

WALKING IN THE DIVINE DYNASPHERE, Part 2

We got pretty deep into our subject of the Divine Dynasphere last session, and some of that might have been confusing. In this session we are going to look at the same subject but from the perspective of Paul's letter to the Romans. There is some redundancy but repetition is good for retention, and it is absolutely essential that you get this Divine Dynasphere down firmly and operational in your soul. We pick up the subject in Romans 7.

Beginning in Romans 7:7, Paul is speaking of how the Law actually tempts one to sin through making you aware of what is sin - The forbidden fruit syndrome. There was a time when he had not been aware of sin to the extent that the Law pointed it out, but there came a time when it made him very aware of sin, and that awareness became in itself a tempting element of his life. As a result he experienced spiritual death. The Law did not have the capacity to produce righteousness and eternal life. It could only produce condemnation and death. In Romans 7:12 he reminds us that the Law is holy, and now he will say it is spiritual.

Ro 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

The Law is spiritual in that it comes from God as His righteous commandments codified into a written form. The Law may be spiritual, but Paul says he is not, he is "sold under sin". The Greek word is piprasko / pip·ras·ko/ and refers to the price of one sold into slavery or the master to whom one is sold as a slave. Metaphorically it means entirely under the control of the love of sinning.

"I am carnal (fleshly) sold under sin" is in the perfect tense – have been sold and remain in that state. Paul will be using the present tense here, indicating this is a present condition and not one that once was and now no longer is. Paul is a believer and he is describing not his former self but his present condition as a believer and the conflict going on in his soul.

Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who

do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

What we will see in these passages is the conflict between the two natures in man: the old sin nature and the new nature from regeneration. There is a war in our persons. Paul says the same thing over in Galatians 5:17. He tells us the new nature has no power of its own to resist the sin nature, and it can really accomplish very little, thus the sin nature often wins out. The new nature wants to do good, because it loves righteousness, but it is powerless to accomplish that. The sin nature, with its years of conditioning the *self*, seems to win most of the time. With that, we need to stop here and talk about your “*self*”.

Your Self

The *self* is you, and we might think of it as the control center of the soul. If you are born again, inside your *self* are a sin nature and a new nature. The sin nature is born of the flesh and is thus fleshly. The new nature is born of the Spirit and is thus spirit (John 3:6). The *self*, using the conscience, works off a set of norms and standards, which may be good and right or very weak and unrighteous. The sin nature rejects these norms and standards if they are righteous, whereas the new nature wants to use them, especially if they are righteous.

Where do these norms and standards come from? Each decision you make contributes to the forming of the *self* that will make the next decision. These decisions are based on whatever norms and standards you have accumulated during your lifetime, whether that is a long time or a very short time. In the case of a “short time” they may not be fully developed, and in the case of a longer time, they may be and often are distorted.

These norms and standards come from two sources. You learn them from your cultural environment, namely a combination of your parents first (or personal guardians), local community and its culture, including any traditions and laws. The second source is experience. You make decisions using these learned norms and standards, and they are validated through how your actions are received by your family, community, and culture.

Decisions have consequences, good or bad. Good decisions/actions based on culturally correct norms and standards should be re-enforced by the family and community, which generally produces good character. Bad decisions/actions in conflict with these norms and standards should experience rejection and even discipline by family and community, and even that should encourage good character. When bad behavior is not condemned, this re-enforces bad behavior – “I can get away with this!” And we get bad character development.

Thus, the *self* is conditioned and becomes a product of its decisions. People may be self-determining, but it is the *self*, which decides and acts, and it has a character out of which it acts. That means character building, developing a good set of norms and standards, is extremely important for believer and unbeliever alike. The conscience evaluates actions, using the best set of values it has available for its use. The *self* decides and acts based on those standards and the character it has developed from experience. Moral behavior in the unbeliever is generally driven by societal mores and laws. When they begin to break down, so does the general moral behavior of that society. We are witnessing exactly that in this country today.

For the believer this conditioning is spiritual growth and assimilating biblical norms and standards.

Ro 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

It is the Spirit of God working in the hearts of men and women to build character, the character of Christ. In that process our system of thinking gets renovated.

James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James is speaking about this process whereby God uses what James calls “trials of various kinds” sometimes translated “various temptations”. Trials should not be seen as a punishment, a curse, or a calamity but

something that must prompt rejoicing. We should “count it all joy” because it affords us an opportunity to test what we have learned from the intake of Biblical doctrines and the working of the Spirit in us to assimilate that. There is also the principle of faith building in play here. When we witness God acting over and over in our behalf in the small “trials,” we build faith “muscle” to deal with the larger trials.

But some believers may never grow spiritually and can even appear to be unsaved, because they never developed biblical norms and standards or more likely they never really learned how to use them (walk in the Spirit), and haven’t built that faith muscle.

For the believer these norms and standards should be biblical and come from Bible study (renovating your mind) and following the guiding of the Spirit of God. The *self* will follow the new nature, which wants to make the right decisions based on these biblical norms and standards. The sin nature does not want to do what the *self* knows is right based on the new nature’s desires and these biblical norms and standards. We then have a battle within the *self* for control of the soul.

Ro 7:16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.

Paul is saying that his *self* wants to follow the lead of his new nature, but his sin nature is resisting and often winning, because the new nature does not have sufficient power to control the *self*. If the *self* is relying on human effort, the sin nature will win out as often as the new nature does, sometimes more often. Paul says the very act of doing what he knows is wrong verifies the validity of the Law as good.

Ro 7:17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Paul is admitting the power of the sin nature working within his *self*. It is interesting for me to hear believers cite with authority Romans 6:6 “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin,” then drawing the erroneous conclusion that their sin nature is dead, therefore it is powerless. It is far from dead or powerless.

At that point I ask them if they no longer sin? To which they admit they still do. I then ask if the sin nature is dead and has no power, why do you still sin? They usually do not have an answer, which is really disturbing, because it tells me they have no clue about how to have victory over sin with a vitally alive spiritual walk. They may have assimilated biblical norms and standards, but they remain powerless to use them.

This passage is not saying the sin nature is dead. If it were you would have no problems related to sin. It is saying that the power of the sin nature over you is to be “counted” or “reckoned” as dead.

Ro 6:11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Many translations translate “consider” as “reckon”. The Greek word is *logizomai* //log·id·zom·ahee/, an accounting term and means to reckon, count, compute, calculate. This word refers to facts not suppositions. Technically the sin nature no longer has power over the believer because of the new birth. As a believer, you have access to a power greater than that of the sin nature — the Holy Spirit with the very power of God to have victory over sin, *assuming* you make a decision of the will to access that power.

That was not available under the Law, and sadly, many Christians are still trying to live under the Law. It is the *self*, using free will that makes the decision to give authority to the sin nature or to the new nature and allow access to the power of God through faith. The *self* must make that decision guided by the conscience based on the norms and standards resident in the soul, and that decision will be consistently victorious over the sin nature every time the believer uses faith and trusts God to provide the resources to have that victory.

Paul was alluding to that back when he was saying the Law not only made him aware of what was sin but it also tempted him to sin. The Law offered the norms and standards but not the ability to effectively use them against the sin nature.

Ro 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

In Paul (and in the rest of us) is the sin nature. It is no good and nothing produced by the sin nature can ever please God. The best it can produce is human good. That may actually benefit someone, but the motivations behind the action, even good actions, are all wrong, because they are inevitably self-glorifying in some way. And they are not produced under the leading of the Spirit or done in the power of the Spirit, because it is not of God and not God glorifying.

Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

1 Joh 3:9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

The human spirit, with its new nature, is a product of divine generation – “born of the Spirit” – also called “born of God” in the 1 John passage. And that new nature “born of God” hates sin and loves righteousness, unlike the old nature. The new nature does not sin, but the old nature does.

The Greek word translated “no one” (“whoever” in the NKJV) can be translated a number of ways, including “whatever,” which gives the passage clearer meaning than “whoever” or “no one”. Thus, I believe John was referring not to the person or *self* but to the new nature. It is the new nature born of God that does not make a practice of sinning.

Ro 7:19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Paul says it is not his new nature that does these objectionable things – it hates sin, but that which is still in him – his sin nature – “the sin that dwells in him” is what does these things.

Ro 7:20 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

The use of the term “law” is not a reference to the Mosaic Covenant. Here the word is used to describe a principle, a fundamental truth or proposition

that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. “I find a new principle....” And this new principle is the reality of this ever-present evil whenever he (Paul) wants to do good.

Ro 7:22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being

Literally it might translate this way, “For I delight in the principle of God following the inner being”. The NIV puts it this way, “For in my inner being I delight in God’s law.” Paul is saying his new nature delights in God and what He stands for. Note that it would be impossible for the unregenerate to rejoice in God’s principles. Only a believer can do this.

Ro 7:23 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.

BUT – there is “another law” (principle) at work in his *self*, and this principle is at war with the norms and standards of God that the new nature delights in. Paul said the same thing over in Galatians 5:17 we looked at last session.

Gal 5:17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

This “another principle” is bringing him into captivity to the principle of sin and keeping him from doing the things he wants to do.

Ro 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

This word “wretched” carries a note of exhaustion because of the struggle going on inside his *self*. He is helpless on his own; his shoulders are pinned to the floor. The flesh is still winning even though he has this new nature that delights in the things of God. Who will deliver him from this battle? The question is rhetorical, because he answers it in the next verse.

Ro 7:25 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.

It is through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is only through the process of tapping into the power of Christ our Lord through the Holy Spirit that Paul's *self* can have victory over his fleshly nature. That is why in Galatians 5:16 Paul can say, "Walk by means of the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." By contrast, when he gives authority to his sin nature he becomes a slave to sin.

Paul is speaking about the process of experiential sanctification, the process of growing spiritually and building the character of Christ by assimilating biblical norms and standards to replace those which are, at least to some degree, corrupt, and then the *self* deciding to follow the desires of the new nature and use this inward character through faith and the power of the Spirit of God.

Ro 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, **who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Paul has been talking about experiential sanctification, our spiritual walk with God. This is also called our "spiritual life," "spiritual growth," "discipleship" and even our "eternal life" functioning here on earth, all captured in the term Divine Dynasphere. It represents not the believer's deliverance from the fires of hell, which is "positional sanctification". It is the believer's potential for the production of divine good that is glorifying to God with deliverance from the power of sin.

Paul has been speaking about the process of growing spiritually, assimilating biblical norms and standards to replace those which are, at least to some degree, corrupt and building new biblical norms and standards that are the very character of Christ, “Christ formed in you” (Gal 4:19), and then the *self* deciding to follow the desires of the new nature and use this inward character through faith and the power of the Spirit of God. That is a rather complex way of looking at Galatians 5:16 “walk by means of the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh”.

And now we come to verse 1 of Romans 8, which is parallel to that Galatians 5:16 passage.

Ro 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (NKJV)

I used the NKJV instead of the ESV I usually use. The better Greek manuscripts do not include “who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit,” which was likely picked up from verse 4. While the NKJV may not be a literal translation, it does capture the thought that is valid, however.

In our study of Galatians 5:16 we discussed how that word translated “walk” is really a lifestyle word. In fact some translators translate it “live”. If we “live” by the Spirit, meaning it is a way of life that depends on the guidance of the Spirit of God and His enablement to accomplish whatever He has led us to do.

Romans 8:1 is saying the same thing Galatians 5:16 is saying. Those who do conduct their lives with their will in submission to the will of God — following the Spirit’s guidance and depending on His enablement — then God will find no reason for condemnation in that person, because as Galatians 5:16 says they are not fulfilling (or doing) the desires of the flesh.

The use of the term “condemnation” should not be viewed as eternal condemnation to the fires of hell; rather it carries the meaning of not finding any fault in that believer’s lifestyle, because they are living the lifestyle God wants them to live, the very lifestyle of Christ, and gave them the power to live it through the indwelling Spirit of God.

There is no reason for condemnation to be found in him, because the believer is in right standing with God on two levels: First – He is identified with Christ as a result of regeneration, and Second – He is not fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

This verse tells us we have a choice to make. We can follow our fleshly desires, and God will find us at fault with that decision. Romans 6 tells us we will be as spiritually dead, and God can have no personal relationship with one who is as spiritually dead. By contrast, the believer who “walks” in the Spirit, lives the lifestyle of dependence upon the Spirit and thus not fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and is accessing the power in God in the Divine Dynasphere to resist sin and accomplish whatever God is calling us to do. In such a believer, God will find no fault in them.

Ro 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Having stated the fact of this freedom from sin that is possible through accessing the power of God through faith and the Spirit of God resident in us, Paul then explained how it is achieved. The law (again, this should be read as “principle”), the principle of the Spirit of God has made me free from the power of sin and spiritual death.

Ro 8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

Paul declares the impossibility of attaining freedom over sin through the Mosaic Law. It is powerless to free man from sin. The Law cannot produce righteousness in man. “Weak” is *astheneo* {*as-then-eh'-o*} and means to be weak, sickly, impotent, powerless. We are told in verse 3 that the Law, though righteous and good, is powerless. In Romans 7:12 it is said the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Not that the Law was weak in itself as many translations suggest, but because meeting the terms of the Law Covenant had to be accomplished in the power of human effort alone (weak in the flesh) the Law could not deliver righteousness.

The word “flesh” is *sarx* and refers to man’s sin nature. The Mosaic Covenant depended entirely upon the power of the flesh for execution.

Knowing the weaknesses of the flesh, God provided a solution for man to meet the terms of the Covenant – Sin offerings at the Temple.

The Law was designed for three purposes:

1. To provide a means of managing and blessing Israel through which God could reveal Himself to man.
2. To demonstrate the righteousness of God to man, and to demonstrate God's perfect standard. "Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."
3. The Law was to prove to man that he could not solve the problem of sin by himself; he needs God's help!

God knew man was a legalist at heart and, in his arrogance, *he* would attempt to solve the problem. The first evidence of that human trait was way back in the Garden with Adam and Eve's use of fig leaves to hide their nakedness and hiding from God.

God is able to do this impossible thing by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus was sent not in sinful flesh but "in the likeness" of it. He had no sin nature, but He experienced all the other human experiences we do. He was tempted as we are but resisted that temptation through the power of the Spirit. Jesus in His humanity "felt our pain". He knew exactly what it was like to be human.

God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. He was sent "concerning" or "for sin" - *peri harmartias*, not as the NIV has it "to be a sin offering". *Peri* means "for". *Harmartias* means "sin" — for sin. In other words, he came to do something *about* sin. By His death on the Cross "He condemned sin," passed a judicial sentence on it. This destruction of the power of sin over us is to be counted as complete. Being condemned, sin no longer has power over us — only such power as we will to give it.

Ro 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The goal of this action was that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, and we can live a life of Holiness. Note the conditional clause "might be fulfilled"? Walk is *peripateo* {*per-ee-pat-eh'-o*} and means to walk, go, or be occupied, to make one's way, progress; to make due use

of opportunities, to conduct one's self — same word in Galatians 5:16. In this case, it is in the passive voice, "The righteousness of the law is *being* fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

In Galatians 5:16 and in our Romans passage, God is saying, "If you depend on me, I promise you that you will not sin. As long as you continue to depend on me, I will give you power and victory over sin!" That is a powerful promise!

There is no other way to achieve such victory. The unbeliever cannot gain victory over sin; he is powerless to do so. His sin nature is more powerful than his own will even if he is working off a solid set of norms and standards. Even the believer in his new nature has no power over sin apart from God. BUT yielding to the will of God for his life and walking by means of the Spirit (filled with the Spirit), the believer has the promise of God that he will have victory over sin.