***The Rebellion of the Sin Nature
RO86-01***

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Our subject is "The Vindication of the Mosaic Law," and this is segment number two in Romans 7:7-11.

**The Law Teaches us**

We have observed that Romans 7:1 through Romans 8:39 explains how God, as the judge of the universe, has solved the problem of the sin nature in the believer's experience (His experiential solution). The experiential solution is the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit functioning in the believer's daily life. The apostle Paul has taught some things, in the course of this book thus far, concerning the Mosaic Law, which have raised some question about the value of the Mosaic Law. In Romans 7:7, Paul begins to explain the importance of the Mosaic Law, and to make it clear that all of these remarks that he has made were not to the end of belittling the law. Paul learned from the Mosaic Law that he was mentally evil, and that evil was within him, even though it didn't show up on the outside. Before he discovered this, Paul viewed himself as an exceptionally fine personality.

We have this indicated in Philippians 3:6, where Paul says about himself: "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law: blameless." Now this was a true statement. Relative to the Law, he could say about himself, "I'm perfect. I'm blameless." What he was talking about was in terms of outward keeping of the Law, he could not be faulted. But while he was outwardly keeping the details, he said, "When I began studying the Law, and realized its spiritual implications, I was horrified to see what a mass of evil I was on the inside in my thinking, because I had mental attitude sins. The reason the Mosaic Law had the effect of stimulating one to overt sinning is because of the character of the sin nature which entices one to mental evil.

So, we're going to begin today at Romans 7:8. Paul says, "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in the all manner of coveting, for apart from the law of sin is dead" – the operation of the old sin nature. The word "but," beginning this verse is "de." This tells us that an explanation is coming of what he has said in verse 7 about learning about the sin nature through the Mosaic Law. He's going to explain a little further how the Mosaic Law enabled him to learn something about his sin nature.

"But sin." The word "sin" is this word "hamartia." "Hamartia" is the word for "evil" which talks about missing the mark of God's standard of absolute righteousness. The Greek has "*the* sin," so it indicates nature. The sin nature is what he's referring to – not an individual act of evil. The reference is to the sin nature – the inherited propensity to do evil. He said, "But the sin nature within him, taking." This is the word "lambano." "Lambano" is the word for securing a possession. It is aorist, which means that at some point in time, the sin nature took something. It's active. The sin nature did the taking. It's a participle – a spiritual principle.

**The Sin Nature Took Opportunity**

What the sin nature took was described as an occasion. This is the word "aphorme." "Aphorme" is an interesting word. It basically means a starting point. In the Greek world, it was a military term. And what it means is a base of operations. We would say "a staging area." So, Paul said that the sin nature used something as a base of operations (as a staging area) with which to cause him to sin. The idea is that the sin nature took opportunity here.

So, the Mosaic Law, Paul indicates, provided the sin nature with a base of operation for its attack on the soul. He did this, it says, by means of the commandment (the "entole"). The "entole" refers to a religious precept in general. Here it's referring to the precepts of the Mosaic Law. Now again, the Greek word says, "*the* commandment," specifically referring to the commandments discussed here in the context about coveting.

So, Paul is saying that the sin nature used the specific tenth commandment as a base of operation to launch an attack against Paul that resulted in his falling into sin: "The sin nature, taking opportunity by the specific commandment, wrought in me." The word "wrought" is "katergazomai." This word is the intensified form. It has this great preposition "kata" before the word "to work." Now it is an intensified form; that is, it worked powerfully. It's in the aorist tense, which is at any point that there was an attack on Paul. That is what he's thinking. It is active voice. The old sin nature did the attacking. Its indicative mood. It's a statement of fact. This word implies not just an attempt, but an achieving of its objective. And the objective was to lead Paul into mental attitude sinning. And it was an intensified attack against Paul. Paul is referring to his experience with the Mosaic Law.

What it did, he says that it worked in him, and successfully worked in him, all manner of coveting. This is the Greek word "pas," which means "all kinds of." What he is referring to with this word is that the sin nature is on a rampage so that nothing, and no one, is sacred to its evil desire. The CID nature holds no one or anything sacred.

So, incest comes along. The sin nature says, "It's all right." Bestiality (sex with animals) – that's all right. Homosexuality – the sin nature says, "That's all right." All these desires are stimulated by the sin nature, and particularly stimulated, because the Bible says that these things are not all right. These things are forbidden.

So, the desire to hurt is promoted by the old sin nature in the most heartless cruelties to man and beast that are imaginable: all manner of, particularly this evil of coveting ("epithumia"). There's that word which we've had before. It is the noun for "strong desires," here connoting a strong evil desire.

This word can be exemplified by Genesis 6:5, which describes a time in the human race where coveting (a strong desire for evil) became a general practice within society. Genesis 6:5 says about the pre-flood civilization: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And the word "imagination" there means "every desire" – every inclination, and everything that he wanted, was regularly evil. His mind was turned toward evil all the time. The sin nature had brought the pre-flood civilization under total control of evil desires.

Another example is in Genesis 8:21, where we read, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor, and the Lord said in His heart, 'I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake, for the imagination (the desire – the strong desire) of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I again smite anymore every living thing as I have done." So, this passage is stressing the fact that the imagination of man's thinking, the nature of man's thinking, is evil from his youth up. What he imagines in terms of desires is evil from his earliest days. The sin nature is in man from birth, and it subjects him, therefore, to evil lusts.

So, Paul is saying that the sin nature in man is so corrupt that it takes the good things which God has given us, such as the Mosaic Law, and it uses them as a base of operation to launch man into the vilest kind of evils, based particularly in the mind. This is the principal recognized in Titus 1:15, where Paul says, "Unto the pure, all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and their conscience is defiled." So, even if a thing is pure and good in itself, the sin nature takes it, and turns it into a defiled thing.

Human viewpoint resists this biblical principle which Paul has here enunciated in this 8th verse – that there is within man an evil nature stimulating him to all kinds of mental and overt evil actions. People resist the biblical principle of inherent evil in man. They say, "That's too negative, and it's a bad way to look at people." What we are told to tell people instead is that they have simply not fully developed. It's not that they're evil, but that they haven't fully developed to the extent that they should have. They're not positively evil. They just have not fully matured.

The solution, therefore, to man's lack of development, which they call "his sin nature," is said to be education and culture. It is this attitude that causes the world of psychiatry and the world of psychology to say that slavery-to-a-sin-nature idea makes a person morbid and mentally ill. To tell people that they are inherently evil, the psychologists and psychiatrists tell us, will make that person mentally ill.

**Mental Illness**

There is such a thing indeed as mental illness to some degree – not to the degree that the psychologists and psychiatrists like to pretend. Let me stress at this point that if you're in love with psychology and psychiatry, please do so. I am amazed at how distressed people get when I say something about psychiatrists or about psychologists. If you love them, if they warm the cockles of your heart, it doesn't matter to me. That's fine with me. I just hope that you can be as relaxed about it as I am. If you love that kind of treatment, if it does something for you, then pursue it.

**Chemical Imbalance**

There is the matter of chemical imbalance, which does cause emotional stress and mental instability. And that's what we're talking about. When we're talking about mental health, we're talking about emotional instability.

**Job**

Job showed us something very important about the pressures of life. The psychiatrists and psychologists tell us, "Well, the pressures of life are the things that cause people to be mentally ill. But Job went under enormous pressures, and Job did not go mentally ill. Job showed that the pressures of life do not cause mental illness. Notice Job 2:10. Job is speaking to his wife, who told him to curse God; chuck it all; and, go ahead and die: "But he said unto her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' In all this, Job did not sin with his lips." There was not a bit of whining.

Here is a man that really was suffering – suffering badly. And if there was anybody who ever had a ground for sitting there and feeling sorry for himself, and whining about the condition to which things had come after he'd been such a faithful man to God, it was Job. He had stood by God, and he had been such a brilliant example to Satan. He shut Satan's mouth so tremendously when Satan said, "You just let me bring some misery into his life, and frustrate the desires of one of your people like Job, and I'll show you how true they are to you."

Job indeed could have said, "After all I have done for the Lord, He lets this kind of treatment come to me. But would have been mental illness to talk like that. That would have been mental instability. That would have been emotional instability. Job doesn't do that. He says, "God has brought me the good things. I don't know exactly why he's bringing me the bad things, or why he's denying me, at this moment, something that I consider good. But I'm staying with Him. I trust Him."

The extent of his trust is stated in Job 13:15, where Joe says, "Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him."

**Emotional Instability**

Well, if it's not a chemical cause for mental illness, what does cause mental illness? Emotional instability. One of the great ways for you to enter mental illness is through negative volition to the Word of God and to the will of God. Just start kicking against what God is doing in your life – negative volition to the Word of God. You're hearing the Word of God and saying, "I don't like it," and trying to evade it. That's a sure road to mental illness.

**Mental Attitude Sins**

Another factor is toleration of mental attitude sins – knowing that these things are evil, but still indulging in mental evil; that will bring you into a state of mental illness and emotional instability. The same goes for permitting spiritual callouses to develop on the facets of your soul because of your negative attitude toward the Word of God. Because of your willfulness in sin, you permit hardness in your will; in your mind; and, in your emotions to develop. That will throw you off your balance. Or you may permit the emotions to dominate your soul, instead of your life being governed by the mentality functioning on the Word of God. You put your mind in neutral so that your emotions can run amuck. That will bring you into mental illness. So will the breakdown of the spiritual maturity structure in your soul because of your reversionism. That will give you a good case of mental illness.

However, it is not recognizing that you are evil. That will not give you mental illness. But resisting the corrections that God has for that evil nature, that will cause you to become mentally unbalanced and emotionally unstable.

The ultimate expression of mental illness in a believer is being conformed to Satan's world system rather than to the divine viewpoint of Bible doctrine. Paul says in Scripture that the old sin nature is a positive force that pressures a person into a mental evil, and then into its overt expressions. The sin nature is a monarch. Paul has already taught us in this book that it is a monarch which reigns supreme, and seeks to enslave the individual. In Romans 5:21, you remember, he said that: "As the sin nature had reigned unto death, even so, My grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." There was one time when the sin nature was the king of our lives. Now, through the grace of God, Jesus Christ is that king.

In Romans 6:14, Paul has said, "For the sin nature shall not have dominion over you, for you’re not under law, but under grace."

In Romans 6:17, he says, "But God be thanked that whereas you were servants (slaves) of the sin nature, you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you, and thereby you have been released from that enslavement."

So, the thing that the apostle Paul is observing here is that there was within him, indeed, this nature of sin. It's a fact of life, and it's foolish to pretend that it's not there. It doesn't do bad things to people to recognize that they've got a disease. What is bad is to have a disease and not do anything about it. That's bad. But to recognize the evil that is inherent in us that we're born with – that's the first step toward getting the life stable, not unstable.

The thing that is characteristic at the heart of the sin nature, perhaps more than anything else, is the spirit of rebellion. The Mosaic Law was an expression of what a holy God declared to be right. And that's the question. It is an issue of what is right. In the Mosaic Law, it was clearly stated what the living Creator God said is right and what is wrong.

Now the standard of God's integrity, therefore, was clearly spelled out for man. The Mosaic Law was not a code of morality which was formed by human consensus. It had a higher authority. It was from God Himself. So, that's what we're dealing with. The Mosaic Law was not therefore subject to ratification by man. The Mosaic Law is right; the Mosaic Law is absolute; and, the Mosaic Law is absolutely right. And that is the issue that Paul recognize caused the problem. He was dealing with a standard from which there was no appeal. It was the mind of God.

**The Holy Spirit vs. the Sin Nature**

At the core of the sin nature in man, however, is this spirit of rebellion against what is right in any sphere whatsoever. And that is still in you as Christians. Those of you who are the most sterling believers among this have deep-seated rebellion within the sin nature. The more sterling you are through the Word of God, the greater control you have over that rebellion, and the more you are able to control negative volition responses. But at the core of the sin nature, remember, is this spirit of rebellion. Instead of the Holy Spirit producing divine good, the old sin nature wants to substitute its own human good. Instead of God's standard of righteousness, the old sin nature rebels, and it substitutes its own righteousness based on a human consensus of what is acceptable conduct. Instead of being led by the Holy Spirit, the old sin nature rebels, and promotes a legalistic kind of asceticism. Instead of separation from the world, the old sin nature rebels, and promotes sensual indulgence in Satan's world system.

So, everyone is born into the human race with a spirit of downright antagonism against God, and rebellion against His rules of righteousness. In Romans 8:7, we read, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "The carnal mind" is describing the normal mentality of the sin nature.

This innate conflict with God comes to the surface when God's rules are imposed on a person. The old sin nature demands autonomy – independence from divine restraints. That sin nature will be so sweet, and it will love God so much even, and it will be so accommodating, until it is crossed. Once that sin nature is crossed, it's no longer as sweet as it seemed to be.

In Hebrews 12:15, it is put this way: "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and by it, many be defiled." That is that terrible quality of the root of bitterness. Why should it spring up in us as Christians? Because we have the same quality of rebellion against God's rules and against God's dealings with us. We can be the sweetest Christians around. We can be the most dedicated and the most devoted. But let God cross something that our sin nature is determined to have, and we lose all of our sweetness. And there rises deep within us a spirit of bitterness, and that root begins to grow, and it defiles not only our lives personally, but begins to defile the lives of people around us.

The sin nature does not want anybody squelching it. It does not want anyone telling it what to do. The old sin nature does not want to be told that it is wrong, and to shape up to some divine standard of right. It is self-contained and self-centered. The sin nature, when it controls a person, resents God's demands and His treatment.

**People say, "I don't Believe in God"**

Some people actually express this rebellion of the sin nature by saying that they don't believe in God. That's why people say, "Ah, I don't believe in God. I don't believe that there's anybody out there." The reason they do that is because their sin nature rebels against the idea that there's some authority out there who can the rules that they must be subject to. So, they deal with the matter by simply wiping God out of existence. They resent His authority over them. They pretend that He's not there.

**The Rebellion of the Sin Nature**

In practice, the resentment of divine rules, for example, will make a cold-blooded murderer the object of indulgence and sympathy. And we're seeing that all the time. Here's a first degree murder. And when he is condemned, what do people do? They don't say, "Justice has been served. God's laws are being obeyed relative to that terrible crime." Instead, they get out there, and they burn candles, and hold a vigil, and do everything they can to keep him from being executed. Why do people do that? Because there is rebellion in the sin nature. They think that it's some expression of their humanitarianism, and some expression of their human kindness. It is an expression, they think, of their humanity. It is an expression of their sin nature. Because they are rebels against God, they resist the punishment that the Word of God has ordained for first-degree murder. In essence, the sin nature is lawless, and it rebels against the rules of God. The rebellion against the Bible is a prominent expression of the rebelliousness of the sin nature – the rebelliousness against the Bible as the inerrant expression of God's mind.

One of our men told me this morning that a new ruling has come down from the United Methodist Church. This ruling states that, henceforth, within that congregation, they are not to refer to God by the terms "King" or "Lord" because those are sexist terms. If you call God "King," that means that He's a man. If you call God "Lord," that indicates that He's a man. So, at least He has the male position. So, the United Methodist Church, because it rebels against the Word of God, which happens to call God by these terms, says, "We don't like it. Our sin nature rebels against that, and we are not going to be subject to God by using those terms anymore.

This morning there was a television program. It was a TV panel discussion of religious leaders. It included Catholics and Jews and liberals and some fundamentalists, and they were discussing submission to the authority of the Bible. There was one Methodist minister who spoke up and said that he: "Considered the words of Jesus far more important than the words of somebody like John that the fundamentalists make so much about in the book of the Revelation**s**." The Methodist minister explained what he meant by that by saying that: "Jesus told the thief on the cross that: 'This day you shall be with Me in paradise.' But what do those fundamentalists say? They go to John in the book of the Revelation**s**, and they say that the paradise is going to be 1,000-year reign with Christ here on the earth in the future. Jesus said, 'This day you're going to be with Me in paradise.' The fundamentalist says, 'It's not going to come until years later.'"

I don't know who's been teaching that. I don't know about equating paradise with the 1,000 years of the millennium. Well, it will be a paradise compared to the earth today. But of course, nobody in fundamentalist circles who knows something about biblical prophecy teaches that.

Well, in the process of making some correction, one of the fundamentalists on the panel, defending the importance of the words of the Bible as being the expression of the mind of God, and indicating that both what Jesus said, that is recorded in the Bible, and what John said, which is recorded in the Bible, both came from God the Holy Spirit. They were both put there by inspiration, and thus recorded. And in the process, he said, "And furthermore, the word is Revelation (singular), not Revelation**s** (plural).

Well, the Methodist minister looked a little peaked, and then showed the rebelliousness of his holy sin nature, because several times after that, he kept referring to John's book as Revelation**s**. He wasn't going to be told by some dumbbell fundamentalist preacher that it's singular. Obviously, somebody made a mistake in the Bible. It should have been plural. And he kept repeatedly saying, "Revelation**s**." That was a beautiful example of the rebellious character of the sin nature.

We have this experience ourselves. You may owe somebody some money which is overdue, and then they come and remind you of it, and you become so resentful about it. They have reminded you of what is the right thing that you should be doing. You have failed to pay them the money that you owe. It's overdue. What do you do? You resent it. You say, "Well, you're not going to get it for another two weeks just because of that."

Several of you said, "Yeah, I remember the time I did that." What is that? That's that resentment's in the old sin nature. Does the person have the money coming? You bet they do. Are they entitled? You bed they are. I can remember one occasion where somebody left Berean Church because somebody asked them to pay up: "I'll never come back to that church again." What is he telling us? His old sin nature is a rebel against what is right, and he is a slave to that rebellion.

You're sitting at the stop light. The light is red. You're daydreaming. You're thinking about your sweetie. The light turns green car. There is a car behind you, and you don't do anything. You're dreaming about her beautiful eyes, and how they roll around every night right across the floor. You're thinking about her teeth. They're like the stars. They come out every night, and there you are all enraptured. And suddenly the guy behind you honks the horn. And you wake up and you look, and you see that it's green. And you just move that car so slowly. You're going to show him. Just who does he think he is, telling you to do right and go when it's green? What is that? That's that inherent rebellion in the sin nature. It does not want to do what is right.

**Oral Roberts**

The old sin nature spirit of rebelliousness against biblical revelation is classically demonstrated in the charismatic movement, which enables sincere people to be suckered by carnival con-artists like Oral Roberts. I want to read you the latest thing that old Oral is up to. If you haven't heard, you should know about this. And I'm going to tell you that when Oral announced this latest revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ, I can guarantee you that that crowd went bananas. They went bananas over it with excitement. How can anybody be a carny man to con like that except the willingness to be in rebellion against the Word of God, so that the whole charismatic movement is built upon a false delusion – a spiritual Disney World?

This is from The Dallas Times Herald, Sunday, January 30th. 1983. The writer is Lewis Grizzard. The title is "Faith Healer's Costly Visions:" "Hold onto your pocket books. Oral Roberts is talking to Jesus again. A couple of years ago, according to the Oklahoma faith healer, evangelist, and financial vacuum cleaner, Jesus came to him in a vision and told him to go out and raise a few million in order to aid in the construction of his financially troubled City of Faith Medical Center in Tulsa – a hospital that city and state officials said really wasn't needed. In that vision, incidentally, Jesus appeared to Oral Roberts as 900 feet tall. How Roberts got the exact measurement of the vision is not known. But who is going to worry about details when you're talking cash to the Son of God? "Now Oral Roberts says he's had a seven-hour conversation with Jesus."

Incidentally, I want to tell you about Oral Roberts. He is obsessed with the number "7." It's a number of perfection in the Bible, and he uses it all the time in a variety of ways.

So, here he's had a seven-hour conversation with Jesus: "And Jesus has picked him to find a cure for cancer at his still-to-be-completed Tower of Faith Research Center. I got a little sick myself reading the details of the letter that was sent to the evangelist's prayer partners, in an effort to raise the money he claims will be necessary for his heavenly-inspired crusade. In the letter, Oral Roberts claimed Jesus told him to ask each of his followers for $240. Again, no details of how that figure was decided upon. I guess it's just something else between Jesus and Oral Roberts the rest of us have to accept. Oral Roberts quotes Jesus as telling him, 'I would not have had you and your partners build a 20-story research tower unless I was going to give you a plan that will attack cancer in both a physical and spiritual way that is different from any cancer research programs in the world today. I'm going to bring mighty and greater breakthroughs for the cure of cancer. When are you and your partners going to obey Me? When?'

"When is somebody going to put a stop to Oral Roberts? The man preys on the old; the sick; and, the hopeless: 'When are your partners going to obey Me?' The weapon he uses most is fear.

"After his vision two years ago, Oral Roberts sent out another series of letters asking for help in finishing his hospital. He sent a letter to Mrs. Rose Emmett of Atlanta. He sent it to the last address he had for her. He sent the letter to a nursing home. Oral Roberts did not receive a donation from Mrs. Emmett after the first letter, so he sent another one. In the second letter, he asked Mrs. Emmett for $100. He suggested that if she did not have that much money, she could go and borrow it, and pay it back in monthly installments. Mrs. Emmett's son-in-law sent me a copy of the letter. Mrs. Emmett certainly didn't need it. She had died at age 85, three months earlier, of a brain tumor.

"'Imagine asking a lady like that, on a fixed income, to go out and borrow money,' said Mrs. Emmet's son-in-law. Forget about the rest of us, Oral, and heal thyself. You're a sick mane."

Now how can people, in the following of all Robert, swallow that kind of swill? How can they go crackers and follow that kind of nonsense? Because they are rebellious against the revelations of Scripture, they do not want to obey with the Word of God has to say concerning spiritual gifts, and concerning the role of God the Holy Spirit, and so they distort the truth, and they set themselves up for a con-artist.

It is the sin nature in parents that rebelled against the rules and standards of what we are trying to do in schools. A Chicago school recently had the experience of a parent who came storming into the classroom of a teacher that had given the child a failing grade. The parent came storming in with a shotgun, and started shooting up the place. Berean Christian Academy parents who don't like subscribing to rules relative to their responsibilities – rules that we make to enable their children to rise above the ways of this world, are not above socking it to us to show their independence. I have to really smile – some of these letters we get from some of these parents, who are calling us legalists, and several other things, and who are putting the screws on us in a variety of ways, because we are saying to them, "You are parents. You have these minimal requirements of responsibility, and we are spelling them out, because if you don't do your job, we can't do our job. So, we're not going to waste your time and your money, and you don't waste our time and our sacrifice.

Boy, do they let us know about it? Why? Because there is this innate rebellion against rules – against being required to do something: "Who do you think you are? Do you realize who I am, and you're trying to tell me what to do?" That's the attitude of some of these parents. The very demands of the Mosaic Law for right conduct cause the rebellious nature to do that evil that God forbad – just to do it out of resentment.

The resentment of the rebellious man is especially evident in the principle of guilt for mental attitude sins. The average person doesn't mind your saying that he's guilty for what he does outwardly. But for you to tell a person that he is guilty for those mental internal sins really sends him up the wall in indignation. Here is this person that has a hankering for something in his mind which is prohibited by the Word of God: "Who's that going to hurt? It's not going to touch anybody else. It's just between me and myself." And yet, when you tell that person that that is a vile evil in the sight of God, it is resented.

**God can Read our Minds**

Man rebels against the idea that his thought life is an open book where God can read it – and worse, that God thinks that He can hold that man accountable for what he has going on in his mind. I'll guarantee you that the Bible makes it very clear that your thought life is an open book with God, and that He is intending to hold you accountable for your mental sins. You can strike back all you want, but you're going to suffer the consequences.

The social approval of some violation of biblical morality makes the sin nature all the more determined to resist God. There was a time when people wouldn't touch homosexuality with a ten-foot pole. And if they did, they kept it very secret. When it became socially acceptable, as it is today, the sin nature is rampant in rebelling against that particular standard of divine morality. It is promoting it with a vengeance.

There are groups now in California: "Parents for Incest," that believe that incest is a healthy thing within a family. And now they are promoting that that be accepted within society. And while now people recoil from it, the direction of the tribulation world is going to move in exactly that direction. And you can count on the fact that the rebellion of the sin nature, once it has social approval for incest, will be striking out against that forbidden fruit of the Word of God.

So, Paul says, in Romans 7:8: "But the sin nature, taking as a staging area, the commandment concerning coveting, worked out in me all kinds of every imaginable vile expression of evil desire." And the rest of the verse says, "For apart from the Law, sin is dead. The word "for" is the word "gar," and it indicates another explanation: "Apart from" is the Greek word "choris." It means if it were not for the law. The "law" is again, the word "nomos," now referring to the concept of rules in general. The Greek here does not say "*the* law." Just apart from a system of rules, the sin nature is dead ("nekros"). Here it means "dead" in the sense of being inoperative. The rebellious nature, the quality of the old sin nature, is always there, but it is bestirred to an expression by the demands of God's moral law.

What Paul is saying is: "I found out that, while the sin nature was there, it was a potential evil. It lay dormant. But the moment God's moral law came along and told me not to do something, then it was raised to a snarling, active attack. Someone has said that it's like taking a poker, and poking into a pile of coals in the fire. When you poke it, the whole thing leaps to new life.

The old sin nature uses God's holy laws to excite one to the vilest evils – the very discussion, as a matter of fact, of evil practices. And the Bible does discuss some very severe evil practices. And this is used by the sin nature to make one curious about those things. The sin nature says, "Do you see that thing that God forbids? Why don't you look into that, and see what it's really like?" The forbidding makes the forbidden fruit so much the more attractive.

Let's close with a few classical biblical examples of the sin nature bestirring the individual to coveting, and to the mental attitude sin of coveting. Joseph's brothers coveted his position as their father Jacob's favorite (Genesis 37:8). Achan coveted loot from the battle at Jericho (Joshua 7:21). Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard (1 King's 21:1 and following). Amnon coveted incest with his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1). Absalom coveted the crown of his father David (2 Samuel 15:1 and following). Ananias and Sapphira coveted praise among the church members (Acts 5:1 and following). Simon the sorcerer coveted the healing power of the apostles (Acts 8:18 and following). Demas coveted the good life of the world instead of Christian service (2 Timothy 4:10). And Diotrephes coveted having preeminence in the local church congregation, and being able to lord it over other people (3 John 9).

These are fascinating classical examples of the sin nature bestirring an evil covetous attitude. And most of these, basically, are as a result of God forbidding the action in each of these cases. Because God forbad the action, the sin nature rose up. And because it is basically a rebel, it struck out, and said, "You don't tell me what to do. I'm going to do it anyway."

So, I have a new and healthy respect for your sin nature. It is a rebel. Keep an eye on it. And when you find yourself rebelling against what God has said or what God is doing in your life, just count on the sin nature to be right there to egg you on, and to tear your spiritual life apart, and to cut you off from the blessings of the Father who will never treat you in a way other than He would treat His Own Son.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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