

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

LIVING

BY THE

LAW

OF LIFE

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Living Stream Ministry

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Three crucial words in [Romans 7 and 8](#) are law, life, and death. It is difficult even for scientists to define life and death. In the Bible, death is spoken of in a very definite way. [First Corinthians 15:26](#) says that death is the last enemy, and [Revelation 20:14](#), that death will be cast into the lake of fire. In order for death to be cast into the lake of fire, death must be concrete and tangible. In [Revelation 20](#) death is related to Satan on the one hand and to Hades on the other, both of which are to be cast into the lake of fire. This proves that Satan is an actual person and that Hades is a definite place. Therefore, death must also be something concrete. Nevertheless, no one can adequately explain what death is.

FOUR LAWS

The matter of law is profound. Many Bible students have been troubled by Paul's use of the word "law" in [Romans 7](#). This word firstly denotes the law of God, that is, the ten commandments ([7:22](#)). Then in [7:23](#) Paul speaks of "the law of my mind," and in [8:2](#), of "the law of sin and of death" and of the "law of the Spirit of life." It is difficult to understand the words "law" and "life"

and even more difficult to understand the term “the law of the Spirit of life.” Therefore, in [chapters seven and eight](#) the word “law” is used in different ways: for the law of God, for the law of the mind, for the law of sin and of death, and for the law of the Spirit of life.

ANOTHER LAW

In [chapter seven](#), however, there is still another law: “I find then the law that, at my willing to do the good, the evil is present with me” ([v. 21](#)). Before we can know the law covered in this verse, we need to understand the law of God, the law of the mind, the law of sin and of death (which is in the law of sin in our members), and the law of the Spirit of life. Learning these four laws is like learning the basic principles of mathematics. The law in [verse 21](#) is neither the law of the mind nor the law of sin in our members. We may call it “the law that.” There is a law, a principle, that whenever we will to do good, the evil is present with us. The law in [7:21](#) refers to this principle.

Paul discovered the principle that whenever he tried to do good, evil was present with him. Have you ever realized that there is such a law? If we do not try to do good, it seems that evil is not present. But it is a law that whenever we try to do good, the evil is present. For example, if you

do not try to be humble, pride will not seem to be present. But if you make up your mind to be humble, pride will be present with you. Likewise, if you do not make up your mind not to lose your temper, your temper is not present. But whenever you determine never to lose your temper again, your temper is present immediately. This is “the law that.” This law has no commandments, only the principle that whenever we will to do good, evil is present.

Not many Christians, including the seeking Christians, know that there is such a law. However, we all have been troubled by the fact that whenever we purpose to be patient, we fail. Instead of being patient, we become angry. In like manner, whenever we make up our mind to be humble, we end up being proud. Before we were saved or when we were not diligent in seeking the Lord, we seemed to be doing rather well. Later, we learned that we should be a new person. I was taught in this way. But the more I tried to live like a new person, the more the old person was present with me. Then I was taught to reckon myself dead, and I practiced this teaching. However, the more I reckoned myself dead, the more living I became. The more I tried to do good, the worse I was.

I believe that we all have experienced this. When we were careless, we apparently were all

right. But when we desired to do good to please the Lord, it seemed that our behavior became worse. For example, a brother may say, “As a Christian who loves the Lord, I should not lose my temper with my wife or mistreat her. I will ask the Lord to help me in this matter.” However, shortly afterward, this brother loses his temper with his wife.

I was bothered by matters like this for eight years, from 1925 until 1933. During those years, there were many times when I could not eat or sleep well because I was troubled about my Christian life. Some with this problem have even thought to stop being Christians and have said to themselves, “I don’t want to be a Christian any longer. I was told that if I became a Christian, I would be happy. But now I am troubled every day. I want to be humble, but instead I am proud.” Through this kind of experience I was exposed, unable to believe how evil I was. Through reading the Bible and through my experience in the Christian life, I have found that there is a law operating in human beings that when we try to do good, evil is present. When I discovered this law, I realized that I should not be so foolish as to keep on trying to do good. Trying to do good is like pushing the button that causes evil to be present. If you do not push the button, evil is not here. But if you push it, evil comes immediately,

eager to work. It was in 1933 that I first stopped pushing this button. I found it difficult, however, to keep from pushing it, for I had been pushing it all my life. Although I know better than to push this button, I must confess that sometimes I push it even now. Probably you have pushed this button already today. Maybe we shall not stop this completely until we are raptured or until we are in the New Jerusalem.

Perhaps you have read [Romans 7](#) again and again without seeing this fifth law. In addition to the four laws, there is the law that operates whenever we will to do good. We need to ask the Lord to keep us from pushing this button, for whenever we push it, evil is present. If we try to be patient, we push the button, and we are angry instead. If we try to be humble, we push the button again, and we are proud. Christians have often prayed that the Lord would help them to do good, to do such things as love their wives or submit to their husbands. But we need to pray that the Lord would keep us from trying to do these things. Regarding this, we need a revelation, a vision, that will keep us from pushing the button that causes evil to be present with us.

THREE PERSONS AND THREE LIVES

Now we need to consider the law of good in our mind, the law of sin in our members, and

the law of life in our spirit. In the garden of Eden there were two trees—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. In these two trees we see good, evil, and life. With each of these there is a law: the law of good, the law of evil, and the law of life. We are a miniature garden of Eden because the triangular situation involving God, man, and Satan is now within us. Furthermore, the law of good, the law of evil, and the law of life are all in us.

As far as persons are concerned, there are just three beings in the universe: the divine person, God; the evil person, Satan; and the human person, man. Each of these persons has a life. The divine person has the divine life, the human person has the human life, and the evil person has the evil life. Our human life does not come merely from our parents; it comes from God's creation. Our human life was created when Adam was created, not when we were born of our parents.

After his creation, man fell. At the time of the fall, an evil life was injected into man's body. As we have pointed out, in the fall not only did man do something wrong, but something evil entered into him. For example, if a child drinks poison, not only does he do something wrong, but something gets into him. By the fall the evil life of Satan came into man's body, and now this evil life is in our flesh. Therefore, everyone, no matter whether

he is a gentleman or a robber, has the human life, which is good, and the satanic life, which is evil. This is the reason that people can be both good and evil, both kind and devilish. No one likes to do evil things. But within us there is a person with a life that likes to do evil. Therefore, Paul said, “For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil I do not will, this I practice” (7:19). This means that it is no longer we who do certain things; rather, it is an evil person with an evil life within us who does those things.

Every human being is not only a son of Adam, but also a child of the Devil. In [John 8:44](#) the Lord Jesus told the Jews, “You are of your father the devil, and it is your will to do the desires of your father.” Everyone has two fathers, a human father and Satan as a father. One day after I had given a message on this matter in Shanghai, a brother asked me to stop saying that we are children of Satan. Telling him that this did not originate with me, I referred him to [1 John 3:10](#), which speaks of “the children of the devil.” Since we are children of the Devil, then certainly the Devil must be our father. This was the reason the Lord Jesus said that the Jews were of their father the Devil. Therefore, all fallen human beings have two fathers, each with a different life, the human father with the human life and Satan as their father with the satanic life.

Praise the Lord that our history does not stop with the creation and the fall! We have been saved and regenerated, born again. When Nicodemus thought that being born again was to enter into his mother's womb and to be born, the Lord Jesus answered that to be born again is to be born of the Spirit: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" ([John 3:6](#)). Thus, to be born again means to be born of God ([John 1:13](#)). Hallelujah, a third person, even God Himself, has been born in us! With this divine person we have the divine life.

The first person, the human person, is our being, our self. This person is in our soul, which is represented by our mind. The life of this person is primarily in the mind. The second person, the satanic person, is in our body, that is, in our flesh. But praise the Lord that the third person, the divine person, is in our spirit! As we all know, man has three parts: a spirit, a soul, and a body. In our soul we have the human person, in our body we have the satanic person, and in our spirit we have the divine person. How wonderful!

Christians are complicated. When I was young, I was taught that believers have two natures: an old nature and a new nature. Later I learned that this understanding is not adequate. Every genuine Christian has three persons with three lives. God, Satan, and the self are all in us. Sometimes

these three persons fight with one another. It is impossible for them to be in harmony or have any fellowship.

EVERY LIFE HAVING A LAW

Every kind of life has a law. A law denotes a natural power with a certain tendency and activity. For example, we breathe because we are alive. As long as we have life, the law of this life causes us to breathe. We may use digestion as another example. After we eat a meal, there is no need for us to try to digest our food. Digestion is a matter of law. Whenever we eat, the law of our physical life functions to digest the food.

The same is true of animal life. Birds fly because it is the law of the life of a bird to fly. A bird is not taught to fly; it is born with the life to fly. Hence, it is natural for a bird to fly. You may frustrate the function of this law by putting a bird in a cage. But once the door of the cage is open, the bird will fly away. On the contrary, a cat can never fly. No matter how much you command a cat to fly, even threatening to punish it, it will still not be able to fly because it does not have a life with a law of flying. However, because a cat has a mouse-catching life, it naturally chases mice. Dogs bark because they have a barking life with a barking law. There is no need to teach a dog to bark; a dog barks naturally and spontaneously

because its life is filled with the tendency and activity of barking.

Turning from animal life to plant life, we may take fruit trees as another illustration of the fact that every life has a law. I am not very good at distinguishing one kind of fruit tree from another. However, it is easy to discern a tree by its fruit. An apple tree will, of course, bear apples, and an orange tree will bear oranges. What nonsense it would be to command the apple tree to bear oranges and the orange tree to bear apples! No one would ever be foolish enough to do this. An orange tree bears oranges, and an apple tree bears apples. An orange tree has the life of an orange tree, in which there is the law that functions in the bearing of oranges.

In like manner, there is no need to teach a carnation to bear carnation blossoms instead of cherry blossoms. In fact, there is no need even to teach it to blossom. If someone tried to teach a carnation to blossom and a carnation could speak, it would say, "Don't waste your time teaching me to blossom. Simply leave me alone and let me grow. Eventually, I will blossom." Blossoming comes from the law of the carnation life. All these examples show that every life has a law.

THREE LIVES AND THREE LAWS

Because we Christians have three lives, we also

have three laws. We have the human life, which is good. With this good life we have the law of good. Because of this law, everyone naturally desires to do good; there is no need for anyone to be taught. We were born with the desire to do good, and every child has a human life with its law of good. However, as we have seen, man has not only the human life, but also the satanic life with its law of evil. Because of this satanic life in man, a child tells lies spontaneously, without being taught. In fact, Christian parents always teach their children not to lie. I taught my children not to lie, but they lied anyway. For example, I instructed my children not to play with the water that was used for washing. One day I came in and found one of the children playing with the water. Immediately he put his hands behind his back. Instead of rebuking him or punishing him, I said to myself, "This is fallen man. What good does it do to rebuke him?" You may command a bush not to produce thorns, but it will bear thorns nonetheless. This is the law of the life of a thorn bush. In like manner, children lie without being taught to lie because the life of Satan with its law of lying is in them. When they tell lies, children are simply living according to this law of lying. We may need to be taught how to read but not how to lie. In principle, for fallen people to lie is the same as for cats to chase mice. Both are the

activity of the law of the life that is in them. Now we can understand why we do the opposite when we will to do good. We have two lives in us, the human life and the satanic life, and each life has its law. But the law of the satanic life is stronger than the law of the human life.

Praise the Lord that we also have the divine life! Of the three lives in us, the divine life is the strongest, and the human life is the weakest.

LIVING BY THE LAW OF LIFE

What we do in our daily living depends upon the law we are living by. To do good is a law, to do evil is another law, and to live by life is still another law. Do not think that you can do anything without a law. Everything we do as Christians in our daily living is a function of one of the laws. Suppose I become angry at a brother. I may try to suppress my anger and say to myself, "Although you are angry with this brother, you must not show it. If you lose your temper, you will also lose your face and cause a problem."

Such behavior is not genuine; it is political. Furthermore, it cannot last very long. Some who suppress their anger develop stomach trouble as a result. Although we may be political in this way, eventually the law of the satanic life will cause us to lose our temper. To suppress our temper is to play politics; to lose it is to live according to the

law of sin. If we are genuine, real, and frank, whatever we do or say will be a function of one of these laws.

Everything is determined by the law we live by each day. If we live by the human life, the law of the human life will function. However, the human life is weak, and its law is fragile because of the presence of the law of the satanic life, which is much stronger. Hallelujah, we have the strongest law in us, the law of the Spirit of life! We should live not by our human life but by the divine life.

In [Romans 8](#) Paul says that we should walk according to spirit. To walk according to spirit is to live by the divine life. When we live by the divine life, the law of this life, the strongest law, works within us. No law can defeat the law of the divine life. By this law we are freed from every difficulty. Do not be concerned about your problems. As long as you walk according to the spirit and live by the law of the divine life, this law will work for you spontaneously.

We all need to be reminded to push the right button, not the button which causes “the law that” to function. Do not try to love your wife, for in your human life you simply cannot do it. Instead, put your finger on the right button, the law of the Spirit of life. If you do this, you shall love your wife spontaneously. Likewise, sisters, do not try

to submit to your husbands. The more you try to do this, the less you will be able to submit. Rather, press the right button, and you will submit to your husbands automatically.

The right button is in our spirit. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit (8:16), and the button is the Spirit of God Himself. Day by day and hour by hour, we must keep our finger on this button. To do this is to have our mind set on the spirit and to walk according to the spirit. Never take your finger off the button of the Spirit. If you keep your finger on the button, you will be in the spirit, the Spirit will be life to you, and every negative thing will be put to death.

The secret to keeping our finger on the right button is to know that we have a human spirit and that the Spirit of life is in our spirit. We need to turn our mind, our whole being, to the spirit and to set our mind there. Then we shall walk according to the spirit. When we do this, all the negative things are spontaneously put to death, and we enjoy the divine life. As we do this, the desire for good by the human life with its law of good is satisfied, and the requirements of the law of God are fulfilled. Furthermore, the evil law of the satanic life is defeated. All is a matter of law. Do not try to love or to do good. Instead, turn your being to your spirit and keep your finger on the right button, that is, on the Lord Himself,

who is everything to us as the Spirit of life. In this way you will enjoy Him, and you will live by the law of the Spirit of life.

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