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Publications

Saul of Tarsus

Blameless ...and lost!



*“the witnesses laid down their clothes at a
young man's feet, whose name was Saul.”*
Acts 7:58

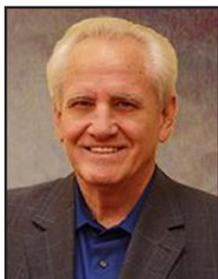
by Leroy Surface

Saul of Tarsus

“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:24

“O wretched man that I am!” Is this the cry of one who has been “born of God,” or is it the cry of a hopeless sinner who has despaired of finding relief from his sin? The Calvinist thought, which was developed about five hundred years ago, is that sin remains in every child of God, and the knowledge of the “wretchedness” of their heart “keeps them humble” and very cautious in their daily walk. The modern church has drifted so far from this position, that many seem “proud” to declare, “We are all sinners; we sin every day.”

In this message, we search the scriptures to discover exactly who and what Saul of Tarsus was until his surrender to Jesus Christ. We will also show proof from the scriptures that the record Paul gave in the seventh chapter of Romans is not the “normal Christian walk,” nor was it any part of the apostle’s experience after his conversion to Jesus. The apostle Paul was not a sinner, and he did not have a “sin problem.” His deliverance from what he called “the body of this death” came suddenly when he met Jesus, and knew He is his Messiah. We will see the proof Paul gave that he was not a “believer” during the time of his “Romans Seven” experience.



Leroy Surface

I was surprised to discover Saul of Tarsus was an almost “perfect man” according to all the righteousness revealed in the Law of Moses. He did not believe in a “sin nature,” and did not believe he was a “sinner.” The seventh chapter of Romans is the record of young Saul of Tarsus when he first discovered, by the Tenth



Keith Surface

Commandment, he was a sinner. The devastation that followed was manifested in his hatred for Jesus and all those who trusted in Him. He “made havoc of the church” Acts 8:3, and “breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” Acts 9:1. It was in such a state as this that Saul of Tarsus finally cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me...,” and his cry for deliverance was heard and answered by our Lord Jesus Christ. A “wretched man” no more, he became the greatest of the apostles of Jesus Christ, and “turned the world upside down.”

Saul of Tarsus

Message by: Leroy Surface

The Apostle Paul is almost universally recognized by the Christian community as the greatest of the apostles and perhaps one of the greatest men of all time. Certainly, he ranks along with Abraham and Moses of the Old Testament in the significance of what God chose him to do. The nation of Israel was “chosen in Abraham” three generations before the “children of Israel” came into existence, and Moses was the one chosen to deliver them out of bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt, and bring them to their “land of promise.” I believe it is an indisputable fact that except for the ministry of Paul and the revelation of Jesus Christ he received, the church today would be nothing more than minor sect of Judaism. Paul was a “chosen vessel” Acts 9:15, chosen by Jesus to preach the gospel of Christ among the Gentiles. He did what no other apostle of Christ was willing to do, and fulfilled the ministry God gave him in the face of more persecution and rejection than any of his peers. It was in the midst of great persecution that it was said of Paul and Silas, his traveling companion, *“They have turned the world upside down”* Acts 17:6.

The apostle Paul was about 60 years old at his death, and was about 31 years of age when he met Jesus on the Damascus road. If these numbers are true, his lifespan was divided into two parts, 30 years before his conversion, and 30 years after. For the first thirty years he answered to his given name, Saul, and became known in the Jews religion as “Saul of Tarsus.” Several years after his conversion, he adopted his Latin name, Paul, possibly because it would be less offensive to the Gentiles whom he was sent to reach for Christ. In this message, we will seek to understand who “Saul of Tarsus” really was for the first thirty years of his life, and exactly what brought about his conversion to Jesus, to trust in Him as “the Christ.” I will not use information from any source other than that which is written in the scriptures of the KJV bible as we “seek and discover” the young “Saul of Tarsus.”

Young Saul

“...and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen...” Acts 7:58-59

This verse brings the first mention Saul of Tarsus. It is in the record of the stoning death of Stephen, and simply identifies him as “*a young man*” whose name was Saul. He was the one chosen to watch the clothes of the “*false witnesses*” Acts 6:11-14 who had condemned Stephen with the false testimony they gave before the council. It is in the writings of the apostle Paul that we find other bits and pieces of information about Saul’s youth to find a proper image about who this young man was.

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace....” Galatians 1:15

The apostle Paul makes it very clear, that the God who “*called me by His grace,*” was the same God “*who separated me from my mother's womb.*” His parents were devout Jews who served the true God of Israel under the Old Covenant. Saul of Tarsus was part of the generation of Jews who were born under the Old Covenant, but lived to see the “*New Covenant*” which God had promised to come Jeremiah 31:31-34. This verse serves to confirm that the God of the Old Covenant is also the God of the New Covenant, and is the Father of Jesus Christ.

By every standard of the Law of Moses, young Saul was a “*righteous man.*” Several years after his conversion to Jesus, he confirmed his righteousness by the law when he wrote to the Philippians, “*...touching the righteousness which is in the law, (I was) blameless*” Philippians 3:6. His parents were godly parents, who did everything for their child exactly as prescribed by Moses in the law. They served the living and true God of Israel, and almost certainly were numbered with those who “*believed God, and it was accounted to them for righteousness*” Romans 4:3.

“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.” Philippians 3:5

Saul of Tarsus was taught in all the commandments and ordinances of Moses from the time of his birth. His parents did for him everything Moses commanded in his Law, indicated by his saying, *“...circumcised the eighth day.”* By birthright, he was *“of the stock of Israel,”* and *“of the tribe of Benjamin.”* He was *“an Hebrew of the Hebrews,”* meaning his bloodline was pure. He was of the highest pedigree in Israel. He was also a Pharisee, which means he was of the sect of Jews who kept the Law of Moses most scrupulously. As the apostle Paul, he said of himself in those early years, *“...touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”* Philippians 3:6. He obeyed the Law of Moses so blamelessly that no one could convict or convince him of sin.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were the parents of John the Baptist. The scripture said of them, *“They were both **righteous before God**, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless”* Luke 1:6. Notice, they were *“righteous before God,”* which means their *“righteousness”* was much more than keeping ceremonies and doing ordinances. They, like Abraham, and a host of others before them, *“believed God.”* They had the *“righteousness of faith.”* The same language was used of the young man Saul. There is no reason to believe he was anything other than a model young man and an excellent example for young Jewish men everywhere. In fact, Paul testified of those days, that he *“...profited in the Jews’ religion **above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers”*** Galatians 1:14.

*“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city **at the feet of Gamaliel**, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.”* Acts 22:3

Three more gems from the early life of Saul of Tarsus. He was educated in Jerusalem *“at the feet of Gamaliel.”* Gamaliel was the most famous of the teachers of the law, and indications are that he

was a “God fearing man.” He was the one who saved the lives of the Apostles when the high priest and elders of the Jews took counsel to slay them Acts 5:33. Gamaliel stood up to speak to the council and concluded his remarks with these words of wisdom; *“Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God”* Acts 5:38-39.

This was the nature of the God fearing teacher who instructed and trained Saul of Tarsus from his childhood. There is no reason to believe Saul of Tarsus was anything other a clean, decent, and moral young man in the day in which he heard the gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time, as it was given by Stephen. This day was perhaps the first “turning point” in the life of Saul of Tarsus, because it was the day, as he would later write to the Romans, that “sin” received a “starting point” in his life. It was the day in which he made a decision that would turn his good and innocent life into a virtual “hell on earth.” This is what is commonly called “the Romans seven experience.”

Romans Seven

“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” Romans 7:1-3.

In the first three verses of this chapter, Paul gave the analogy of a woman who is married to a husband, and is bound to him as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is freed to “marry another.” To this point, the analogy speaks of the natural “law of marriage,” which is expressed even today in the marriage vows we take, “...*till death do we part.*” Paul was not giving this analogy for the purpose

of a woman married to a man, but for the devout Jew who was married to the Law of Moses. In the analogy, the husband had to die before the woman could “marry another,” because if she simply forsook her husband for another man, she would be stoned to death as an adulteress. It was the same with the one who was married to the Law; if they simply walked away from Moses’ Law, they would “*die without mercy*” Hebrews 10:28. It is obvious that “The Law of Moses” was not going to “grow old and die,” so the one married to the Law would have to “die to the law” before they would be “free to marry another.”

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” Romans 7:4.

Saul of Tarsus had been “married” to the Law of Moses all his life, and he dearly loved it. Before he could be at all “converted” to Jesus, he would have to lose his confidence in the Law he had trusted for righteousness, and see that this “legal husband” which he loved and trusted, was in fact “*weak and beggarly,*” Galatians 4:9 and could not keep him in the hour of his need.

Many teachers believe there is a “process” we must go through in order to be “saved” (almost every bible version with the exception of the KJV says we are “*being saved,*” while the KJV says we “*are saved*” I Corinthians 1:18). The truth is, salvation and our sanctification were finished at Calvary through the blood and cross of Jesus Christ, and they are given to those who believe the truth as a “*gift of righteousness*” Romans 5:17. There is no “process” for a believer of the truth, but for Saul of Tarsus to “die to the Law,” was a very painful process. Paul said, “*I have suffered the loss of all things*” which he had trusted in under the Law of Moses. No one just walks away from the Law, just as no one just walks away from sin. We must, through “*belief of the truth*” II Thessalonians 2:13, find our “death” to both sin and the Law, through crucifixion with (in union with) Jesus Christ on His CROSS Romans 6:6. Before this could happen for Saul of Tarsus, the Law must so completely fail him and sin so totally destroy him, until

the time he would cry for deliverance, which he would find *“through Jesus Christ our Lord”* Romans 7:24-25.

Notice the apostle said, *“...ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another,”* which speaks of Jesus Christ, who *“loved us, and gave Himself for us”* Galatians 2:20. Only those who are *“dead to the law”* can be married to Christ, and only those who are *“married to Christ”* are *“freed from the Law.”* We know Christ *“abolished”* the Law of Moses for those who *“trust in Him,”* but those who refuse Jesus Christ will yet be judged by the Law. Paul said, *“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law”* Romans 2:12. Those who are *“married to Christ (one with Christ John 17:20-23)”* have a loving husband, and His *“law”* is written in their hearts.

In the Flesh

“For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” Romans 7:5

Saul of Tarsus, as is every one of us, was *“in the flesh”* from the moment of his birth into this world until the day he surrendered to Jesus on the Damascus road while persecuting the church. Not all his young life was spent in what we call *“the Romans seven experience,”* however. We were all born into this world as sinners by nature, but the effects of the sinful nature is different from person to person. Two children can be raised by the same parents, and one may be a model person, gentle, kind, moral, and obedient to both parents and civil authority. The other child, raised by the same parents, may be angry, rebellious against all authority, and end up in a life of drugs, crime, violence, and ultimately in prison. We have all seen this scenario play out many times, and while one child is almost perfect, and the other *“impossible,”* the fact is, both of them are sinners by nature until they surrender to Jesus Christ, and receive His life.

What the apostle called “*the motions of sins*” are best understood to be the “*emotions of sin,*” which do in fact work in every unregenerate person until they are taken away by Jesus Christ in true salvation. The term “*fruit unto death*” is that which is produced when these “emotions” are yielded to. The “good child” has never yielded to those “emotions of sin,” and “sin” has never gained control. This was the case of young Saul of Tarsus. His training in the religious law of the Jews did not give sin a “starting point” to take control of his life. He grew up in perfect harmony with the Law of Moses, and no one could rightly convict him of sin. This being the case, those “emotions of sin” worked in him just as in the heathen children around him, but his devout Jewish parents had properly “disciplined him” in all the principles and ordinances of Moses and his law. Understand, “good training and discipline,” while being a good thing for a child, is not “salvation.”

I have seen the case many times where Christian parents have raised their children to be “good Christians,” through “home schooling” in “Christian principles,” where they receive a Christian “philosophy of life.” These children often grow up believing they have been “saved” all their life, but when they become young adults, the “emotions of sin” begin, and very often they either “turn away” into a life of sin, or enter a lifetime of struggling against sin to serve God. Their “experience” proves to them “we are all sinners, who must sin every day,” which is what the apostle Paul called “*fruit unto death.*” This is not the way of those who have been “*born of God.*” The apostle John brought the conclusion of his first epistle with these words; “*We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not*” ¹ John 5:18 KJV.

Paul’s teaching on “*in the flesh*” will continue throughout the remainder of this chapter, until he gives this conclusion in the eighth chapter: “*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you*” Romans 8:8-9.

The apostle concludes the analogy of those who were “*married to the Law,*” (which he gave in the first six verses of this chapter) with these words:

“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” Romans 7:6

He is speaking of his present condition as the apostle Paul, and the condition of everyone who has “died to the law,” and are “married to Christ.” These alone are those who “*serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter* (the law).”

The Romans Seven Experience

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Romans 7: 7

From this verse forward in this chapter, Paul does not refer to the Law of Moses. It was “the Law of God” that identified sin in the young man Saul, and convinced him for the first time in his life, that he was a sinner. Having kept the Law of Moses “blameless” Philippians 3:6, Moses had no condemnation for him. He loved the Law, was in perfect harmony with it, and stood without condemnation under the Law of Moses the day he witnessed the trial of Stephen. He came into those court proceedings a model young Hebrew according to Moses’ Law, but he would leave those proceedings with something awakened in him which would turn his life into a literal “hell on earth.” He saw the face of Stephen “*as it had been the face of an angel*” Acts 6:15, while the false witnesses spoke their lies against him before the council. He heard a powerful indictment against the “fathers of Israel” in generations past for their rejection of those whom God chose, like Joseph, Moses, and the prophets. His final remarks given just before the council stopped him were these; “*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been*

now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.” Acts 7:51-53.

Upon this last charge, the members of the council lost all self-restraint: “*When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth*” Acts 7:54. Perhaps the last charge was the greatest of all insults to this council. They would defend their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth as a blasphemer and deceiver, but to say they had not kept the Law was a direct insult to every person on this council. They above all people in Israel were extremely zealous of the Law of Moses, and kept it blamelessly. For this charge, they were so enraged they “*gnashed on him with their teeth,*” and as they did so, Stephen “*looked up steadfastly to heaven*” and said, “*Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*” Acts 7:56.

This was too much for these elders of Israel. They had already lost all dignity in their rage against Stephen, but now, they “*...ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him*” Acts 7:57-58. This verse concludes with our first introduction to the young man, Saul; “*...and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul*” verse 58. These were the “*false witnesses*” upon whose testimony the trial of Stephen was based. According to the Law of Moses, they must be the first to cast a stone at Stephen. It is uncertain whether the protocol of the Law was followed that day, however, so angry was the entire council against Stephen.

The devout Jews did not believe they were sinners. In fact, they had no concept of a “sin nature.” The apostle Paul reveals this attitude of the Jews in his conversation with Peter; “*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles ...*” Galatians 2:15. The Jews who trusted in the Law of Moses could very well be the ones the apostle John spoke of in His Epistle:

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness (the Law of Moses), we lie, and do not the truth.”

I John 1:6

*“If we say that we **have no sin**, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* I John 1:8

*“If we say that we **have not sinned**, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”* I John 1:10

The self-righteous mindset of the scribes and Pharisees would have fit perfectly in each of the scenarios.

The devout Jew was confident he was “not a sinner” because he kept all the commandments and ordinances of Moses “blamelessly.” Many Christians believe the Law of Moses was designed to prove everyone is a sinner, because, “no one could keep it.” Such thinking is contradicted by the experience of many of the devout Jews under the law, however. The apostle Paul spoke of his reasons for trusting in the law, concluding with these words, “*Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; **touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.***” Philippians 3:6.

Luke introduced us to Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, saying, “*And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord **blameless.***” Luke 1:6. Even Jesus, when speaking of the scribes and Pharisees, whom He called “hypocrites” Matthew 23:12-15, said, “*If I had not come and spoken unto them, **they had not had sin:** but now they have no cloke for their sin*” John 15:22.

The scribes and Pharisees kept the Law of Moses so blamelessly that no one could condemn them for sin, but Jesus exposed the sin in their hearts, which among other things, was hatred. He said, “***He that hateth me hateth my Father also.** If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, **they had not had sin:** but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father*” John 15:23-24.

It was only when Saul of Tarsus discovered the truth of the nature of sin in his heart that he came to the realization he was, in fact, a sinner. He could no longer claim “*fellowship with God*” while he walked in “*the darkness of the law*” I John 1:6. He could not say “*I have no sin* (sin nature) I John 1:8, or “*I have not sinned*” I John 1:10. The knowledge of sin in his heart destroyed all his righteousness which

he had under the Law, and eventually brought him to the cry, “*O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” Romans 7:24

Consider the young man Saul on the day he witnessed the stoning death of Stephen. He stood on the sideline, chosen to watch the cloths of the false witnesses while they, along with the entire council, stoned Stephen to death. Young Saul of Tarsus was very special in the eyes of the high priest and council that condemned Stephen to death, but He was also “special in the eyes of God.” Three days after his conversion, Jesus told Ananias of Damascus “*he is a chosen vessel unto me*” Acts 9:15. Why would Jesus choose one so filled with hatred and murder against the Christians? He didn’t. Saul was chosen by God from his youth, long before his heart became filled with bitterness and hatred.

Young Saul of Tarsus was offended by the testimony of Jesus which Stephen gave before the council that day. The scripture says, “*And Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen’s) death.*” Some have believed Saul of Tarsus was of such great authority as a young man that he was the one who gave permission to stone him. Certainly this was not the case on that day. So great was the rage of the council, no one could have stopped the stoning of Stephen. This dignified body of the elders of Israel had become like a “lynch mob,” and needed no permission whatsoever to do this evil deed. The Greek text does not say that Saul “gave consent” for Stephen to be stoned, but that he “approved” the death of Stephen. It was nothing he said or did, but it was the attitude of his heart that got him in trouble with God.

Jesus said, “*He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me*” John 13:20. Saul had absolutely rejected the testimony of Stephen which he gave of Jesus, and in so doing, he had rejected Jesus. He had longed for the appearing of his Messiah, as had every devout Jew, but when he heard proof that Jesus is his Messiah, he refused to hear. He, along with the others, “*stopped their ears...*” Acts 7:57 “*...lest they should hear*” Acts 28:27. I cannot imagine the confusion of Saul’s heart when

he heard the words of Stephen's last breath; "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*" Acts 7:60, but we do know his anger against Stephen turned into hatred for all Christians, and of Jesus in particular.

I will use my "imagination" for a few moments. Stephen had charged the council of not keeping the Law Acts 7:53. Saul of Tarsus was very proud of his record of keeping all 613 commandments and ordinances of the Law "blameless" Philippians 3:6. He knew he had done this. That left only the Ten Commandments which God had spoken at Sinai, and he was certain he was blameless there also. He could number them in his mind; **1.** He worshiped one God, the living God of Israel. **2.** He did not make graven images to worship. **3.** He did not "*take the LORD's name in vain.*" **4.** He had always remembered the Sabbath Day, to "*keep it holy.*" **5.** He had honored his father and mother from his childhood. **6.** He was not a murderer. **7.** He did not commit adultery. **8.** He was not a thief. **9.** He did not bear false witness against his neighbor. **10.** "**Thou shalt not covet...**" It was here, after approving himself of keeping 613 commands and ordinances of Moses, and the first nine commandments of God, this last of all the commandments, the "Tenth Commandment" stunned him. He wrote, "*I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, **Thou shalt not covet***" Romans 7:7.

The tenth commandment is the only commandment which uncovers the secrets of the heart. All the other commandments either restrain evil actions or require religious activities, but the tenth commandment stands alone to expose the contents of our heart so we can "see ourselves" II Corinthians 13:5. Jesus said everything that defiles a person comes out of their heart. He said, "*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man*" Mark 7:21-23. It was the tenth commandment and the content of his heart that finally convinced Saul of Tarsus he was a sinner even though he had kept the Law of Moses blamelessly for the first thirty years of his life.

“But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.”

Romans7:8

This is the first place in the book of Romans the word “*commandment*” is used. It will be used six times from verse eight through verse thirteen. In every case, it speaks specifically of the tenth commandment, and not the Law in general. The Greek word “*aphormē*,” which was translated “*occasion*” is properly defined as “*a starting point*” by “*Strong’s Greek Dictionary*.” When Saul understood the tenth commandment, sin received a “*starting point*” to work in his heart, and the result was that he began to experience feelings and attitudes he had never known in his lifetime. Every manner of “*desires for that which is forbidden (concupiscence)*” found a place to work in his heart. These were not things he was doing, but with the tenth commandment, Saul of Tarsus awoke to the fact that “*sin in the heart...is sin*,” and that he was a sinner. This knowledge alone was enough to destroy the righteousness of Saul of Tarsus.

“For without the law sin was dead.” Saul of Tarsus was never in his lifetime “*without law*.” Even as the apostle Paul, he testified of this, saying, “*To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law*” I Corinthians 9:21. The Greek words which were translated “*without the law*” in this verse, actually mean “*apart from the law*.” The life Saul of Tarsus had as a young man was more than that which the mere keeping of commands and ordinances could give. There were many righteous men in the Old Testament, but none of them were “*made righteous*” by the Law. These were those who “*believed God*” as Abraham had “*believed God*.” Young Saul had been one of these. At the same time he was “*zealous of the traditions of the fathers*” Galatians 1:14, he was also “*zealous toward God*” Acts 22:3. He, along with every devout Jew of his time, looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, who would “*make an end of sins*,” and “*bring in everlasting righteousness*” Daniel 9:24-25. Had he “*died in faith*” before the coming of Jesus Christ

in ministry, he would undoubtedly have taken his place among the Old Testament saints who also *“died in faith.”*

“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Romans 7:9

When Paul said, *“I was alive without the law once...,”* it is obvious that he did not have “spiritual life,” which is Christ, but he had all the life which could be received before Christ died and rose again. He had what Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and host of other righteous men had under the Old Covenant. Paul said all that ended *“when the commandment came.”*

“...sin revived, and I died.” Instead of turning to trust in Jesus, Saul of Tarsus saw the Christians as the root of the turmoil he was in since the day he approved the death of Stephen. He *“had not known sin”* verse 7 before that time, but that was the day he was forced to examine himself under the light of all the commandments, and the tenth commandment alone could condemn him. Rather than surrender to Jesus of Nazareth and believe He is *“the Christ,”* Saul of Tarsus determined to destroy those who did believe. He dedicated his life, his substance, and all his energy to the goal of eradicating the earth of the Christians and all knowledge of Jesus. When Saul of Tarsus was found to be *“breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,”* he was a walking dead man. His mind was crazed by the hatred that drove him.

Two Laws

The scriptures clearly tell us there were two laws which were given at Sinai. The first is “The Law of God,” and the second is “The Law of Moses.” The first is “spiritual” Romans 7:14, and the second is “carnal” Hebrews 9:10. The first was “established” Romans 3:31 at Calvary, and the second was “abolished” Ephesians 2:15 on the cross. The first was “ordained unto life” Romans 7:10, the second was found to be “weak and unprofitable” Hebrews 7:18. It is in the book of Deuteronomy, however, that Moses clearly delineates the two laws.

“These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.” Deuteronomy 29:1

First, let me point out that the word “Deuteronomy” actually means “second law.” The Law of Moses was forty years in the making, and was completed on the last day of Moses’ life when he instructed the priest, *“Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee”* Deuteronomy 31:36. A further proof that Christ “abolished” the Law of Moses is given by the apostle Paul to the Colossians; *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was AGAINST US, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”* Colossians 2:14.

Moses, in this last day of his life, reminded the children of Israel of the “covenant” God had made with them forty years before. He said, *“The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb”* Deuteronomy 5:2. In the following verses, Deuteronomy 6-21, Moses related to them the words God had spoken to them from the mountain, which we know as “The Ten Commandments.” In the verse 22, Moses made it clear to the children of Israel that God **“added no more.”**

“These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more.” Deuteronomy 5:22

Fifteen hundred years later, the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians concerning the Law of Moses; *“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made”* Galatians 3:19. Their “transgression” was when they refused to hear the voice of God as He spoke to them out of the burning mount Sinai, and thus broke the covenant God had made with them only three days before when He said, *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation”* Exodus 19:5-6.

Ordained to Life

“And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” Romans 7:10

The Law of God was ordained to life. It was a covenant of blessing upon “*a kingdom of priest*” and “*a holy nation.*” It was made for a righteous people, who would be “*made righteous*” only if they “*believed God,*” exactly as their father Abraham had “*believed God*” Romans 4:3. The law of God did not speak to a murderer, “*thou shalt not kill,*” or to a thief, “*thou shalt not steal.*” These were not telling an ungodly people what not to do; instead they were statements of fact which define the nature of “*a kingdom of priest*” and “*a holy nation.*” It is not a grievous thing I John 5:3 for God to define his chosen people and holy nation with words like “*thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; and thou shalt not bear false witness.*” It would be “grievous” to a murderer, an adulterer, a thief and a liar,” but God’s commandments are not grievous to a child of God. It may seem to be grievous to a carnal person who claims to be a Christian, however, to say “*thou shalt not covet,*” which speaks of the “*thoughts and intents of the heart*” Hebrews 4:12, an area over which no person has control.

The children of Israel did not have a “heart” to receive God’s covenant of blessing. God said to Moses on the same day they refused to hear His voice at Sinai, “*O that there were **such an heart** in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!*” The children of Israel did not have such an heart, so the Law of Moses was “*added,*” which was a “carnal law” for a carnal people. The apostle Paul told the Galatians, “*...it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made*” Galatians 3:19. There would never be a people with “**such an heart in them**” until Christ would die on the cross to “*take away the sin of the world*” John 1:29, and to “*wash us from our sins in His own blood*” Revelation 1:5. He would “*purify their hearts*” Acts 15:8-9.

Ordained to Death

The Law of Moses was “ordained to death.” The apostle Paul called it “*the ministration of death*” II Corinthians 3:7, and “*the ministration of condemnation*” II Corinthians 3:9. It was not made for a righteous person, but as the apostle wrote to Timothy, “*Knowing this, that **the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust***” I Timothy 1:8-11.

The Law of God was destined to be written in the hearts of the children of Israel. When they hardened their hearts against God, however, He wrote His commandments on tables of stone instead. The prophet Zechariah said, “*They made their hearts as an adamant stone (a diamond), lest they should hear the law...*” Zechariah 7:12. It is impossible to write upon a heart so hard as a diamond, so God wrote on two tables of stone instead. Written in the hearts of the people, the commandments would have been life to them, but “*engraved in stone,*” they were a testimony against them of the hardness of their hearts. Written on stone, the Ten Commandments testified against the people that they were a “lawless people,” who could not receive the commandments in their heart. This would explain the words of Paul, “*...the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death*” verse 10.

A New Covenant

Very shortly before Jerusalem was destroyed because of their idolatry, God gave a promise of a “*New Covenant*” through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them*

out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Jeremiah 31:31-34

This is the promise of a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*” which the prophet Ezekiel also spoke of. Ezekiel 36:26. It is the promise of a “*divine nature*” which the apostle Peter said the children of God partake of. II Peter 1:4. The apostle Paul was chosen by Jesus to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Those who believed the gospel he preached and trusted in Christ were so transformed through believing, that it became very obvious to all who knew them that God’s laws were written in their heart. It was their new nature as the children of God. Paul referred to this in his indictment of the nation of Israel in his epistle to the Romans;

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts” Romans 2:14-15

No one had to teach those Gentiles how to stop sinning when they “*heard the word of truth*” and “*trusted in Christ*” Ephesians 1:13, because their “*sin*” was “*taken away,*” exactly as the gospel of Christ tells us. Their hearts were “*purified by faith*” Acts 15:9 in Him “*...that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood*” Revelation 1:5. This is the New Covenant, which is for “*whosoever*” will believe the truth and trust in Jesus Christ.

A Starting Place for Sin

“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” Romans 7:22

This is the second time Paul relates how sin received a “starting point” by the Tenth Commandment. This time, he said it “*deceived me, and by it slew me.*” Notice, it was sin that deceived Saul, and it did so through his lack of understanding the spiritual nature of the Law of God. The Law of Moses, which he kept “blameless,” was a “carnal ordinance” Hebrews 9:10, made for “carnal people.” His training in the law from childhood made it very easy for young Saul to obey its commands and ordinances. The Law of God is spiritual, and especially the tenth commandment, which can only be kept by those who are “*born again*” of the Spirit of God, with a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*”. The apostle Paul would later speak to the Hebrews (Jews) about the “*deceitfulness of sin*” Hebrews 3:13. In this case, he was “deceived by sin” into thinking he could obey the tenth commandment just as he did the others, but the harder he tried to change his heart, the greater his bondage became.

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” Romans 7:12

Notice that Paul spoke of “*the Law*” and “*the commandment*” as though they were separate. The first nine commandments were such that a devout Jew who kept the Law of Moses “*blameless*” would have no problem obeying, but there were none who could obey the tenth. Paul acknowledges, “the law” is “*holy,*” but “the tenth commandment” is “*holy, and just, and good.*”

“Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” Romans 7:13

It is likely that Saul of Tarsus had never in his lifetime broken the first nine commandments. The Tenth Commandment stands alone in identifying sin in the heart of man. It destroys the righteousness of the self-righteous. No one since sin entered the heart and nature of man through the disobedience of Adam has been able to control the thoughts and imaginations of their heart. Several of the eastern religions have sought to do so through meditations and mind control, but all fail miserably as regarding the condition of the heart. Saul of

Tarsus was no exception. He had such complete control over his actions that even the Law of Moses could only approve him. It is the Tenth Commandment alone that exposes sin in the heart of man.

The Tenth Commandment, in discovering sin in the heart of man, also shows that sin in the heart *“is sin.”* Remember the saying of Paul in verse seven; *“I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet”* Romans 7:7. Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, **they had not had sin**: but now they have no cloke for their sin”* John 15:22. He continued in the next verses to say, *“He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, **they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father”**”* John 15:23-24.

When Jesus said, *“They had not had sin,”* he really meant it. If *“righteousness”* were nothing more than the outward keeping of laws and ordinances, these scribes and Pharisees would have been perfect in righteousness, but when Jesus spoke to them, he took away their covering for sin, because He knew their hearts. The apostle John said of Jesus, *“...He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man”* John 2:24-25. The sin of the scribes and Pharisees which they could not cover was their hatred for Him. The Law of Moses could not condemn them in any point because they were in perfect obedience to it even as they hated Jesus, and plotted His death.

Jesus preached to the scribes and Pharisees, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess”* Matthew 23:25. He continued his message to them, *“Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. **Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity”**”* Matthew 23:27-28. Their hypocrisy was not that they were fornicators, liars and thieves, because they kept the Law of Moses blamelessly, even to the tithing of mint and cumin, and

fasting two days a week. Their hypocrisy was that they presented themselves to the congregation of Israel as holy men of God, while their hearts were filled with every sinful activity.

When Paul said, “...*sin, that it might appear sin...*” he was speaking of sin in his heart, which he had never believed to be sin. When he understood the Tenth Commandment, however, sin began “*working death*” in him until he saw clearly that “sin in the heart” **is sin**. Paul expressed it this way, “...*that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*” When a person discovers the truth of the “Tenth Commandment,” that “sin in the heart,” is just as damning as the breaking of all nine commandments before it; that is when “*sin*” becomes “*exceeding sinful.*” Jesus said it best: “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, **Thou shalt not commit adultery** (7th commandment): But I say unto you, That **whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery** with her already **in his heart** (10th commandment)*” Matthew 5:27-28.

Sold Under Sin

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.” Romans 7:14

The Law of God is spiritual, but the Law of Moses was carnal, and was the perfect fit for Saul of Tarsus, who was also “*carnal.*” For the first time in his life, Saul also realized he was “*sold under sin,*” but he did not sell himself. Adam sold the entire human race under sin when he disobeyed God, and every person born into this world is born with sin in their heart and nature. Under the Law of Moses and the discipline of the greatest of the teachers of the law, “sin” had lain dormant in Saul until it was awakened the same day he rejected the testimony of Jesus which Stephen gave, and “*consented* (approved)” while Stephen was stoned to death. When sin awakened (revived, verse 9), suddenly his heart and mind were filled with such powerful influences that he soon lost all control.

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” Romans 7:15

Those who preach that the apostle Paul had a sin problem at the same time he was “*turning the world upside down*” with the gospel of Jesus Christ which he preached, are sadly and dangerously mistaken. Often they are seeking an excuse for their own sins by condemning the very apostle who first gave us the understanding of “*freedom from sin*” Romans 6:7, 6:18, 6:22, “*...through our Lord Jesus Christ*” Romans 7:24. What hypocrisy!

What was Saul of Tarsus doing that he “*allowed not*” and even “*hated?*” There is no indication he was a fornicator, liar, thief, or that he broke any of Moses’ laws. It was still the Tenth Commandment which condemned him. What was he doing? “*As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison*” Acts 8:3. He bound Christians in chains to transport them to Jerusalem where they would stand on trial for their life before the Sanhedrin Court, which had condemned both Jesus and Stephen to death. Saul did what he did with authority from the high priest, and the approval of the Law of Moses. Why then did he was so troubled? It was the horrible things that filled his heart, things which were completely alien to him until these recent events. From a young man who had always been a prime example of what a child of Israel should be, and literally an “*innocent*” on the day he came into the court proceedings at the trial of Stephen, Saul had in only a few days became one filled with bitterness and hatred for everyone and everything pertaining to Jesus of Nazareth. It began when he “*rejected Jesus*” and “*consented* (approved)” the death of Stephen. Murder (hatred I John 3:15) entered his heart, and within a few months, he was literally driven mad by his hatred for the Christians, as he “*...breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*” Acts 9:1. Stephen had used his last breath to ask Christ to forgive those who stoned him, but Saul was using every breath to destroy those who forgave him. How long can you slaughter those who forgive you, and not have your hatred turn inward against yourself? Saul of Tarsus was being destroyed by that which worked in him, and he had lost all control to change his situation. He had no choice but to continue doing the things he hated, which was “*hatred itself.*” He was a slave, and was

only now beginning understand, “sin” was his master, because he was “sold under sin.”

“If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.” Romans 7:16

The first six verses of this chapter Romans 7:1-6 deal exclusively with the Law of Moses. From the seventh verse through the remainder of this chapter Romans 7:7-25, it is the Law of God, and specifically the “Tenth Commandment” that is the issue. The Law of Moses had no objection to anything Saul of Tarsus was doing. In fact, the commandments of Moses encouraged Saul in his persecution of the church. Jesus spoke of this in his “Sermon on the Mount” when He said, *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy”* Matthew 5:43. Who was it that told the Jews, *“...love your neighbor and hate your enemy?”* It was the message of Moses to the children of Israel who received his law. A very indignant person confronted me years ago, saying “The law did not say to hate your enemy,” and they were correct. Moses’ law only commanded them to “kill their enemy,” to which Jesus responds, *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* Matthew 5:44.

Saul of Tarsus, even in the depths of his bondage, understood if he was “doing” what he didn’t want to do, then the Law of God, and especially the “Tenth Commandment” which exposed the content of his heart, were right and good. He said, *“I consent unto the law...,”* which means *“I agree with the Law and will speak the same thing.”* He would agree with the only commandment that condemned him with the words, *“Thou shalt not covet...”*

“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”

Romans 7:17

This verse reveals the awakening of Saul of Tarsus to the sin that is in him. Remember, he has never believed he was a sinner, and had no concept of a “sin nature. Perhaps most modern teachers believe Paul spoke this to excuse himself for sinning, which multitudes in the modern church also do in our day. They claim to be Christians

who “sin every day.” Their “disclaimer” is “It’s not I, but sin that dwells in me.” They believe God sees them as holy, clean, and pure, because they have “believed in Jesus,” while their reality is, they “sin every day.” Oh how flippant a person can get about their sin when they have believed the lie about “the Romans seven walk.” Saul of Tarsus, on the other hand, was horrified to discover the presence of sin in him. In all the years of his youth under the Law of Moses, he had never found a day he could not “honor Moses” and do the right thing. Since rejecting the testimony of Stephen concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and consenting to Stephen’s death, Saul had lost all control. He was still blameless according to the Law of Moses, but the Tenth Commandment had discovered the nature of sin which had lain dormant through all the years of his life, thus his saying, “...when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” Romans 7:9.

The word “now,” which he began this verse with, means “just now” and speaks of the present time. He was experiencing something “just now” that he had never experienced in his lifetime unto now. He was very aware that if he was doing things he did not want to do, he was a slave, and sin was his master. What a horrifying experience for this young and devout Jew.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Romans 7:18

Again, Paul was not giving an excuse for the things he did before he surrendered to Jesus. For young Saul of Tarsus, this realization that there was nothing good in him, was further evidence of his awakening to sin, and sin’s awakening in him. He had believed that “every good thing” dwelt in him under the Law of Moses. He was a Jew, one of the “chosen ones.” He described the things he trusted in as a Jew to the church at Philippi; “*If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” Philippians 3:4-6.

Notice that Saul had “trusted in the flesh” all the days of his life till “just now.” Even “persecuting the church” was seen as a good thing to the Jewish mindset under the Law of Moses. “Now,” he says, “*in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.*” He knows this because he has a “will” to do good things, but he no longer has the ability to do them. Something else has gained full control, which was “sin” in his heart and nature. Modern Christians have been taught this to be common to those who believe in Jesus, but to Saul of Tarsus, it was his worst nightmare.

A Slave to Sin

“For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” Romans 7:19

Paul, speaking as young Saul before his conversion to Jesus, reveals something in this verse which proves absolutely that he was neither a Christian nor a believer when he experienced these things which we call “The Romans seven walk.” We will examine this verse closely:

“For the good that I would I do not...” The word “do” is used two times in this verse 19, and was translated from a different Greek word in each place. In this first phrase, the Greek word translated “do,” is “*poieo*,” which means “*to make or do.*” According to “Strong’s Greek Dictionary,” this word “*refers to a single act.*” With this in mind, the phrase is properly understood to say, “**I cannot do a single act of the good I want to do.**”

“...but the evil which I would not, that I do.” In this second phrase, the word “do” was translated from the Greek word “*prasso*,” which means “*to practice.*” Let’s look at the definition of this Greek word exactly as given by “Strong’s:”

prasso: A primary verb; **to practise**, that is, *perform repeatedly or habitually (thus differing from poieo, which properly refers to a single act)* Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance and Greek Dictionary.

With this definition in mind, the second phrase of this verse 19 literally says, “...but the evil I do not want to do is **my habitual practice**, which I do repeatedly.” Now we will look at the complete verse again in the simple form of the KJV scriptures, but giving the actual definition of the word “do” in both places it is used.

“For the good that I would, I do not a single act; but the evil which I would not, that is my habitual practice.”

Is not this proof that Saul of Tarsus was not saved during this struggle with sin? Even very liberal teachers agree that a child of God cannot “practice sin,” but Paul said it was his “practice” during those months of his life described in this seventh chapter of Romans

The apostle John wrote his first epistle to show who Christ is, and to prove those who “abide in Him” are not sinners, and do not sin.

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not...”

I John 3:5-6 KJV

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin...” I John 3:9 KJV

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not...”

I John 5:18 KJV

The apostle John did not use the Greek word “*prasso*” in any of his epistles. He used the word “*poieo*” fourteen times in his first epistle alone. Many teachers and most versions of the bible substitute the words “do not practice” in every place the apostle said the children of God either “*sinneth not*,” or “*do not commit sin*.” This is a willful error on the part of many translators of the bible versions, and a willful transgression on the part of every teacher who knows what John said, but changes the truth of God into a lie Romans 1:25. The apostle John never said, not even once, that we who are born of God “do not practice sin,” but he repeatedly said we “do not sin.” The apostle Paul, who “*had no sin*” after his surrender to Christ, told us of his experience while persecuting the church; sin was his “practice,” and he became one such as Peter warned of, who “*cannot cease from sin*” II Peter 2:14. All this was before he surrendered to Jesus on the road to Damascus.

“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Romans 7:20

The apostle repeats himself from verse 17. He speaks in the present tense, but only because the remembrances of his past are so vivid. He never “forgave himself” for those months of his life in which he “persecuted the church” I Corinthians 15:9. It is also true, that if any person is doing things they do not want to do, it is because they are a “slave” to something else, and obedient to its commands. Sin in the heart is a cruel taskmaster, and proof that those who have it are indeed a sinner, and lost. Saul of Tarsus was not making excuses; he was confessing his worst nightmare, that he was a sinner, and lost.

“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” Romans 7:21

This is the case with every unregenerate person, regardless of how religious they may be. Jesus Christ died on the cross to “take away the sin of the world” John 1:29, I John 3:5. The children of God not only can, but they do, by their new nature, those things which please their Father John 8:29. We should never preach “what a child of God should be” or “what a child of God should do,” because a child of God is “a child of God,” and they “do by nature” those things that please Him Romans 2:14. One of the tenants of the New Covenant is, “...**they shall not teach** every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, **Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest**” Hebrews 8:11.

It is true that a child of God “is not a robot,” as some say. We have a “free will” in the choices we face in this life, but those who “abide in Christ” do not have the “choice” to commit sin, because it is not in their heart to do so. No one can do anything that is not in their heart to do. Only “the pure in heart” shall see God Matthew 5:8. Our hearts are “purified by faith” Acts 15:9, and they are “pure.” Saul of Tarsus knew for the first time in his life that he was “lost,” because “evil” was present with him whenever he tried to do good.

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:” Romans 7:22

The “*inward man*” is either “*the new man*” or “*the old man.*” The “*new man*” is the “*Spirit of Christ,*” which is given by God to every child of God Galatians 4:6. The apostle Paul said, “*Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” Romans 8:9. For Saul of Tarsus, his “*inward man*” was an extremely religious “*old man,*” which “*delighted in the law of God,*” but could not obey the “Tenth Commandment.”

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” Romans 7:23

Remember the promise of a “*New Covenant?*” God said, “*I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts...*” Jeremiah 31:33, Hebrews 8:10, 10:16. The “*Law*” in the members of a child of God is the “*Law of God,*” written in our hearts. Paul said there was “*another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind.*” Saul had the Law of God in his mind, but not in his heart and members. The “*law of sin*” controlled his heart and members, and he could not throw off its yoke.

Saul of Tarsus was taken prisoner by sin which “*revived* (awakened)” when he understood by the Tenth Commandment that “*sin in the heart,*” IS SIN. The more he struggled against sin in his heart, the greater his bondage became. Saul of Tarsus had been a model young man under the Law of Moses in the Jews religion until the day he rejected the testimony of Stephen concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and approved the death of Stephen. Sin had always been in his heart and nature, but under his devout religion, it lay dormant until confronted by the Tenth Commandment, which revealed the contents of his heart. It began subtly, but as he yielded his members to persecute Jesus and His church, anger turned into hatred, and hatred into murder. On the day he met Jesus on his way to arrest the Christians in Damascus, he was totally out of control. The scripture says, he was “*breathing out threatening’s and slaughter against the disciples of Jesus*” Acts 9:1. He was a man obsessed with his mission and possessed by the adversary of the church. For a modern day teacher to tell us this is the “normal Christian walk” is both sick and

absurd. Saul of Tarsus not only hated Jesus and His disciples, he had finally arrived at the point that he hated himself, and the things he did, but he had no control to stop it. He would have gladly returned to the innocence he had known before he heard Stephen give the testimony of Jesus, but there was no “going back.” He was a driven man, a “madman” on a mission, on the verge of losing his sanity, when an unheard cry of despair began to scream within him...

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:24

The pricks of the gospel Stephen preached were goading him, and he could not erase them from his mind. He had trusted in the Law of Moses his entire life, but now when he needed it most, it had utterly failed him. The things he had trusted in, “...*circumcision ...tribe of Benjamin ...stock of Israel ...Hebrew of the Hebrews ...Pharisee ...perfect righteousness under the law*” Philippians 3:4-6; none of these meant anything to him in his hour of distress. Even in his driven state, Saul of Tarsus could clearly see for the first time in his life, that everything he had trusted in was nothing more than garbage. Years later the apostle Paul would write, “...*what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*” Philippians 3:7-8.

For the first and only time in his life, Saul of Tarsus was “*without law,*” and he was an “outlaw” in his own sight. He had lost all faith in the things he once trusted, and was left alone with his tormented soul. He saw himself as a truly “*wretched man,*” but when the cry went up from his tormented soul, “*Who shall deliver me from this body of death,*” he was nearer to the kingdom of God than ever in his lifetime. This was a cry that Christ could not deny. Just up the road, on his way to arrest Christians in Damascus, Saul of Tarsus would have his encounter with Jesus of Nazareth Acts 22:8.

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 7:25

The great hope of the nation of Israel was the coming of their Messiah (the Christ). The angel Gabriel had told the prophet Daniel of His coming, to “*make and end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.*” Israel had suffered under the oppressing hand of other nations for about six hundred years, but when “Messiah came,” He would end their oppression and drive the oppressors out of their land. That was the great hope of the Jew. It is sad that two thousand years later, the Jews are still hoping and praying for their Messiah, “the Christ” to come, not believing He came right on schedule, exactly as the prophecies said He would. Saul of Tarsus was yet “breathing out threatening’s and slaughter” against the church when he received authority from the high priest to arrest the Christians in Damascus, and bring them to Jerusalem to stand trial. As he neared the city on the Damascus road, a bright light, brighter than the midday sun, shone from heaven upon him. He was blinded and fell to the ground as a voice from heaven called to Him, “*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*” Saul immediately responded, “*Who are you, Lord?*” Saul did not yet know who was speaking, but he knew it was “*the Lord from heaven*” I Corinthians 15:47. His answer came just as quickly, “*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*” Acts 9:5.

How quickly can a heart filled with “hatred” begin to overflow with “love?” How long does it take an angry, bitter, miserable, and wretched man to become one filled with “*love*” Galatians 5:22, and “*joy unspeakable*” I Peter 1:8, and “*peace that passes all understanding*” Philippians 4:7? Only as long as it took Saul of Tarsus to say, “*What will you have me do, Lord?*” Acts 9:6. His salvation and sanctification was instantaneous, and was set forth by God “*...for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him (Jesus Christ) to life everlasting*” I Timothy 1:16. Saul’s “Romans seven experience” was not a “process” of “being saved,” or “being sanctified;” rather it was a process of “*suffering the loss*” of everything he trusted in Philippians 3:4-8. What amazement and what joy for Saul of Tarsus to discover the truth, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he hated and sought to destroy, is “*the Christ*” whom he loved and longed to see. His conversion was instantaneous: Three days later, Saul of Tarsus was

filled with the Holy Ghost, and “...straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” Acts 9:20. In a very short time he received “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ,*” which is the greatest revelation ever given to man. He went everywhere, preaching “*Jesus is the Christ*” Acts 17:3, and “*turned the world upside down*” Acts 17:6 in his generation.”

“Saul of Tarsus” in the Modern Church

There are many “Saul’s of Tarsus” in the modern church. They come from totally different backgrounds, and are almost an opposite image of one another. Saul of Tarsus had never in his lifetime believed he was a sinner. He kept the righteousness of the Law “blameless” Philippians 3:6. When the knowledge of sin came to Saul, he was devastated to discover he was a sinner just like the Gentiles, whom the Jews had called “dogs.” The modern Saul has often been trained up in religion in much the same way as Saul of Tarsus. At a very early age, all 613 commandment and ordinances of Moses had been “programed” into young Saul’s thinking, and these became “his life.” For the modern Saul, it is the hundreds of “principles of life” that have replaced the Law of Moses, but as long as sin remains dormant in their heart, the modern Saul has little problem in “serving the Lord.” It is when sin “awakens” (dormant sin in the heart will always awaken) that the problem begins, and life most often goes off the tracks.

For Saul of Tarsus, the “awakening of sin” Romans 7:9 was a horrible thing, which utterly destroyed his ability to function, and dragged him down to the ultimate cry of despair, “*O wretched man that I am...*” Romans 8:24. This “awakening of sin” did not happen until after Saul of Tarsus rejected Jesus in the preaching of Stephen, and approved in his heart when they stoned him to death. The modern church, in its “enlightened wisdom,” has taken the shame of sin away from the people. They have done it with the constant drumbeat of “*We are all sinners...we sin every day.*”

When Saul of Tarsus said, “*Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*” Romans 7:20, he was

not making excuses for a sinful lifestyle. Instead, for the first time in his life, he was forced to face the fact that he was a sinner, and that knowledge destroyed him.

I have heard some preachers in the modern church speak of the Apostle Paul as if he were a “playboy” with a flippant attitude to excuse his sins, saying, “...it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” Romans 7:20. To hear them tell it, you could think “O wretched man that I am” was a tune the apostle whistled as he traveled to preach Christ at the next village. The apostle did not have a sin problem. His testimony was, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” Galatians 2:20.

We know that every child is born with sin in their nature, but with proper discipline, and Christian training, sin can remain “dormant” for many years. It is a fact, however, that at some point sin will “awakened” in the heart of every individual, and being faced with the “motions of sins (emotions)” Romans 7:5, working in their heart, they are ashamed, and often give place to “secret sin.” The philosophy of the modern church has tried to counter this by the constant reminder, “We are all sinners; we sin every day.” This attitude displays the difference between the devout Jew under the Law of Moses, and the modern church. The Jew said, “We are not sinners,” while the modern church says, “We are all sinners.”

The agony of sin brought Saul of Tarsus to the point he surrendered to Jesus at his second encounter, his first being the testimony of Stephen. But what will save the “sinner” in the church who has been told all their life that sin is perfectly “normal” in a child of God? Those who “hate their sin” most often rejoice in the truth when they hear it, but the vast majority are satisfied to “continue in sin,” and will often become bitter, with great anger against the one who tells them Jesus Christ died to “take their sin away,” and they can be free. We can only pray, as with Saul of Tarsus, the “wretchedness of their heart” will drive them to surrender at their next encounter with the truth.

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