

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.

Summary verse

Can a believer knowingly practice what he hates?

Paul says, "*For that which I do, I do not understand.*"

He does not understand his experience as a Christian. "*I don't get it.*"

He says, "*For that which I desire, this I do not practice, but that which I hate, this I am doing.*"

That is, the very thing he desires to do, namely, good as defined by law, this he does not do, and what he hates passionately, this is the thing he does do.

Paul has three words to describe man,

"natural" *psuchikos*, the unsaved man whose highest form of life is dominated by his reason (mind) and emotional nature, the soulless man ([1 Cor. 2:14](#));

"carnal" *sarkinos*, the saved man who has not found deliverance from the power of sin in the fullness of the Spirit but is more or less still under the control of the evil nature; and

"spiritual" *pneumatikos* ([1 Cor. 3:1](#)), the believer who is living his life in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Carnal is not used to describe an unbeliever but a believer walking in the power of the flesh: 1 Cor. 3:14. Therefore, by the word “carnal” Paul was describing a state (condition) out of which there was deliverance.

Molloy

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.*

Three Greek words for “Do” all in present tense

Katergazomai - To work out, labor, perform. Put into effect. To make operative. **To produce**. That which I am always producing I don't understand...I'm confused, I don't understand what was going on.

prassō – Execute -accomplish habitually- **practicing**. I am not practicing.

Poieō – To produce - something tangible - something obvious to the senses. **To make or create** or manufacture. **To perform**.

I do not understand my production, my practice, and my performance.

God has given man immaterial abilities:

1. To think – ability to think is intellect. *I do not understand.*
2. To choose – ability to choose is volition. *I am not practicing what I would like to do.*
3. To feel – ability of emotion. *I am doing the very thing I hate.*

What I think in my mind is not what I do, what I choose to do is not what I do and what I hate that's what I practice.

Like it or not we're all haters.

***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.*

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

Question from Hal Molloy

1. Is the “I” the unique personhood of Paul (Saul)?

a. Paul as an entity

b. Paul as an individual

Answer: Yes: An individual formed by God in his mother’s womb. He is a man - a particular unique person.

2. With what kind of nature did Paul enter the world?

Answer: Sin nature - as also we. Paul was in Adam. Rm. 5:12

- **Miles Stanford wrote:**
According to His eternal plan and schedule, God called (spoke] the world into being. And He created Adam to be head, source, of the human race for that world. With the rest of humanity, (we) you were created in Adam-- he became your life, as yet unborn (positional).

- **Had you somehow been aware of that, your reaction may have been something like this:**

- **"Hey! Wait just a minute, here!**

On the authority of God's personal Word, I am a unique and eternal person, elect, called and chosen in the Last Adam, from before the foundation of the world, the first Adam, or anything else!

Stanford

"He has chosen me 'in Christ' ([Eph. 1:4](#)), the uncreated, Eternal Son of God, and predestinated me to be conformed to His image. He has positionally justified, sanctified, and glorified me ([Rom. 8:28-32](#)).

• "But here I am, at the very outset, positioned in a life-and-death relationship with the wrong, the first, the created, the sinful, earthly Adam!"

Stanford

3. What happened when Paul believed?

Molloy

Answer: He became (is) a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) in Christ.

- Positionally: Immutable, eternally established.

But the old Adamic nature still abiding in his body but no longer in union with it. And no longer a slave to it. Rm 6:1-13

- Now Paul, a believer, the same person - individual, unique person, but recreated and reborn in Christ. 2 Cor. 5:17 and 1 Pet 1:23

4. Does Romans 7:17-18 make sense now? I = Paul same personhood but a new creation?

Answer: “Rm 7: ¹⁷ *So now, no longer am I (as a new creation) the one doing it, but (the) sin (nature) which dwells in me.*

¹⁸ *For I know that nothing good dwells in me (old man), that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me (New Man), but the doing of the good is not.*

"For thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabits Eternity, whose name is Holy" ([Isa. 57:15](#)).

"In the secret place of the Most High"; "in the bosom of the Father" ([Ps. 91-1](#); [John 1:18](#)), before anything was created -- the Father fashioned YOU in His heart of love.

"Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unformed; and in Thy Book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" ([Ps. 139:16](#)).—

Miles J. Stanford

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

“No longer am I!” That was a great discovery! For a forgiven Paul, who had gone on in pride awhile without any inward trouble, it was indeed an earth-shattering awakening to become again convicted—not now of sins (deeds done in the body), but of indwelling sin, of a hateful power that seemed like it was one’s very self—but was really “our old man.

Not sins but the sin-nature.”

Since I am doing what I am not wishing, there must be another evil principle working within me.

This is the same man who wrote in **Philippians Three**, “*If any man hath whereof to glory in the flesh, I yet more!*”

There he pointed out seven facts he could glory in, —beyond the greatest Greek, or Roman, or English, or any Gentile— “*I yet more!*”

But now he is saying, “*In me dwells not one thing that is good.*”
And also: “*I can will, but cannot do!*”

This great double lesson must be learned by all of us!

- (1) There is no good thing in any of us—in “**our flesh**”—our old selves.
- (2) We cannot do the good we want or will, to do.

Most humbling of all confessions.

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not

As things are, in view of the facts just explained, it is not the true (new) man which is responsible for this line of conduct, but the sin (Nature) which has its home in the man.

To be saved from sin, a man must at the same time own it and disown it; it is this practical paradox which is reflected in this verse.

It is safe for a Christian like Paul—it is not safe for everybody—to explain his failings by the watchword, *Not I, but indwelling sin*. . . . A true saint may say it in a moment of passion, but a sinner had better not make it a principle. Sin, here, is the evil (sin) nature indwelling a believer.

Why isn't there anything good dwelling in our flesh?

“It is sin, and nothing but sin, that has to be taken into account of in this connection, for *'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good,'* in me, regarded as a creature of flesh, apart from any relation to or affinity for God and His Spirit.”

Wuest

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¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

Why isn't my will strong enough to overcome sin?

- Paul has taught the terrible, lost guilty state of all men and their inability to recover righteousness.
- Then he has set forth Christ as a propitiation (satisfaction) through faith in His blood as man's only hope;
- Then the believer's identification, as connected with Adam, with Christ in His death; and the command *to reckon themselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus*;
- Together with the fact that they (we) are not under law, but under grace.

The sin nature is simply much stronger and more powerful than my will.

Our hearts are weary with the appeals to *man's will*, — whether the *will* of a sinner to “make a start,” “become a Christian,” etc.; or the appeal to the *will* of believers who have not yet been shown what *guilt* is, and what indwelling *sin* is. For God's Word in Romans 7:18 tells us that while to will may be present with us, to work that which is right is *not* present.

Paul told the Philippians that believers were such as had “*no confidence*” in the flesh, and that it is *God* that worketh in us, “*both to will and to work, for His good pleasure.*”

Romans Verse-by-Verse.

For, though our old man was crucified with Christ, put in the place of certain, **though not instant death**—we find, though we have “**put him off**” (**Col. 3:9**) we must “**put away**,” as to everything of the former life, “**the old man**” (**Eph. 4:22**).

And to be put away, **he must be discovered to us**, and this is what is so vividly set before us in this struggle.

Note, it is never said the old man is dead, but that we died. We were federally identified with Christ, and passed on with Him into burial, and now share His Risen life. The old man is not to be “counted dead”: but to be counted crucified—his place being there only. Footnote 160 Newell’s Romans

*¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not **do**, but I **practice** the very evil that I do not want.*

Poieō – To produce- Something tangible-something obvious to the senses. **To make or create** or manufacture. To perform.

prassō -Execute-accomplish habitually- **practicing**. I am not practicing.

Thelo- Desire, want

Verse 19 expresses concerning Paul, and all of us, all the time, **our utter powerlessness in ourselves** (though Christians) **against the evil of the flesh**: whether we are consciously under Moses' Law, or any law system or code or ethic as was Paul, or convicted by the power of an awakened conscience that we ought to have deliverance from our sinful, selfish selves, and walk in victory in Christ.

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 restates the fact (which is, unfortunately, no comfort to him as yet!) that *it is no longer the real “I,”* but indwelling sin, that is working out this hated life of defeat.

All this to show the believer that they have no strength in themselves to overcome the power of the indwelling sin nature.

When the demand arises in our hearts that we must be what we find written in the Epistles, the effect is the same as in Paul’s case as regards the discovery of powerlessness.

If we have seen that we died with Christ; and are properly instructed, we shall, upon such realization:

1. Know there is deliverance in Christ for us, whether we are able, or not, in living faith to reckon that we are dead unto sin and alive unto God.
2. We shall be, or become, willing to have God show us how, or wherein, we are still holding fast to any sin, or any indulgence of the flesh.
3. We shall be brought, by God's grace, to agree to the sentence of death that has already been pronounced on this sinful desire, when our old man, —all our old sin nature was crucified with Christ
4. Then we shall enter the place of reckoning ourselves dead to sin, and to this darling sin, and to all sin, — as God commands His saints who have died with Christ.

(5) We may have, if necessary, a struggle here: as James shows: ***“Ye adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? . . . God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Be subject therefore to God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you!”***

Newell

