

Counseling God's Way

IV. Foundational Truths for Counseling

Lesson 15 - Walking According to the Flesh

By

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

Lord, we come again in Your mighty name. We come with hunger, with need, with expectation, with desire. We come seeking You, Lord. Seeking to be edified, built up, instructed, counseled, equipped, warned and guarded. There are so many things that pertain to counseling God's way. Lord, we come with thanksgiving that You would draw us near to Yourself and that You would become to us our wonderful Counselor. Lord, we humble ourselves right now and confess our need for You, for strength and wisdom, cleansing, forgiveness, encouragement, direction, confirmation, all the things that come with You as our Good Shepherd and our Wonderful Counselor. And we thank You that You give grace to the humble. We ask You to pour out Your grace upon us tonight that we might grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and thereby receive and give counsel that is Your kind of counsel. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

In this study together, Counseling God's Way, we're looking at our third study under the heading of "Foundational Truths for Counseling God's Way." This is item C, our third study, "Walking According to the Flesh."

Remember in Romans 6 we saw how God deals with our old, spiritually dead, sinful life in Adam. He crucified it with Christ and then He raises us with Christ to a new life in Him. And we saw in Romans 6 that God wants us to know these facts and He wants us to count on these facts and then He wants us to present ourselves to God on the basis of these facts.

Sometimes Christians say or think, "Well I believe I have done that or I do that. But in many ways I still struggle and sometimes fall into sin or drifting in disobedience, with a lack of victory and progress and get to striving and straining. What's the deal?" Isn't there enough there in Romans 5 and 6 to live on all the way through time out into eternity? Yes there is.

But Romans chapter 7 reveals an ongoing problem that we still must face and deal with. And that's called the flesh. And Romans chapter 7 is about Christians trying to please God, trying to obey the law of God, live up to the standards of God on their own best efforts. This is walking according to the flesh.

Romans 8:4, talks about those who do not walk according to the flesh, but walk according to the Spirit. And Romans 7 is about the walk according to the flesh. And God's answer for that is to learn to walk according to the Spirit.

In Romans 7:14-16, a fleshly struggle surfaces when a Christian attempts to walk according to the flesh.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin [or sold in bondage to sin, it could be translated either way]. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good.

Remember Romans 6:14? "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace."

This person struggling in Romans 7 is battling the dominating influence of sin, which means they are, by inference here in Romans 6:14, probably trying to live by their own resource under the

law and standards of God. They are not drawing on the grace of God, which is the resource of God for victory and growth.

Christians are to live by grace, not by law. That is, living by law, trying to keep the law of God on their own best effort. When we try to please God by drawing on our own human resources inherited from Adam—even though we're now saved, born again, new creatures—in practical experience we put ourselves under the law. That is, we're living by performance. Hey God, is this good enough? If not I'll try harder.

Well, that's the way the law works. The law tells you the standard, commands perfection and gives nothing to help you do it. That's the backdrop, really, behind Romans 7, already introduced in Romans 6:14.

Now the law is spiritual. It's of God, given by the Holy Spirit. The law is spiritual. It's heavenly.

Romans 7:12, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." And Paul wrote the law is good if one uses it lawfully, the way it was intended to be used. It wasn't intended to be a standard that we strive to live up to. We can't do it. That issue is what the class "Growing in the Grace of God" is all about. We cannot be justified or sanctified that way. We cannot grow that way. We cannot find victory that way. We cannot get out from under the domination of sin that way. It has to be by the grace resources of God.

"The law is spiritual. But I am carnal," Paul writes. That is, me, myself and I. You know just my resources, just me. And he'll elaborate on that in just a moment. I am of the flesh. I am carnal. And in that respect, on our own, left to our own resources, we can still say about us that we are sold under sin, or sold into bondage to sin. In fleshly, self-dependence even a Christian is bound to sin. They will sin, if they draw on their own resources. Even a Christian, on his own—that is, drawing on his own resources—is carnal. In fact that's what carnality is all about, really, living by fleshing standards, fleshly resources. In any independent acts to impress God or live up to the standards of God, we're of the flesh. Flesh here is human resources and human abilities. What man can do out of his best effort and best intentions. Then it is all the way to the other end of the flesh, the deepest of licentious indulgence.

Romans 7:15, this can baffle us as Christians.

For what I am doing I do not understand. [Why is it perplexing?] For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

What's the matter with me? Aren't I a Christian? I mean, what's the deal here? Many Christians, when they first get into that mode after they're saved, are really perplexed. Am I really saved? Why I can't I do it and everybody around me seems to be doing it right? They are probably saying the same thing. It's perplexing.

But the Scriptures reveal what it's all about. But even in that striving, fleshly, failure it doesn't mean the law is bad. If then I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. It's not the fault of the law that we can't live up to it. The weakness in the law is the weakness of human flesh. And we'll read later on, in the second half of our study tonight, about Romans 8:3, that the law was weak through the flesh. Man's resources couldn't live up to it. So that's a weakness in living under the law.

What is going on here? Why doesn't this precede chapter 6 or chapter 5, back there when we were looking at the problems and the remedy? And then united with Christ and victory, why does this follow that? Well, though the old man was crucified with Christ, Romans 4, 5 and 6—the flesh remains. The bodily cravings and temptability remain. We still have the same physical body we had before we were saved. Romans 8:23, "...we ourselves are groaning [awaiting] the redemption of our body." It hasn't even started. Our spirit is totally redeemed, brought back fully to God. Our soul, that is our mind, emotion, will, the personality of man, once saved is going through the process of being brought back to the ways of God. But the body is exactly the same body we had when we were saved. We might treat it a little better. But we also might worship it a little less, you know. It might come into its perspective better, but it's still the same body. And it will not be different until we see the Lord and we're glorified and have those resurrected bodies. It's going to be great!

Remember, along with those same physical bodies, the greatest culprit in the members of the body lie right between your ears. It is the brain, the physical brain. We have exactly the same physical organ, the brain. We can get a new mind. We get a new mind in Christ, but we have the same brain. It has all that same data logged into it, from the days before we ever knew Christ. All of that is part of the flesh. There is tons of input from the old man with sinful ways of thinking, sinful ways of reacting, and sinful, ungodly, humanistic, earth-bound ways of imagining and scheming and planning. So when we look to ourselves, when we put hope in human resources—even well intended, Christian, dedicated human resources—the flesh is turned loose. The amazing thing is the flesh behaves just so much like the old man did. Even though he got crucified on the cross of Christ, he left his ways behind him in the body in which he dwelled, and logged in that brain, you know. You talk about your computer chips. Oh, what he left behind!

This is another reason why psychological counseling is deadly to spiritual victory. It is another reason why you cannot integrate psychological theory with Biblical truth. Psychological theory appeals to the flesh. All the way from, "hey, you're not as bad as you think you are." No, that is not quite accurate. You're worse than you think you are to the other side, the hoping in self and the pumping up and really exalting. Psychological counseling appeals to the flesh. Come on, you can do it. You know you can. Here. We'll give you techniques. We'll give you ways to think, to motivate you. We'll give you new ways to think to give you self-justification and a false sense of liberty from guilt and condemnation. Psychological counseling is exceedingly attractive.

Why are so many Christians into psychological counseling? It is because they don't want the flesh crucified. They want it pampered. They want to be pleased. Bless me. Please me. Coddle me. Don't nail me! And God nails us, not out of cruelty but totally out of love. He wants that old life to be rendered in the place of the cross and just be left there. He wants us to find a whole new life in Christ, which can only be found and walked in by the Spirit.

Now Romans 7:17-20 speak about the fact that sin indwells our flesh. That's why it is so deadly. The flesh is contaminated by the principle of sin. It is not only the physical body, but the human brain and all of its ways. Sin indwells our flesh, verses 17 through 20.

But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Verse 17 is not given to us to remove personal responsibility. “Hey, if I’m sinning don’t look at me. It’s not me. It’s sin that indwells me.” It’s not that kind of a thing. You know, that’s not what it is saying. We know there’s accountability. What a person sows, they reap. You reap the spirit, life or you reap flesh, corruption, and death. Sow to the flesh you reap corruption and death.

Why is this verse given? It is to reveal the cause of the problem. It’s that a tendency to sin dwells in our flesh. “Now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

One of the many reasons why I’m personally convinced that this second half of Romans chapter 7 here, which gets into personal testimony here with Paul and his struggle, was after his born again, saved days. Some Bible teachers, believers don’t agree with that. And I’m not saying I have all the answers, but in wrestling over that issue many, many years, I personally can’t see any real possibility but what it’s a believer. You know, someone looks at this and goes, “That can’t be the apostle Paul. That has got to be Saul of Tarsus.” Well, I believe, in the first case, if that were so it would be back preceding or in Romans 5 and not after 6. But far more contextually profound and Biblically important is, no unbeliever could ever say, “It’s no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” In the unbeliever there is no distinction between them and the sin that dwells in them. They’re dead in trespasses and sin. They have no righteousness. They have no other reality at work in them but sin and death. Only a believer, in their struggle and defeat, could say, “Now it’s no longer I, that is, the new creature in Christ, the persons we really are. It’s sin that dwells in me.”

Indwelling sin from verse 18, “Nothing good dwells in me.” What do you mean, Paul? Well, that is, in my flesh nothing good dwells. I know that in me nothing good dwells. That is, in my flesh.

Remember what Jesus said? “None is good but God alone” (Matthew 19:17). Well, that settles the case. None is good. Even the apostle, essentially, inherently or innately, when you take God out of his life there is no good left. There are just varieties of badness, socially or culturally acceptable or not, but there’s no good. None is good but God alone.

What we are apart from the Lord living in and through us? That is our flesh and nothing good dwells in it. The NIV here I think translates this, “Nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my sinful nature.” I have never been able to figure out why they translated it that way. It’s the only major translation that does that. Every other one takes the basic, obvious, straight forward meaning of the word *sarx*, and that is flesh. Flesh. Time and time again it is obvious. In this chapter and in the contrast jumping to chapter 8, the difference between the walk according to the flesh and then the walk according to the Spirit. Putting sinful nature in here kind of mixes up what chapters 5 and 6 were talking about, the person himself. What’s God’s remedy for that person? Crucify him.

After doing that all the problems are solved, right? No. The new creature in Christ still has to deal with the flesh that remains. The cross is for the old man. The walk in the Spirit is for the flesh. Basically those are God’s pattern in Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8. Nothing good dwells in me—that is in my flesh. The wishing is present. Yeah, I want to do it. I wish I could. I really have the will, but the doing is not there. Having a God-given desire to live righteously does not mean we can do it in our own strength.

Romans 7:19, you could probably call this the common, average Christian experience. “For the good that I will [to do], I do not do, but the evil I will not [to do], that I practice.” That doesn’t mean it’s normal. It’s maybe just too common, too average. Normal infers what? It infers a norm that is correct by which it’s being measured. Average just means what’s going on. And this is what goes on among the Christian community and every Christian has their trek or treks through

Romans 7. We don't have to live there. But I don't know that there is any way for anyone to avoid walking through there.

It's in Romans 7 we learn our desperate need of everything that is provided in Romans 6. Romans 6 can give the light and the insight and the knowledge of the victory and provision of union with Christ. But for so many—I believe all of us to some degree—we only learn our total need for what Romans 6 talks about when we're struggling in Romans 7.

So the normal Christian life is Romans chapter 8, though that is not the average. The average is too much like Romans 7. But even if that has become non-typical as a way of living—not that a person is immune to ever struggling in Romans 7—but if a believer is less and less in that, you are living more characteristic of Romans 8, then that's the normal Christian life and they might have some average experiences down the road too. But the Lord definitely wants us to go right on through Romans 7 being less and less there, and more and more in Romans 8, as we will see.

Now, sin dwells in our flesh. Think of that. Right in our body is the tendency to sin! This is including the physical brain with all these sinful proclivities and weaknesses and inclinations and understandings to pull it off. We carry this battle with us everywhere we go. You know, it's just, it's part of our flesh. It is the tabernacle in which we live and the human resources we draw on out of it, including the overwhelming despot of it all, the brain.

Now look at this. This gets worse before it gets better. Let's not jump too quickly to where we think the victory is, because we will get caught in this territory that yet lies ahead. Not only is there a fleshly struggle if we're trying to please God on our own resources and live up to His standards, we find out it is because sin dwells in our flesh. Now look at this, the picture of flesh defeated, dominated, drug off captive by the law of sin. It is not just irritated and tripped up, but hog-tied.

Romans 7: 21-22,

I find then a law, [this principle] that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

This is another reason why I'm personally convinced that this testimony is speaking of a believer. An unsaved person cannot delight in the law of God according to the inward man. Why? It is because the inward man is totally dead. He has no spiritual capacity to delight in the things of God at all. The inward man is dead. The spirit is dead toward God, but a believer, deep in the heart, deep in the inner person, deep in the spirit, delights in the law of God. You hear what the law of God says and you go, "Oh yes!" Even though you might look at behavior or present experience and go, "Oooh, yuck! The good that I will to do I do not do. But the evil I will not to do, that I practice!"

Delighting in the law of God according to the inward man. The inward man is the new creation, the real us. See, verse 21—"I find then a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good." There is a tendency, a vulnerability, and inadequacy concerning sin, which will always be in our flesh until our bodies are transformed. And even though the new man wishes to do good, the human resources don't automatically cooperate. And even though the inner man delights in the law of God, the new creation agrees with the law of God gladly—Amen! That's it. That's what I want.

Romans 7:23 says, “But I see another law in my members....” This is another principle working right in the very members of our tabernacle. And again, I don't think we can be reminded too much, including the physical brain. “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

Oh, this is a believer in the midst of warfare, trying his best. He delights in the law of God. “Amen! I love it! I'm going to do it. I'm going to throw myself into doing it.” But he's not depending on the Lord, trusting in the Spirit. He is striving to produce it on his own. A different law in the members of the body is at work, fighting against that desire to please God. It is waging war against the law of my mind. It is warring against this principle in my mind that God has now stirred through the mind of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 2:16, we have “the mind of Christ,” believers are told. So in our minds, this mind of Christ resides. The mind is thinking of the realm of actually entertaining thought and all. The brain is where a lot of past thinking is just kind of logged, and wants to interfere and get in the way. It is warring against the law of our mind.

So this mind of Christ dwelling in us, Christ in us the hope of glory, stirs “oh yes” to the ways of God and the law of God. But there's another law in our members. There's something else dragging against us. And look what happens, “...bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:23).

It is not a very exciting prospect, is it? It is making me a prisoner of this law of sin. You know what that's saying? The new creature in Christ cannot whip this principle. We can't whip the flesh on our own resolve. “Hey, I'm born again. I will not succumb to the ways of the flesh.” Well, that's a fleshy statement, you know. It is self-confidence. “Pride goes before destruction [a fall]...” (Proverbs 16:18). Oh, you won't? Okay, here let's clear back. Give him plenty of room. We don't want anyone injured, as they don't do it!

Romans 7:23 is a sober verse. “But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members.” The new creature in Christ is not designed to win the battle on his own, any more than the new creature in Christ is designed to live the Christian life producing that life on his own, any more than a branch in a vine is expected to produce the life that sustains it.

So what must we do? What is the way out? The way out is a cry for a deliverer. If I were writing that outline today I would add the word, humble cry for a deliverer. Maybe even a desperate humble cry for a deliverer. That's the way out. It's provided right here. How do you get out of this cycle? Humbly cry for a Deliverer. Not try harder. Humble quicker!

Romans 7:24-25, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ, our Lord!” And the rest of the verse rehearses the struggle before it goes on to assure us there is no condemnation in it. And then we see the path of victory in Romans 8.

But let's dwell a little bit on this cry, “O wretched man that I am....” That's what the Lord is looking to hear, a plea of wretchedness. The word has to do with spiritual weariness, spiritual helplessness, and an incapacity to produce righteousness. “O wretched one that I am.”

Oh wretched man that I am, in my flesh, on my own—in me dwells no good thing, that is, in my flesh. Me, I'm a wretch. “Well you sound like you're teaching worm theology.” “No, no, no. Worm is way too high. We're talking wretchedness. Wretchedness.

What a humble plea this is. Oh wretched man that I am. Weary, helpless, incapable of producing victory and righteousness. That's me, God! I cry out, who will deliver me from this body of death? Who will set me free from this body in which sin and death dwells? It's dominating me. It is bringing me down into a dead, lifeless defeated Christian struggle.

The integrative psychological, self-esteem counseling of the day that is all throughout the church world, actually tries to prevent people from saying this. The counsel actually builds a roadblock to keep Christians from saying, "Oh, wretched man that I am." When someone struggling with sin and defeat comes into a Christian counseling clinic, or often to a staff pastor even, or someone helping in a church ministry, and in all kinds of ways they are kind of hinting that they think they're quite a wretched person who can't kind of see their way through this to victory and the counselor goes into emergency resuscitation of the flesh work. "Bring out the electric shock on the flesh. We've got to jump start this guy's flesh. He's starting to sound helpless. 'Oh, you're not as bad as you think you are. Come on. Give yourself some slack. Hey, you just need to feel better about yourself. Hey, who made you so down on yourself? Let's find out and blame them.'"

So struggling Christians go in for counseling and instead of confessing "Oh, wretched man that I am," and they are only allowed to say things like, "Oh dysfunctional one that I am." "Yes, you could probably learn to function a little better. Oh, you mean you are a product of a dysfunctional world. Oh, they didn't function well towards you. Oh well, that makes even more sense." Oh wretched man that I am, is not allowed.

Church groups are writing it out of their hymnals and finding the mellowest possible halfway synonym in their translations and paraphrases. We've got all kinds of Bibles, all kinds of Bibles. There are some good translations out, but some of these study Bibles! Man, you get the translation and then you get all the commentary built in. Even the Holy Spirit Bible, that one that I think was out recently, has all these charismaniacs writing in it. It is not really about the Holy Spirit. It's about charismania. We are probably going to have one someday called, "The Flesh Bible." Why hide it anymore? Let's just come right out front with it. "This Bible is designed to protect your flesh at all cost. We can re-explain every verse until the context disappears." Probably the subtitle will be something like: "You'll never have to fear the cross again. In this one study Bible 4,000 detours around the cross of discipleship." Oh, the world! It would probably be a best seller in the world and the church.

"Oh, wretched man that I am." Boy, the popular one now is, "Oh co-dependent one that I am." "Yes, yes, that's it. Say it! Say it! That's your hope." And really one of the most popular of all now is, "Oh victimized one that I am. We all know any wrong you we see in my life could no way be my fault. All I need is your help to find out who did it." And boy, I tell you, there are professionals that are great at it. They can find blame where nothing ever happened, and it will be as real as if it had happened all your life long. It's unbelievable.

Can you see heaven moved by this plea, "Oh dysfunctional one that I am. Oh co-dependent one that I am." Why the heavens are brass to that! All of this prolongs the struggle. God's waiting to hear a humble, bankrupt plea. "Oh, wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me?"

Now, I'm not inferring at all that is the way Christians must live every day. You know, you climb out of bed, "Oh wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of sin?" Maybe as a Christian you aren't in Romans 7 right then. This is not our automatic Christian discipleship daily confession. That comes from Luke 9:23 and elsewhere, where Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and [just] follow Me." Just every day, "Lord, not me. Not my will. Not my way. Not my resources. Not my glory, but Yours.

Lord, may my self-life this day be on that cross where it died with Christ and be left there. Not dredged out of the fleshy ways of man. May I today have only one option, to just follow You for direction, for peace, for strength, for insight from the Word, for nurturing, for victory, for not being drug down by the law of sin and death that dwells in this body." That's the normal, daily approach to God and the Christian life.

But at times we slip from that, we drift from that. We really get into struggling. And the more we sense a struggle, we flail away the harder. "I will not get in defeat. I will do right. I love the ways of God." And we eventually end up crying this: "The good that I will to do I do not do. But the evil that I will not to do, that I practice." What is going on? It is struggling according to the flesh. And there's only one way out. And it's a humble cry for a deliverer. Oh may the Lord just revive, reform the church so that her counseling doesn't build roadblocks to people getting to the place of escape!

Probably instead of saying, "Oh man, you're not near as bad as you think you are." Maybe we should encourage them, "Hey, you don't know half how bad you are. You know, only God knows how bad you are. But He loves you and He died for you and He wants to deliver you."

Oh wretched man that I am, who will set me free? Who will deliver me from this body of death? The Spirit wants to stir us to cry, "Who?" The flesh wants to ask, "What?" The flesh always wants to know, what can I do to get out of the mess I'm in? The Spirit stirs in you to need a "Who" and not a "what." A "what" is something the flesh can do. "Who," that is your mighty Deliverer, Jesus. Who will set me free? Not, what can I do to get back on top again? This is a cry for a Deliverer. Who will set me free? Who will deliver me?

The flesh of man goes into the counseling situation saying, "Just give me some procedure, will you? All I'm interested in is a program. Not a person and one who died there and I died with Him and they are now my hope today and forever. Just give me a program." The program is the great hope of man now, not only in the world but in the church as well. The flesh says, "What can I do to get out of this?"

And the psychological integrative flesh-pumping, flesh-tempting, flesh-building counselor says, "Have you tried this?" And he or she has a thousand of "have you tried to pull out?" "Have you tried visualizing a better life for yourself?" "Have you tried finding who messed you up?" "Have you tried trying harder?" "Have you tried not even caring?" Just, "have you tried, have you tried?"

And so often the answer is, "Oh no, thanks."

"Well, you're welcome. That will be ninety-five dollars."

And they'll probably be back because it won't work. "No problem, we've got a drawer full of these things." You can do this for ten years as long as your insurance stays in force. And sometimes the insurance runs out before the answers. Then you're healed.

Who will set me free from this body of sin and death? This body of death that sin dwells in, brings spiritual deadness. It is sin indwelling the flesh. Who will deliver me? See, it is a humble cry for a Deliverer. Not a law, standard, performance, or works, hey try this. But, who will deliver me? We sang, "Deliver me, great Deliverer." What a great song. But let's not diminish the kind of Deliverer He is. He's a great and comprehensive Deliverer. He has already delivered us from the penalty of sin. Already! Someday we know He is going to deliver us even from the very presence of sin. He will come and deliver us and take us to a place where there won't even be a hint of sin, not a memory of sin. Not one little influence of sin. What a mighty Deliverer!

And what did we do to cause either one of those two deliverances to be assured? We trusted in the Lord. Now why, from here to there are we going to be our own deliverer? When we are struggling and striving and trying to get it all just right on our own capacity, with our own religious knack, He can now deliver us from the powers. He can.

How does one under the dominion again of sin, though saved and struggling, how do they get out? Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? That's the person who has this song to sing: "I thank God, it's through Jesus Christ our Lord." That's the victory. It is not a program but a Person. It is not a procedure but trusting in the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 15:57 it says, "Thanks be to God who gives the victory, [How?] through our Lord Jesus Christ." Victory is a gift. It's not something we create, earn or cause. It is a gift. We are talking grace again. It is a work of God's grace on our behalf that got us out of the penalty of sin, and will remove us someday from the presence of sin, and along the way the grace of God at work is giving us the gift of deliverance from the power of sin.

Now in conclusion, in Matthew 26:41, Jesus said to His disciples, "Watch and pray [Why be prayerfully alert?], lest you enter into temptation...." Well, what is this danger all about? "...the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

God just had His apostle Paul elaborate on that in Romans 7 for us. Jesus laid down the bedrock principle here, the truth. The spirit of those hanging around the Lord Jesus can be willing because of His influence. They are willing to go the ways of godliness, but the flesh is weak. Of course it showed up the moment trouble came. "Oh Lord, we will never deny You." We all think of Peter, but they all were going, "Yeah, yeah! Amen. Me too." One of the Gospels tells us that "Oh yeah, no. No way." The spirit is willing. Yeah sure, willing, that's great, but we can't pull it off on our own, that walk in godliness. The flesh is weak. Well then, what do you do? Watch and pray. Be alert to depend on the Lord. Watch and pray. Stay alert to put your hope in the Lord. Watch and pray. That's really what Romans 7 is about.

Philippians 2:12 says, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It comes in here as a critical reminder on this study. Why work outward the salvation that God has worked inward and why do it with fear and trembling, with awe and humility? It is because, "it is God who works in you both to will and to do for [His] good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). His good pleasure is the law, His will. It's not enough to just say, "Oh yes, I hear the law! Amen. I delight in that." It's not over yet. Watch and pray. Don't just leave it there. "Hey, count me in, God. I'm with You. Hey, let's get on with it." It's not over there. "God works in us both to will and to do."

What do you think is easier "to will" or the "to do"? And we often stop on the easier side. Not that there isn't a battle sometimes there too. We're struggling with the will of God. But even yielding to that, God working in us, wooing us, showing us why and encouraging us His way. Even saying, "Yes Lord! Your path is all that matters to me." It isn't time to stop praying. Isn't time to stop seeking the Lord. Isn't time to stop depending and looking to Him, because God's got to keep working in us both to will and to do. Romans 7 is the struggling Christian who has the will to do and just can't figure out why he can't pull it off. I mean, he is trying harder than he ever did in his life. In fact, he probably thinks he's trying harder than he ever saw a Christian try. "And why am I doing the very thing that I hate?"

The flesh is weak. We need God to work in us to will and to do.

Then Colossians 3:10 is talking about this "...new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him." What is this new man, this new life in Christ all about? Well, there is neither Greek nor Jew. It doesn't matter your nationality, or circumcised or uncircumcised, your religiosity or religious procedures, Barbarian, or Sythian. The most sophisticated or the worst, scoundrel of a man. Slave or free. Here's what matters. Here's what it's all about, "But Christ is all and in all."

That's both humbling to the flesh and exhilarating to the spirit. Christ is all. "Hey, how about me?" Yeah, we had you in here before. In me dwells no good thing. You were mentioned. You were covered very well. "In my flesh, dwells no good thing." (Romans 7:18). Again, it is death to the flesh. Nail that, mortify it, put it in the place of death.

Where is the hope?" Christ is all and in all." Christ lives in all of us. And it is designed for Him to be all that we need all the time. And certainly that is so much what walking according to the spirit is all about. As we get into Romans chapter 8 we will see. When people are struggling according to the flesh, this is a great place to turn. Turn to Romans 7, help people see the way out of the struggle of walking according to the flesh is not trying harder and what can I do. It is a humble plea for a Deliverer.

And psychological theory will so consistently concentrate on the "what" not the "Who;" what to do or how to justify self.