

RELIGIOUS, BUT LOST!

Romans 7:14-25 Excerpt from "The Foundation" commentary on Romans by Leroy Surface

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 those who are "born again" of the Spirit of God Hebrews 8:8-13. The Law of Moses, which was "added because of transgressions" Galatians 3:19, is a carnal law Hebrews 7:16, 9:10, which was given to a carnal people. When God spoke from the mountain to give His Law to the congregation of Israel in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, they could not receive it because their hearts were "carnal." God defined the problem to Moses, saying, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always..." Deuteronomy 5:29. They could not, because they were "carnal, sold under sin."

The Greek word "sarkikos," which was translated "carnal" in this verse, means "similar to flesh" and was translated as both "carnal" and "fleshly." This was the state of Saul of Tarsus; He was "...fleshly, and sold under sin." The Greek word for "flesh" is "sarx," and speaks of "human nature" which was "sold under sin" by the first man, Adam. In the verses that follow, Paul lays out the proof that he was sold under sin. It is important to remember when reading this passage that the children of God are not "sold under sin" but are "redeemed from all iniquity" Titus 2:14. Saul of Tarsus had been one who was "sold under sin," but when he met Jesus he became one who was "bought with a price."

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 apostle Paul continues speaking as Saul of Tarsus before his conversion to Jesus for the remainder of this chapter. He offers proof of Saul's carnality until the day of his surrender to Jesus Christ; "...what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." It is with these words he describes "the motions of sin which were by the law" which he spoke of in the fifth verse.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Saul recognizes that if righteousness is not 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. The word "dwelleth" comes from the Greek word "oike" meaning "to occupy a house." An unwanted guest was occupying Saul's "house" and had taken dominion over Saul. He is a slave to sin. This is how he came to understand he was "sold under sin" as he said in verse fourteen.

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. 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..." Sin, through Adam's transgression, had made human nature its

dwelling place. It is Saul of Tarsus who comes to this realization, and the proof of it is, "...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 "Christians" who are in the same predicament.

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. This nineteenth verse proves the seventh chapter of Romans does not describe, as many say, "the normal Christian experience." The key to understanding this is found in the word "do," which is used one time in each phrase of this verse. These were translated from two different Greek words as "do," which serves to conceal the powerful statement Paul made about himself before he believed upon Jesus. Follow closely as we examine these words.

"...the good that I would I do not..." The word "do" in this phrase was translated from the Greek word "poieo," which is defined very simply by "Strong's Greek Dictionary" as "to make or do." This phrase is translated exactly as the Greek text says. I will show in the definition of the Greek word which was used in the next phrase that "poieo" refers to "a single act," which strengthens this phrase dramatically. Understand this phrase to say, "the good that I would I do not a single act," or, "I do not a single act of the good I want to do." This certainly speaks of a man who is a slave to sin, and cannot do good, even though he wants to.

"...the evil which I would not, that I do." The word "do" in this phrase was translated from the Greek word "prasso," which is defined by "Strong's Greek Dictionary" as "to practise, that is, perform repeatedly or habitually (thus differing from G4160 (poieo), which properly refers to a single act). This definition proves Saul of Tarsus could not do a single act of the good he wanted to do, but "the evil" which he did not want to do was his "habitual practice."

We are told by modern theologians that the children of God are still sinners, but they "do not practice sin." According to the Apostle Paul, before the day he believed in Jesus, that He is the Christ, Saul of Tarsus "practiced sin" (habitually sinned), even though he did not want to. Strangely, he was also "blameless...as touching the righteousness that is in the Law of Moses" Philippians 3:6, while at the same time he was "persecuting the church."

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 even if he had never committed an outward act of sin, yet sin dwelt in him. This was proven to Saul because he began doing things he did not want to do, and they were his "practice." Human nature was not created sinful in the beginning. It was the entrance of sin through Adam's transgression that polluted human nature. Sin is described as an entity that is separate from human nature, but it abides in human nature and takes dominion over it. As Paul said, "...it is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

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Only the blood of Christ can wash the sin pollutant out of our nature. It is a shame in many churches today, the proof of salvation is *"you do not want to do the evil things you do."* This same religious struggle, which is called *"concupiscence,"* is what finally proved to Saul of Tarsus he was a slave to sin ...and lost.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. It is the nature of sin to resist the good and do the evil. As long as sin remains in the heart, he may struggle to do the good, and may even succeed in the working of good deeds, but sin is always present with its evil desires in the heart of the unregenerate man.

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," when contaminated with sin and 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 divine nature, but Israel could not receive it. The Law of Moses was given to *"control"* sinful 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. Sinful human nature, without the restraints of law, will descend to the level of the beast of the field. It is only the *"the restraints of law,"* whether religious or secular, that hinders the bestial activity of sinful human nature.

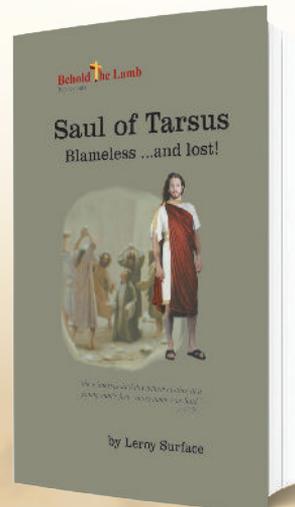
Saul of Tarsus was well disciplined by the Law of Moses. Such behavior as described above was out of the question, yet he, as does every unregenerate person, had sin dwelling in his human nature, seeking control of his members. The *"law in his members"* that warred against *"the law of his mind"* was simply sin dwelling in his *"human nature"* warring 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 *"the sin"* in his heart was discovered by *"the commandment"* (thou shalt not covet). His *"walls of defense"* which were 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 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. It is very likely that his words *"the evil which I would not, that I do"* was speaking of his rage against the church. He who had thought himself to be perfectly righteous under the Law discovered in himself an uncontrollable hatred that dominated his every thought both night and day. 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"* was used in Romans 6:6, and speaks of the *"entire body (or source) of sin and death."* It was his *"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.



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