He says that if you wish to overcome the flesh, you need to put to death the practices of the body "by the Spirit" (v. 13). Although the flesh consists of the soul and the body, there is nevertheless a particular connection between the "flesh" and the physical flesh, that is the human body. Consequently, the Bible uses the word sarx in speaking of the flesh in the physical sense, and employs the same word in speaking of the flesh in the sense of the psyche.

(3) Whatever there is in man is born of the flesh, and for that cause he is fleshy. No man in the world is regarded by the Bible as non-fleshy for all men are subjected to the control of the flesh (comprising the soul and the body). They all walk after the sins of the body and the self of the soul. So when referring to all men, the Bible does

not say all men but "all flesh." Since all men are fleshly, the word sarx is used in speaking of the carnality of man as well as of man himself.

HOW DOES MAN BECOME FLESHLY?

The Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). From this we can see that the Lord is speaking of three things: (1) What is flesh? (2) How does man become flesh? and (3) What is the nature of flesh?

What is flesh? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Who then is born of the flesh? Man. So man is flesh. Whatever a man may have inborn in him or may have derived from nature when he was born of his parents is flesh. However good he is, however virtuous he may be, whatever talents he may have, or however kind and intelligent he may be, he is fleshly. Regardless of how bad, how unholy, how foolish, how useless, or how cruel he may be, he is of the flesh. That man is flesh means that all that a man inherits by birth, whatever it may be (whether good or bad) is of the flesh. Whatever is inherited by him at birth, although it is only in its embryonic form and is later developed and becomes fully grown, is of the flesh.

How does man become flesh? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man does not become fleshly by learning or practicing to be bad. Man is fleshly not because he sins gradually and becomes fleshly in due course of time. A fleshly man need not necessarily be one who is given to the indulgences of the flesh or one who does what pleases him and is completely controlled, suppressed, and subjugated by the evil desires of the body. The Lord Jesus said man is flesh the very moment he is born. So, to determine whether a man is fleshly, we need not look at his conduct or disposition. It is sufficient to take only one thing into account, and that is, of whom was he born? All men are begotten of human parents; therefore, they are born of man. Every man on earth is born according to the manner of men; that is, every human being is begotten of man. Thus, in the sight of God, all men, without exception, are flesh (Gen. 6:3), and on this account God on numerous occasions does not refer to men as men in the Bible, but to all men as "all flesh." Since all men are born of the flesh, can there possibly be anyone who is not the flesh? So, in view of the Lord's word, whether man is of the flesh is not dependent on any consideration other than whether he is born of the flesh. Man becomes flesh because he is begotten of blood, of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man. It is not his behavior or his parents' conduct that determines the kind of person he is.

What is the nature of the flesh? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." In any case, he who is born of the flesh is flesh. Educate him, reform him, cultivate him, regulate him with morality and religion—all these will not make him non-flesh, because that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Since he is born of the flesh, he is flesh and will remain as flesh, regardless of the amount of work or energy spent on him. If he is to be other than flesh, he has to be born otherwise than of the flesh, and since it is through the flesh that he is born, he will always and forever be flesh. Nothing further need be said if man is not born of the flesh. But if he is, then neither by any human means nor by the power of God or miracles can he be changed into something other than flesh. The Lord Jesus said man "IS" flesh, and the matter is settled for all time. The question of whether man is fleshly lies not in the man himself, but as is stated in the foregoing paragraphs, in of whom he is born, of what he is born. If he is born of

the flesh, whatever programs may be employed to make him change will be of no avail, for he may change from one condition to another, and for that matter change from day to day, but he is still flesh, no matter how much he has changed outwardly or what condition he has changed into.

THE UNREGENERATED MAN

The Lord Jesus has said that every unregenerated man, born but once of man, is flesh and is in the realm of the flesh.

During the time of unregeneration, men live in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3) for "it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God" (Rom. 9:8). The soul is subjected to the allurements of the lusts of the body and in pursuit thereof commits many unspeakable sins. But since at this time man is dead unto God (Eph. 2:1), being dead in his offenses and in the uncircumcision of his flesh (Col. 2:13), he is not in the least conscious of his being in sin and is perhaps still proud of himself, thinking that he is still better than others. Indeed, when man is in the flesh, the passions for sins, which act through the law, operate in his members to bear fruit to death (Rom. 7:5). So, it is because he is "fleshy, sold under sin" (v. 14) that he serves "with the flesh, the law of sin" (v. 25).

Because the strength of the flesh is exceedingly weak (although it is extremely strong in committing sins and fulfilling the desires of the mind), it cannot satisfy God in fulfilling any of His requirements. This is because the flesh is weak and cannot keep the law (Rom. 8:3). Not only is the flesh unable to fulfill the law of God, but it cannot even be subject to it, "because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be" (v. 7). However, this is not to say that the flesh will indulge itself in any way it pleases and altogether ignore the things of God. As a matter of fact, there are fleshly men who have tried their best to keep the law. The Bible does not say that those who are in the flesh do not walk after the law, but rather it affirms that "out of the works of law no flesh will be justified" (Gal. 2:16). That those who are of the flesh do not keep the law is, of course, not unusual; it shows that they are of the flesh. However, what God has ordained is that a man is not justified by the law but by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:28). Therefore, even if a fleshly person tries to keep the law, this only serves to demonstrate that he submits himself not unto God but unto his own will, going about to establish another righteousness apart from the righteousness of God (10:3). It shows even more that he is fleshy. Anyway, "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (8:8). The three cannots (that is, the flesh cannot keep the law, cannot subject itself to the law, and cannot please God) judge all fleshly men as to their sins.

In God's view the "flesh" is absolutely corrupt. Since the flesh is closely linked with lusts, the Bible often speaks of the "lusts of the flesh" (2 Pet. 2:18). Although the power of God is great, God is not able to change the nature of "the flesh" into something pleasing to Him. God Himself says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh" (Gen. 6:3). The corruption of the flesh is beyond the power of God; it is something which God is unable to change. Neither is the Holy Spirit by striving against the flesh able to make it no more the flesh. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Yet men do not understand God's Word and intend to

reform and improve the flesh. However, God's Word holds true forever. Because the flesh is in such a deplorable state before God, He warns His saints to hate "even the inner garment spotted from the flesh" (Jude 23).

God knows the actual condition of the flesh. He therefore knows that the flesh cannot be changed. He who intends to improve his own flesh, working through the process of self-denial so as to help the flesh to change for the better, is bound to fail. God knows that the flesh is incapable of change, improvement, or reform. So, although He wants to save the world, He does not set out with the task of changing the flesh, for even if He had undertaken this task, He would not have achieved it. God does not change the flesh of man but, instead, gives man a new life so that it may cooperate with Him to bring the flesh into death. The flesh must die—this is the way of salvation.

GOD'S SALVATION

Romans 8:3 says, "For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh...." This represents the true condition of the morally minded who constitute a portion of fleshy men. They may perhaps be willing enough to devote themselves to the keeping of the law, but they are fleshy. Being weak, they are incapable of keeping the whole law. These people come under one category. There is yet another category of men who do not keep the law of God at all. Their mind is the "mind set on the flesh" which is "enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be" (v. 7). However, the law decrees that he who keeps the law lives by the law, and he who does not keep it shall be condemned unto perdition. How much of the law must then be kept? The answer is the whole law, for "whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). "Because out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him; for through the law is the clear knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). So the more man strives to keep the law, the more conscious he is of his being full of sins, incapable of keeping the law of God. Therefore, the first part of Romans 8:3 points out to us the condition of man and how sinful he is.

Since all men are sinful, God prepared to save them, and His way of salvation was by "sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin." His Son is without sin, so He alone is able to save. "In the likeness of the flesh of sin" refers to the birth of the Lord Jesus on earth, in which He took on a human body and identified Himself with humanity. God's own Son as the "Word" came "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," that is, He became flesh. This verse, therefore, speaks of incarnation. The important point contained herein is that He is the Son of God and He is without sin. The text does not say He was made "sinful flesh" but rather "in the likeness of the flesh of sin;" that is to say, He became flesh, having the likeness of the sinful body of man. Although He became flesh, He is still the Son of God and thus is still without sin. But as He also has the likeness of the sinful flesh of man, He is very intimately affiliated with sinners of the flesh in the world.

What was the purpose of the Lord's incarnation? It was to be made "a sacrifice for sin" (Rom. 8:3, Darby, margin); this is the work of the cross. God's Son is for the redemption of sin. Those who are fleshy sin against the law and cannot fulfill the righteousness of God, so they must perish and suffer the punishment for sin.

However, the Lord came to the world, took on the likeness of the flesh of sin, and wholly identified Himself with all fleshly men. So, when He died on the cross, all fleshly men were judged to have received punishment for their sins in Him. He is sinless and need not have suffered punishment, but when He received the punishment, He had the likeness of sinful flesh. Accordingly, as the Head of a new race, He included all sinners in Him in suffering the punishment. This is insofar as punishment is concerned.

The fleshly men who were to receive the punishment now have in Him a sacrifice for sin. But what is to be done about the flesh that is filled with sins? He "condemned sin in the flesh." It was for sin that He died; thus God made the Sinless become sin on our behalf. When the Lord Jesus died, He died in the flesh, "being put to death in the flesh" (1 Pet. 3:18). When He died in the flesh, the sins borne by His flesh were crucified with Him. This is what is meant by "condemned sin in the flesh." In other words, it is "to judge sin in the flesh" or "to convict sin in the flesh." To condemn means to judge or to punish. The judgment and punishment for sin is death. What is meant here is that He put sin to death in the flesh. It can therefore be seen that when the Lord Jesus died, He not only died as a sacrifice for sin, suffering the punishment on behalf of men, but He also brought sin under punishment. As sin was condemned in the Lord's body at the time of His death, so is sin condemned in the flesh of him who is joined to the Lord's death; sin no longer has the power to harm him.

REGENERATION

God's salvation, which saves people from the deserved punishment of the flesh and the power of the flesh, was accomplished in the cross of His Son. Now He places this salvation before every man, that whoever receives it may be saved.

God already knows that there is no goodness in man. The flesh cannot please Him. The flesh is utterly corrupted and irreparable. Because the flesh is absolutely beyond repair, God cannot expect man, after believing in His Son, to have anything to please Him if He does not give man something new, something other than the flesh. Therefore, when a man believes that the Lord Jesus died for him and receives the Lord Jesus to be his personal Savior, God gives him a new life, that is, His own uncreated life. This is what the Bible calls regeneration. God does not change our flesh; rather, He gives His life to us. Regardless of whether or not a man has been regenerated, his flesh is corrupted just the same. The flesh in a sinner is the same as the flesh in a saint. Although a man may be born again, his flesh does not become better because of the new birth. One's regeneration does not affect his flesh a bit and cannot improve him or make him good. No matter what, the flesh is the flesh, and it can never be changed. God does not use His life to educate and train the flesh. Rather, He uses the new life He gives to man to overcome the flesh.

This regeneration is a relationship of real birth between man and God. In the original text, the word born in the sense of to be born anew refers to giving birth, meaning we are born of God. Just as our fleshly body is surely born of our parents, so our spiritual life is also surely born of God. The meaning of giving birth is "to impart life." Therefore, to say we are born of God is to say we have received a new life from God. Just as we received our fleshly life at the time we were born of our

parents, we also received our spiritual life at the time we were born of God. This life is a real life.

We already know that we human beings are fleshly—our spirit is dead; our soul controls our whole person; we act according to the lust of the body; there is not any goodness within. Therefore, when God saves us, He must restore in us the position of the spirit so that we may again have fellowship with God. Thus, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, God puts His own life into our spirit and resurrects our spirit. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). It is at this moment that the life of God, which is "the Spirit" referred to here, enters into our human spirit and causes our spirit to recover its position. From this point on, the Holy Spirit abides in the human spirit. Therefore, man is transferred into the spiritual realm. Now the spirit becomes alive and again renews its reign. The "new spirit" in Ezekiel 36:26 also refers to the new life we receive at the time of regeneration.

The condition for a man to be regenerated is not that he has to do a special work, but that he must believe into the Lord Jesus as Savior. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Those who believe into the Lord Jesus as their Savior are born of God; they are the children of God.

Regeneration is the minimum basis of spiritual life. All later spiritual edification has regeneration as its foundation. Without regeneration a person has no spiritual life at all. Such a person cannot expect to grow in the spiritual life, because he does not yet have a spiritual life. Just as people in the world cannot build a house in the air, so also we cannot help an unregenerated person to grow. To teach an unregenerated person to do good and to worship God is to teach a dead person to do these things, because he has not yet received life. To do this is to attempt to repair and improve the flesh, that is, to do that which God cannot do. Every believer should definitely know that he has been regenerated, that he has received a new life that he did not have originally. Regeneration is not repairing the old flesh and changing it into the spiritual life. Regeneration is receiving a life that one absolutely did not have before. Unless a man is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He can never see all the spiritual mysteries of God's kingdom and can never savor its taste. Regardless of how much he has changed, he has no other destiny than to wait for death and judgment.

How can one know whether or not he has been regenerated? John 1 has already told us that a man is born anew because of his believing in the name of the Son of God and his receiving Him. The name of God's Son is "Jesus." Jesus means "He...will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Therefore, to believe in the name of the Son of God is to believe in Him as the Savior from sins, to believe that He died on the cross for my sins that He might save me from the punishment and power of sin, and thus to receive Him as my Savior. Therefore, if any man wants to know whether or not he has been regenerated, he only need ask himself whether he has come to the cross as a helpless sinner to receive the Lord Jesus as his Savior. If he has done so, he has been regenerated. All who believe in the Lord Jesus are regenerated.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE NEW AND THE OLD

After a believer has been regenerated, it is most important for him to know how much he has received from his regeneration and how much is left of his natural endowment. Knowing these things will keep him advancing in his spiritual journey. Therefore, we need to explain here what is included in man's flesh and how the Lord Jesus in His redemption deals with the elements of the flesh. In other words, what does a believer receive when he is regenerated?

Romans 7:14 says, "I am fleshy, sold under sin." Verses 17 and 18 say, "sin...dwells in me...that is, in my flesh." After reading these two verses, we know that the elements of the flesh are "sin" and "me." This "sin" is the power of sin; this "me" is what we ordinarily call the "self." If a believer desires to understand the spiritual life, he should not be confused about these two elements of the flesh.

We know that the Lord Jesus has already dealt with the sin of our flesh on the cross. Therefore, the Bible tells us that "our old man has been crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6). Therefore, concerning the problem of sin, the Bible never tells us to be crucified. Because this has been accomplished by Christ and has been fully accomplished, man need not do anything. Hence, the Bible asks us to count this matter as true (v. 11) so that we can receive the effectiveness of the death of Christ and thus be completely delivered from the power of sin (v. 14).

Although the Bible never tells us to be crucified for our sins, the Bible does tell us that we should bear the cross for our self. The Lord Jesus said many times that we should deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. This is because there is a difference between the Lord's dealing with our sins on the cross and His dealing with our self. We know that the Lord Jesus bore our sins while on the cross (He had not done it before that time), but the Lord Jesus denied His self throughout His life, not just at the time He was on the cross. Therefore, a believer can overcome sin in a moment's time, but he needs his whole lifetime to deny himself.

The book of Galatians shows us very clearly the relationship between a believer and these two aspects of the flesh. On the one hand, it tells us, "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (5:24). This means that on the very day a person belongs to Jesus Christ, his flesh has already been crucified. Without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, one might assume that the flesh is no longer there because his flesh has already been crucified. But on the other hand, the Bible also tells us, "Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (vv. 16-17). Here it reveals to us clearly that a person who belongs to Christ Jesus, one who already has the Holy Spirit abiding in him, still has the flesh. Not only does the flesh exist, but it is also especially powerful. How do we explain this? Are these two portions of Scripture contradicting each other? No. Verse 24 stresses the sinful aspect of the flesh, while verse 17 stresses the self aspect of the flesh. The cross of Christ deals with sin, and the Holy Spirit deals with self through the cross. Through the cross, Christ fully delivered the believers from the power of sin so that sin can no longer be the lord. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ abides in the believers so that they may daily overcome their self and utterly obey Him. The matter of being

delivered from sin has already been accomplished, yet the matter of denying one's self is now being accomplished day by day.

If a believer understands the full salvation of the cross, then at the time of his regeneration (that is, when he receives Jesus as his Savior), he can, on the one hand, be completely delivered from sin and, on the other hand, receive a new life. Regrettably, many workers do not present God's full salvation to sinners. The sinners, therefore, only believe a half salvation and are only half-saved. Their sins have been forgiven, but they lack the strength to not sin again. Sometimes salvation is preached in a full way, but because the believers only care to have the grace of the forgiveness of sins and do not really care to be delivered from the power of sin, they only receive a half salvation.

If a believer at the time of his regeneration believes in a full salvation and therefore receives a full salvation, he will experience less defeat in battling sin and will have more experience of battling the self. However, this kind of believer is extremely rare. Although we dare not say how many there are, we can say there are very few. Most believers receive only a half salvation. Therefore, almost all of their battles are with sin. Moreover, there are some who, at the time of their regeneration, do not even know what the self is.

One's experience before regeneration also plays a part in this. Many people have the inclination to do good long before they believe. (Of course, they do not have the strength and are not able to do good.) Even though their consciences are comparatively brighter, their ability to do good is feeble. Consequently, conflict is inevitable. This is what people in the world call the conflict between reason and lust. When these people hear about full salvation, they sincerely accept the grace for deliverance from sin, just as they receive the grace for the forgiveness of sin. There is another group of people whose consciences are dark before regeneration. They sin terribly and are extremely evil; they never really try to do good. When they hear of full salvation, they naturally grasp the grace for forgiveness of sin and neglect (not reject) the grace for deliverance from sin. This kind of person will have the experience of battling with the sin in their flesh after they have been regenerated.

Why is this so? Because once a person is born again, once he receives a new life, this new life demands that he depart from the rule of the flesh to obey God. God's life is absolute. It must obtain complete authority. As soon as this life enters a man's spirit, it requires him to depart from his former master, sin, and completely obey the Holy Spirit. However, sin is deeply rooted in him. Although his will is being renewed because of the regenerated life, this will is still united with sin and self and therefore many times is still inclined toward sin. Due to this, a great conflict between the new life and the flesh is inevitable. Because there are a great number of people in this category, I want to pay special attention to their experience. However, I want to remind my readers that such a prolonged struggle and failure with sin (which is different from the self) is unnecessary.

The flesh wants to exercise complete control. The spiritual life also desires nothing short of this. The flesh seeks to have man forever subject to itself, while the spiritual life seeks to have man utterly obedient to the Holy Spirit. The flesh and the spiritual life are different in every respect. The nature of the flesh is that of the first Adam; the

nature of the spiritual life is that of the last Adam. The motive of the flesh is earthly; the intention of the spiritual life is heavenly. The flesh is self-centered in all things; the spiritual life is Christ-centered in all things. Since they are so different, a person cannot avoid constant conflict with the flesh. The flesh seeks to lead man to sin; the spiritual life seeks to lead him to practice righteousness. Because the believers do not realize the full salvation of Christ, they often experience such an inward struggle after they have been regenerated.

When young believers discover such an inward conflict, they are really baffled. Some become discouraged, thinking they are too bad, with no way to go on. Some even doubt the genuineness of their regeneration because of this. They should have known that it was precisely because they were regenerated that they were having such a conflict. Formerly, the flesh exercised its control without any interference. Furthermore, because their spirits were dead, they did not sense that they were sinful, even though they had sinned much. Now the new life comes, bringing with it the heavenly nature, desire, light, and thought. Once this new light enters into man, it exposes how man is so basically filthy and corrupted. The new desire naturally is not willing to remain in corruption and filthiness but seeks to walk according to God's will. Then the flesh spontaneously desires to war against the spiritual life. Such a war makes a believer feel that there are two persons within him. Each has his own opinion and power and is trying to overcome the other. If he follows the spiritual life and overcomes, he will rejoice greatly, but if the flesh overcomes, he will not be able to avoid self-condemnation. This kind of experience is proof that such a one has been born anew.

God's purpose is not to improve the flesh, but rather to destroy the flesh. God gives His life to man at the time of regeneration for the purpose of destroying the self of the flesh through His life. Although the life that God gives to man is very powerful, a newly regenerated person is just like an infant. Because he is newly born, he is still very feeble. However, because the flesh has ruled over him for such a long time, its power is very great. Furthermore, he has not apprehended God's full salvation by faith. Therefore, at this juncture, although he has been born anew, it is still difficult for him not to be fleshly. To be fleshly means that he is still ruled by the flesh. The most pitiful thing is that although this man has been born again and the heavenly light has shined on him, and he knows that the flesh is hateful and he wishes with all his heart to overcome it, he is too weak in his own strength and is not able to do so. This is a time of much shedding of tears and much sorrow. Furthermore, every regenerated person must have a new desire to purge away sins in order to please God. However, his will is not strong enough, and he is overcome by the flesh most of the time. Consequently, his victories are few, but his defeats are many. How can he not hate himself at these times?

The experience Paul mentioned in Romans 7 is the story of such a conflict. "For what I work out, I do not acknowledge; for what I will, this I do not practice; but what I hate, this I do...For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not. For I do not do the good which I will; but the evil which I do not will, this I practice...I find then the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which

is in my members" (vv. 15, 18-19, 21-23). The hearts of so many who have had the same experience will really respond in one accord with Paul's final sigh: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24).

What then is the meaning of this war? This war is also a kind of discipline by the Holy Spirit. God has already prepared a full salvation for man. Man does not obtain it either because he does not know of it or because he does not want it. God can only give to man according to what he believes, accepts, and appropriates. Therefore, when people ask for forgiveness and regeneration, God forgives and regenerates them. It is through such a war that God makes the believers seek after and hold fast to the complete victory in Christ. If a believer has not obtained such a full salvation because he does not know it, through such a war he will seek to know it. The Holy Spirit will then have a chance to reveal to him how Christ on the cross dealt with his old man so that this one may believe and may obtain it. If a believer does not have it because he does not want it, the truth he has is merely in his head. Through such a war he will know that simply to have the knowledge is useless. Since he fails repeatedly, this will create in him a desire to experience the truth he has known.

This kind of war increases as the days go by. If these believers do not easily give up but continue to press on faithfully, then they will have much fiercer battles. Unless they obtain deliverance, this kind of war will never cease.