

# The Anatomy of a Church (19)

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[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 04/13/14)

## PERSONAL HOLINESS

### STRUGGLE AND CONFESSION: THE BELIEVER IS TO BE FREE FROM THE LAW, [Romans 7:1-25](#)

The Confessions of a Man's Struggling Soul, [Romans 7:14-25](#)

#### The First Lament

[Romans 7:14-17 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup>“For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

<sup>15</sup>For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

<sup>16</sup>But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good.

<sup>17</sup>So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

#### The Proof

##### Struggle of A Saved Soul

[Romans 7:15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>15</sup>“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.”

Paul's proof that sin still indwelt him was in the reality that **that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do.**

*Ginōskō* (**understand**) has the basic meaning of taking in knowledge in regard to something or someone, knowledge that goes beyond the merely factual. By extension, the term frequently was used of a special relationship between the person who knows and the object of the knowledge. It was often used of the intimate relationship between husband and wife and between God and His people. Paul uses the term in that way to represent the relationship between the saved and the Savior: “**Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?**”

([Galatians 4:9](#)). By further extension, the word was used in the sense of approving or accepting something or someone. “**If anyone loves God,**” Paul says, “**he is known [accepted] by Him**” ([1 Corinthians 8:3](#)).

That seems to be the meaning here and is consistent with the last half of the sentence. Paul found himself **doing** things he did not approve of. It was not that he was unable to do a particular good thing but that when he saw the fullness and grandeur of God's law he was not able to measure up completely. It was not that he could never accomplish any good at all, nor that he could never faithfully obey God. The apostle was rather expressing an inner turmoil of the most profound kind, of sincerely desiring in his heart to fulfill the spirit as well as the letter of the law (see [Romans 7:6](#)) but realizing that he was unable to live up to the Lord's perfect standards and his own heart's desire.

It was not Paul's conscience that was bothering him because of some unforgiven sin or selfish reluctance to follow the Lord. It was his inner man, recreated in the likeness of Christ and indwelt by His Spirit, that now could see something of the true holiness, goodness, and glory of God's law and was grieved at his least infraction or falling short of it. In glaring contrast to his preconversion self-satisfaction in thinking himself blameless before God's law ([Philippians 3:6](#)), Paul now realized how wretchedly short of God's perfect law he lived, even as a Spirit-indwelt believer and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

That spirit of humble contrition is a mark of every spiritual disciple of Christ, who cries out, "Lord, I can't be all you want me to be; I am unable to fulfill your perfect, holy, and glorious law." In great frustration and sorrow he painfully confesses with Paul, **I am not practicing what I would like to do.**

Every Christian can relate to the feelings Paul expresses in this section. He expresses the frustration we all have with our flesh. [Verse fifteen](#) states, "**what I am doing, I do not understand.**" The word "**understand**" means "**I do not approve or wish for.**" How many times have you done something and then said, "**I wish I had not done that.**"

Paul continues and says, "**I am not practicing what I would like to do!**" Because Paul loves the Lord, he is concerned about what he neglects to do. We should too! Our failure to do what is right, to serve Christ, to let our light shine for Him should bother us. Paul continues to express his frustration. What I hate, I do! We hate our selfishness, pride, jealousy, anger, losing our temper, greed, etc. We still do these things sometimes.

Here we have the conflict of two natures, the old nature and the new nature. There are definitely two "**I's**" in this section. The first "**I**" is the old nature as he asserts his rights. "**For what 'I' would**" is what the new nature wants to do. "**That do 'I' not**" -- the old nature rebels and won't do it. "**But what 'I' hate**" -- the new nature hates it -- "**that do 'I'**"; the old nature goes right ahead and does it.

Do you have the experience of this struggle in your Christian life? Do you do something, and then hate yourself because you have done it? And you cry out, "God, oh, how I've failed You!" I think every child of God has this experience. Paul is speaking of his own experience in this section.

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**Series: The Anatomy of a Church**

Apparently there were three periods in his life. **First** he was a proud Pharisee under the Mosaic system, kidding himself by bringing the sacrifices and doing other things which he thought would make him right with God. But the Law was condemning him all the while.

Then the **second period** began when he met Christ on the Damascus Road. This proud young Pharisee turned to Christ as his Savior, but he still felt he could live the Christian life. His new nature said, **“I am now going to live for God!”** But he failed and was in the arena of struggle and failure for a time. I do not know how long it lasted -- probably it was not long. There came a day when there was victory, but Paul did not win it; Christ did. Paul learned that it was a matter of yielding, presenting himself and letting the Spirit of God live the Christian life through him.