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Series: [The Anatomy of a Church](#)

# The Anatomy of a Church (26)

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[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 06/15/14)

## 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 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 longer**.”

#### The Third Lament

[Romans 7:21-23 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

<sup>22</sup> For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

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<sup>23</sup> **but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.**

The third lament is very much like the first two, both in substance and in order.

## The Condition

[Romans 7:21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> **I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.**

The continuing presence of **evil** in a believer's life is so universal that Paul refers to it not as an uncommon thing but as such a common reality as to be called a continually operating spiritual **principle**. Lingering sin does battle with every **good** thing a believer desires to do, every good thought, every good intention, every good motive, every good word, every good deed.

The Lord warned Cain when he became angry that Abel's sacrifice was accepted but his own was not: "**If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.**" ([Genesis 4:7](#)). Sin continues to crouch at the door, even of believers, in order to lead people into disobedience.

[Genesis 4:3-4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> **So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.**

<sup>4</sup> **Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering.**

[\(Genesis 4:3-4\) Worship— Offerings— Cain— Abel](#): This scene is the worship of Cain and of Abel. **Note:** Scripture indicates that Cain and Abel approached God at a specific time and at a specific place for worship.

⇒ The specific time is indicated by the words "**in the process [or course] of time**" ([Genesis 3:3](#)). The Hebrew means *at the end of the days*. What days? Scripture does not say. It could refer to the days of harvest, a very special time when Adam and his sons wanted to set aside a very special day of worship and offering to God.

However, it most likely refers to the end of the week, the seventh day of rest. Remember: God had already blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a day of rest and worship.

**But note this:** it could also refer to the first time Cain and Abel worshipped on their own, apart from their parents. It may refer to the day when the two sons cut the apron strings—so to speak—and became men on their own and began to approach and worship God on their own. This may be the first time the two sons approached God independent of their parents.

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⇒ The specific place is indicated by the fact that both Cain and Abel “**brought**” their offering to *a particular place* for worship. Where was that place? Again, Scripture does not say, and to guess is just that, a guess.

However, we would expect Adam to establish a place of worship. Adam’s soul was just like our souls—except more so—restless, unfulfilled, and thirsty for fellowship with God. Adam had known perfect fellowship with God. In his fallen condition, he was bound to thirst deeply for God. He was bound to seek more and more for a restoration to the perfect fellowship he had once known.

If knowing God in a personal way—if fellowship and communion with Him—is the summit of experiences, then Adam must have sought after God with a diligence seldom, if ever, matched. Having known God in perfection and having experienced perfect fellowship with God must have put an insatiable desire for God within Adam’s heart.

Adam must have, therefore, established a very special place and a very special altar where he and his dear family sought after God and faithfully worshipped God. Where, then, was the place where Adam and his family worshipped? Again, Scripture does not say.

**But note this:** it would be only logical and rational for Adam to worship God right at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, the very place where he had known face to face fellowship with God. Many commentators hold this position, thinking that God actually instructed Adam to build an altar and to worship Him at the entrance to the Garden where the cherubim stood guard.

Note that God seems to still talk with Adam and his family face to face, probably from between the cherubim ([Genesis 4:6-7, 9-15](#)). This fact plus the fact that the sons bring their offerings to a particular place for worship gives significant weight to the place of worship being at the entrance to the Garden. The Garden's entrance would certainly be the dearest and most meaningful spot to Adam’s heart. **And note two other things:**

⇒ Adam would have been very careful how he *approached God*. He would want to please God to the utmost when he approached God, ever hoping to be restored to the perfect fellowship he had known. Therefore, when Adam entered the place of worship, he would approach God exactly as God had instructed: by the way of sacrifice.

⇒ Adam would also have been very, very careful to teach his family how to approach and worship God. In fact, Adam would have shared time and again his own personal experiences with God, how wonderful face to face fellowship and communion with God is.

Now, to the major subject of these two verses and of this particular scene ([Genesis 4:3-4](#)): the personal worship of Cain and Abel.

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**Genesis 4:3-4 (NASB)**

**<sup>3</sup>So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.**

**<sup>4</sup>Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering.**

**1. First, there was Cain's false worship:** he approached God and offered produce—the works of his own hands—to God. Cain was a farmer, so he took what he had, produce, and he brought his produce as an offering to God. We can imagine that the produce was the very first of Cain's harvest and the very best produce he had.

**2. Second, there was Abel's true worship:** he approached God and offered a sacrifice—a substitute life—to God. Abel approached God by taking the first—the very best—of his flock and sacrificing the animal and offering it to God.