***Learning Bible Doctrine, and Spiritual Integrity  
RO92-01***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

Please open your Bibles to Romans 7:21-25. The subject is "The Great Conflict," and this is segment number three.

Last Sunday night, following the evening service, a taper called me from the West Coast. He has been a student for some time of God's Word via Berean tapes, and so he has developed a biblical frame of reference relative to the matter of personal Christian conduct. His question to me dealt with the conflict which he experiences between his knowledge from the Word of God, as to what is right, and his willingness, on the other hand, to violate that standard of righteousness.

**Depression**

This great unresolved conflict is causing him to be depressed, and it has driven him to the point, he says often, just to throw up his hands, and to forget it all. What he wonders is keeping him from putting into practice that which his mind approves, and that which he finds confirmed by the Word of God? What keeps him from doing the right that he desires to do?

**The Sin Nature**

Well, of course, this man's problem is the very thing that the apostle Paul is dealing with here at the end of Romans 7. In this final section, Romans 7:14-25, the apostle has, in three distinct segments, raised the question of: what causes the inconsistency between one's knowledge and one's experience? Each time in each of these three segments, Paul comes to the same conclusion. The culprit is the sin nature that lies within him.

So, verse 17 concludes the first section, and Paul says, "What's the reason for this inconsistency? The sin that dwells within me," meaning the sin nature. The second segment is completed at verse 20, and he answers the question again with the same answer: sin that dwells within me is the reason. And in verse 23, the third section is concluded. And again he comes to the same answer (the same conclusion) as to the cause of the problem – the law of the sin nature which is in my members.

The agony for the apostle Paul as a Christian is so great because of this inconsistency in his own living that he calls himself, in Romans 7:24, "a wretched man." This word, we found, connotes a spirit of despair, and a feeling of exhaustion that stems from defeat in spite of one's good desires and one's earnest efforts.

**Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit**

So, Paul realizes that he needs someone greater and more powerful than himself to gain victory over his nature – someone, not something in the form of some kind of a scheme of positive thinking, or something in the form of willpower techniques. He rightly realizes someone has to make me stop being the stinker that I am. Paul says, "I can't handle it. It is beyond my capacity, and I'm wretched over it. I know what I should be. Who is going to help me to make it?" And, of course, the who, to resolve Paul's conflict, as with all of us, is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has been the agent through whom we have permanently received the indwelling presence of the person of God the Holy Spirit, Who has been delivered to us to be our constant helper, to take over this problem, and to elevate us to the role that is ours, to which we've been called as members of the royal family of God – about to start walking like royalty and to stop acting like grubby commoners. It is what the Lord has done through the provision of the Spirit of God that is the answer. The details of this provision are going to be spelled out in Romans 8 which we will soon be studying.

The main reason that Christians do not leave the holy life, which is demanded by God, is that they do not admit that the desires of the sin nature are evil and deluded. And that is the main problem. The nature wants us, in fact, to ignore the biblical principles of human conduct in all areas of life. And failure to love these biblical guidelines results in a spiritual callousness upon the soul, and blindness to reality. The rebellious Christian, in his spiritual blindness, believes the lies of his nature, and he brings down on himself, consequently, judgment and discipline, both temporal and eternal.

A great example of this problem, that we Christians face, is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:5-12, just to illustrate this. Here, a biblical principle is laid out: "Don't you remember that when I was yet with you, I told you these things." "These things" that Paul was referring to here have to do with prophetic matters.

Verse 6: "And now you know what restrains that He might be revealed in His time. For the mystery of iniquity does already worked. Only He who now hinders (that is, God the Holy Spirit) will continue to hinder the full expression of iniquity until he be taken out of the way," which will be at the rapture of the church. Then all hell will break loose on the earth because there'll be nobody holding back evil anymore: "And then shall that wicked one (the antichrist) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even Him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." The antichrist will be functioning on the power of Satan, who will even enable him to perform the miraculous.

Verse 10: "And with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness (all the subtle deceit that evil can convey) to them that perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." How do these people in the tribulation get themselves in the terrible condition in which they will find themselves? Because they don't love the Word of God. They do not love the truth when they hear it. They hold it in indifferent contempt. And the sin nature always wants you not to love the truth.

What's the result going to be when you do not love the truth that you are taught? "And for this cause God to send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie." And the same principle works for you and me. You don't want to believe what the Word of God tells you. You want to give ear to the sin nature. You want to reject the principles that the Word of God lays out. Then God says, "Fine. What you do when you reject the truth is that I will permit you to believe a lie."

First 12 says, "That they all might be judged who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in righteousness." The result will be that you will have a solid basis then upon which God will judge you for the unrighteousness of which you will be guilty, because you will have believed the lie when you have rejected the truth.

So, this passage is a very sobering indictment of the sin nature, and the capacity here of Satan to delude a person to the truth through that sin nature. This self-induced blindness principle, ignoring the Word of God, and obeying the sin nature applies to Christians today.

So, we've been trying to illustrate this problem by just taking a few examples out of the Bible. And the more you researched this in Scripture, I'll tell you, you become overwhelmed with the enormity of the contrast that you can find in the Word of God between what God, on the one hand, says, "This is truth; this is reality; and this is wisdom;" and, on the other hand, what you find your sin nature tells you about that same thing.

**Lines of Authority**

So, we've looked at the conflict, for example, in lines of authority, and we pursued what the Bible says relative to male leadership and female subjection, on the one hand; and, what the old sin nature does to those Scriptures. We've looked at parental authority over children that the Bible lays out, and we've seen what the nature does to that. We've looked at government authority within the limits of restraint, such as the Constitution, that the Bible lays out, and what the old sin nature has done to that restraint.

We've looked at the conflict relative to sex – the biblical principle of sex within marriage only, and what the old sin nature has done to that. We've looked at the conflict of maintaining the distinctiveness between what a male is; how a male acts; what a male looks like; and, how a male dresses, over against the female in all of those things. The sin nature wants to drive toward a unisex image.

We've looked at the conflict over the ownership and the use of one's possession. Some in society are always seeking to use a government force to take from other citizens. We've looked at the conflict over Christian service. The Bible calls us to fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ, but the sin nature says, "Ah, don't get pushy and nosy, and poking into the religious life,

We've looked at our failing to use our spiritual abilities in God's service. God says, "To each of you there is a spiritual ability given." But the sin nature says, "Don't worry about that. That's just theory. Don't think that you're going to stand up before the Lord, and He's going to say, "Now, Sam, I gave you this spiritual ability at the moment that you were born again. And I want you to take a look at this page here of the record we have of what you did with it in terms of divine good. And I'm sorry, but there's not much I can do in the way of commendation – 'You good and faithful servant,' or to reward." You are living for the present, and storing nothing for eternity.

**Learning Bible Doctrine**

Well, we pick up another conflict. The conflict about learning the divine truth of Bible the doctrine. Just exactly what does the Bible expect of you relative to learning and studying the Word of God? Well, let's begin with 1 Peter 2:2. It says, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow by it." When you're a brand new Christian, there are some things in the Word of God that are heavy doctrine, and you can't handle it. But you should seek, right away, when you come into the Christian life, to start feeding upon the Word of God, and to start growing spiritually. This is why the Lord, to this same apostle Peter, commanded him to feed the flock, and to give the children of God what they needed to grow on.

Let's take a look at 2 Timothy 2:1: "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." This includes studying the Word of God on your own: reading; and, pursuing it. The first place you start studying the Word of God is right here in the public services that God has provided for that purpose. For this reason, the Bible says, "Do not neglect when the church gathers together for worship through the study of the Word of God."

This does not mean the kind of study where you come up with all of your exotic, crazy notions. You wouldn't believe the kinds of things people come up to me with as their latest, greatest insights that they have come up with concerning the significance of a passage of Scripture. They're always arrogant erotics, who are just out there, enjoying these exotic thoughts that come to their mind, and then burdening others with their idiocy.

This means spreading the Word of God so that when you open your mouth, you know what you're talking about. You know how to rightly divide it. This is why a study of the dispensations is important. Isn't it awful when most of the preachers and churches are forever trying to apply something that belongs to Israel, and impose it on the church. And they have missed the boat completely, because they do not study to understand – to divide the world of God rightly. So, they stand in such a position of authority that people are confused and are sidetracked from doing what God would be able to prosper and bless in their lives.

Let's take a look at Matthew 4:4 – that dramatic statement by our Lord when He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." You cannot live without the knowledge of the Word of God. You cannot live without physical food. But that's not all that you need to survive.

Then there is Hebrews 4:12, which says, "For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God is living and active. It isn't just words on the page. It is the powerful words that are described as the mind of Christ. And for that reason, they are living and active words, and they make a difference when you learn them.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tell us this book from God is inerrant. Therefore, you cannot argue with it. When it has spoken on a subject, that's it. All Scriptures is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine; for reproof; for correction; for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is the Word of God that enables us to perform good works. Without that Word, we're doing human good, and that ought to be the most vitally concerned thing in the life of a Christian. Any Christian is really seriously disoriented who does not go before the Lord and say, "Lord, I have to know for a certainty that this thing that I am investing my life in: my treasures; my efforts; and, moments of life that I will never again recapture because they're gone – I have to know that this is of eternal value. I have to know that this is divine good production." And don't ever forget that the greatest amount of human good production is performed in Christian organizations – not outside. The greatest amount of human good is performed within the context of serving God.

Titus 1:9 says, "Holding fast the faithful Word, as he has been taught; that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to complete the opposers. When you're going to debate religious matters, you talk about it from the Word of God. There's one thing that's very clear. Every time you watch a talk program that discusses spiritual principles, they never refer to the Bible. Yet, the Word of God says that until you know what God has said, you don't have any basis for discussing religious matters.

James 1:22-25: "But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror. For he beholds himself and goes his way, and immediately forgets what manner of man he was. But whosoever looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." How much intelligence does it take to put two and two together and say, "I cannot say I am a doer of the Word unless I first can say I am a knower of the Word. You cannot do what you do not know. So, again, the impact is: "Know the Word."

In Colossians 3:16, we read, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Here is a testimony meeting admonition. What God has taught you, how the Word of God has worked in your life – share it with the people of God. Share your divine viewpoint experiences with others.

Then in Ephesians 4:14, the apostle Paul says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive." This is what God does not want you to be. He does not want you to be a sitting duck for every deceit of doctrine that comes your way.

It is a shock to most people to realize, for example, that into the cults come mostly people who are church members. The place that the cults receive their adherence are from people who are already part of some church group, but who did not have the capacity, through knowledge of the Word of God, to discern the deceit that the cult brought to them.

Here's one more in 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto yourself and unto the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this, you shall both save yourself and them that hear you." Doctrine is the only way to make it in life.

**Spiritual Death**

We could multiply this many times. I've given you several Scriptures, and it is very clear what God's point of view is. Ah, but now let's go from the Law of God to the law of the sin nature. How do people act in reference to this concept of: "Be a student (a fanatical regular student), feeding upon the divine viewpoint of the Bible. Be a reader of the Word of God on a daily basis, like you eat daily physical food. In our society, we find instead people whose major emphasis is on physical food, because that's what's essential to a person. You know that if you don't eat, you're going to die. But anybody knows that if you don't study the Bible, you're not going to die. Oh, no? That's because you don't understand the principle of spiritual death. You don't understand that you are walking daily through a context of spiritual death, and you're even serving God in that context of spiritual death, and you're going to find out, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, just how dead you were, and the consequences of it.

No, the Bible is quite right. Without physical food, you will not live. Without the spiritual food of the Word of God, you won't live either. You think you are, but the reports on that are going to come later. Put yourself in the place of Adam. Put yourself in the place of Eve. She was told by God: "If you eat this fruit, you're going to die." She ate the fruit, and for a moment, she held her breath; looked around; waited; smiled; and, breathed a sigh of relief. She didn't drop dead. Satan was right. But what did she not understand? She didn't understand that, at that moment, within her, something dramatically took place, as later did in her husband, and they died spiritually.

Suddenly, within the genetic structure of their physical bodies, there came a contamination in the form of a sin nature, and it separated them from God, and they were dead spiritually. That's the same condition that Christians have today, who think they can live on physical food, but if they don't take spiritual food, it won't make any difference. Some of the differences are indeed evidence in your life now, but I can assure you they will be very much in evidence in eternity.

**Homosexuality**

The sin nature says, "The Bible is not a guidebook with basic principles to apply to specific cases;" meaning that the Bible is not so clear. This is what people hate. People just hate it when you come out and say, "This is what the Bible says." They say, "Well, that's not that clear. That isn't what the Bible really means when it says that. And one of the most dramatic expressions of that today is the defense of the homosexual society. You would not believe the kinds of exegesis that are taking place of the passages in the Bible that condemn that moral depravity. Suddenly, they get through explaining it. And sometimes preachers – I've read their explanations, and suddenly the only people who are perverted are those of you who are not homosexual. It suddenly comes out being a very commendable lifestyle.

The old sin nature says that you cannot decide social, economic, and political issues with the Bible. You can't decide what we should do as a country on the basis of the Bible." That's what the sin nature says. Have you ever heard anybody say, "Don't mix politics and religion?" What is the battle cry today? The party that's fighting from the wall as the underdog in this political campaign feels it has finally found an issue, because the president has said that a nation's political life and its religious beliefs go together. Now what's so hard to understand about that? Instead we're being told, "Aha, he wants to form the church of the United States, which the Constitution forbids."

I spoke to a locksmith this week. He knew I was a minister. He said, "What do you think about this political campaign?" And I said, "Well, it's interesting." And he said, "I can't believe how they're jumping on Reagan about this religion business." And then he expressed the thought – he said, "You know, the fact that they're attacking that, and the fact of what they're saying, shows what contempt they have for us. They really think that we, as a people, are so stupid that we won't see through this – that we won't see the difference of applying principles of the Word of God over against forcing somebody's religion down somebody's throat. And they're counting that we're so stupid that we're not going to see the difference." I said, "You're right. They're counting on the fact that you're just that dumb."

The sin nature says that you cannot prosper and be happy in life if you are going to obey the Bible explicitly. Do you realize what you're going to be cut off if you listen to everything that the Bible tells you to do? The sin nature says, "Don't spout off about spiritual laws to people. They don't really exist. These are things you are imagining you." Human viewpoint, we're told, is a valuable product of the enlightened human reason. The Bible is wrong to call it foolishness. The sin nature says that Bible, teaching and personal beliefs are not to be propagated or imposed upon others. The Word of God says, "Study the word. Learn it. Make this your frame of reference in everything in life. But the sin nature resists that. And you can see how, indeed, that's happening on a wide scale.

**Personal Integrity**

Take another problem. Take the conflict of personal integrity. What does the law say about that? Ephesians 4:25 says, "Wherefore, putting away lying. Speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." If you're a Christian, don't tell lies.

**Lying**

Colossians 3:9-10: "Lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds (the man in Adam – the death place), and have put on the new man (the in-Christ man) that is renewed in the image of Him that created him." Since you are now in Christ, don't act according to the in-Adam position. The in-Adam position is to lie, and to deceive, and to con. Don't do that if you're a Christian. That's what the Bible says.

**Stealing**

Ephesians 4:28 says, "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands, the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs." If you are a Christian, don't steal. Don't get what you want by stealing it from others.

Romans 13:8, on the matter of godly integrity, says this: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loves another has fulfilled the law." Pay your debts on time, the Bible says. That's personal integrity.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, we have this statement: "And that you study, to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you; that you may walk honestly toward them that are outside (that is, the unbelieving world), and that you may have lack of nothing." Because you are working and applying yourself, God provides, and you will have lack of nothing. Secure your needs and wants by earning the money that you need.

Then in 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you: that if any would not work, neither should he eat" – no handouts to the indolent and lazy. Now what kind of a statement is that? If you don't work, you don't eat? Are you're going to let a human being stand there and starve before you just because he doesn't want to work?

We have one more in Romans 12:17: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men." That's what God says. Now let's go over here and see what the sin nature has to say. The sin nature tells us, "Ah, white lies are acts of kindness. They're not wrong. You can go ahead. As long as the lies are white, then you can go ahead and use them. People who are rich can afford to be ripped off. That's true, isn't it? They'll never miss it. Just because you're rich, you'll never miss it. Go ahead and rip him off. Don't steal from the poor, you know. Robin Hood wouldn't do that. Robin Hood was an honorable hood. He always stole from the people who had it to give to the people who didn't have it. If you're going to be a thief, you be an honorable thief."

The sin nature says, "Poor people, you see, have a claim on the wealth of rich people. And they appeal to the government to do the stealing for them. The sin nature has this strange idea that poor people have a claim upon the possessions of rich people. The sin nature says, "Delay paying your bills so as to use the other person's money longer. Make him come after it, and when he comes after it, play poor boy and dumb boy: 'Did I owe you that? I didn't know that. Has the bill come? Write me a letter. Let me check that out. I'll talk to my secretary. Somebody's got something fouled up here.' Play Poor boy and dumb boy. Delay paying your bills." That's what the sin nature says. Well the Word of God says, "Don't know owe anybody. Pay it, or don't take the services.

The sin nature says, "Try to live by the sweat of other men's labors by stealing from them, no matter how devastating it may be to the victim. And until you've had a little experience where you've seen people who have been struck by serious theft, you don't really have a feel for how heartless and brutal stealing is, and why God condemns it so. But the sin nature justifies it.

Recently, the man that rents part of our Berean facilities, and that runs the Motor Mart, had been broken into, thousands of dollars of his valuable tools were stolen. The next morning, the poor man could not even open for business. His very livelihood had been taken from him. Under the Mosaic Law, anybody who did a thing like that, when they found who did it, he replaced everything he took. He paid for it all. And then he paid a fifth more. God says, "You'll add 20% to what you took for the inconvenience that you put the man through."

The old sin nature says, "Don't prosecute or punish thieves so that it makes stealing painful and unattractive to them. After all, some of these are just little kids. They're just boys. They're the ones who are stealing from you. You're not going to punish them, are you?" And of course, the sin nature says, "You can't let families starve just because a husband won't go to work. Are you can let these children starve, and get these big bellies that they have when they have malnutrition? You can't do that." Well, the Bible says, "If you will not work, you will not eat." And the sin nature says, "Well, I know, but, you know, that's that stuff. We're more enlightened now." The sin nature says, "Let them get away with it. Take the pressure off his back."

The sin nature says, "Put on a front of integrity and a front of compassion, as you gouge people out of the fruits of their labor for your own gain. Just throw out enough there so that the idiots will think that you're a very generous person." The contrast between the Word of God, in terms of material things, and what the sin nature has to say.

**Covetousness**

Take a look at this concept of covetousness. The Law of God has a lot of very explicit things to say about covetousness. Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you, so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'" The Word of God says, "Trust God to supply your needs."

Look into Colossians 3:5: "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication; uncleanness; inordinate affection; evil desires; and, covetousness, which is idolatry." Those things are all condemned because they are disobedient to God.

1 Timothy 6:6 says, 'But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world; it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtfulness lusts which drown them in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." That's what the Word of God says: "Depend on God daily, and use your wealth for doing divine good works.

In Colossians 3:1-2, we read, "If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Let's look at one more in Philippians 4:11: "Not that I speak in respect of want," Paul says, "for I have learned in whatever state I am, in this to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere, in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Him whose strengths me."

So, the Bible is very, very explicit. You could multiply this, of course, relative to the Law of God on the conflict of covetousness.

This past week, all nation was agog to who's going to win the Illinois lottery. Finally, a young man in the city of Chicago won the $40 million pot, and overnight he became famous as the $40 million man. Can you imagine the wave of covetousness that swept the nation as they interviewed this man on television? It was fun to sit and say, "What if that happened to me? $40 million. The first thing I would do is take out my telephone. The second thing I would do is go hide someplace so nobody could find me to talk to me; to sell me things; and, you could just go on and on: what would I do if suddenly I found that I had to struggle with $2 million a year for the next 20 years?

Well, the lusts for enough for anything that you want, which belongs to another, is fully justified by the sin nature. That's covetousness. Try to satisfy your covetousness, if you can, by taking it away from him. And if you can't, then destroy it so he can't use it. That's known as envy. Don't be content to let God provide for you as He judges best. Love money, and spend all your waking hours trying to make more. When you pop up in the morning, set your mind in gear and say, "Bingo, I'm off to my money-earning." And when you stop for lunch, you interrupt for a little bit, then Bingo – get back in there and start wheeling; dealing; maneuvering; and, spending every blessed moment you have to crank out a little more money. That's what the sin nature says to do. God says, "No, up there. That's where your affection should be first – not down here.

The sin nature says that obsession with money won't cause you spiritual degeneration, and it won't cause you sorrow. It'll cost you a lot of freedom and happiness when you have all this money. God can help the poor people better than you can anyhow. If you're rich, you really should flaunt it. . . . After all, you've worked hard to get it, and God knows whom He should trust with His money. That's why you have it, and this slob over here doesn't have it. God knows He can't trust him. You're a fine person. God has given to you. You worked hard. Flaunt it. Be an arrogant pup. Tell yourself that you’re storing treasures in heaven with your money. But don't get carried away. Throw in 10% maybe, but don't go crazy about it. Store your treasures of heaven – 10% maybe. The Jews had to put 20% or 30%, but 10% – that's plenty. So, you can create for yourself the image that you're really cranking it up there for God's service.

"Just remember," the old sin nature says, "you only go around once in life, and you have to grab all the gusto you can." That would make a good advertising slogan. "You only go around once in life. You've got to grab all the gusto you can," the sin nature says, "so start grabbing it," and money is the way to grab it. Don't be satisfied, by all means, if you're young and starting off – don't be satisfied to have less than your parents have. You don't live in some kind of a little house if your parents have a nice big house. You can live without a washing machine if your parents have four of them. I mean, you have everything your parents have: bingo; blotto; right off the bat.

Certainly you don't live in any less style than this joker down the street, or the guy who sits across the desk from you at work. You see to it that, as soon as possible, you catch up, and then you outdo them. The sin nature says, "Don't be taking in stride, having to do without. Go into debt and get it. Don't do without. Just go into debt. What do you think we made plastic credit cards for? Go into debt. Of course, you can't pay it. Strip your church offerings. Take it off; and, take it off there. And if that doesn't help, you can always set up your relatives. Then there's the church Fellowship Fund. You can always hit that for a little bit to help you make up for that television payment you need to make. I mean, after all, a person has to have a big television set, and he has to have it everywhere. "So, don't take in stride to do without," the sin nature says.

You can see the subtlety of this evil thing within us. And pretty soon, we're listening and believing it as if we hadn't heard anything from the Word of God.

**Vile Language**

Then there's the conflict of the vile language – the conflict of the dirty talk. Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." The Law of God says, "Do not use language which is not edifying to others, and that does not ennoble them.

In Colossians 3:8, Paul says, "But now you also put of all these: anger; wrath; malice; blasphemy; filthy communication out of your mouth." Avoid the use of filthy language.

In Ephesians 5:12, Paul says, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." Don't talk about vile acts that are performed by people secretly.

Then James 3:10 says, "But out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing, my brethren. These things ought not so to be. Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh." Don't talk as a Christian and as a worldling with the same mouth.

Then we have one more in Titus 2:8: "Sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you." The Law of God says, "Use godly language so that no opponent of God's truth can escape by attacking your speech. Ah, but we come to the law of the sin nature, and what do we find? Show that you're a real man and a liberated woman by using curse words and obscenity around others. And have you noticed that women in public life love to use the curse words to show what good old boys they are?

**Two Power Structures in the Universe**

The sin nature says, "Just go ahead and reject the idea that there are two power structures in the universe: the power of God, on the one hand; and, the power of Satan, on the other hand, and that there are words that call upon each of these power structures, and that express honor for each of these power structures. When you say "hell" and "damn," and everything else that goes with it, whose power structure do you think you're calling upon? God's? Not the way you're using it. It's the power structure of Satan. Don't give me that stuff that it's just an exclamatory expression. And I'm hearing preachers who don't mind using even the "hells" and the "damns," because they say, "Those aren't curse words. Those are just little words you throw out." No, the truth of it is part of the whole scene of cursing and obscenities that honor the devil.

The sin nature says, "Tell dirty stories and give your friends. I mean, life is so dull – why not give people a little joy?" Help them to have a little smile because you tell them a little filthy story."

The sin nature says, "Create verbal pictures for people of your secret evil acts to give them a vicarious kick." And just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you can't use salty language, so that people in the world make a point. Have you ever heard of that? How many idiots walk around and say, "Well, when I deal with the world, I have to talk to them in language they understand." What do they speak? Chinese? And the implication is: "If I use obscenities, and curse, and degrading language, then I can communicate." The sin nature says, "If you don't like the world," "they won't be impressed with you, and they won't listen to you. So, just pretend you're one of them. And when you get out there, pretend you're one of the good old boys, and talk like the rest of them.

That is the contrast between the Law of God and the law of the nature. It is a horrible, terrible enslavement that we are in. When you stop and think, just in these categories like this, of specifics, this is what Paul is talking about. The apostle Paul was struggling with these very kinds of things we're talking about. All of these are struggles between the Law of God and the law of the sin nature. And Paul found that there was something about the sin nature that could make a good case that he believed. And then he realized, when he stumbled into the dirt, how wrong he was. That's why he said, "Oh, wretched man that I am – who can give me the stability of my thinking so that I can distinguish between the Law of God and the law of the sin nature?" And he says, "Thank God, the who is the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God that He has placed within me.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)