***The Law of God vs. the Law of the Sin Nature
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We are studying Romans 7:21-25. This is the fourth segment on the subject of "The Great Conflict."

**Adam and Eve**

The Bible does not reveal how long Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. They may have been there for many years before the actual fall into sin. During that period, however long it was, we may rest assured that they walked in full fellowship with God, and they enjoyed life to the fullest in a perfect environment. There was no friction between themselves, and no friction between them and God. It was a perfect lifestyle. Their human natures and their personal conduct were absolutely sinless, and this was the normal thing. It was not unusual for them to be sinless. That was the norm.

**After the Fall**

After the fall into sin, however, it soon became evident that something drastically had changed about them. They were no longer naturally totally subject to God's law. In fact, they now found themselves opposed to what God thought and what God wanted them to do. They found themselves sinful in their minds, and they found themselves sinful in the use of their bodies. Now sin was the normal life style. Sin was now the norm, as sinlessness had been the norm before. The contamination of human nature with evil became clearly evident to them as their children grew up. Adam and Eve had experienced a genetic change physically at the moment that they ate the fruit, and that change produced the sin nature within them. So, now the sin nature was part of their physical structure.

**The Sin Nature**

This propensity to do evil: to lie; to steal; to engage in illicit sex; to covet; idolatry; to murder; to use vile language; and, to hate – all of this was passed on to their children. And in time, it became very clear that their children had been born just as evil as they had become. Since the fall, the sin nature has been the cause of terrible evils and painful suffering for mankind. Even after one is born again, he possesses a sin nature, and that is a very important thing for a person to learn. 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The use of that word "sin" in the singular indicates that it is referring to our nature. If we say that we do not have a sinful nature, you're only kidding yourself. The truth is not in you. Because that is true about us, that we are sinful by nature, we as Christians must understand that we continue being sinful even after being born again, because the Bible says that the point at which we lose the sin nature is when we come into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The specific text says, "When we see Him, we shall be like Him." And until that moment, we will not be sinless in our physical bodies.

So, the Christian finds defeat by his sin nature humiliating and frustrating. Paul calls himself, for this reason, "a wretched man." No matter how good the believer's intentions may be, he still responds to the sin nature, and he does that which is evil, even when he determines that he's not going to do it.

So, God's law of righteousness is constantly squaring off with the law of the sin nature, calling us to sins and human good works. For this reason, the Bible repeatedly warns us to respect the potential danger of the sin nature within us. Let's look at a few passages illustrating this.

Romans 3:10: "As it is written, there is none righteous. No, not one. There is none that understands. There is none that seek after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that do good. No, not one." And by ourselves, in our human condition, we can do no good.

In Romans 12:3, we read, "For I say, through the grace given unto me to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God's Word has dealt to every man the measure of faith." So, the apostle Paul is very clear in wanting us not to take an arrogant attitude that there are no flies on us. The sin nature puts plenty of flies on us.

In 1 Corinthians 10:12, we read, "Wherefore let him that thinks that he stands take heed, lest he fall." It is an occupational hazard of the Christian life, for the mature Christian who is progressing in spiritual maturity, to think that he has some kind of stability such that he is now secure and safe. He has reached super-grace living. And about the time you think you've got it made, Satan will sneak up on you and cut you down. How can he do that? Because the sin nature is always there just waiting to be used if you do not respect its potential danger in your life.

In Galatians 6:1, the apostle Paul makes this statement: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual (those of you who are in temporal fellowship), restore such one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you be tempted." So, when some other Christian who has become a victim of his sin nature, don't you take some supercilious, super-arrogant, self-righteous attitude of contempt toward him, and disbelief, and cutting him down, and not realizing that, but for the grace of God, there go you. So, when something that offends you in somebody else, just remember to thank God that your sin nature did not bring you down in the same way. "But just remember," Paul says, "sooner or later, you give it a chance, and you'll be right there with the person that you're holding in such contempt.

In Galatians 5:17, the apostle Paul says, "For the flesh lusts against the spirit." The flesh here is referring to the sin nature: "And the spirit against the sin nature. These are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would." And that's the summary. You just can't do the things that you would.

Now, the depravity; the loathsomeness; and, the deception of the sin nature is seen most vividly when compared to specific instructions from the Word of God. And that's what we have been doing. We've been stopping and saying, "Here is the law of God. Now let's walk over here and see how in our experience we discover the sin nature operating, and the power of the sin nature. It's shocking when first you see what Almighty God has said. That's perfect knowledge. Then you come over here, and you know what your sin nature tells you to do, and what we see taking place in our society. And the contrast is enormous.

**The Law of God vs. the Law of the Sin Nature**

So, we've looked at the conflict over divinely ordained lines of authority relative to males; to parents; and, to government. We've seen the conflict between the Law of God and the law of the sin nature relative to sex. We've looked at the conflict over private ownership and disposition of one's possessions. We've looked at the conflict over Christian service and in activity. We've looked at the conflict over the learning of the divine viewpoint of Bible doctrine. We've looked at the conflict over personal integrity. We've looked over the conflict of covetousness. And we've looked at the conflict of vile, dirty language.

**The Conflict of Christian Witnessing**

Now, we begin with another conflict – this time the conflict of Christian witnessing. Here, first of all, is what the Lord God has to say on this subject.

**The Great Commission**

We begin with Matthew 28:19-20: "Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the age. Amen." We refer to this as the Great Commission. This was the directive which the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples, that they would be left behind as His witnesses, to testify to the whole world about salvation through Jesus Christ, and to the doctrines relative to Christian living.

In Acts 1:8, just at the moment that the Lord is about to ascend to heaven, we have this statement from Him, to his disciples and to us: "But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." We are to testify under the guiding hand of God the Holy Spirit. We are not to testify in the power of the sin nature. We must not decide that you must speak to someone about the gospel every day. There are some days when God the Holy Spirit wants you to keep your mouth closed, because, for some reason, you are not prepared to testify, or He has not prepared an ear to receive your testimony. But, under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, He will bring you into opportunities to witness to the gospel, and to explain to confused Christians the great distinctions between Israel and the church, and what God has for them in this unique age.

In 2 Timothy 4:2, we read, "Preach the word. Be diligent in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." The word "in season" means "when it is convenient;" that is, when people are positive or when people are negative. Proclaim the full counsel of God under all conditions of receptivity. Sometimes people are going to stonewall you. But the apostle Paul says, "When God the Holy Spirit has led you to this person, you give the testimony, and then they are responsible for the truth that you have given them.

In Acts 20:25-27, the apostle Paul says, "And now behold, I know that you all among, whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." He's on the seashore. He is about to depart on the boat. He is speaking to the many pastor-teachers in the city of Ephesus, which have gathered with him. Verse 26 says, "Wherefore, I testify unto you this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." That's a great thing for the apostle Paul to say: "I do not have upon me a sense of guilt for having failed to try to preserve anybody that came across my path, that God the Holy Spirit had prepared for my testimony, to preserve them from the lake of fire. When that person came into my presence, I gave him the information. While he may sustain spiritual death by having rejected the gospel, his blood is not on my hands." That's very clear. That's the law of God concerning the matter of Christian witnessing relative to the gospel.

However, now take a look at the law of the sin nature. Actually, what do our sin natures tell us? Well, we're being told that we should not be fanatics in invading the privacy of people's personal religious beliefs. Don't be a fanatic, trying to push your religion on somebody else. Let people follow their own ways to God. After all, our sin nature says, "There is the mountain. There is God at the top. And there are many ways by which to come up to the mountain. Isn't that right? Why should you be such a fanatic? There are many ways to God. Buddha has his way; Muhammad has his way; and, Sam Jones has his way. Why should you think that your way is the only way? Oh, there all kinds of different ways," and the sin nature is quite wrong on that. But it sounds so reasonable.

The sin nature tells us to get people to make some kind of public move so that they can solidify and indicate their desire to be saved. So, instead of just telling people to believe the gospel, they say, "No. Believism – that's not enough. Get them to raise their hand. Get them to walk forward. Get them to do something so that they can crystallize their salvation." But that's not what the Bible says.

Our sin nature tells us that we should not propagate the dispensational distinctions of the Word of God so that we can apply the word accurately to people's lives. And we should not create confrontations with society over the issues of God and eternal life. So, if people get embarrassed when you talk to them about the gospel, don't do it. Don't do it if it upsets them, or if it angers them. Let them go to hell if they want to. That's what the sin nature tells you. But the Bible says, "No." When that blind man is going over the cliff, you reach out and say, "Don't do it." If he will not listen, his blood is not on your hands.

There is quite a conflict between the Law of God on Christian witnessing to the gospel, and the law of the sin nature.

**Anger**

Let's take another one: the law of anger. In James 1:19-20, we read, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear; slow to speak; and, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God." We do not accomplish God's work with a quick temper, but with godly, reasonable, thoughtful living. So, the book of James says, "Be careful about popping off.

Colossians 3:8 has this to say: "But now you (Christians) also put off these: anger; wrath; malice; blasphemy; filthy communications out of your mouth." The Bible says, "Reject anger as a Christian response to injury."

Romans 12:18-19: "If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men." Sometimes that's not possible, but that should be our objective to live peaceably: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourself, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine. I will repay, says the Lord.'" The Word of God says, "Seek to be a peacemaker, and leave the vengeance with God, because you just might be mistaken as to who is in the wrong. And maybe you're the one that deserves the vengeance. So, just leave it with God.

Take a look at Ephesians 4:26: "Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down upon your wrath." Now it is possible to be legitimately angry. The Bible tells us how the Lord Jesus Christ, on occasion, was angry when people were violating the principles of the Word of God. The arrogance of the Pharisees angered Him. The abuse of the helpless and the weak made the Lord Jesus very angry. But here we have a principle that says, "Control your anger within the context, legitimately, of the Word of God, so that your anger is not sinful anger. And in any case, don't put your head down on your pillow in anger and wake up the next morning still mad. There are an awful lot of Christians that have an awful lot of confession of sins to make right there – going to bed mad, and getting up the same way the next day.

Ephesians 4:31: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." How do we forgive? On the basis of the pattern that Jesus forgave us. What? Because we deserved it? No, He just did it. Because He's a God of love, He forgave. And when somebody injures you, you treat people with the same forgiving grace in spite of the injury that they have done to you. You do not wait until they come to you and say, "I'm sorry for what I did." That's irrelevant. You do not wait until they come and confess to you what they have done. That's irrelevant. Most of the time, you're better off not knowing. All that's important, when you're aware that you have been mistreated, and have been injured, is forgive. What that person does with the problem is between him and God, but don't you become part of his problem. And that's what happens when you are an unforgiving person. You become part of the problem. So, the Bible is very clear that God's law says, "Treat people in forgiving grace."

Then Galatians 5:15: "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another." Carnal anger is self-destructive in many ways. It is not worth it. This is the basic principle upon which you can develop for yourself a nice, enormous ulcer.

Proverbs 15:1: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." A soft answer to the angry will cause him to reconsider his raging.

**Forgiveness Means Forgetting**

Proverbs 19:11: "The discretion of a man defers his anger. And it is his glory to pass over a transgression." The spiritual Christian honors his Lord by overlooking an injury. That's the law of God, very explicit. It is very explicit and very clear about the matter of personal anger – one of the qualities that the sin nature triggers in us very quickly. What does the sin nature say? Well, the sin nature says, "Hey, don't let anybody trample on your rights. You put it in place pronto." The sin nature says, "Don't ever forget the injury that somebody has done. Oh, you forgiven him, but don't forget it." Of course, that's a subtle lie, because the Bible has made it clear, as we've already seen, that forgiveness means forgetfulness. God forgives. He puts it behind His back where it can't be seen again.

The sin nature says, "You should treat people the way they deserve for what they have done to you, or what you think they've done to you. That's how to treat people – according to what they deserve." But the Word of God says, "No. Treat people the way God has treated you in grace – the way you didn't deserve to be treated." So, the sin nature says, "Get hot. Get emotional over an injury so that you can leave a good bruise on your abuser, so he'll respect you next time."

Furthermore, the sin nature says, "Always put the worst interpretation on every action so that nobody gets away with anything. Just let them learn to do right. That's what they should do." The signature says, "Let people know you're on top of things, and you let them know when they get out of line."

All of these sin nature responses are subtle contradictions of the Law of God. And how gross they are only appears when we have first looked at what God has called upon us to do, to see how far out of that pattern we can be.

Let's take another one: the conflict over rebuking evil in society. This is a big one today. It's raging all around us. What does the Law of God say about the evil in society? Well, look at Ephesians 5:11. The Law of God says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Don't go along with violations of God's moral law. But reprove and condemn them. Declare them out of line with the Word of God. And don't say some weak thing like you disapprove of that because that's how you were brought up. That's no argument, even though you were brought up on the Word of God. It is because it's the Word of God that your position is correct.

Luke 17:3 says this: "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother trespasses against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him." That's very explicit and very clear. When someone has trespassed against you: call his attention to it; say, "That's wrong;" and, forgive him.

2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the Word. Be diligent in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Be a consistent source of divine viewpoint, and of admonition to a godless society. Rebuke the evil.

Titus 2:15 puts it this way: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you. Now, that's a good verse, because when you stand up and rebuke evil on the authority of the Word of God, sooner or later somebody is going to say, "Hey, who do you think you are? What makes you think you're all that perfect and all that good, that you should be sounding off like this?" Well, of course you're not. And you're not saying that you're speaking on the basis of your authority. What you're saying is: "This is what God has said." We may all fail, indeed, in it, but this is the standard for which we should strive.

So, the apostle Paul says, "Don't let people intimidate you who are in human viewpoint error just because you yourself are not perfect." You are not quoting yourself. You're quoting the God who is perfect. And He, therefore, has the right indeed to speak in this way.

In the little epistle of 2 John:10-11, we read, "If there come any unto you, and bring not that this doctrine (and he has just been speaking about the doctrine relative to the person of Christ), do not receive him into your house, neither beat him Godspeed. For he that bids him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds." Now, here's an interesting principle in the Word of God relative to rebuking evil in society – to rebuke the evil among your peers, within the circle of your associates. The Word of God says, "Peer pressure is to dignify righteousness on the one hand, and it is to disapprove of evil." You are to set the standard as a group. If he comes in to you, and he doesn't bring this doctrine, all you Christians understand that you do not even invite him to your house, and you don't bid him Godspeed in his endeavors, or you become part of it. And pretty soon, he gets the message that his peers are putting the pressure on him to be aware that he's out of line with the Word of God.

Verse 11 says, "If you don't do that, you've joined him, and you're just as bad as he is.

1 Corinthians 5:11 stresses the same principle: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man is called a brother, be he a fornicator, or covertness, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortionist – with such a one, no: not to eat." Here you have the apostle Paul again calling for a group standard of righteousness compatible with the Word of God which does not commend or fellowship with the people who violate that standard.

**Peer Pressure**

So, Paul says, "You have evil-doers. Here's this man. Oh, he's your brother in the Lord. He's born again, but he's out there being a fornicator. He's out there being covetous. He's out there being an extortionist. He's out there being an idolater. He's doing all of these things that are evil. And I've written to you that this guy, he's a brother, but you condemn that, and you do it by making it clear that you do not have fellowship, and you cannot have fellowship with him when he practices those things." That's what's known as peer pressure. And that's how the Word of God designs Christian conduct to be assisted.

So, when the unbeliever or the outsider comes into your group, he is very conscious that here is a group of people who has a standard of righteousness, and it is not based upon what they've always been taught, or what they believe, but what God has said. And because God has said it, they subscribe to it. And if you do not subscribe to it, you're out of line, and you will not find yourself in compatibility with this group.

Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he shall hear you, you have gained a brother." The first step of Christian conflict is person-to-person: "But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established." Take some people who have some spiritual smarts, and say, "Hey, this fornication that I'm talking to you about is wrong. And we confirm what you have been told about this. It's out of line with the Word of God: "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. But he neglects to hear the church, let him be onto you as a heathen and a tax collector."

2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we commend you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus, that you withdraw yourself from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." This means separation from your ungodly peers.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 says, "And if any man does not obey our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. That's very explicit peer pressure against those who are violating the Word of God. You establish a ground of righteousness, and that's what you hold up to people.

We have one more in Titus 3:10-11: "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sins, being condemned of himself."

Now the law of the sin nature is considerably different in all this. The law of the sin nature says, "Play ball to get ahead, even though you disapprove of a thing." So, you might say, "I'm against abortion, but I won't impose my views on anybody else." Someone might say, "Oh, you're against abortion? Why are you against abortion?" You say, "Well, because my church teaches it." That's no reason to be against it. If the Bible teaches it, then you cannot say, "I'm against it, but I wouldn't impose it on society." What about your poor, elderly parents? These old characters who are doddering around – they can hardly take care of themselves. They're always stumbling around, and they're on their last leg, and you have to feed them and take care of them: "I don't believe in euthanasia, but I'm not going to keep you from bumping all of your old folks." Is that consistent thinking? "I don't believe in euthanasia." If you don't believe in it, it is because the Bible condemns it and forbids you to do that. That's why we don't believe in it. Therefore, when our society tries to do it, we stand up and say, "No, you can't do it either." And if the Bible condemns an action, then we condemn it in society.

The sin nature says, "Ah, don't pretend that you're all that smart about what God thinks. The Bible is not that clear. It's not that complete on the subject." The other day on a program, they were debating a women having such a liberated lifestyle. They could have multiplicity of lovers, and they should, just like men have always been practicing evil. And they had this lady who was a doctor of psychiatry, this lady who had written a book, and they were talking back and forth on this subject. And finally, some innocent soul brings in the Bible about this: "This is wrong. The Bible would condemn this." Then one man stood up and said, “The men who wrote the Bible were a bunch of illiterates. Why are we even discussing it?"

Well, that was even too much for that gang of women. There was a moan of reaction against that. But the guy was right on. He was right on target. He knew exactly, in his stupid way, that he had put his finger on the real issue: "If the Bible is an authority, then we have to listen to it. If it is not, don't even discuss it." He showed how illiterate he was – to describe men like Dr. Luke as an illiterate.

The sin nature says, "More people share my views on something than yours. So, why don't you catch up with the time?" The sin nature says, "Just because someone promotes an evil doesn't mean that you should not help them make money. Just because this company publishes pornographic material, you shouldn't stop buying their books. Just because this monster on television sponsors degrading evil programs, you shouldn't stop buying his product." Oh, yes, you should. That's exactly the way you should speak. What an organization sponsors should determine how you cooperate with it financially.

The sin nature says, "That people should be free to do their own thing without someone making them feel guilty about it with their fundamentalist beliefs." The sin nature says, "Don't violate the civil rights of the homosexuals by trying to deny him a job as a schoolteacher; as a church organist; or, as a food handler." The sin nature says, "The public schools separate themselves from God because we have separation of church and state." But they have a room for smoking students. Isn't that interesting?

The sin nature says, "Don't interject Biblical ideas into government. Respect the wall of separation." And, of course, while the World Council of Churches is riding high, wide, and handsome, they didn't mind interjecting their views in society, and bringing us gradually down to the humanism in which we've been engulfed now. But now, when the fundamentalists have risen up, and said, "The Word of God has spoken, and this is wrong, and we want it changed." Now, suddenly, religion shouldn't be interjected into politics.

I appreciated what one of our young women said: "It is so much easier to listen to the politicians now, after the training we have at Berean Church, because they can't con us the way they can most people. They really look ridiculous, and you pity them.

**Prayer**

Let's take one more: the conflict over prayer. What a devastating, devastating conflict we Christians have over this one. Take a look at Ephesians 6:18: "You, praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The basic tactic of the Christian's spiritual warfare is prayer guided by the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 517: "Pray without ceasing." Prayers is to be a continuous activity during one's day.

Take a look at James 4:2: "You lust, and you have not. You kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not." You like something because you do not pray for it, or because you pray for it in the wrong motives, as in the pattern in the record of the Pharisee and the publican.

1 Thessalonians 5:25 has this to say. The apostle Paul says, "Brethren, pray for us." Christians are asking other believers to pray for their specific needs. And I must warn you that when Christians do ask you to pray for them, it is a sin when you do not respond in prayer in their behalf upon their request.

Notice 1 Samuel 12:19, and then notice what Samuel says in verse 23: "Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. But I will teach you the good and right way." Samuel says, "And it is very clear that if I were not to pray for you, when you have asked me to pray for you, it is a grievous sin for me not to do so.

1 Timothy 2:1-2: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings; and, for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Pray for government authorities to maintain peace in society. That is a duty which is imposed upon us as Christians – to pray for government authorities to maintain peace, because that is the primary call of government – to maintain peace and order, that justice and freedom may be experienced.

Philippians 4:6 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Don't worry. Go to God, and get some real solutions to your problems.

Then we have the tremendous promise in the gospel of John 14:13-14: "And whatsoever," Jesus says, "you shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it." God the Father promises to respond to prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. That means what He stands for. That's His Name. That means His will.

John 15:16 says, "You have not chosen Me. But I have chosen you, and ordained that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. And whatever you shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it to you." The prayer of the believers is the means by which God does His work and makes us fruitful.

John 16:24: "Hitherto you have asked nothing," Jesus says, "in My Name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." The maximum joy in life is going to be secured by the Christian who uses the technique of prayer.

In Luke 18:1: "And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Pray, and don't give up in your prayer life. Keep at it.

In the book of Proverbs 15, we have two statements of wisdom. Proverbs 15:8: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Proverbs 15:29 says, "The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous." God delights, God's law says, in hearing the prayers of His children, and He responds as per His proper timing to their requests.

In 1 Peter 3:12, we read, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

In 1 John 3:22, we read, "And whatever you ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." A Christian who is in temporal fellowship is guided by the Holy Spirit in his prayers, so that God will grant him his request.

Then Matthew 21:22: "In all things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Believing that God works through prayer is a prerequisite for having successful answers to prayer. You approach Him on the understanding that this is His technique.

Romans 12:12 says, "Rejoice in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing diligently in prayer." Remain faithful in the technique of prayer.

Then Romans 8:26-27: "Likewise, the Spirit also helps our infirmity, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Here's a wonderful fact – that God the Holy Spirit helps us to pray in a way that is compatible with the will of God, so that we have successfully prayed with answers received.

Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us, therefore, come boldly onto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." God says, "I want you to come without hesitancy. I want you to come without reluctance. I want you to pray."

We have one more in Matthew 6:6: "But you, when you pray, enter into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to My Father who is in secret. And your Father who is in secret shall reward you openly."

Now, that's quite an impact. And we've gone through it rapidly, but I think you've got the impression that the Law of God's place is great dignity on prayer. Ah, but what does the law of the sin nature say? "Prayer is an inspirational activity, but it is unreliable in getting things accomplished. So, don't trust prayer to get things done. If you're an achiever, don't look to prayer to do it. Spending time in prayer is all right, but if you pray continually, repeatedly through the day, it becomes a distraction."

The sin nature says, "I don't have the energy to try to remember what other people ask me to pray about, but I'll pretend I do it. It makes them feel good anyhow." But Samuel says, "It's a sin if they ask you, and you forget to remember them."

The sin nature says, "Preachers and the prayer meeting crowd will do the praying for national peace and security, so I don't have to waste my time."

Then there's the sin nature statement that God knows what I need because he's omniscient, so I don't need to explain it to Him in prayer." But God says, "That's how I work. Yeah, I know, but that's how I work. When you ask, I respond."

The sin nature says, "I pray, but I don't get what I ask for, so it's no use." There are reasons why you are not getting answers.

The sin nature says, "Prayer requests to God are really soap bubbles that float upward and burst into nothing." That's the thinking of the person who doesn't really believe it.

Then of course, there's the sin nature that says, "If I can't handle something, I'll try praying about it. God helps those who help themselves." Have you ever heard that smug statement? "God helps those who help themselves." In a little bit, small way, that's true. But God helps a whole lot more of those who pray first.

Then the final blow of the sin nature is: "Just expedite things. Sure, you should pray, but good in an organized fashion. Do the rote praying: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your Name.'" Did you ever see a war story on television – a war movie? These guys are about to go into combat." And now they're in the rubber rafts. They're paddling across, and they're in real trouble. And somebody starts saying, "Our Father who art in heaven. Then all the voices join in, and these guys are all praying as they're going along. It's a nice scene. Hollywood loves to do that "Our Father" bit.

Or you sit down to eat and you say, "Come Lord Jesus, be our guest, and may this food to us be blessed." And if you want to really finish it off, cross yourself. That's a good touch. I love that. I mean, sure pray, but, you know, do it with class. When you go to sleep, you say, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep." And every night, you do it.

The sin nature tells you: "Just get a book of prayers – somebody that's got some style, and read that. That's pathetic. It's the sin nature. God says, "Everything in the world is at your fingertips as a child of God, because when you are in temporal fellowship, and you open your mouth to Me in prayer, I, the Almighty God, have to listen to you. You're My child, and I cannot ignore. And when you ask in the name of Jesus, compatible with His will, I have to say, 'Yes.'" What a contrast between the Law of God and the law of the in nature. And what a tragedy if we listen to the sin nature.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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