

## **FOLLOWING JESUS: (part two of a four-part study)**

In this segment our focus will be on the two internal factors which can hinder us from faithfully following our Savior every day. Our propensity toward sin is undeniable. The apostle Paul openly admits as much about himself in Romans 7:18, 24-25, where we read the following –

**“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 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.”**

Rather than making excuses for his struggle with sin, or worse, being in denial about it, Paul confesses it and implies in v25, that he is looking to his Savior for forgiveness and victory over the behavior with which he struggled. Ironically, the formula for overcoming our propensity toward sin is provided earlier in Romans 6:1-19. The sequence from Romans 6 through 7, indicates that this God-given resource, as a result of our redemption in Christ, does not eliminate the Christian’s struggle with sin; and is part of the process known as progressive sanctification.

In regard to the second internal factor, our personal predispositions in the form of various weaknesses, the apostle directs our attention to Romans 8:26 –

**“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words . . .”**

No Christian can claim to be a perfect human being. Every person consists of a combination of strengths and weaknesses: physically, mentally and emotionally. In whatever area we happen to be weak, there exists the potential for failing to follow our Savior fully. Paul admits to the believers in Corinth that he began his ministry there in a state of weakness, marked by fear and trembling (1 Corinthians 2:3; cf. Acts 18:9-10). He also exhorts the believers in the church at Rome to be cognizant of the weakness in others for the purpose of their spiritual edification (Romans 15:1-2).

This is why Jesus, in Matthew 22:37-38, confirms that the greatest and foremost commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. The encouraging aspect of this overwhelming requirement which we often overlook, is that God doesn’t expect us to love Him, or follow Jesus, with someone else’s heart, soul or mind, but our own! This means that we cannot and should not compare ourselves to others (2 Corinthians 10:12), but must maintain our focus on Christ, following Him wherever and however He may lead us, as individuals (Hebrews 12:1-3).