

## THE OR SERIES 8: OLD NATURE OR NEW NATURE?

*For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. (Romans 7:22, NIV)*

CURIOSLY ENOUGH, right in the midst of the Del Monte's Forest's many famed courses—Cypress Point, Pebble Beach, Spyglass Hill, Monterey Peninsula CC, Spanish Bay, and Poppy Hills—you will find the Stevenson School, a top-shelf boarding school named for the famed author Robert Louis Stevenson. We have no record of Stevenson's having played golf, but he must have understood it quite well, for he was born in Scotland, lived for a time in Monterey, and—most significantly—wrote *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

We can chuckle at this notion, for if any group of readers empathizes with a person's sudden, desperate change from good to bad, it is golfers. And to add a bit of marvelous irony to the whole matter, Stevenson's wife once told of her awakening Robert from the dream that would shape *Jekyll and Hyde*; she said this upset him, as she had stirred him from, in his words, "a fine bogey tale"!

Of course, in our game, there are no fine bogeys (well, maybe a few). What we'd far rather have is perfection all the time.

The apostle Paul was this way. It disturbed him mightily, now that he was in Christ and Christ was in him, that he was still prone to sin's fierce grip. It had no eternal hold over him any longer, but it drove him to do the very things he did not want to do, for sin is its own impetus (Romans 7:8), an evil inspiring evil.

Why would God who has saved us allow us to continue in such a state, to declare even as a redeemed believer, "What a wretched man I am!" (7:24)?

The simplest answer is dependence. Immediately after lamenting his wretchedness, Paul lifted up an exaltation: "Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Though we are to hourly strive for righteousness, the sins of our day keep us leaning into our Savior for the application of his salvation. So, too, we lean into him to sanctify us—that is, to mature us in our faith and its expression. It is a slow process, fraught with failure, but it keeps us on a heavenly trajectory. Such recognitions that God is at work in us are signs themselves that we are indeed people of a new nature. Let us pray that each day this nature increasingly overrides the old one.

**Opening questions** Why do you think a golfer's game is so readily prone to falling apart at any time? • How much would you say your own shortcomings and failures discourage you?

**READING** Romans 7:14-25; Romans 8:1-17

### Honest frustration (Romans 7)

What surprises you about the nature or wording of Paul's laments? To what degree do you understand his frustrations?

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### Security and favor (Romans 7-8)

How do the closing lines of chapter 7 and the opening lines of chapter 8 supply both encouragement and hope for those who are in Christ?

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### Life in the Spirit (Romans 8)

If your spirit is alive because of righteousness (v. 10), what kinds of actions will this produce in your body?

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How do the words of verses 16-17 cause you to see yourself differently today?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/HH7KDOHJf6s>