

## **Spiritual Flu: Symptoms and Cures**

Romans 7:14-8:2 New American Standard Bible

### **The Conflict of Serving Two Masters**

*<sup>14</sup> For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold into bondage to sin. <sup>15</sup> For I do not understand what I am doing; for I am not practicing what I want to do, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> However, if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, that the Law is good. <sup>17</sup> But now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. <sup>20</sup> But if I do the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin that dwells in me.*

*<sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. <sup>22</sup> For I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner person, <sup>23</sup> but I see a different law in the parts of my body waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, the law which is in my body's parts. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.*

Deliverance from Bondage

**8 Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus.** <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

### **Introduction**

I am going to talk about a spiritual condition that I would call a spiritual flu that keeps us lethargic in our walk with God. We will think about its symptoms and cures. One good thing from the COVID-19. We become keenly aware of the virus and its effect on our health. We do everything in our power not to get it. Same attitude we should have toward the spiritual flu.

### **Content**

#### **What is a spiritual flu?**

A spiritual flu is a disease that debilitates and paralyzes us in our walk with God. It keeps us from leading a victorious life in Christ. Once infected, we become too weak to bear any spiritual fruits such as love, joy, peace, and self-control. It puts a strain on our relationship with God and with others. It may even result in the loss of eternal life if we remain in this condition.

### **Three Characteristics of the Spiritual Flu.**

It **operates stealthily**. Like germs in the air. We don't know how we get attacked most of the time. It attacks us stealthily.

It **discriminates against no one**. No one is immune to this disease. We all experience this. Even Paul the apostle, a spiritual giant, once suffered from this disease (today's text).

It **attacks us relentlessly**. Unlike its physical counterpart, this one doesn't choose any particular seasons to be around. Indeed, it attacks us all year-round.

We need to be on guard.

### **Good News Bad News**

There is good news and bad news. The bad news is that many of us unnecessarily suffer from this disease due to the ignorance of its existence. Some believers refuse to treat this disease as a serious threat to their spiritual well-being simply dismissing it as mental or psychological problems. Left untreated, however, it can be very costly to our salvation.

The good news is that cures are found and available in Christ. In fact, provided we carefully heed to this problem, and if we faithfully apply the cures to our spirit, we can lead a life victoriously and serve the Lord effectively.

### **Symptoms and Cures**

So, let me present to you the common symptoms of the spiritual flu, then, I will talk about the cures.

My list is not exhaustive, but it is compiled based on both my study of the Bible/books on this subject and personal experiences. We all have experienced them before.

#### **Symptoms**

- Not doing what we would like to do.
- Doing the very thing we hate.
- Feel powerless before temptations.
- Feel miserable after defeated in spiritual battles.
- Enslaved to the power of sin.
- Constant tug-of-war going on inside of us between good and evil.
- Feel that “nothing but evil is present in me.”
- Low or no self-esteem/self-worth.
- Negative/destructive thoughts and feelings.

### **Three Cures: Emancipation. Identity. Promises. (Declare. Remember. Claim.)**

These cures begin and end with Jesus: what He has done and His promises.

#### **Declare Emancipation**

Jesus set you free on the cross. “No more slavery” for you, He declared. The wages of your sin have been paid in full once and for all. Through His blood, your sins are forgiven. Christ has redeemed you (i.e. bought us back) from the bondage of sin. Therefore, you are no longer a slave to sin, but a child of God (Romans 8:15). You are no longer in servitude to sin, but an heir of God’s kingdom, His righteousness and glory.

Sadly, many a Christian are unaware of this truth of emancipation that already took place on the cross. Consequently, they still live like a slave to sin. E.g. Juneteenth Celebration. On June 19 in 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas and spread the news that the Civil War ended and slaves had been freed. The news came two-and-a-half years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. During that time, many blacks still suffered as slaves even though they had been set free.

When we do not live and act like a free person in Christ, Satan, our enemy, takes the full advantage of our ignorance. In fact, he does everything possible to keep us in darkness and ignorance of the freedom in Christ. Remember: he is the father of all lies. He tricks us into believing that we are still under the bondage of sin and death. To our spiritual enemy, we must declare: “Christ’s blood set me free. I am free in Christ. No more deception, no more trickery, and no more slavery!”

#### **Remember Identity**

Remember who you are *in Christ*. *In Christ*, you are a child of God, not a slave to sin. *In Christ*, you are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). *In Christ*, you are an heir of God's Kingdom.

An analogy for "being in Christ": Christ is a book. We are a bookmark. As the bookmark is in a book, so are we in Christ. Whatever happens to the book also happens to the bookmark. Being in Christ means that everything happened to Christ also happened to us. When He was crucified, since we are in Christ, we too have been crucified (Galatians 2:19). When He died on the cross, so did we in Him. When He was buried in the cave, so were we. When Christ rose from the dead, so did we in Him.

Since Christ died to sin and rose from the dead, so are we dead to sin and alive to God. Our old self is dead and the one who lives in us now is Christ (Galatians 2:20). Since He has paid off the wages of our sin, we owe Him a life. We have an obligation to live a new life in Christ. Instead of continually living an old life where we would present ourselves as a slave to sin, as a new creation in Christ, we now offer ourselves as an instrument of God's righteousness.

God's command for us: Be proactive in your walk with God. Reach out to God first before temptation strikes you. Be proactive in keeping His commands. Seek and set your mind on the things above (Colossians 3:1-2). Walk with the Holy Spirit. Consciously and proactively give yourself to God. Offer yourself as an instrument of righteousness.

This is a sure way of warding off Satan's temptations and accusations. The best defense is a good offense. You can stay away from the temptations (2 Timothy 2:22) by actively offering yourself to God as His instrument of righteousness. Remember it is always better to shun the bait rather than to struggle in the snare.

### **Claim Promises**

Claim God's promise of restoration after you've fallen into temptation. Have you noticed that Satan's accusations always follow after you have goofed up? In those moments, you must cling onto Christ's promise of forgiveness through repentance. Let me elaborate.

Satan's strategies are deception, intimidation, temptation, and accusation. He is the Accuser. When we sin against God, Satan immediately accuses us of our wrong doings. We all have been there. In such a moment, you can admit that you have sinned against God, but never ever agree with Satan's lie that God has abandoned you.

Difference between *conviction* and *accusation*: The conviction of sin comes from the Holy Spirit. The accusation of sin is from the devil. The conviction is constructive. The accusation is destructive. The conviction leads us to repentance, restoration, and peace. Satan's accusation leads us to further shame, guilt, and withdrawal from God. E.g. Once Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how many times shall my brother sin against me and I *still* forgive him? Up to seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:21-22). This verse decisively helped me to overcome Satan's accusation.

Refuse to listen to Satan the accuser. Listen only to the Holy Spirit your helper.

### **Closing**

Let me close my sermon with a story of a missionary. She has been a Christian for over 20 years. *"I never understood God's forgiveness and my spiritual inheritance. I have been bulimic for years. I was in a Bible college at the time when I began this horrible practice and never thought that this living hell would end. I thought about suicide. I would've killed myself had I not thought that was a sin. I felt God had turned his back on me. I thought I was doomed to hell because I couldn't overcome the sin. I hated myself. I felt like a failure. (After reading the Bondage Breaker and God's promises) I feel like a new Christian. Just like a born again. My eyes are open to God's love. I realize that I am a saint who sins, not sinner. Free of Satan's bondage. I am aware of lies he has been filling me with. Before I would confess to God begging his forgiveness when I binged and purged. Yet, the next time, I felt deeper in Satan's grasp, because I couldn't forgive myself and I couldn't accept God's forgiveness. I always thought that the answer lied in drawing closer to God. Yet, I went to Him in fear, confusion, acting as a sinner who couldn't be loved. No more. Through the Scriptures, I am no longer a defeated Christian. I don't consider myself a bulimic. I consider myself a saint. Salt of the earth, Christ's friend. A slave of righteousness. Food has no power over me. Satan has lost his grip on me"* (The Bondage Breaker Audio Book, Neil T. Anderson).

Remember your emancipation on the cross: you are not a slave to sin. You are God's child. Proactively give yourself as the instrument of God. Remember God's promise---no condemnation for you in Christ. Declare to your enemy that you are free in Christ. Declare to the devil that you are a child of God in Christ. Declare to your accuser that there is no condemnation in Christ.

**Action Point:** Memorize Romans 8:1: *"Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Amen.