



## NEW LIFE: Life Means Life!

*By: Peter Bales*

*No. 13, January 21, 2024*

Remember playing “opposite day” when you were a kid? We would have fun joking that everything has the opposite meanings!

It might remind us of what happens when we come to faith in Jesus! We went from slave to free, lost to found, empty to full and from death to life! We went from before to after!

There is a tricky passage in Romans 7 where Paul describes a situation of struggling and losing to sin. It’s tricky because if you take it out of context it might have the *opposite* meaning of what Paul had in mind!

Start by reading Romans 7: 14-20.

That doesn’t sound like a good situation. The question that we need to ask, “Is Paul describing life *before* or *after* we came to Jesus?” I believe he is describing our old lives before Jesus—what it was like to battle sin when we were still living from our old sinful nature. Let’s look at some clues...

First read from earlier in the chapter, Romans 7: 7-12.

### **1. How does Paul talk about our “before and after”?**

Look at verse 14 of Romans 7, “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.”

### **2. How does that verse fit with Romans 6:6 and Romans 6:17?**

Now, look at verse 18 of Romans 7, “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.” Paul is telling us which “me” he is describing—his sinful nature. This is key to this passage because it shows that he is describing life with his sinful nature, which is powerless over sin. But what is his conclusion?

READ Romans 7:24-8:4.

**3. What are your conclusions after reading this? What is Paul's point in all of this?**

Many people have made the point that we still have a struggle inside. There's an old Cherokee story about having two wolves inside—one good and one evil. The one that wins is the one that you feed. While this story makes a good point about guarding your heart, it also paints the picture that our sinful nature is still alive and kickin'!

Learning about our identity in Christ involves finding out what the Bible says about us and trying to live in that. As much as it feels like our flesh or sinful nature is still alive, Paul is telling us that when we turned our lives over to Jesus, it died and we now live in the Spirit. Later in Romans 8, Paul tells us that we are more than conquerors. The first step to living as a conqueror is to understand that the battle against sin has already been won by Jesus.

**4. How does this teaching change our view of "the battle inside."**

**5. What do you think it means that we are "more than conquerors?"**

The book of James gives us some practical advice on how to approach this. It says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." (James 4:7-8 NIV)

It sounds like we need to move in the **opposite** direction! Instead of paying attention to the enemy, we submit to God. For some of us we think "resist the devil" means we must fight him. I might suggest that it means "resist *engaging with* the devil." If we start to fight him we've already lost. Why!? Because he has already been defeated by Jesus. Fighting the devil is a distraction. Instead, we submit and come near to God. We turn toward Jesus and the devil will flee!! We wash our hands, purify our hearts, and are not double-minded. We give God our full attention.

**6. What do you think about this strategy?**

**7. What are practical ways that you can "resist engaging with the devil" and come near to God?**

**8. What are some times in your life when you realized you needed to stop fighting and surrender to God?**

GOING DEEPER> Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. Verse 16 talks about changing our point of view. Meditate on these verses and ask God to give you a new point of view "in Christ."