

## “Step 2 - the Real Question”

### Romans 8:12-14

It seems that when people are born-again certain addictions or weaknesses drop away immediately. Almost without effort an area of temptation or assault will be lifted out of our lives when Jesus comes in. And what an amazing miracle it is when that happens. But oddly enough certain other problem areas don't disappear, or return quickly to plague us for years. Why some things are removed and others allowed to remain I don't know, but I suspect it has something to do with tribulation bringing about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character and proven character, hope (Ro 5:3, 4). It seems it's the struggles of life that humble us and teach us to depend on God (2Co 12:9, 10). In fact, most of us would have to admit it's in our trials that we mature in faith and become wise. So maybe we shouldn't be surprised that certain problems are left behind for us to learn to overcome. It isn't that God doesn't want us to be free, and it isn't that He withholds the help we need. But real freedom requires us to make costly choices. It forces us to daily take up our cross and follow Him. And as painful as that sounds: that's a good thing!

- Review the message of Romans 1-8
- Read: Romans 8:1-4, 12-14

#### Passivity vs. Partnership

“What is God waiting for? Why am I still struggling with this? I asked God to take it away, but He hasn't.” The only way some people know how to respond when overwhelmed by temptations and spiritual assaults is to pray, asking God to take it away, and then wait passively for the problem to miraculously disappear. If it stops, praise God. If it doesn't, “He must have decided not to answer my prayer, so I guess I'm stuck with this for now.” This attitude places the responsibility for freedom entirely on God, as if I had no part to play other than asking for the right thing. But living in freedom requires me to participate as a partner with Him. I have a very real part to play. Yes, of course, He supplies the power and I can do nothing without Him, but the truth is, it's not God who's holding back my deliverance, it's me. I have deep attitudes that need changing and steps of faith that need to be taken. Only then will the miracle I long for arrive. Here's one attitude that must be present before God can set me free:

#### Hitting Bottom

I must be honest and ask myself this question: “Am I really willing to live without this?” It's far too easy to answer, “Well, of course I am. I asked God to take it away didn't I?” And very likely that request was sincere. I recognize this is wrong or makes me feel miserable so I want to be rid of it. But the human heart has the capacity to want different things at different levels. At one level I want something, but at another level I don't. Deep down I love certain sins or have grown comfortable with familiar areas of pain. At that level I'm really frightened by the thought that God might actually take something away or heal that part of me. It's hard to imagine life without it. I'm conflicted. I've asked God to take something away, but at the same time I'm terrified He might. This indecision can prevent me from receiving my miracle year after year after year. Sadly, not all of me wants it gone yet.

- 2 Corinthians 7:8-10
- Grieving (sorrow over the damage I've caused) vs. repenting (wholeheartedly desiring God's way)
- Repentance begins with a revelation: “What am I doing? This is evil and full of death. It's killing me and people I love and breaking God's heart.”
- Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-19
- For freedom to come I must see the enemy's lie for what it is. This has to die. It can't be managed more efficiently or pushed to a hidden corner. It must be crucified.
- Galatians 5:24 – “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”
- What will it take to convince me to let God completely take this away from me?
- Illustration: Cake in the refrigerator (warning: this cake contains rat poison)
- What changed? I realized it may taste good but it contains death.
- Genesis 3:2-5 – “You won't die!” And when they ate the fruit it appeared the devil was right because they didn't die, right away.
- We have to want to stop not just because we know it's wrong, but because we too see the death and have come to hate the sin. At the deepest level we must want it gone.
- Oddly enough depression also requires a similar decision. After a while we become so accustomed to being depressed, feeling good is unsettling. We wait suspiciously wondering when it will return. We're afraid to hope for freedom.
- Remember: God wants to teach us why something is wrong not just give us a command to obey. He not only wants to change our behavior but He wants us to think like He thinks, love what He loves, hate what He hates. He's “fathering” us into His likeness.
- When this decision is made the resources of God are released and real freedom can come quickly so long as the person is taught how to live in freedom. But until this decision is made there will be a constant pattern of relapse, sorrow, asking for forgiveness, promises to do better and then relapse again.



# LIFE LESSONS

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### Turning Around

It appears there are three ways for a person to arrive at this decision:

- 1) Actually hit bottom: I become so devastated, my self-effort has failed so often, the death hidden in my sin has become so obvious I am faced with the choice to either forsake Christ and yield entirely to the sin, or give up all pretense and take whatever radical steps are necessary (often these are the steps I've avoided for years).
- 2) Walk into the anointing: In a meeting where the power of the Holy Spirit is strongly present I'm mercifully given a revelation of my spiritual condition. God shows me the depth of my sin and His love and calls me to take His hand and come out.
- 3) Ask God to show me the truth: I earnestly ask Him to lift the deception and show me my double-mindedness and the death hidden in what I'm doing, to see that this bondage is no friend but a deadly enemy.

### Questions

- 1) Have you ever experienced that moment of revelation when you suddenly saw what you were doing through God's eyes? What effect did that change of perspective have on you?
- 2) Did you experience some sudden change when you were born-again? Name one.