

Simply Christ
Gospel Newsletter
Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

November 23, 2023

Paul's Agony

In the 7th chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul vividly describes the events which led to his conversion to Jesus. He begins the chapter by speaking of the Law's dominion and tells of his efforts to serve God under the Law. He describes this time as being *"in the flesh."* He says, *"For **when we were in the flesh**, the motions of sins, **which were by the law**, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."* Romans 7:5. He had lived his entire life under the Law and *"in the flesh,"* and for the most part had done fairly well. Sin was no great problem for him, and he viewed himself as exceedingly righteous. In fact, he looked back to his life under the Law and said, *"...touching the righteousness which is in the law, (he was) blameless."* Philippians 3:6.

Yet something began to trouble this "righteous" Pharisee, as the tenth commandment began to speak to him in a way he never considered before. The first nine commandments dealt with his actions, but he began to see that the tenth commandment dealt with the content of his heart. He said, *"I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."* Romans 7:7. Paul (then known as Saul of Tarsus) had always viewed

himself as a righteous man because he kept the deeds of the Law. Now he was faced with the realization that sin in his heart made him a commandment breaker. It seems Saul thought he could remedy this by taking control of his thoughts and desires, just as he controlled his actions, but this is where sin deceived him! Romans 7:11.

When Saul recognized that sin in the heart was in fact sin, he endeavored to purge this iniquity from his own consciousness. However, the more he struggled with it the more he discovered its grip upon his soul. The harder he fought, the more pronounced the sinful desires became. Romans 7:8. Sin, which for most of his life Saul had kept subdued, and thought was dead, revived! Romans 7:9.

Saul became so *"exceeding sinful"* Romans 7:13 in his own sight, that he was forced to acknowledge something which shattered his great religious self-image. I can imagine the horror which gripped this great *"Hebrew of the Hebrews"* Philippians 3:5 who believed himself to be spiritual above others, when he had to admit to himself, ***"I am carnal, sold under sin."*** Romans 7:14. These words do not describe a child of God. Those who are born of God are not carnal (unregenerate), they are *"spirit"* because they are *"born of the Spirit."* John 3:6. Neither are the people of God *"sold under sin."* God's children have been *"redeemed from all iniquity."* Titus 2:14.

Listed below is the evidence Saul considered about himself which forced him to acknowledge

that he was not spiritual, but was in fact a slave to sin.

“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” Romans 7:15. A slave is forced to do the things he hates and cannot do the things he desires to do.

“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Romans 7:17. A slave is controlled by someone more powerful than themselves. This powerful master is SIN in the heart.

“...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Romans 7:18. A slave will live his life longing to do certain things which his master will never allow him to do.

“For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Romans 7:19-20. Saul could no longer deny it. He was controlled by something more powerful than himself. Sin was his master and he was its slave! Jesus had spoken of this slavery, saying, *“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin.”* John 8:34.

This was Saul’s condition when he met Jesus on the Damascus Road. The *“pricks”* he was fighting were destroying him. In his heart he was crying, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* Romans 7:24. He found that deliverance *“through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* Romans 7:25. He discovered that Jesus Christ truly takes away the sin which reigns in the heart of fallen humanity. Jesus’ promise is still

true: *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."* John 8:36.

I know this teaching goes contrary to what is almost universally taught today. We are constantly told that we are all sinners, and nothing can change that reality. But consider this: **Since Jesus said, "*the truth shall make you free*"** John 8:32, **how can anything which says you can never be free from sin be "*the truth*?"** It simply cannot be! But, if you will believe the truth which is clearly recorded in God's word, you too, like Paul, can be free!