

† Humanities Great Crisis

- *If you watch the news for 5 seconds these days, you will hear someone tell you about the current existential crisis faced by humanity, and then argue about what it is. Run out of oil. Global warming. Nuclear weapons. The democrats. The Republicans.*
- *There is a crisis far greater that has been with humanity from day 1... it's a reality behind every war, political upheaval, every human caused disaster, and it is the chief evidence for the reality of sin...*

We KNOW what is right, we AGREE what is right, but we don't DO what is right.

- *You've had a great day, you get home, and BOOM. Something happens, an argument erupts, you say something you shouldn't, and the day is ruined. WHY DID I DO THAT!!!*
- *As followers of Christ, we are not immune to this- to this way of living that Paul calls the OLD WAY OF THE LAW... In Romans 7:5, he nails the failure of the old way!*

The failure of the 'old way': *"For when we were in the realm of the **flesh**, the sinful passions aroused by the **law** were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death."*

- *Two concepts here that are essential for us to understand! The LAW, and the FLESH.*

† The Law... QUICK RECAP

- What I think it is: INSTRUCTIONS that will lead to LIFE
- *We think this because we are taught this!*

Deuteronomy 5:32 *So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³ Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.*

- What it really is: A TASKMASTER with an IMPOSSIBLE standard
- What it does: Brings me to CONDEMNATION and the experience of DEATH
- *Shame. Guilt. Full reality of just how far removed from God we are, on our own. (IF TIME-illustration of dirty clothes at a formal ball). We need to recognize the truth of our sin, and law does that very well. But it can never set us free. THE REASON is because when we are trying to live by law, we are living in what the NT calls our FLESH.*

† The Flesh...

- What I think it is: Morally NEGATIVE thoughts and actions
- What it really is:

The *flesh* (self-life), is the CONDITION (mindset, attitude, strategy of living)

- *This is important. It's very common for Christian teachers to view the flesh as a 'bad nature', as opposed to the 'good/new' nature that God gives us as Christians. But this is incorrect, as we will see. IN CHRIST, we don't have two natures. We are not spiritually schizophrenic. What we have is FLESH, a condition, which is like a birth defect. It is something we must deal with, but it is NOT WHO WE ARE. SO! THE FLESH IS A CONDITION....*

Where my focus is primarily on MYSELF; (even if it is ‘good looking’ self, ‘well-adjusted’ self, or ‘socially acceptable’ self)

Where I am living out of my own RESOURCES; (such as heritage, education, IQ, personality, sense of humor, looks, talents, abilities, finances, etc..)

In order to:

Cope with LIFE Solve my PROBLEMS

Meet my NEEDS Become a SUCCESS!

– ***MY flesh is what I do when I decide to rely upon myself, my wisdom, and my resources to live, rather than looking to God.***

Reality! Flesh always tries to live by law, and it always FAILS.

– ***Not my flesh! My flesh loves breaking moral law... maybe so, but the essence of law is trying to establish our identity by measuring up to some standard, whatever that may be... and this is what our flesh always does, even if that standard is myself.***

- What it does: Keeps me in opposition to God.

Galatians 5:17 *For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*

- ***And this brings us to the last section of Romans 7, where Paul honestly lays out this crisis we all face.***
- ***If you’ve ever asked “WHY do I do the things I do”- take comfort, Paul asked the very same thing.***
- ***IF WE EVER thought that Biblical Christianity pretends that life should be easy and if we just believe in Jesus, then we should be able to behave perfectly... THIS SHOULD CURE THAT MYTH. By the way, the question today is “why does my wife do the things...” but “WHY DO I”***

† **Paul’s struggle, our struggle, my struggle**

Romans 7:14-25

*For we know that the Law is spiritual, **Good, of God** but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.*

- ***But in Romans 6, Paul said that we died to sin, that it shall no longer be our master? What’s going on?***
- ***Paul purpose here is to convey just how powerless our flesh is to overcome sin. EVEN as a believer, this is a picture of reality- that we all know- when we are trying to overcome our temptations, our flesh patterns, on our own. THE FLESH- who I am apart from Christ- that old strategy of living by my own resources- is a SLAVE to sin.***
- ***IMPORTANT... by using the analogy of a slave, Paul is emphasizing that his flesh, this struggle with sin, is NOT WHO HE REALLY IS. A slave, as Paul uses the imagery here, is a person who is forced to do something against his will. Like there is no choice. His activities as a slave are not who he really is!***

¹⁵ *For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.*

- ***Irritation. Impatience. Envy***
- ***Discontent. Gossip. Language you know isn’t consistent with you who are.***

- **Anger. Just being wrapped up in yourself. AARGH!**
- **THEN, Paul points out that the very fact that we struggle so much is evidence that we agree with God that HE IS GOOD, that his LAW is GOOD!**

¹⁶ But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.

- **Paul is identifying himself- who he really is, the live he wants to experience- with GOD, GOD's nature, GOD's Character.**
- **This leads him to a crucial observation... V17**

¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

- **OK. Paul is not saying he isn't responsible for his actions. Whatever in his own life he might have had in mind, it's his action he is talking about. There is no "THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT". No.**
- **THE POINT is that HE KNOWS this sin, is NOT WHO HE IS. !!! Paul is saying here that as Christians we go around sinning all the time. This isn't some blanket condemnation. Rather, Paul says I KNOW WHEN I am turning my back on God, his goodness, because it is SO OBVIOUS. (Works of the flesh are obvious). IT'S NOT ME!**
- **HEAR! As a follower of Christ, you don't have a split personality! You don't have a GOOD NATURE and a BAD NATURE... you are a NEW CREATION IN CHRIST, AND YET, you, me, all of us, still have the choice of reverting back to the OLD NATURE- which is no longer who we are, but for the rest of this life will follow us around, always there, doing its best to convince us that it IS who we are, and look to it instead of Christ.**

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me (**Who I truly am**), but the doing of the good is not (**in my flesh**)

- **Remember Jesus' words to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane... "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!"**
- **Then Paul restates, driving the point home...**

¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

- **Paul Tripp Quote... Didn't plan to get mad in the grocery store, but that guy made me mad. Didn't plan to be discontent, but it just enveloped me in the quietness of the car. Discussion wasn't supposed to degenerate into an argument, but it did.**

²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, (**In my spirit**)

²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body (**Mind, will, emotions**), waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

- **Interesting note- "law of my mind". My favorite commentary points out that Paul may be talking about our rational mind here... the idea that we can just reason ourselves into freedom from sin. No one rationally wants to be angry, bitter, adultery... In our rational mind, we KNOW this is destructive, BUT OUR RATIONAL MIND ISN'T ENOUGH. JUST KNOWING WHAT IS RIGHT CAN'T SET US FREE!**

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

- **Answer? NO ONE! Again, quoting Trip- This battle, this struggle, can't be solved by**
- **Theology- Strategies- Principles- Techniques- Plans- Preparation- Helpful hints- Outlines. Religious activit**
- **THERE IS ONLY ONE HOPE!**

²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Reality! As believers, we do not have two natures! We are New Creations In Christ, our spirit is in union with Christ, and what is true of Christ is true of us. *This is our true identity.* However, this side of eternity, we also have the ever-present reality of our flesh, which is indwelled by sin, and constantly seeks to control us. Our hope is not to reform, improve, or manage our flesh. *That is the old way of the law.* Our hope is nothing less than to offer ourselves, surrender ourselves, fully, constantly, unreservedly, and practically, to the reality and authority of *Christ in us, the hope of Glory*, and who we are (our new Identity) in Him. And this doesn't happen by ACCIDENT.

– **THIS IS ROMANS 8!**