***Paul does the Things that he doesn't Want to Do
RO90-02***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 7:18-20. Our subject is "The Great Frustration."

**God's Judicial Solution for the Sin Nature**

The apostle Paul, at this point in the book of Romans, is explaining the divine provision for victory over the sin nature which lies in every believer. The solution that Paul explains has two sides. One is a judicial solution. The other is an experiential solution. The judicial solution consists in the fact that God, the supreme judge of mankind, has transferred that believer at the point of salvation from a position of eternal death in Adam (the position in which we are born) to a position of eternal life in Christ. That is the judicial solution. By judicial, we mean that God, as judge, has taken this action in our behalf.

**God's Experiential Solution for the Sin Nature**

There is, however, an experiential side to this problem, and that has been solved by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who has been provided to each believer in order to give him the capacity in daily living to reject the appeals of his sin nature. This is the experiential factor because it has to do with our daily experience.

The great truth that Paul is explaining is the capacity that the believer does have to live the godly life, which God can then prosper both in time and in eternity. God has made His standards of living very clear in Scripture, but the natural, overwhelming propensity to do evil, which is in everyone, frustrates the good intentions of all of us who want to do what is right.

**Just Willingness cannot Overcome the Sin Nature**

Paul, as a Christian, has experienced the tyranny over himself via his sin nature. Knowing what is right is one thing then. But doing it is a problem that we all face. We have all left a trail of defeats behind us, and we need not kid ourselves about that. Willingness to do right is not enough for the Christian to be able to achieve a godly lifestyle. That's why it is very deceptive for preachers to be challenging people to do better; to call upon them to make new promises to God; and, maybe even to come forward in a public meeting and take some kind of special action under the impression that now they'll be able to make it; they'll be able to live up to the quality of life that they have in Christ; and, they'll be able to live up to their calling. Nothing could be further from the truth. You're not going to do it because somebody meets you in some counseling session, and you talk things over with them, and you discuss the things of God. That is not going to make it. The sin nature is a special problem that every believer takes into the Christian life with him. Thank God, however, there is an answer for this dilemma, and the apostle Paul now delights in explaining it to us.

**Just Knowing the Rules cannot Overcome the Sin Nature**

The godly lifestyle to which a Christian is called cannot be achieved by obeying God's moral rules, but by submission to God the Holy Spirit, as He applies doctrine to us. That's another great mistake. People think that if we just give you the set of rules, this is how you should live. How many young people have fallen into various immoralities who knew all the rules? How many adults have fallen far short of the standard of godliness that they knew the Word of God spelled out for us? Knowing a set of rules is not enough for us to be able to live up to the standards of God's righteousness.

**God's Judicial Solution**

So, the godly lifestyle requires something more. In Romans 7:14-25, the apostle Paul expresses this problem of being unable to live the godly life that he wants to live, and he uses the present tense to indicate that the problem is current with him as a believer. This is something that is his case now. Previously, he has been using the past tense. So, in the Greek language, it's very significant that you hit verse 14-25, and suddenly everything shifts into the present tense, where, up to then, he's been talking about the past. Well up to then, he's been talking about what God has done for him as judge, placing a big price. That has been his past experience. All that is behind him. That's the position he has; that's the potentiality; that's the capacity; and, that's the power he has.

**The Experiential Solution**

However, now when he gets down to where he's living, he switches to the present tense, and says, "It's not working out. It's not at all up to where I should be." So, what he does now in these verses, 14-25, is approach this problem three times – three distinct times. You have this in verse 14-17, which we looked at last time. When he gets to verse 17, he draws a conclusion as to what the problem is: "Why can't I do right? Why can't I have a control over my conduct and my thinking?" in verse 17, he comes to the conclusion that: "There's an evil, defective disease within me in the form of a sin nature.

Today, we look at verses 18-20. He takes up the whole problem again from a little different angle. In verse 20, he comes to the same conclusion. Next time, we will look at verse 21-25. He picks up the same problem again, and he looks at it from a little different angle. In verse 25, he comes to the same conclusion. The sin nature is the culprit. At the end of each segment he arrives at this decision.

The segment in Romans 7:14-17, he has pointed out that the moral laws of God are a spiritual code which has been produced by God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the law is spiritual. It is not simply the consensus of a bunch of human reasoning. Furthermore, he points out that man, by nature, is fleshly or sinful. So, he is a slave of that inward propensity to do evil. That's how we're born.

Then he pointed out that he does not understand his evil actions, even though he prefers to obey God. He prefers to obey God, but he doesn't. Paul agrees that the moral laws of God are true, and of great value in achieving God's purpose of preserving human freedom. Otherwise, he said, "I wouldn't be so upset about disobeying them. If they were not important, it wouldn't make any difference. But they are important, and it does upset me.

Then he concludes, in this section, verses 14-17, that it is not the person Paul that chooses to violate God's Law, but the sin nature which permeates his being. The sin nature is perverting his intentions, and causing him to do evil.

That brings us to Romans 7:18, where he picks up the same problem again now; reiterating it; and, viewing it again from a little different angle. Verse 18 says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." The word "for" is the Greek word "gar." This is a conjunction which is referring back to verse 17. Verse 17 says, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but the sin nature that dwells in me." Then he picks that thought up in verse 18 with this word "for," and he introduces the second segment of discussing the same problem.

"For I know." The word "know" is the Greek word "oida." This is a word for knowledge that comes as the result of your thinking (your reasoning). It is not something you come to by experience. It is something that you get some information from the Word of God, and then you think about it, and you come to know something. This is the result of analyzing the data that you have, and you draw a conclusion. It is, in effect, in the present tense, which tells us that this is Paul's constant awareness about something. It is active. Paul himself is doing the thinking, and he has arrived at this knowledge. It is a statement about Paul's understanding.

He says, "I know that." The word that is this Greek word "hoti," which indicates that he's going to introduce what he perceived about himself. What he has perceived is that: "In me (that is, in Paul the person – in his human being); that is, in my flesh." The word "that is" is a Greek idiom, and we make translate it better as "that is to say." It is an explanation. This is a certain combination within Greek grammar. When you have this combination, you understand that the author is saying, "I want to explain something to you.

For example, in Matthew 27:46, we have this same Greek idiom used, and I think it will show you what Paul is trying to do here. In Matthew 27:46, we read, "In about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.'" And then the Greek Bible uses this same expression again, a Greek idiom: "That is, to say," and that's how it's translated here in the King James Version: "That is, to say,' My God, My God, why have You the forsaken Me?" And when he says, "That is to say," he means I'm going to explain it to you.

**The Flesh**

So, the apostle Paul has said that he has, by reasoning, from the information of Scripture and other data that has come to him, that in his being, in himself as a human being, that is, he says, "In my flesh." He is specifically explaining to us what it is that is the problem. The word "flesh" in the Greek Bible is this word "sarx." The word is used here to refer to the natural inclination in human beings to pursue what is morally evil. This is simply the quality that resides in us. You must not think of this as something that is sitting in you like a diseased lump, like some kind of a tumor that you can go in, and cut out, and get rid of. This is permeating everything that you are. You are flesh.

**Self-Centeredness**

This refers to the natural state of mankind with its inborn qualities of self-centeredness and perverted animal lust. That's probably the best definition as a summary that you give of the flesh. It is the fact that we are born with a quality of self-centeredness. We don't give a hang about other people. We put ourselves first. We are concerned about ourselves first. We place ourselves first. We consider ourselves first. No matter what need we see in someone else, we always judge that need by how it's going to disturb our own situation before we get involved with them.

**Animal Lust Patterns**

Along with that self-centeredness are animal lust patterns. That is the flesh. And the flesh of Paul is not his human body. It is a nature which permeates him as a human being. It's not something separate, as I, say inside of him, because the flesh, as the sin nature resides in your genetic structure. It is in the genes of every cell in your body. It is transmitted to you by your human father. We get it, therefore, by the natural birth. "Flesh" refers to the sin nature of a person. It's really a state of the mind which then guides all of our actions. The state of the mind is self-centered, and the state of the mind is lust for animal indulgences. The desires of the flesh are always evil. They can only be overridden by the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit and who is functioning on the principles of doctrine.

**The Sin Nature Produces both Sins and Human Good**

We might illustrate again the flesh in this form. We could call it the old sin nature. And we can remind you that it produces sins, these acts of evil, and it also produces human good. These two, because they flow from this diseased quality within us, are both bad.

**Human Good**

Human good is evil. Our government is constantly guilty of performing the evil of human good. Our society is filled with people who are overwhelmed with the desire to produce something that is good. They do it in the capacity of their sin nature flesh, and it is evil. This nature then expresses itself in asceticism, on the one hand, keeping a lot of rules; or, on lasciviousness, a total indulgence in evil on the other hand. So, it produces what is both human good and sins. Both are totally rejected by God. This is the thing that Paul is talking about when he says, "Within me is the flesh, and it is no good." It is a bad thing. This thing, he says, dwells within him.

This is the word "oikeo:" "For I know that in me, as a human being (that is to say, 'in my nature') dwells no good thing." This word "dwell" means to inhabit as one's abode. We may illustrate its use in 1 Timothy 6:16, which uses this same word. We read, "Who only has immortality (describing Jesus Christ) dwelling in the light which no man can approach." That clearly illustrates the use of this idea of "dwelling;" that is, you are surrounded. Here in the look of 1 Timothy, it is referring to the fact that Jesus Christ is surrounded by the glory reflected by His absolute righteousness. It is also used in Romans 8:9 – here in terms of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the body of the Christian, Romans 8:9 says, "But we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." There's the word "oikeo" again – the same concept of residing.

This is grammatically in the present tense, which indicates to us that this is a constant indwelling within Paul. This thing is always there. It's a very important point. There are people who believe that they can remove their sin nature. The holiness groups that eventuated in the Pentecostal movement, and then later into the charismatic movement, were based upon this foundational deception that they could come to the point where they could remove that evil quality, the propensities of the sin nature within them. And here the apostle Paul says, "Within me, this is a constant factor." When he uses present tense, he's telling us that it's always there. It's active voice, which is personally the case with Paul. It's a statement of fact about him.

**No Good Thing**

He says that within him there dwells "no good thing." In the Greek language, there are two words for "no." There's a strong one, and a weak one. He uses the strong one: "ou." There is absolutely no good thing in him. The word "good" is the word "agathos." This is an adjective.

**Do What is Beneficial to Others**

This word for "good" means "beneficial to a person." 1 Thessalonians 5:15 illustrates this: "See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men." What that verse is calling upon us as Christians to do is not to do what is evil to other people, but to do for people what is beneficial to them – that kind of good. You can do a good which is not beneficial to people. You can give your children more money than they should have, and then they will be injured by it. You must give them good things in such a way that they will benefit. Otherwise it's not a beneficial good. That's what the Scripture means here by this word "good." Here it refers to what is acceptable to God's holiness – His divine good.

The capacity for divine good works is not to be found in man's flesh nature. It doesn't say "*the* good," as if it was some specific good. It just says, "Good," in general. So, it's simply saying that the quality of doing what is beneficial is just not found in us. By our human nature, you're not going to be any good to anybody. So, here you are in a position of influence. Here you are in a position of authority. Here you are as somebody in the government, and you're making big decisions for other people, and you’re unregenerate. You're not born again. You can't do a single thing that's good. Every move you make will be a good by human standards, but which is not beneficial good by God standards – the divine good. Only divine good is beneficial. And divine good only comes as a result of the guidance of the Holy Spirit as He applies the Word of God to us. There's nothing beneficial coming up from the sin nature. It's all human good and sins, so it's all evil before God.

Man, in his natural state, is totally depraved, and regeneration doesn't remove the corruption from his nature. So, we can translate this in this way. Paul says, "For I know that nothing good dwells within me; that is, to say, in my flesh or in my sinful nature."

**Paul Wants to do Good**

Then he expresses a frustration. He goes on to say, "For to will is present with me. But how to perform that which is good, I find not." The word "for" is again that word "gar," telling us that he's going to introduce an explanation of what he has just said. The word "will" is the Greek word "thelo." This means "to desire" or "to wish for something." It is Paul constant desire. It's his choice. And it's in the infinitive mood this time, which indicates that this is his purpose. The apostle Paul says, "I know that, although within me there does not dwell anything that is beneficial to anybody, my desire that is now present with me – my purpose is to produce that which is beneficial." And he is actually putting this in such a way that what he is saying here, to really translate it right, is "the act of willing." This is, again, the way it comes out in the Greek grammar. Paul says, "But the act of killing, or the act of wishing, is present with me. The word "present" is "parakeimai." "Parakeimai" means "to be near" or "to lie beside a person."

**The Problem is Paul's Performance**

So, Paul says, "The act of willing (the act of wishing) – that's always present with me. It's my choice. For the wishing is present in me, but." And here he's going to contrast something with what lies within him as a wish. The problem with him is not what he wants to do, but with his performance ("katergazomai"). This is an intensive form of the verb "to achieve." And what he is saying is: "Constantly, the problem with me is my performance – what I achieve." Again it has in the Greek language the word "the:" "*the* achieving." So, he says, "The problem with me is not the willing, but the achieving. That is my problem. The achieving what?

**Divine Good**

"For the willing is present with me, but how to achieve that which is good, I find not." The word "good" is the word "kalos." Here's the other word for "good." We just had "agathos," which is good, as beneficial. What does "kalos" mean? God the Holy Spirit doesn't throw words around without meaning. There's a reason when he switches words. And, of course, you're never going to know this by reading the English Bible. You have to have somebody explain it to you, and that's what we're here for. The word "kalos" means "suited to its purpose;" that is, there is something intrinsically good. It is suited to its purpose.

If you join us on the Berean Youth Club winter ski trip up to Winter Park, Colorado, and you bring along a pair of our Berean youth club water skis, it won't work. They are not suited to the purpose. You're going to have a real wild time on the slopes trying to go down in those water skis. Those keys are not suited to the purpose, and vice versa. If you try getting out behind our boat with a pair of snow skis, you're going to have a wild time. You might, if you go fast enough, be able to stay on top of the water, but it would be very unlikely.

That's what this means – that this thing is suited to its purpose. Paul says, "What I can't do is perform what is suited to its purpose. We can give you some illustrations. In Matthew 3:10, it talks about fruit – fruit which is suitable for eating. That's what fruit is supposed to be for. It's supposed to be something you can eat. But if you're down in the valley, and a big freeze comes, and the citrus fruit is damaged, it's no longer suitable for eating. Therefore, it is no longer "kalos." You can't describe all that damaged fruit down in the valley as being "kalos." It's no longer suited for its purpose as food.

In Matthew 12:33, you have a tree which is supposed to be suited to its purpose of bearing fruit that you can eat. And here you have again this word "good" use in terms of bearing edible fruit.

In Matthew 13:8 and Matthew 13:23, you have ground which is supposed to be suitable for its purpose. What's the ground supposed to do? It's supposed to be able to grow things. Therefore, it should be ground which is suited to its purpose of growing things. If it does that, then you call it "good ground," because it is suited to its purpose.

In Matthew 13:48, you have this word "kalos" used in connection with fish. There are certain types of fish which are suitable for eating. They are edible. Therefore, we call them good fish. They can be eaten. If they are not suited for the purpose of food, which is what fish are for, then they're called bad fish.

In Romans 7:16 and 1 Timothy 1:8, you have this word "kalos" applied to the Mosaic Law. And it is described as being good. In what sense? Well, because the Mosaic Law achieves the purpose for which it was given. It will preserve your personal freedom, and it will place you in a position of coming under the blessing of God if you obey those rules.

Then, in 1 Timothy 4:4, you have this word used in connection with the creatures (the animals) that God has made, and they are called good if they are suitable for food. There are certain animals that are not good in terms of being suited for the purpose of food.

Then, in 1 Timothy 4:6, you have the word "kalos" used in terms of a good minister (a good preacher) and good doctrine which he teaches. And he is a good minister if he performs that which is intrinsically good – that which is suited to its purpose. What is his purpose as a preacher? To feed the people of God upon what? Upon the good food of Bible doctrine. That is his purpose. And this verse, in 1 Timothy 4:6, should to tell you a whole lot about where you should go to church, and where you shouldn't go to church. If what you do when you come into a church service is get a bunch of nonsense that does not feed you spiritually, and upon which you cannot structure your life, then what you have had is a preacher who is not "kalos" good, and you have had information which is not "kalos" good. It is not intrinsically good, suited to the purpose of his speaking, and your growing in the knowledge and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christian service is to produce things that are suitable for people. 2 Corinthians 8:21, in the King James Version, has the word "honest." In 2 Corinthians 13:7, again, the word is "honest." You and I should produce Christian service that produces things that are suitable for people. There is a lot of Christian service that produces what is not suitable for people. They are serving people, and giving them things that they shouldn't have; giving them things that they don't need; and, giving them things that are bad for them. Service as a Christian should produce what is suitable for people.

Then in Galatians 6:9, you have the word well-doing. Believers are not to become weary of doing what is suitable or proper. And that's a great admonition. Christians should just not get tired of doing what is suitable.

Then, in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, you have this word "good" as "kalos" used. There we're told to check out and retain only that which is suitable, or useful. You're going to hear a lot of things. Check it out. Keep the good.

In Titus 2:14 and Titus 3:8, Christians are to be zealous to produce suitable, divine, good works, and to persist in doing so. Don't waste the remaining days of your life doing things that are good on a human level, but are not suitable in terms of eternal values. Christians are to be zealous for producing divine good works – not just to produce good works, but divine good works. Those are the ones that can be called "kalos." They are suitable.

In Hebrews 10:24, Christians are to encourage each other to produce the suitable works of divine good. This is one of the things that Christians do for one another. When we gather in the Lord's service, this is one of the objectives – for one Christian to encourage another Christian to do a divine good service – a good which is suitable to God's purposes, and only divine good is that.

Then, in 1 Peter 2:12, Christians are to bear testimony for God by their suitable words, which are divine good. If our works are divine good, they're z testimony to God.

In Romans 7:18, we'll look at that one. We have both "agathos" good and "kalos" good used. Paul says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing – nothing beneficial." Then he goes on and says, "For the will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good (that which is suitable to its purpose), I find not." And in one verse, he uses both these words. In himself, there is nothing beneficial. Within his nature of sin, there's nothing beneficial. Consequently, he cannot find within himself the capacity to perform a work which is suitable to its objectives. He's doing something that doesn't reach its goal. He falls on his face. He cannot produce that which is suitable to his objectives.

So, verse 18, we translate in this way: "For I know that nothing good dwells within me; that is to say, in my flesh (or sinful nature). For the wishing is present in me, but the achieving of the suitable good is not.

In verse 19, he then explains the conflict that he faces. Again, he begins with the word "for:" "gar." "Gar" is telling us again, "I'm going to explain something." He introduces proof for what he has said in verse 18, that he has discovered about himself. He says, "For the good which I would." This is the "agathos" good. Now you know what that means. This refers to a good which is beneficial in its effects. So, he's speaking about the kinds of divine good works which God approves: "For the good that I would." Again, we have this word "thelo." "Thelo" means "to desire." We translate: "For the good that I desire (the beneficial good that I desire), I do not." The word "do" is this word "poieo." The idea here is to perform a specific act. And he has again with that the strong negative "ou." He said, "I just don't do any specific act which can be described as beneficial. The beneficial thing that I desire (that I prefer to do), I do not, but." And this is a strong negative "alla," because he's going to make a contrast.

**Paul does Things which are Evil in their Character**

What does he do? He says, "What I do is evil "kakos." And this word means evil in its character, rather than just in its influence and the effect on others. This is evil in its character. Actually, you would put "kakos" against "kalos." "Kalos" means inherently good. It is suitable. "Kakos" means inherently evil. It's the essence that is being viewed here. This thing is absolutely useless. Paul says that: "The beneficial good thing that I want to do, I don't do. But the thing that is absolutely useless, injurious, and destructive – that's the thing I do. This is evil in its very essence: useless; injurious; and destructive. And those are the kinds of things we do. We do it to ourselves. We tear up our lives. We shred them in pieces. We chop it all up, and we do this under the pursuit of some idea that we're pursuing happiness.

Paul says, "This good that I want to do, which is going to be a suitable benefit, that I'm not doing. But this thing, which is inherently grossly evil, that's the thing I do. The good that I would, I do not. But the absolute inherently evil, which I would not." Again he goes back to that same word "thelo:" "My desire is not," and he uses the strong "not:" "But the evil which I do not desire. I don't ever desire it. I am constantly against it. That is what I do."

In the Greek Bible, the word "that" is stressed, meaning "That very thing I do." And here use is a little different word. He uses the word "prasso." "Prasso" means what it sounds like: "practice." This is what I practice. It's a habit. It's a process. We had the word "do" a moment ago, "poieo." "Poieo" is just a single little spot act. I do it. Bingo. That's it. But "prasso" means here it is. It just goes on and on and on. It isn't that I just do some lousy, filthy, low thing: bingo. It's the fact that this is characteristic of me, I'm constantly doing this: "That good thing I would, I do not. I absolutely don't ever do it. But that corrosive evil thing, which I don't want to do, that's the thing that I practice.

**Habitual**

This word "prasso" connotes a habit. So, it's a process. Paul says, "It's continual with me." He puts it in the present tense. And it's active – his personal chosen pattern. Paul's pattern of life is to practice the specific acts of evil that he wants to avoid.

Up in verse 15, Paul has indicated that he has an incapacity in his will. But now, in verse 19, he acts with an incapacity that is fully aware of the moral nature of the acts that he's choosing. Up in verse 15, he says, "I just have an incapacity." That's all he stresses. But in verse 19, he goes a little further. He says, "I know that what I do stinks. I know it stinks before I do it. I know that it is corrosive. It is just inherently grossly evil in the sight of a holy God. Yet I do it." That's different. He stepped up a little bit.

We come to the last verse, verse 20. Having analyzed all this again, he comes to a conclusion. He says, "Now." The word "now" is "de," a word to introduce a conclusion: "Now If I do that, I would not. The word "if" is the Greek word "ei." It is introducing a conditional sentence, and it is first-class. A first-class "if" is true. You translate it, therefore, as "since." Paul says, "Since I do that I would not." This "if" indicates something that is true about him. It's very important that you understand that about that "if." And here, what he is talking about as the word "do" is "poieo" again, which is that doing at a certain point: "Now since I do that." And the word "that" again is emphatic in the Greek Bible. He means, "That very thing." What very thing? Well, the very thing that he knows is so bad. He says, "Now since I do the very thing that I would." The "would" again is the Greek word "thelo." We've had it several times – that word "to desire." Again, the strong negative is added to it: "ou:" "If I do, as a single act, this time, and this time, and this time. I'm just going through my day doing these individual acts of things that I absolutely don't want to do.

We translate it: "Now since I am doing the very thing I do not desire." That's what he observes. Paul says, "It is no more I that do it." The word "I" is emphatic in the Greek Bible. It's the Greek word "ego," because Paul is stressing that this is about himself as a person. He said, "I, as a person am not responsible for this conflict. If it were up to me, I wouldn't choose to do these terrible things."

Now he says, "What's the problem? Now since I do the very thing that I would not, it is no more I (Paul, the person) that do it." Here he has a different word for "do." This time it's "katergazomai." "Katergazomai" is again the intensive form of the word that means "to work" – Paul's mental and overt works. He is constantly doing it. This is his choice. Paul says, "It is no more I that is constantly doing these specific individual acts of terrible evil, but." And again he returns to that strong word for "but:" "alla." You Greek students remember this one. "De" is the other word for "but." That one is weaker. But when he uses "alla," you have the strong wind up there. He's going to introduce a very strong contrast to point out why there is this contradictory action.

***The* Sin**

He says, "I'll tell you what the trouble is. Here's my conclusion. "But sin that dwells in me." And the word for sin is "hamartia." This is the word for the evil nature in man. But in the Greek Bible it says, "*the* sin," which indicates that it's the specific old sin nature with which we're born. Paul says, "I know why I act like this. I know that, after I've been taught what is right, I still choose to do the worst of evils, and I choose to do them when I know that they are the worst of evils. And I can tell you why I do that. It's because there is something that permeates my being that overrides all of my good intentions. And it is the sin."

**This Sin Dwells with Paul**

This thing dwells with him: "oikeo." We have that word again. This resides within Paul. It refers to the inherent propensity to evil, and it's present tense. It's constantly there within him. It's active. It's possessed by each person individually.

**Sin no Longer Reigns**

Earlier in the book of Romans, you remember we learned something about *the* sin relative to our human structure. Paul said, "The sin nature reigns over me." Then he described the condition that he was in – his lost, pathetic, helpless condition as it reigned over him. It is very significant that now he says, "No, it doesn't reign over me anymore. It just dwells in me." That is significant. Now that evil is in there, but it is no more lord and king. And that's the good news today. We've drawn a dark picture because he's drawn a dark picture. But this word brings a ray of hope. This brings us back into the sunshine. That evil quality just dwells within you. It does not reign as king over you.

I don't care where you are tonight. You can go back in your mind, like everyone else can, and think of all those low points in your life where all of the worst of evils, perhaps, that you could identify, were the ones that you chose to participate in. But even then, if you were a Christian at that point in time, it was because you permitted yourself to become the victim of that sin nature. It was not because it reigned over you, but simply because it dwelt within you. You'll never get rid of it. Paul stresses this again in the Greek language. He said, "This is in me." He uses the Greek word "en." And he uses the word "me" ("ego"). And anytime they put those personal pronouns in the Greek, he is hammering a way to emphasize himself as a person – the sin nature in the genetic structure of Paul's body.

He says, "It's there. It dwells in me, but it's no longer king over me. I don't have to be its slave." This is the condition which is true of Paul as long as he is in his physical body. That is because the sin nature is in our genetic structure. The sin nature will be evicted from our bodies when we receive a glorified body, a resurrected glorified body.

Paul problem, as with us all, is how to experience the godly lifestyle to which we, as Christians, have been called. To sum it up, we should observe that Paul does take responsibility for his sinful conduct in spite of his helplessness in the face of his sin nature. I wouldn't like anyone to leave here today and say, "Well, then, I'm not to blame. It's that thing residing in me that's the cause, and it's not my fault. Yes, it is your fault. And Paul clearly takes it as his fault.

Furthermore, Paul is stressing the terrible power of the sin nature in a human being which can destroy the best of Christians. You don't want to forget that. That we should learn today. It will destroy the best of Christians. It will destroy the most powerful of Christians. It will destroy the most knowledgeable and mature Christians. All you have to do is put yourself in a position where the thing can take over.

Furthermore, you should observe that Paul has indicated that no set of rules for godly living is going to be enough to stifle the sin nature in us. Knowing what is right is not enough.

Finally, we should observe that people share Paul's struggle with evil. And we see the sad consequences of those who have gone down in defeat. What's the answer? That's the problem. God says, "There is an answer," and the apostle Paul is leading us to that.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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