



A "Behold the Lamb" publication
Calvary Outreach Ministries

“In The Flesh”

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:8

There is no hope that can be given to those who are “in the flesh” other than the “hope” of the gospel. The Apostle Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:20-21). It is by the “grace of God” that Jesus Christ died for us. It is “abundance of grace” that we died to sin with Christ, and are made alive unto God through Him. This is the “hope of the gospel;” It is “steadfast and sure” to all who believe it.

Leroy Surface

“In The Flesh...”

Message by: Leroy Surface



So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:8

A large part of the message this month is an excerpt from my commentary on the book of Romans, titled “THE FOUNDATION.” Less than two months since its release in mid November, almost two thousand copies have been given out, both hand to hand and through the mail. We have done this completely free of charge to the receivers. It has now been translated into Spanish, and the Lord willing, the Spanish version will be released in early March, 2010. We have also developed a correspondence course on “THE FOUNDATION” and already there are nearly a hundred people taking it with more asking to participate every day. Several study groups have begun across the nation, each by men or women who were independently led of God to do so. I realize these numbers are very small when compared to the great task that is set before us, but I recall the words of the prophet Zechariah in the day Zerubbabel laid the foundation for the House of God; “...*who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel...*”(Zechariah 4:10).” The task God has given us is greater than the might and power of men can do. That “task” is to re-educate the people of God in the truth of the gospel, and it can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God working with us.

The seventh chapter of Romans has become an adage for the struggles people have, trying to serve God. It is commonly believed today that the “*Romans Seven Experience*” is the norm for a Christian life, but the truth is, the problem is due to the absence of life. There are those who were once saved, and even “*Spirit-filled*,” who find themselves trapped in the Romans Seven Experience. They should read Romans 7:9 very carefully: “...*I was alive without the law*”

once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Regardless of how you interpret this verse, two things stand out and cannot be denied; “...*sin revived, and I died.*” This person cannot revive themselves again. They cannot simply walk away from sin, because they are “...*sold under sin*” (Romans 7:14). Sin is once again their master, and its cruelty knows no bounds. It will drag them down into the pits of helplessness and hopelessness, knowing that they are lost and about to be cast headlong into the pit of hell. They have tried to “*be strong,*” and to “*do good,*” but they cannot. There is no hope for them until the horrible scream arises from their tormented soul, “*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” That is where sin took Saul of Tarsus, and that is when he came face to face with Jesus on the Damascus road.

It is the height of absurdity to seek to comfort these who are in such bondage by giving examples of others who are “*saved, Spirit filled, and love the Lord with all their heart,*” yet are also in bondage to those same sins, of which Paul said, “...*they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Paul warned against such comfort of sinners in I Corinthians 6:9-10, saying, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*”

Notice what Paul says in Galatians 5:19-21 concerning the “*works of the flesh*” which he names individually as follows: “*Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

Again in Ephesians 5:5-7, Paul says, “*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these*

things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Paul clearly says in each of these places, *“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* He did not, however, leave them without hope. In I Corinthians 6:11 he also says, *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* The *“hope”* for those who have thus fallen is to, in the words of Jesus, *“...repent, and believe the gospel.”* Many of those who were **truly alive in Christ** before sin revived have *“repented”* day and night, a thousand times over. For those, it is time to stop repenting and *“believe the gospel.”*

The *“Romans Seven Experience,”* as it is called by many today, actually begins with **Romans 7:5** and continues through **Romans 8:8**. It begins with Paul’s words in the **fifth verse of chapter seven**, *“...for when we were in the flesh...,”* and ends with this conclusion in the **eighth verse of chapter eight**, *“...So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”* Everything that is written between these two verses is written to prove the conclusion which Paul reaches about those who are *“in the flesh;”* and that conclusion is, they *“cannot please God.”* With such a damning statement about those who are *“in the flesh,”* we must determine the meaning of the term. The flesh in this text cannot speak of the human body, because even Jesus could not have pleased his Father if that were the case. The proper definition of *“flesh”* as used in this text is *“human nature;”* the nature which has been polluted by the entrance of sin which came through Adam’s transgression. Human nature that is polluted by sin can never please God.

It should be noted that Paul uses the *“past tense”* in his statement, *“...when we were in the flesh.”* This statement can only be understood in the light of his words in Romans 8:9, which say, *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”* On the basis of these statements by Paul, we know that his *“Romans Seven Experience”* was before he was saved and filled with the Spirit of God. Paul describes to perfection the experience of every unregenerate person who tries to please God through keeping the righteousness of the law. This **was** Paul’s experience,

as Saul of Tarsus, from his youth until the day he surrendered to Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. It is also the experience of millions of professing Christians today who have never, as Saul of Tarsus was, been “*under the law;*” but have tried to please God through obeying thousands of principles given to them by their religious leaders and teachers. However, they find, just as Saul of Tarsus did, that they will never please God through the keeping of principles.

It is commonly taught that a child of God has “*two natures,*” both a “*sin nature,*” and a “*divine nature.*” It is amazing that the philosophy of the Gnostics and the Nicolaitans of the first century, “*which thing*” Jesus said He “*hated*” (Revelation 2:15), would become the fundamental doctrine of many twenty first century churches. The Gnostics believed that the physical body of man was inherently evil, while the spirit of man was inherently holy; thus the man could be holy and pleasing in the eyes of God while his body continued in sin. This describes the “*doctrine*” of a majority of the teachers in the modern church. So what is the truth concerning these two “*natures?*”

Adam had a “*human nature.*” The scripture says that God formed man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and “*man became a living soul.*” His nature was human with the breath of the divine. There was no sin in Adam’s nature. It must be understood that there was no sin in Adam when he walked away from the tree of life to the forbidden tree. It is for that reason that even a child of God must not trust his human nature. There was no sin in Adam’s nature until he disobeyed God, but his human nature was attracted, not to “*sin,*” but to the “*beauty,*” the “*wisdom,*” and the “*nourishment*” of that “*tree*” which held the promise of making them “*as gods, knowing both good and evil*” (Genesis 3:5-6). His disobedience to God opened his nature for sin to enter. His nature was polluted with sin and Adam became a slave to the sin in his nature. It was through this pollution and bondage of sin that the human nature became known as the “*sin nature.*”

Jesus had a “*divine nature.*” To show that Adam and Jesus were different in nature, Paul said in I Corinthians 15:45, “*The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (Christ) was made a quickening spirit.*” Then, in **the forty seventh verse** he says, “*The*

first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.” There was no sin in Jesus when He was born into this world, just as there was no sin in Adam when He was formed of the dust. The difference in their nature was that Jesus *could not have sinned*. He could not be “*tempted to sin*” even though He was “*...tempted (tested) in every point as we, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus came into the world as the “*Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). This he did through His death on the cross, just as the writer says in **Hebrews 2:9**, “*...that He (Jesus) by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*” When Paul says in Romans 6:6, “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him (Jesus), that the body of sin might be destroyed...*” he is speaking of the “*destruction*” of the sin that entered man’s nature through Adam’s transgression. The Greek word “*katargeo*,” which was translated “*destroyed*” in this verse, means “*to render entirely idle (useless).*” It is the same word that is used in I Corinthians 15:24-26, where Paul tells of events at the “*end*,” just after the great white throne judgment. “*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. **The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.***” Both sin and death entered through Adam’s disobedience. The first was “*destroyed*” when it was nailed to the cross of Christ with our “*old man.*” The last will be “*destroyed*” when both “*death and hell*” are “*cast into the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:14).

Does this writer believe that sin is so destroyed in the believer that it cannot revive? No, I do not! I do know, however, that it cannot revive unless the believer is “*moved away from the hope of the gospel*” (Colossians 1:23), which is “*Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*” In Hebrews 2:14, there is something else that is “*destroyed*” through the death of Jesus on the cross. “*...that through death he might **destroy** him that had the power of death, that is, **the devil**....*” Do I believe that the devil has been destroyed into non-existence? To believe that would be the ultimate in stupidity, because he is still the “*god of this world.*” He is not *our* god however, because for the believer, the devil is “*destroyed.*” We dwell in a place where there

is no sin, and the devil cannot touch us, because we dwell “*in Christ.*” John says in I John 3:5-6, “...*ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not....*”

Jesus was manifested to “*take away our sin.*” There are two places in the **sixth chapter of Romans** that Paul says we are “*free from sin.*” The first is in **verse eighteen**, “...*being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness....*,” and the second place is in **verse twenty two**, “...*but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*” The term “*made free from sin*” does not mean that the believer has received “*power over sin.*” It simply means that Jesus took the sin that polluted our nature, and nailed it to His cross. While the child of God still has a “*human nature,*” it is freed from the sin that once dominated it. He has made us partakers of His divine nature, which will never co-exist with sin. The “*Romans Seven Experience*” cannot be the experience of those who abide in Christ, but it is the only experience possible for those who are yet “*in the flesh.*” Paul was not “*in the flesh,*” but “*in the Spirit*” from the moment the “*Spirit of the Lord*” came into him (Romans 8:9).

The remainder of this message is an excerpt from “THE FOUNDATION,” which is my commentary on the first eleven chapters of Romans. The scripture setting is **Romans 7:5** through **Romans 8:8**. Study it prayerfully, with an open heart toward the truth of the gospel.

5 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.

“**When we were in the flesh...**” The word “*flesh*” is translated from the Greek word “*sarx,*” and has various meanings and applications as follows:

Strong’s definition of “sarx:” **flesh** (as stripped of the skin), i.e. (strictly) *the meat of an animal* (as food), or (by extension) *the body* (as opposed to the soul [or spirit], or as *the symbol of what is*

external, or as *the means of kindred*), or (by implication) *human nature* (with its frailties [physically or morally] and passions), or (specifically) *a human being* (as such):

The proper understanding of the word “*flesh*” as used in the book of Romans is “*human nature*.” The term, “*when we were in the flesh*,” however, speaks of more than human nature. Paul was speaking of the time before he believed upon Jesus when he tried to serve God through fleshly means under the Law of Moses. Paul asked the question of the Galatians who turned from Christ to trust in the law, “*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh*” (Galatians 3:3). They had been “*born of the Spirit*,” but they were seeking to fulfill their salvation through the keeping of ordinances, principles, holy days, feast days, and rituals, all of which are dead works of religion, and all of which are performed “*by the flesh*.”

“...the motions of sins, which were by the law...” The Law does not create sin; it only identifies and forbids it. The very nature of sin is to rebel against the law. “*The motions of sins* (the **emotions** of sins)” speaks of “*concupiscence*,” which is defined as “*longing, especially for that which is forbidden*.” It “*works in the members*” of every unregenerate person, but especially those who are “*under the law*.” When it is “*at work* (in motion),” every fiber of the human body will seem to crave what the law forbids. Its only fruit is “*unto death*.”

6 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.

“But now we are delivered from the law...” Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin. Being “*saved from sin*” we are also “*delivered from the law*.” And we are “*saved from sin*” in that we are “*dead to sin*.” It is in this same manner that we are delivered from the law. In this verse, Paul uses two corresponding phrases that mean the same thing. They are, “*...we are delivered from the law*,” and, “*being dead wherein we were held*.” We are delivered from the law only “*through death with Christ*.” “*Our old man is cruci-*

fied with Christ...” (Romans 6:6), and we are freed from both sin and the Law. I cannot emphasize enough that “*sin*” and “*the law*” are irrevocably connected. The “*law*” is the proper husband for a sinner. Wherever you find sin, there you will also find the law. Do not be deceived that the answer to the sin problem is to “*revoke the Law.*” A great shame in the church today is that so many rejoice that they are “*free from the Law*” even as they angrily deny that we are “*freed from sin.*”

“...that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” God promised (Jeremiah 31:31-33), and the writer of Hebrews confirms (Hebrews 8:8-13) that the “*New Covenant*” is “*God’s law written in the heart of His children.*” This is “*newness of spirit.*” This is “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” It is Christ who now **lives** in us. To serve God in the “*oldness of the letter*” is to try to please God through human obedience to His law, whether it is written in ink, or engraved in stone.

7 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.

Beginning with this seventh verse, and continuing through the end of the chapter, Paul is relating his experience as Saul of Tarsus. In this verse, he is speaking as one “*delivered from the law*” to “*serve God in newness of spirit,*” while looking back at his experience under the law. He shows that the law was not his problem, but even as a devout Jew, sin had been the problem all along. The law only identified sin. When the law said to Paul (Saul of Tarsus), “*Thou shalt not covet* (the tenth commandment),” Saul discovered that even the “*desires of his heart*” were also sin.

Jesus said, “*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees had no problem keeping the first nine commandments, because these only regulated outward behavior. In these they were “*blameless.*” It is the tenth and last commandment, “*Thou shalt not covet,*” that destroys the “*righteousness*” of the “*self-righteous.*” It is the only commandment that discovers and uncovers the sin that is resident in

the heart of man. It is the only commandment that no one can obey by the force of his or her will power. It is the source of the breaking of all the other commandments. Take covetousness out of the heart of man and he cannot break any law of God, because “*covetousness*” is the nature and source of all sin. This one commandment ultimately stripped Saul of Tarsus of all *his* righteousness that was by the law, and destroyed *him* in his own sight.

There are Ten Commandments of God, six hundred and thirteen commandments of Moses, and hundreds of “*traditions of the fathers.*” Saul of Tarsus kept all of these so blamelessly in their outward form that he found none that could condemn him. But from the moment he understood the tenth commandment, which exposed the sin in his heart, it was as though there was but one commandment, “*Thou shalt not covet,*” and from that day he spoke of it in the singular as “**The Commandment.**” In the next six verses, he will use this term six times. In every case he is speaking of the tenth commandment: “*Thou shalt not covet.*”

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

“**But sin, taking occasion by the commandment...**” To this point, Paul has used the word “*law*” fifty three times in this book of Romans. This is the first time he uses the word “*commandment,*” which he will use five more times within the next five verses, after which he will use the word “*law*” another twenty two times in the remainder of his letter. His brief usage of the term “*the commandment*” does not speak of the law in general, but of the one specific commandment, “*thou shalt not covet.*” Notice Paul’s words in the seventh verse; “*I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*” Something awakened Saul of Tarsus to the sin that was in his heart; the sin that could only be identified by the tenth commandment: “*Thou shalt not covet.*”

Saul of Tarsus had been taught the law from the time he was a baby. It was with him day and night. Saul was not, as the Jews called others, a “*sinner of the Gentiles*” (Galatians 2:15). His lifestyle was

blameless (Philippians 3:6). No one could convict Saul of transgressing the law. He was “*exceedingly zealous*” of the traditions of the fathers, and “*profited in the Jew’s religion above his equals*” (Galatians 1:14). Saul was never “*without the law*” in the sense of being “*lawless*;” he kept the law to the tiniest detail. He loved the law; he meditated on it day and night. To Saul, the law was not a harsh taskmaster. It identified no sin in Saul, for he was righteous according to all that he read and understood in the law. There came a day, however, that Saul “*read*” the law as it was written on the heart of a man.

Jesus said of the Pharisees, “*If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin...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 15:22, 24). In the case of Saul of Tarsus, it was not Jesus, but Stephen who came to touch his life. It was Stephen, whose face was seen “*as it had been the face of an angel*,” even while he was being falsely accused (Acts 6:15). It was Stephen, who spoke the truth without fear to a court predetermined to slay him (Acts 7:1-53); who saw the glory of God and testified to seeing Jesus at the right hand of God even as the members of the religious court “*gnashed on him with their teeth*.” It was this same Stephen who used his last breath to pray for the angry mob who stoned him to death, saying, “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*.”

We know that the New Covenant is God’s law written on the hearts of His children. Oh what a contrast Saul of Tarsus saw that day between Stephen, who had God’s law written on his heart, and those devout Jews, including himself, who only had it as it was “*engraved in stone*.” For the first time, Saul of Tarsus saw the “*Law of God*” written in life; and it identified him as a sinner. He now understood the tenth commandment, “*Thou shalt not covet*,” because in Stephen, he saw a man with a “*pure heart*” who was free from “*covetousness*.”

“But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.” “*Concupiscence*” in this verse is the same as “*lust*” in the previous verse. In Romans 5:20, Paul said, “*The law entered, that the offence might abound*.” “*Sin, taking oc-*

casation by the commandment (thou shalt not covet),” wrought in Saul every manner of sinful desire, and he became a “*wretched man*” filled with hatred and murder against the Christians. Saul was just like the Pharisees that Jesus spoke of; if he had never seen Stephen, he would “*not have had sin,*” that is, he would not be aware of his sinfulness, but now he had seen Stephen, and hated both Stephen and his Lord. In Saul’s sight, the “*Christians*” were the cause of his every problem. It was after this that Saul “*made havoc of the church*” (Acts 8:3), and “*breathed out slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*” (Acts 9:1).

“For without the law sin was dead.” This phrase is best understood when connected to the next verse...

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

“For I was alive without the law once...” Over forty years ago, during the time of the civil rights movement in America, I knew of a man who was Sunday School Superintendent in a church near Houston. He was a good man, who served God along with his wife and small children. He loved the brethren and the church loved and respected him as a wonderful Christian man. One Sunday a godly black man visited their church, arriving just as the superintendent finished his duties. Upon seeing the black man enter, the superintendent walked down the aisle to his family, said out loud to his wife and children, “*Let’s go! If ‘they’ are coming, we are not,*” and with that, they left the service. The black man never came back, and the superintendent tried to continue as before, but he could not. Everything about him was changed, and it was not long before he quit the church and entered a life of open sin. That man had “*been alive*” once, but when “*he*” discovered the sinfulness of his own heart (hatred), he died, and sin became his master. In fact, sin had always been there, but it had been dormant, or as the Greek word Paul used, it had been a “*corpse.*” The “*corpse*” revived that day, and slew the man. As with Saul of Tarsus, if he had never come face to face with the target of his hatred, he would never have known his sinfulness, but now, he knew, and he died.

In everything Paul relates about his experience with sin and the law before he was saved, there is a parallel experience for every “*Christian*” who is moved away from Christ-crucified to trust, either in the law, or in the thousands of man-made principles of religion which promise righteousness. Notice the wording in this verse; “...*sin revived, and I died.*” Whether this chapter speaks of Saul of Tarsus, a man married to the law, but never to Christ, or whether it speaks of one who was “*married to Christ,*” but turned once again to the law for righteousness, the results are the same; “*sin*” is “*alive,*” and the man is “*dead.*” This chapter cannot relate the experience of any person God will receive. He may have once known God, but if so, he is now backslidden and lost, though he may also be very religious.

10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

The commandment, “*Thou shalt not covet*” is life to one and death to another. Let me explain! A sinner is convicted of sin and repents. He comes to God believing the gospel that his “*old man of sin*” (Romans 6:6) is nailed to the cross with Jesus. He hears the words, “*thou shalt not covet,*” and rejoices, because his former life had been destroyed by covetousness (as is every life without Jesus Christ). His heart, having now been “*purified by faith*” (Acts 15:9), has no covetousness in it. He rejoices that the “*Son has made him free, and he is ‘free indeed’*” (John 8:36). “*Thou shalt not covet*” is good and wonderful news to this man. On the other hand, to those who are merely religious, “*thou shalt not covet*” is the most “*grievous*” of all commandments. For Saul of Tarsus in his self-righteous state, the commandment was “*unto death.*”

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

When Paul speaks of “*the commandment,*” he is still speaking of that one commandment, “*thou shalt not covet.*” Sin had no occasion against Saul of Tarsus in any other commandment. He was much like the “*rich young ruler,*” who walked sorrowfully away from Jesus; “*All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*” (Matthew 16:19-22) All that both of these young men lacked

was revealed by the tenth commandment, “*thou shalt not covet.*” The rich young ruler walked away “*sorrowful*” because he had great riches. Saul, discovering the meaning of the tenth commandment, was deceived. He would obey this commandment also and be perfect. It was only then that he began to discover the nature of “*sin*” that was in him. The warfare had begun.

Multitudes in the churches today are also deceived by sin and condemned by the same commandment. In order to make the fact of sin in their heart acceptable, they are taught that the Law of God has been abolished. Others teach that the things we have no control over cannot condemn us. In fact, the tenth commandment is the only commandment that reveals sin in the heart, and that sin (the sin nature) is what Jesus died to take away (John 1:29). Saul of Tarsus found no remedy in the Law of Moses that would satisfy the Law of God. When “*the commandment came,*” that is, when understanding of the commandment came, it destroyed all of his righteousness and he became as a living dead man.

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Paul defends the Law of God, and specifically the tenth commandment as “*holy, and just, and good.*” He defines the nature of God’s law, as he will further do in the fourteenth verse.

13 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.

Paul continues his defense of the tenth commandment. Remember that the commandment was “*ordained unto life*” (verse ten). It is the source of “*glorious liberty*” to the redeemed (Romans 8:21). Saul’s problem was not “*the commandment;*” it was the covetousness of his heart. Saul of Tarsus, a man who could not be condemned by any of the first nine commandments (Philippians 3:6), had always considered the desires of his heart to be as nothing, because he did not obey them. Now that the understanding of the tenth commandment, “*thou shalt not covet,*” had come, Saul also under-

stood that he was “*exceeding sinful.*” In the definition of the Greek word translated “*exceeding,*” we see that in Saul’s own sight he was a sinner “*beyond others.*” Years later Paul confirmed this in I Timothy 1:15 when he said he was “*chief of sinners.*” As Jesus had told the Pharisees, he was like the sepulchers of the prophets; he was “*beautiful on the outside,*” but on the inside he was “*full of dead men’s bones,*” and now, he knew it.

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

With this verse we must make some distinctions between “*The Law of God*” and “*The Law of Moses.*” The Law of God is spiritual, and is written in the hearts of a spiritual people (Hebrews 8:8-13). The Law of Moses, which was “*added because of transgressions,*” (Galatians 3:19) is carnal (Hebrews 7:16, 9:10), and was given to a carnal people. When God gave His Law audibly to the congregation of Israel in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, they could not receive it because they were “*carnal.*” God defined the problem to Moses in Deuteronomy 5:29, “*O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always....*” They could not keep it, because they were “*carnal, sold under sin.*” The Greek word “*sarkikos*” that was translated “*carnal*” in this verse means “*similar to flesh,*” and was translated as both “*carnal,*” and “*fleshly.*” That was the state of Saul of Tarsus; “*...fleshly, and sold under sin.*” The Greek word for “*flesh*” is “*sarx,*” and speaks of the “*human nature*” which is “*sold under sin.*” In the verses that follow he lays out the proofs that he was sold under sin.

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

The great apostle Paul continues speaking as Saul of Tarsus for the remainder of this chapter. He offers proof that Saul is carnal until the day of his surrender to Jesus Christ. The proof of his carnality is “*...what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*”

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Saul recognizes that if righteousness does not reign in his heart, he must have a law to control his actions, therefore he consents that the law is good.

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

Saul recognizes that if he is doing things he doesn't want to do then something else is in control. It is not him, but sin that is in his heart and nature. He is a slave to sin.

18 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.

“...(that is, in my flesh,)...” The word “*flesh*” as used in this verse does not refer to the physical “*body*,” but rather to the “*human nature*” which controls the body. “*For I know that in me (that is, in my human nature,) dwelleth no good thing...*” It is Saul of Tarsus who comes to this realization, and it is proven to him, “*for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*” It was in his “*mind*” to serve God, but it was in his “*nature*” to serve sin. He had the “*will*” to perform, but he did not have the “*way*.” What a sad predicament for people to find themselves in, but there are far too many who do.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

This verse continues to prove there was nothing good in Saul of Tarsus, even though he had been “*blameless*,” according to the righteousness of the law, for his entire lifetime (Philippians 3:6). Remember the saying of the rich young ruler who walked sorrowfully away from Jesus; “*All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*” (Matthew 16:19-22) Jesus took the covers off and revealed his “*lack*” in the next verse. It was this tenth commandment, “*thou shalt not covet*,” that caused the rich young ruler to “*go away sorrowful*.”

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Saul of Tarsus discovered that even if he had never committed an outward act of sin, yet sin dwelt in him. It was proven to Saul because he began doing things he did not want to do.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

It is the very nature of sin to resist the good and do the evil. As long as sin remains in the heart and nature of man, he may struggle to do the good, and may even succeed in the working of good, but evil is always present with sinful desires in the heart.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

The “*inward man*” of Saul of Tarsus was his mind and intellect. Intellectually, he loved the Law of God, “*but...*”

23 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.

“*Human nature,*” left to itself, is no better or higher than the beasts of the field. It is the intellect that makes man to be above the beasts. The Law of God, being “*spiritual,*” was given to “*define*” the higher divine nature, but Israel could not receive it. The Law of Moses was given to “*control*” human nature. Notice the level of some of the commandments: “*If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them*” (Leviticus 20:13-16). Human nature, left to itself, will descend to the level of the beast of the field. It is only the “*disciplines*” of law, whether religious or secular, that hinders that bestial level of human nature.

Saul of Tarsus was well disciplined by the Law of Moses. Such behavior as described above was out of the question, yet he, as does every unregenerate person, had sin dwelling in his human nature, seeking control of his members. The “*law in his members*” that warred against the “*law of his mind*” was simply his “*sinful human nature*” that warred against his mind and intellectual desire to please God.

“...warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin...” This phrase brings to mind the methods of ancient warfare. A city with strong walls would come under attack by a powerful enemy. For a time, the walls would hold against the siege, but the city would be cut off from all supplies from without. Daily, the battering rams and the catapults would batter the walls, while inside the city the food supplies would be rationed. The battering of the walls would continue night and day until the walls were breached, at which time the malnourished inhabitants would be taken captive and led away as slaves. This is the description of the warfare within Saul of Tarsus after his “*sin*” was discovered by “*the commandment (thou shalt not covet).*” His “*walls of defense*” built up by the Law of Moses were battered to the ground, and Saul could no longer keep himself. He was “*brought into captivity*” to that “*law of sin (sinful human nature)*” which was in his members.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

It must have been during the time that Saul of Tarsus was “*breathing out threatenings and slaughter*” (Acts 9:1), and “*making havock of the churches*” (Acts 8:3), that he became a “*wretched man*” in his own sight. From within, though never publicly, there came the cry, “*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*” The term “*body of this death*” is used in the same way as “*the body of sin*” in Romans 6:6, and speaks of the “*entire body (or source) of sin and death.*” It was that “*cry for deliverance*” that brought Saul of Tarsus into a direct confrontation with Jesus Christ (Acts 9:3-5). There, he found the answer, given in the next verse, which is the basis for the gospel of Jesus Christ as the apostle Paul preached it.

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Thank God, there is deliverance from sin “*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” How this was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the indescribably “*good news*” which is called “*The gospel of Jesus Christ.*” The last phrase of this verse closes out the chapter, defining for one last time the dilemma Saul of Tarsus was in before he met Jesus. With his mind (intellect) he served the Law of God, but in his human nature, he was the slave of sin.

The Eighth Chapter of Romans

In this eighth chapter, Paul shows the “*glorious liberty,*” the “*overcoming power,*” and the “*complete victory*” of those who are “*in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”

Romans 8:1-39

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

“**There is therefore now...**” The word “*therefore,*” translated from the Greek word “*ara,*” draws a conclusion about those who are “*in Christ Jesus.*” They are not condemned. They do not live under the “*death sentence*” due to sin; neither do their “*hearts condemn them*” (I John 3:20-21). The word “*now*” speaks of “*now...in Christ Jesus,*” and draws a contrast between those who are “*married to Jesus*” and those who are “*married to the law.*” It is a contrast between those who have received the “*glorious liberty (from sin) of the children of God*” (Romans 8:21), and those who continually struggle in the bondage expressed in the seventh chapter of those who are “*under the law.*”

“**...no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...**” The word “*condemnation*” is translated from the Greek word “*kata-*

krima,” which means “*adverse sentence.*” Paul will tell us why we are not condemned in the third verse.

“...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The word “*after,*” used two times in this phrase, is translated from the Greek word “*kata.*” It was most commonly translated “*according to,*” and then as “*after.*” These translations do not do justice to the word as it is used in this verse. “*Kata,*” in this verse, is best understood to indicate the “*source*” of the walk of those who are in Christ. Their source is the Spirit, and not the flesh (or, human nature). It is also beneficial to understand that Paul often used “*flesh*” and “*Spirit*” to identify the two covenants, “*law,*” and “*grace*” (Galatians 3:3).

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The “*law of the Spirit*” is “*life in Christ Jesus.*” Jesus Christ is the only source of “*life*” to fallen man. The phrase “*...hath made me free...*” should have been translated “*hath liberated thee*” from the law of sin and death. If the “*law of the Spirit*” is “*life in Christ Jesus,*” it follows that the “*law of sin and death*” is the “*sin and death*” that inherently reigns in the human nature of man. Thank God, we are delivered from “*sin and death*” through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

“*What the law could not do*” is defined in the last phrase, “*condemned sin in the flesh.*” The law could “*condemn* (try, condemn, and punish) *the man,*” but it could never “*condemn* (try, condemn, and punish)” the sin that was in the man. God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (human nature) for the express purpose of condemning, not the man that was in sin, but the sin that was in the nature of the man. John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the world saying, “*Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). This is what Jesus did through His death on the cross. Paul explained it best in Romans 6:6; “*Knowing this, that our*

old man (of sin) is crucified with Him, that the body (the entire body and source) of sin might be destroyed...”

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The Greek word “*hina*,” translated “*that*” means “*in order that*.” Jesus passed the death sentence against sin which is in the heart and nature of man, and nailed it to His cross, “**in order that**’ *the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us...*” The only “*righteousness*” the Law of Moses could give was “*death to the sinner*.” The righteousness of God at Calvary was to slay the sin which is in the sinner, hence “*the righteousness of the law (of Moses)*,” which is death to the sinner, is “*fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*.” The Law of God, which had been engraved in stone, is now engraved in the hearts of those “*who walk not after the flesh (human nature), but after the Spirit (The Spirit of life which we have in Christ)*.”

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

Those who live by their human nature think on and desire the things of the natural man. Their “*affection*” is on “*things of earth (Colossians 3:2)*,” and they take care of those things. Those whose life is of the Spirit and grace of God think on and desire the things of God. Their affection is on “*things above*,” and they “*seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*” (Colossians 3:1). It is actually a matter of what you are “*born of*.” Jesus said, “*That which is born of the flesh (fallen human nature) is flesh (fallen human nature); and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6).

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

In this verse a new English word is introduced. The word “*carnally*” is translated from the Greek word “*sarx*,” and is used just as the word “*flesh*” was used in previous verses. It speaks of “*human nature*” under the control of sin. The word “*minded*,” translated from

the Greek word “*phronema*,” speaks of “*inclination or purpose.*” “*Carnally minded*” relates to those who are “*born of the flesh;*” they are “*flesh;*” sin dwells in their nature, and their inclinations and purposes are “*fleshly.*” That is the definition of “(spiritual) *death.*” Paul did not say the “*carnally minded will die;*” he said “*to be carnally minded is death.*”

To be “*spiritually minded*” relates to those who are “*born of the Spirit;*” they are spirit, and their inclinations and purposes are spiritual. Paul makes the conclusion, “*to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*”

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Human nature under the control of sin is the enemy of God. The inclinations and purposes of man, which have their source in a nature polluted with sin, is what Paul called “*enmity*” in this verse. The Greek word “*echthra*,” translated “*enmity*,” is defined by “*Strong’s concordance*” as “*hostility; ... a reason for opposition.*” It is the “*quality*” that makes unregenerate man the “*enemy of God.*” Paul concludes that human nature with indwelling sin is not subject to the Law of God because it cannot be. That “*impossibility*” brings another conclusion in the next verse:

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

We must keep in mind that it is not the “*body*” that is the enemy of God, but the “*human nature*” that sin dwells in. The conclusion is that “*fallen human nature*” cannot please God.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Paul has drawn several conclusions in previous verses, each of them proving more and more that man can never please God through his own abilities or the inclinations of human nature. In this ninth verse, he brings yet another conclusion, this one with great hope. “*...ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of*

God dwell in you.” All previous conclusions were based upon the fact of sin dwelling in the nature of man. This conclusion is based upon the fact of the “Spirit of God” dwelling “in us,” that is, “in our nature.” It is impossible for the Spirit of God to “co-habit” with sin, therefore the conclusion, “Ye are not in the flesh...if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Peter said, *“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (II Peter 1:4). God promised in Ezekiel 36:26, *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”* This is the result of the “new birth” Jesus told us we must receive (John 3:6-7). The “new spirit” of Ezekiel 36:26 speaks of a “new (divine) nature” and not of the Holy Ghost, because in the next verse (Ezekiel 36:27), God promised, *“And I will put my spirit (The Holy Ghost) within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”*

Paul spoke to the Colossians about *“the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”* He said it is *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:26-27). *“Christ in you”* indicates a “new heart,” and a “new spirit (nature).” Paul concludes, *“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”* Every person should take note of this.

It is a “false hope” to tell those who have fallen into fornication, drunkenness, perversion, etc, that they will “go to heaven” because they have “already believed in Jesus.” A great man of God, who just recently passed on to his reward, told of a vision he received from God many years ago of those who were searching through the liquid flames of Hell, looking for the preacher who did not tell them the truth. Certainly when they find that preacher, he will be the one that told them that the “Romans Seven Experience” is “normal” for the redeemed of God.

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