



Romans 7:1-25 | Week 87 | 3/23/2014

1. Why do think it is hard to do good things? Why is it hard to not do bad things?
2. Describe what it feels like to be a Christian with the heart desire to do the will of God. Compare your experiences before and after you became a Christian. Explain why you need Jesus every day.
3. In verses 14-25 Paul moves from the past tense (non-Christian past) into the present tense. What positive things does he say about himself as a Christian in the present tense?
4. What negative things does he say?
5. How can these both be true at the same time?
6. Have you ever been discouraged by sin and failure in your life? How does this chapter encourage you to respond? (v. 24, 25)
7. What is Paul looking forward to in verse 25a? (see 5:9, 10; 8:23; 13:11)
8. This gospel recognizes that we are saved by what Jesus has done and not by what we have done. Encourage your family to rely upon what Jesus has already done and to trust what he is doing to restore and renew a world lost and broken by sin (Revelation 21:5). Confess your inability and your overwhelming need for the gospel every day.
9. Pray.

Slavery in the United States was abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment on December 18, 1865. How many slaves were there on December 19? In reality, there should have been none. But many still lived like slaves, because they never learned the truth. Others knew and even believed they were free but chose to live as they always had.

Now suppose several plantation owners were devastated by the Emancipation Proclamation. "We're ruined! Slavery has been abolished. We've lost the battle to keep our slaves." But their chief spokesman slyly responded, "Not necessarily, as long as these people think they're still slaves, the Emancipation Proclamation will have no practical effect. We don't have a legal right over them anymore, but many of them don't know it. Keep your slaves from learning the truth, and your control over them will not even be challenged." !

One cotton farmer asked, "But what if the news spreads?" "Don't panic. We have another barrel in our gun. We may not be able to keep them from hearing the news, but we can still keep them from understanding it. They don't call me the 'father of lies' for nothing. We still have the potential to deceive the whole world. Just tell them that they misunderstood the Thirteenth Amendment. Tell them that they are going to be free, not that they are free already. The truth they heard is just positional truth, not actual truth. Someday they may receive the benefits, but not now." !

"But they'll expect me to say that. They won't believe me." "Then pick out a few persuasive ones who are convinced that they're still slaves and let them do the talking for you. Remember, most of these free people were born as slaves and have been slaves their whole lives. All we have to do is deceive them so that they still think like slaves. As long as they continue to do what slaves do, it will not be hard to convince them that they must still be slaves. They will maintain their slave identity because of the things they do. The moment they try to profess that they are no longer slaves, just whisper in their ear, 'How can you even think you are no longer a slave when you are still doing things that slaves do?' After all, we have the capacity to accuse the brethren day and night."!

Years later, many had still not heard the wonderful news that they had been freed, so naturally they continued to live the way they had always lived. Some heard the good news but told themselves, "I'm still living like a slave, doing the same things I have always done. My experience tells me that I must not be free. Everything is the same as before the Proclamation, so it must not be true. I must still be a slave." So they continued as if they had not received freedom! !

Then one day, a former slave heard the good news and received it with great joy. He checked out the validity of the Proclamation and discovered that the highest of all authorities had originated the decree. Not only that, but it personally cost the authority a tremendous price so that slaves could be free. The slave's life was transformed. He reasoned that it would be hypocritical to continue living as a slave, even though his feelings told him he still was. Determined to live by what he knew to be true, his experiences began to change dramatically. He realized that his old master had no authority over him and did not need to be obeyed. He gladly served the one who set him free.!

Neil T. Anderson. Who I Am In Christ: A Devotional