

Paul: Persecutor to Preacher

Pastor Nick Bergquist • Struggle • August 16, 2020

Romans 7

Performance based Paul (20's and 30's) - "...If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless." (**Philippians 3:4-6**)

Have there been times in your life where your family, wealth, occupation, good works or social position given you a false sense in believing that you were righteous? Think about the false sense of security or confidence that this may have provided and note how dangerous such a performance based position is to the formation of true fellowship with God.

Grace based Paul (60's) – "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing." (**Romans 7:19**)

Why is the realization that there is a war raging between the Holy Spirit in our lives and the pull of sinful flesh so essential in the pursuit of sanctification in the Christian life?

Systemic sin leads to pandemic struggle

☞ I am not as I should be – I struggle with me: "...I was afraid..." (**Genesis 3:10**)

☞ We are not as we should be – I struggle with you: "...the woman you put here with me..." (**Genesis 3:12**)

☞ It is not as it should be – I struggle with creation: "...cursed is the ground..." (**Genesis 3:17**)

Why is the concept of original sin at the fall of man in Genesis 3 so fundamental in our understanding of the all-pervasive sin that so easily entangles us in our every day lives?

Even in Christ, I retain my sinful nature predisposed to sin - My condition: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature." (**Romans 7:18a**) *Before our conversion to Christ, we were unknowingly the slaves of sin, all along thinking we were serving our own interests. Our struggle was the result of our opposition to God and His present judgement in our lives. As a result of faith in Christ, our animosity toward God ended and a new animosity—toward sin—began. In many ways, our lives become more difficult because of this exchange. Think about how that might be true in your life.*

The desire is there but not the follow through – My conflict: "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing." (**Romans 7:18b-19**). *There is a perpetual tension between the Spirit and the flesh. Why is it important not to minimize this conflict by denying the reality of our sin, trying to cope with our sin or redefining our sins by putting Christian labels on them?*

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Sin made me do it - My culprit: “Now If I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.” (**Romans 7:20**). *Why is an overwhelming sense of recognition over our struggle with sin and our defeat by it an essential step in the ultimate solution to our sin problem?*

I have been rescued from that culprit - The cross: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord...” (**Romans 7:24-25**)

How great is your struggle? If our struggle approaches that of the Apostle Paul, we will give up all self-help efforts and turn to the cross of Christ. How has God provided the righteousness required to ultimately deal with our sin problem? How does the Holy Spirit give us the power to appropriate that righteousness?

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:1**)*