***The Sin Nature in Christians  
RO90-01***

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Please open your Bible to Romans 7:14. Our subject is "The Law and the Problem of Carnality." This is segment number two.

In Romans 7:14, we read, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." In this verse, the apostle Paul declares that the moral regulations contained in the Mosaic Law are spiritual because they are Holy Spirit-made – they are not man-made. The moral standard, therefore, of the Mosaic Law reflects the holy character of God Himself. The factor which determines what is right and what is wrong is the character of God. It is not human opinion. It is the character of God which determines what is right and what is wrong in the relationships that people have with one another.

Human beings were created physically, emotionally, and psychologically, therefore, to function on God's rules for living while they are here on the earth in this human society. The apostle Paul, however, having said this, we must be aware, declares that he himself is carnal, because he is aware that he is under the control of some kind of internal power in the nature of sin which dominates. Paul finds himself, therefore, in rebellion against God's moral rules which govern human relationships. For this reason, we have seen that Paul says that he is carnal. Or the word "better" is "fleshly," referring to his natural state of perverted, sensual, animal desires, and his inborn self-centeredness.

**Self-Centeredness**

Part of being alive in the human body is facing the fact that we are self-centered. We want our way. And we don't want anybody butting in with some concept of authority over doing our own thing. Furthermore, being in the human body places us in the position where we have within us a cluster of lusts. They represent the sin nature. And these lusts dominate the human being on an animal level. Therefore, we are confronted with these two qualities: our self-centeredness; and, our inclination to animal desires. Paul is referring to this evil propensity which we have inherited from our parents. We call this the Adamic sin nature.

Paul actually is referring to a condition of the mind which expresses itself in the selfish animal desires. So, Paul sums up his natural condition, in Romans 7:14, as one who is sold under sin. This expression means that he is under the control of this inward inclination to do evil. Paul faces God's moral laws, and he has a natural desire to disobey them, and to do what God tells him not to do.

**The Sin Nature in Christians**

So, in the portion of Romans now, the last of chapter 7, that we are pursuing, in Romans 7:15-25, Paul proceed to describe for us this struggle that all of us know so well – a struggle of frustration as a Christian in dealing with this sin nature which is in conflict with God's moral regulations. While a Christian is in Christ, he is also potentially under the control of his sin nature. That control is not removed at salvation. Paul, as a believer, wants God's will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven, but his experience shows that this is not what is happening.

So, in Romans 7:19, jumping a little ahead, Paul says, "For the good that I would, I do not. But the evil, which I would not, that I do." Paul wants God's will, but that isn't what he does. The laws of God for right living do not achieve godliness simply because the Christian is fleshly. His sin nature rises up and rejects those rules.

So, the Christian, although born again spiritually, and although he is in Christ, he cannot by himself obey God's laws and live thereby a godly life. He cannot obey the rules because of this carnal nature within him.

The law of God is right, and it clearly should be obeyed, as we will see him say in verse 16. Paul agrees that he should obey what God's law says. But the sin nature in him overrides that decision.

In Romans 7:20, he says, "Now if I do that, I would not, it is no more I that do it, but the sin nature that is that dwells in me."

The unbeliever, of course, has no internal conflicts like this himself. The unbelievers that you and I associate with want to do what is evil. They have no problem about doing what is evil. They're not internally torn over the fact that they had this inclination to do evil. They don't want to do what God's laws tell them to do. They see God's moral laws as a hindrance to their personal freedom.

So, the Christian chooses God's law with his mind, but he's got a problem. With his sin nature, he chooses evil. So, that's what Paul says in Romans 7:25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, that with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but, with the flesh, the law of sin." Paul frustration in this conflict produces the cry of Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Victory over evil must come, therefore, through some power beyond Paul's own capacities. As a believer living in human flesh, he cannot make it without some outside force beyond his own capacities.

**The Mosaic Law cannot Secure Justification**

So, this is an important portion of the book of Romans. In Romans 7:14-25, Paul will show that the Mosaic Law cannot secure justification. He's already shown us that. Any human work or ritual offered for salvation removes the basis for salvation by free grace. The Mosaic Law is simply a mirror. It shows man his moral guilt before God, but it can't supply the solution for the problem of sin.

So, the means of salvation has to come entirely from God through Jesus Christ, apart from any human contribution, including the good statement of the Mosaic Law and its moral code. People can be moral, but they still can go to the lake of fire. A sinner cannot save himself by any kind of human doing, including keeping God's moral rules. Why? Because he still has a disease which is known as the sin nature.

Now once a person is born again, and thus he's justified by God, he still cannot secure a personal sanctification by keeping the Mosaic Law. That's another bad mistake – to think that once you are a Christian: "Now I can become the kind of person that God wants me to be, and that He can bless by keeping His rules. And this is where Paul has come to. The natural affinity within us for evil still resides in there after we are born again.

**Experiential Sanctification**

God does not leave His children, however, to try to attain godly living on their own. This is experiential sanctification, and it is an important truth for us to realize that if you want to live in a way that is pleasing to God, you will not be able to do it on your own. The Christian is in Christ, so he has had imputed to him absolute righteousness. But he does not seek, therefore, any righteousness through the Mosaic Law. What a justified believer needs now is the capacity to live up to what he already is in Christ Jesus. He needs spirituality. He already has justification. Now how to live up to what we are – that is the message of Romans 7:14-25. Spirituality cannot be achieved through keeping rules. It is achieved in another way.

**Four Deliverances of Salvation**

So, Paul in the book of Romans, is describing personal salvation. And he describes in this book this salvation in terms of four great deliverances. We have already looked at three of them.

1. **Deliverance from the Acts of Evil**

The first deliverance is from the acts of evil. God has judicially, as a judge, imputed to the believer the absolute righteousness of Christ.

1. **Deliverance form the Acts of Evil in Our Experience**

The second deliverance is from the acts of evil in my experience. He has done this through the shedding of God's love in the believer; that is, the principle of "love your neighbor as thyself," which is the power base that enables the believer to rise above individual acts of evil.

1. **Deliverance from the Hereditary Sin Nature**

The third problem we face, and the third deliverance, is the hereditary sin nature. God, as judge, has to deal with our sin nature. He deals with it by placing us in Christ. Everything that the sin nature condemns us for has been removed, because we're in Christ. When God looks at us, he sees His Son.

1. **Deliverance from the Hereditary Sin Nature in our Daily Conduct**

We've come to the fourth deliverance, and that is from the hereditary sin nature as it expresses itself in our daily conduct. And the answer to that is what Paul is pursuing here. How am I going to control that hereditary sin within me? Without the fourth deliverance, Paul calls himself a wretched man, and that was Paul's experience. He had all the other three deliverances, but he did not have the fourth one, and he was a wretched man.

**The Flesh**

So, Paul yearns for deliverance from what he calls "the body of this death," referring to his inherent propensity to do evil (Romans 7:17, Romans 7:20, and Romans 7:23). You have three expressions that I should mention to you that are all the same. Paul uses these various terms. He talks about "the flesh." He has that in Romans 7:5, Romans 7:18, Romans 7:25, and Romans 8:1-13. He talks about "the flesh." He also talks about "the sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:17, Romans 7:20, Romans 7:23). He also uses the phrase "the body of this death" in Romans 7:24. All three of those refer to the same thing: the sin nature in man; the animal lusts; and, the self-centeredness. So, whenever the phrase: "the flesh;" "the sin that dwells in me;" or, "the body of this death," all three are referring to the sin nature.

**The Flesh vs. the Spirit**

Romans 8:6 (looking ahead a moment) contrasts the mind of the flesh that is controlled by the old sin nature and the mind of the Spirit that is controlled by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:6 says "For to be carnally minded (controlled by the sin nature) is death. But to be spiritually minded (controlled by the Holy Spirit) is life and peace." These two positions represent the two mental states of every Christian. At any point in time, one or the other predominates. You are primarily controlled by your sin nature; or, you are primarily controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God (through the doctrine you have taken into your mind) refines our human nature as Christians, so that our wills choose to follow the mind of the Spirit. The Christian's basic sympathy is against the mind of the flesh. But without the Holy Spirit control, the power to resist carnality is practically nil.

So, now, beginning with that brief quick overview summary, we are beginning at verse 15 today. We're going to begin the first of three segments where the apostle Paul raises the same issue in three different ways in order to drive home what the problem is relative to that sin nature. Romans 7:15 says, "For that which I do, I understand not." This is the puzzlement of his conduct. The word "for" is the Greek word "gar." This is a conjunction. It is introducing Paul's explanation for what he meant when he said, in verse 14 – that he was fleshly. He says, "I'm fleshly. I'm sold under sin. I'm under the control as a slave to the sin nature? "What do you mean by that, Paul? You're born again. You're going to heaven. How can you say things like that?"

**Sold Under Sin**

He's about to explain in what respect, and to what degree, he is still sold under (or subjugated to) the sin nature. He introduces, thus, his testimony of the nature and the cause of his personal, painful bondage to evil – that which refers to the personal acts to his mental attitudes.

"For that which I do." "I do" is this Greek word "katergazomai." "Katergazomai" is made up of two words. This first part is "kata." That's a preposition which means "down." The second part is the verb "ergazomai" means "to do." Therefore, doing is made emphatic by this preposition "kata" – to really press it down; to do it energetically; to work hard; or, to bring something about by toil. Paul says, "That which I do, and I do it energetically. I work at it. I drive it like a football player just about ready to cross the goal line. I move my feet, and I throw my weight into it." It's in the present tense, which tells us that this is always the problem that he faces. It is active in its meaning – Paul's own works by his own choice.

**"I Understand Not"**

You must not get the idea today that we're talking about something that Paul can't say, "No" to, because you might want to excuse yourself from some of the same things you discover that you and I do. We are not helpless in our choices. We deliberately choose to do the things we do. And Paul is making a statement of fact here concerning his actual deeds. We would translate it: "For that which I am doing." He looks at his life, and he looks at what he does, and then he says, "I understand not." The world "understand" is "ginosko." That's a rather odd word, because normally this is the word for "knowledge" – for knowing something as a result of your own experiences. But here the idea is knowledge in the sense of understanding. And Paul adds the strong negative "ou," which means that he positively, absolutely does not understand his own actions.

He is saying, I'm baffled by what I do. The word connotes lack of approval for what he's doing. He finds himself doing something, but he cannot stand up and approve it. He does something, but he doesn't want to get up and tell all of his friends he does it. He does something, but he doesn't want to stand up in church before the congregation and say, "This is what I've been up to, and this is what I've been doing." He does something that he is totally revolted by, but he's baffled by it. He is in a constant dilemma. It's present tense. He says, "There's just no time that I can understand this. I can't figure this thing out." His mind is in confusion and IN conflict. He's making, again, a statement of fact. Paul simply does not understand his good intentions being overridden.

**Why did I do That?**

So, Paul finds himself asking the question after he's done something: why did I do that? How often human beings have experienced that? Knowing that nothing but good can come by obeying God, we don't do it. And all of us can look back in our lives and ask this same question: "I just don't understand why I did that. Whatever possessed me to do that? Paul feels like a slave whose will is subject to some master.

So, Paul realizes he's got a contradiction: "For that which I energetically pursue, I just don't understand." Then he goes on to say, in verse 15, “For what I would, that I do not do; but, what I hate, that I do." "For what I would" – again he introduces it with this word "gar." That tells us he's going to give us an explanation of the confusion about his own conduct. "That which" refers to those external things that he's doing. He says, "That which I would." The word "would" looks like this: it's the Greek word "thelo." This word means "to will" or "to desire." This is his will. This is his desire. He is not just a poor, helpless little leaf floating down the stream. He is at the helm. He is at the wheel of the boat. He is pulling the whistle, and he has his hand on the throttle, and he shoving the thing forward.

"What I would" connotes delight in doing something. The word expresses his volition – that which normally he finds he would prefer doing. "What I really desire. What is really the expression of my will." This is active voice – his personal choice. He is making a statement concerning himself. And what do we find?

He says, "Relative to what I really want to do, that thing I do not do." Here the word "do" is "prasso" – a little different word. This word means "to practice," sort of like what it looks like. It connotes a habit of doing something – purposeful, habitual doing. And this one, again, has the strong "ou" (the negative): "I do not practice." There are the lines drawn: "What I have in my soul, after I listen to God, and I study the Word of God, and I say amen, and I have a powerful drive – that's for me. That's the way I want to walk. That's the way I want to be."

Then he says, "Having said that, I discover a terrible thing. I have a negative response to the thing I said: "That's what I want to do." His actions are not beyond his volition. This word is active voice. He decided to practice this. What Paul wants to do with his mind and with his body is in harmony with God's law. But what he does is in violation of God's law.

**We do the Things that we Loathe**

So, he introduces that contrast. He said, "What I would do, I don't do, but." And then he uses one of those stronger words for but: "alla." It's a word of contrast to introduce what he actually does. He says, "But what." That is referring to the thing that he is doing. He says, "What I hate." This is the Greek word "miseo." And this word means "what I loathe." I think it's so vile. It's so disgusting. I just loathe it. But I do it. What God's holy law condemns as being evil, Paul is against in his heart, but not in his practice. This is the constant attitude of rejection. What I hate: that thing that is evil; that thing that God condemns; and, that thing that I consider so vile;, so despicable; so mean; so cruel; those terrible, cruel things to do to other people; those terrible, cruel attitudes; that terrible, cruel mouth that I have; and, the things I'm willing to say about people. I'm ready to slander; I'm ready to intimidate; I'm ready to abuse people; and, I'm ready to stand against what is good. I hate all that. And I hate seeing that in me. I loathe it.

We translate this as: "But what I really hate (what I really loathe), that," referring again to those hateful things. He comes up and says, "I do it ("poieo"). This word means "to perform." It stresses an individual act of evil. I do those things. This I perform.

So, what the moral of God condemns, Paul, though agreeing with God, still does the evil. And Paul is puzzled by his obvious inconsistency. So verse 15 is translated as: "For that which I am doing (my regular practice) I don't understand. I do not understand. For what I really desire (that is, to conform to what God says), this I do not practice. But what I really hate (that I don't want to stand up against God), this I perform."

Everybody should be able to do well to relate to that – those experiences in the past, and those experiences currently, where the very thing we say, "I don't want to be in this position. I don't want to do this. I don't want to have this attitude. I don't want to permit this kind of satanic domination over me." But you do. You don't resist it. That is the practice.

The apostle Paul sat down, and he just looked at himself, and he shook his head and said, "I don't understand this. I know God is right. I love to do what He wants me to do." He did that even before he was born again. He could say relative to the Ten Commandments that he kept them all, until he discovered mental attitude seems in the form of covetousness, and that they didn't keep that one.

So, in verse 16-17, he gives us the Holy Spirit analysis of the problem of his inconsistency. Verse 16 says, "If then I do that which I would." The word "if" is the word "ei." This is a negative particle. This introduces one of the four kinds of conditional sentences that the Greek language has. Here is a significant point that you won't see from the English Bible. This is first-class condition. First-class condition means that the word can be translated as "since," because first class condition says, "If I do this, and I do do this: if I am guilty of this, and I am guilty of this. It's an "if" which means "it is true about you." Paul is describing something which is true about himself.

So, he says, "Since then." And the word "then" is the Greek word "de" – one of those negatives, a little less strong negative. But here it indicates a transition to a conclusion. Paul is such a logical man. He says, "Now I've analyzed the problem. I've put out before you what I discovered about myself, and what all Christians sooner or later discover about themselves." And now he's going to give us a logical answer for the thing. And the word "de" indicates here is the transition Paul says, "But if then I do that." The word "do" here is again the word "poieo" – the word for "perform." Paul is referring to his choices – to his constant personal preference. "That" is referring to the individual thing that he does: "That which I would:" "If then I do that which I would." T word "would" is the word "thelo" again, which means his determined will and desire. The word implies volition.

However, but he puts the negative – the strong one, "ou," with it: "If I don't do the things that I would do, there's something wrong." If I choose not to do, by personal choice, that which I want to do." Then he says, "I consent unto the Law that it is good." The word "consent" looks like this: "sumphemi." The word "sumphemi" is made up of two words. The first word is the preposition "sun," meaning "together with," and the second word is the word "phemi" ("to speak). So, put together, it means "literally to speak together with another." And the idea is "agreement." To speak together with another person is to agree with that person.

**Paul Agrees with what the Law Says**

So, Paul is expressing his agreement about something that was stated about God's law. It's his constant attitude. It's his personal view. It's a statement of fact with him. Paul is expressing his agreement. And he follows this with two things. And these are concerning the Law ("nomos"). Here it is, the Mosaic Law, because in the Greek Bible it says, "*the* Law." Therefore, it is referring to the Mosaic Law. Paul says, "I agree about something relative to the Mosaic Law – specifically, its moral standards. And that is that he agrees with what it says. That's what he means. I agree with the Law. I agree with what it says. So, the first thing he says, "Is I agree with what the law says."

**Paul Believes the Law is Good**

Then a second thing he agrees with is another statement about the Law, and that is that it's good ("kalos"). It's an adjective. The word "good" here in the sense that the Mosaic Law is suited to its divine purpose of preserving human freedom in Satan's world system. If you obey the Ten Commandments, you will preserve your personal freedom. If you do not steal, you will preserve personal freedom and happiness. If you do not tell lies about people (bearing false witness), you will preserve your personal happiness. If you do not bow down to idol gods, you will preserve your personal happiness and your freedom. If you do not treat your parents with disrespect, but treat them with honor, you will preserve great personal freedom. If you do not commit sexual immorality, you will preserve personal freedom. Whatever law you break in some degree, you make yourself a slave. In some degree, you shortchange yourself in terms of personal freedom. That's what this word, "kalos", means.

This law of God has an inherent good quality to it. It will perform its stated objective of bringing you into freedom. Paul agrees with the intrinsic worth (the value) of the Mosaic Law when it speaks about morality. The law is right, and it is a blessing to people. He agrees with the excellence of God's rules.

So, what Paul is saying is that the very fact that he is distressed by his violations of God's Law shows that he believes it's good and right. Otherwise, he wouldn't care about breaking it. If you really believe that you are listening to God when you hear these moral precepts, then it will bother you when you violate them. When you undermine these precepts of God, you will indeed limit your freedom. If you are a person who is in a position of great responsibility (you're handling large sums of money), if you obey the law not to steal (the moral law), you will find that it's good, and that it will bring you freedom, and that it will bless you. But if they find you snitching from the till, you will find that you will lose your freedom. You will find that you will lose your blessing. You will find that there will be terrible consequences because of that violation.

The apostle Paul says, "When I break the moral law of God, and when I'm guilty, particularly of these mental attitude sins such as covetousness, he said, the very fact that it upsets me is an indication that I do believe that God is right, and that His Law is good, and that it will be to my benefit to obey them.

So, we would translate for 16 something like this: "Since then, I do that which I do not desire, I agree that the Law is morally good."

So, in verse 15, the apostle Paul says, "I look at myself, and I look at my conduct, and I don't understand myself. Paul says, "The things that I want to do, I won't do those things. I don't do them. But the things that I hate, that's the thing I do."

Verse 16 says, "Well then, if it bothers me not to do those things which God has said, it must indicate that I think that God's law is good; that God's law is to my benefit; and, that it would be a good thing for me to operate on that. How many human beings have found out how true that is, after they decided to violate God's principles, and then bore the grief, sometimes for the rest of their lives, relative to some consequence of some act, because they did not think that God's law was good, and that, therefore, it should be obeyed? But how many of them had additional grief, saying, "I did that, and I had terrible consequences, but I didn't want to. I was totally opposed it. I can't believe I did that."

**It is not I who Does this**

Now Paul comes to verse 17, and says, "Here's the cause of that terrible condition that resides in every believer. Paul says, in verse 17: "Now then it is no more I that do it." The word "now" is this Greek word "nuni." It introduces a conclusion. The word "then" is that weak adversative, "de," connoting the idea of "in view of the facts.” Now then" means "Now, in view of the fact that I have described, it is no more I." The word "no more" is the word "ouketi." It's an adverb relative to the time. He says, "It is no longer I," and he uses the Greek word for "I," which makes it emphatic: "diago." He refers to himself as a person: "It is no longer I, as the person Paul, the born again believer, who thinks God is right." Paul is not denying responsibility for his choice of evil, but he is denying it as his intentions: "It is no longer I – me, Paul, the human being, because I want to do everything opposite to this. There has got to be some other explanation. It is not I who does this." We have that word again that we had a little earlier: "katergazomai" – that intensive word: "I do it energetically. I work hard at it." Paul's pursuit of evil is a determined effort.

Paul says, "It is no more I that do it – this evil." And "katergazomai," when we say it is energetic (it is determined), it means he sets it up. How many times have Christians wondered how is it that they could have been guilty of setting up an opportunity for evil – not just where they fell into it? That was bad enough. It is not just that occasional (time) when they went positive to an opportunity for evil, but they planned it ahead of time, and they set it up. That's what "katergazomai" means. Paul says, "I ran at this thing with a vengeance. But he says, "That is not I. That's not Paul, the born again Christian. Something is wrong here."

**Sin**

Furthermore, Paul by this word says that he pursues this on a constant basis. It is his choice. I don't pursue it;" that is, the evil. But then he uses this word "alla" again, that stronger adversative. He's implying here a strong distinction. But he says, "The problem is sin "hamartia." "Hamartia" is a noun. This is the word for "sin" in the sense of missing God's standard of absolute righteousness. But it doesn't have a definite article; that is, it doesn't say "*the* sin" in the Greek – just "sin" as a quality. So, he's referring to the flesh. He's back to what he said: "I'm fleshly." He says, "The problem with me is that there is a quality of evil in my nature. There is a propensity to do these things within me. It's not just a small desire. It's a big, powerful force within me. Oh, yes, I'm born again. Yes, I'm in Christ. Yes, I've had absolute righteousness imputed to me. And, oh, yes, I sure do know Bible doctrine. And I do know God's moral principles. I know all those things. But there is a powerful force within me that is taking charge, and that he calls by this word "hamartia."

**Sin Dwells in Believers**

And he says that it dwells within him. The word "dwells" is "oikeo." This is the word referring to "inhabiting an abode." He is referring to something that he says is in ("en" – location) "ego" – the "I" – in me. This is something that is in me. The sin nature resides within Paul's body. You may remember that, earlier in Romans, we pointed out the sinlessness of Jesus Christ – that He did not have this "hamartia" propensity to evil within Him. He was born free of the sin nature. This was because he did not have a human father. All of the cells of the body have these 46 chromosomes that are the normal content of the chromosomes, which contain the little particles known as genes, which give us all of our hereditary characteristics. But in the female ovum, there are only 23 chromosomes. In the male sperm, there are only 23 chromosomes – the only cells in the body that vary from the 46 structure. But when those two reproductive cells come together in conception, those 23 on each side form the normal 46 cells out of which the child then begins to be generated. This is because, the Bible tells us, Eve was tricked into sinning, she was not held guilty for what happened in the Garden of Eden. But Adam, her husband was, because he knowingly entered sin. He knew what he was doing. She thought things were going to get better. She was tricked.

So, for this reason, we've indicated that the sin nature does not reside in the female ovum, but it resides in the male sperm. For this reason, the Lord Jesus Christ had to be born without a human father. All he needed was the 23 chromosomes from his mother, Mary, superimposed with another 23 perfect ones by God the Holy Spirit. And He would then be born without a sin nature. Any woman today, consequently, if you had that same combination, could bear a sinless child – one without this inward propensity.

However, Paul is saying that that's not true of us: "It is in me." And what he means is that it's in his genetic structure, as long as he is alive here on this earth. This is in the present tense. It constantly dwells in him. It's active. It's his personal condition.

So, Paul defines the conflict between his internal desires and his external performance. And he concludes that the reason is quite clear. The reason for it, he says, is that there is an enormous power in the form of the sin nature, which genetically resides in the body of the believer. He takes it over into the Christian life with him, and that thing is there to destroy him. Paul is going to present this same conflict twice more in the verses which follow. In Romans 7:18-20, he's going to ask the same questions. And he's going to come up with the same answer. It's the sin nature. And in verse 21-25, he's going to present the same problem again, and he's going to come up with the same conclusion: it's the sin nature.

What Paul is doing is laying the groundwork for explaining God's experiential solution for the internal control of the old sin nature. This is the fourth deliverance. How to be delivered from having to say, "Yes" to the sin nature. The full answer to that question is going to come in Romans 8. So, that is why three times he strikes against this fact that we don't do what we would like to do. We are for God, but we act against God. We hate certain things, but we'll roll in that filth. We'll take it on. We'll be willing to do it.

So, Paul suffers from conflicting potentiality, as do we all. We have the potential to be obedient to a perfect God. We have the potential to be slaves in rebellion against divine authority, and slaves of the sin nature. Those two potentials lie in all of us. Paul struggles between the two. The sin nature's power, we have already learned, has been broken. It is no longer king within your life. It is no longer king within your body. But the beast is out there on the outer perimeter. It constantly stalks the Christian, and waits for a moment when that believer is vulnerable, through his own carelessness in studying the Word of God; in learning the Word of God; in being open to the Word of God; in being positive to what God has said; and, in keeping his known since confess. If you make yourself vulnerable where the Spirit of God is not controlling, the beast will pounce upon you.

You look back at those moments of horrendous sin in your life, and if you can put all the pieces together, you will say, "That's the way it happened. The thing I never thought I would do; the thing that I did not want to do; and, the thing that I loathed and that offended me in every way, I did because I was at a certain condition spiritually where the sin nature could pounce upon me and bring me down. That is why the Word of God describes Satan as a roaring lion, who is pussy-footing about, seeking whom he may devour.

The apostle Paul, in a rising crescendo of his frustration, cries out, "Oh, God, what a wretched man am I. Who shall deliver me from this body of death – this sin nature? That's why, when we get to Romans 8, it's going to be Beulah land. It's going to be out there on the mountaintop, because all Romans 8 is laying out for us how to stay free of the vileness of the sin nature. God has given us the resource. If we learn how they work, and then use them, you can live a godly life.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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