

06-08-14

Series: The Anatomy of a Church

# The Anatomy of a Church (24)

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[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 06/01/14)

## PERSONAL HOLINESS

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

#### The Second Lament

[Romans 7:18-20 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup>“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.

<sup>19</sup>For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

<sup>20</sup>But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”

The second lament follows the same pattern as the first: the condition, the proof, and the source.

#### The Condition

[Romans 7:18a \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup>“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.”

In order that his readers will not misunderstand, the apostle explains that the **me** in whom **nothing good dwells** is not the same as the “**I**” he has just mentioned in the previous verse and which referred to his new redeemed, incorruptible, Christlike nature. The part of his present being in which sin still **dwells** is his **flesh**, his old humanness, which has not yet been completely transformed.

Again he points out (see [yv. 5, 14](#)) that the only residence of sin in a believer’s life is his **flesh**, his unredeemed humanness. As noted above, the **flesh** in itself is not sinful, but it is still subject to sin and furnishes sin a beachhead from which to operate in a believer's life.

## The Proof

### **Romans 7:18b-19 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup>“**For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.**

<sup>19</sup>**For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.**”

Paul had a deep desire to do only good. The **willing** to do God’s will was very much **present** within his redeemed being. The **me** used here does not correspond to the *me* of the first half of this verse but to the *I* in [verse 17](#). Unfortunately, however, the perfect **doing of the good** that his heart wished for was not present in his life. Slightly rephrasing the same truth, he says, **For the good that I want, I do not do.**

As noted in regard to [verse 15](#), Paul is not saying that he was totally incapable of doing anything that was good and acceptable. He is saying that he was incapable of **completely** fulfilling the requirements of God’s holy law “Not that I have... already become perfect,” he explained to the Philippian church, “**but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus**” ([Philippians 3:12-14](#)).

As a believer grows in his spiritual life, he inevitably will have both an increased hatred of sin and an increased love for righteousness. As desire for holiness increases, so will sensitivity to and antipathy toward sin.

The other side of the predicament, Paul says, is that **I practice the very evil that I do not want.** Again, it is important to understand that this great inner struggle with sin is not experienced by the undeveloped and childish believer but by the mature man of God.

David was a man after God’s own heart ([1 Samuel 13:14](#)) and was honored by having the Messiah named the Son of David. Yet no Old Testament saint seems a worse sinner or was more conscious of his own sin. Particularly in the great penitential psalms [32](#), [38](#), and [51](#), but in many other psalms as well, David agonized over and confessed his sin before God. He was so near to the heart of God that the least sin in his life loomed before his eyes as a great offense.

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## The Source

**Romans 7:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> **“But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”**

Paul repeats what he said in [verses 16-17](#), with only slight variation. **If I am doing the very thing I do not want**, he argues with simple logic, then it follows that **I am no longer the one doing it**. The apostle again uses the phrase **no longer**, referring to the time before his conversion. Before salvation it was the inner **“I”** who sinned and agreed with the sin. An unsaved person cannot truthfully say he is not doing it. He has no moral or spiritual **“no longers.”**