

# THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

September 27, 2009

## Romans 7--3

**Romans 7:15-- “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”**

Paul continues his discussion here under the premise that he is “**of the flesh, sold under sin**” (v.14). I hold that Paul is speaking of his former life as an unregenerate sinner struggling to keep the Law of Moses and that he speaks in the first person simply to set forth himself as a type for all souls who have yet to come to Jesus Christ. As I stated in the last article, there simply seems to be far fewer difficulties with this interpretation than with assuming Paul is speaking of his life as a redeemed Christian. With this understanding, let’s consider verse 15.

When Paul says that he does not understand his own actions he finds himself in the same position that every alien sinner is in. Paul is not saying that he does not know what he is doing when he does it. For instance, if Paul were to steal from his neighbor he certainly would know that he was stealing as he did it. What he would *not* understand, nor does any unregenerate sinner, is the consequences and seriousness of those actions. In speaking of this we are not talking about the temporal consequences, such as legal punishment. Rather, we are speaking of the *spiritual* consequences and ramifications (Note such passages as 1 Timothy 1:13; Acts 3:17; and 1 Corinthians 2:8).

Another understanding of the first part of verse 15 is that our English word “understand” would be better rendered “approve” in this place. The word is “*ginosko*” and, according to Greek scholars, occasionally bears that meaning. So, if Paul does not approve of the acts he’s doing, why do them at all? That, my friends, is the very point! As Paul writes he speaks of himself as one who is “sold under sin.” He is writing as a slave to sin. Whether we view this as Paul stating that he does not understand the spiritual ramifications of his actions, or that he does not approve of his actions but cannot help but do them anyway, neither is true, nor can it ever be true, of a Christian! It is imperative to our understanding of this passage, and to our view of sin and its existence in the life of a Christian, to note that Paul is speaking of one who *cannot help but sin*. If a Christian *must* sin, if they have not the capability to ward off sin and refuse to engage in it, then every warning against sin in the life of a Christian is at best nonsensical and at worst cruel. Paul *is not* speaking of a Christian.

**“For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”** Paul’s inner self was simply incapable of keeping him from engaging in the wrong, even though he did not want to engage in it. When Paul said, “I do not *do* what I want,” the italicized “do” is the word “*prasso*” and denotes the idea of “practice.” Thus, Paul is speaking of a constant activity, his habitual and repeated practice. In Paul’s heart he longed to avoid the wrong, and if he had been free from the bondage of sin, he

would have been able to avoid it. As it is, we see him speaking of the struggle that goes on between the spirit and the fleshly body to rule in the life of the man who is attempting under the Law of Moses to serve God.

“But I *do* the very thing I hate.” The italicized *do* in the last part of this verse is the word “*poieo*” and considers the whole series of Paul’s acts as almost unconscious and mechanical. The reason Paul did not want to do these acts was because they were contrary to the Law and the Law was admittedly good, as the very next verse shows. “**Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with that law, that it is good**” (v. 16). It was not because Paul loved sin that he sinned. On the contrary, he *hated* it. Yet sins temptations were so powerful to him, and they attacked him mightily through his flesh, that he committed sin, even when he did not want to sin. Unfortunately, the Law of Moses was powerless to help him. As helpless as his condition appears, there exists One who can save him from this pitiful condition. Paul will discuss Him at the end of this chapter and throughout the next.

One final thought on this verse: Paul makes it clear that if he had not been “sold under sin” he would have acted differently. Paul *wanted* to do good and stop sinning. Thus, in an unexpected place, we find a verse containing solid refutation of the doctrine of total depravity. Paul, long before his conversion, desired to do right and avoid wrong. Obviously, he could not have had that desire if he was totally corrupt and bad.

In Need of Prayers	In Need of Prayers
<p>Sharon Tirey continues her cancer treatments.</p> <p>Keep Kristen Osterling and her baby boy in mind as he continues to go through some difficulties.</p> <p>Remember David Blakeman.</p> <p>Lilly Fitzwater (Bill Morelan’s mother) is recovering in a care facility in Ohio. The contact information is posted on the bulletin board in the hall.</p> <p>Chuck McDavitt is suffering with diabetes and has now had to have both of his feet amputated.</p> <p>Ron Catchen had open heart surgery earlier in the year but recently had to have stints put in.</p>	<p>Randy Blackaby, the evangelist for the New Carlisle church of Christ up in Dayton, suffered a heart attack and is recovering at this time.</p> <p><b>The congregational meeting will be this afternoon at 5. Please make your plans to attend.</b></p> <p><b>University Height Church of Christ 445 Columbia Avenue Lexington, Ky 40508 859-255-6257 www.uheightschurch.com</b></p>