

TITLE: CAN I DO GOOD?

TEXT: ROMANS 7:12-25

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to explain Paul's teaching that many misinterpret to say that humans are inherently sinful & incapable of doing good works.

INTRO: The first tenet of Calvinism is "Total hereditary depravity," which means that every human is totally depraved, sinful in nature because of Adam's "original sin." Because of this, there is *nothing* we can do that is good...nothing to contribute to our own salvation, nothing that could be considered by God to be good work. This is NOT according to Scripture. Has the Scripture "thoroughly furnished unto every good work" in vain (2 Tim 3:16-17)? Has God created us wicked, then determined to punish us for this wickedness *He* created? Can I really do any good at all? Paul speaks about this in Rom 6&7

I. THE EXTENT & END OF THE LAW (v. 1-6):

- A. (v. 1-3) A person is amenable to the law as long as he lives.
 - 1. Example: A woman is to her husband by law until her husband dies (v. 2-3)
 - 2. Point: Two laws can't be in effect at the same time, just like a woman can't be married to two husbands at the same time.
 - B. Paul's point throughout this letter has been that the Old Law is dead (Christians are dead to it) and the new law exists.
 - C. (v. 4-6) And you are dead to the old law.
 - 1. How? By the body of Christ (no more details give here – he already gave them in 6:3-6).
 - 2. Why?
 - a. To be married to another (from the marriage example in v. 2-3) – to him who is raised from the dead.
 - b. To produce good fruit
 - 3. Before this, when we were in the flesh (**distinction made between law and spirit – "in the flesh" = law**), the passions (emotions, suffering, afflictions) of sin worked in our members (bodies) to produce bad fruit.
 - 4. But now, we're completely delivered from the law.
 - We were dead in it before. Now we serve in newness of spirit and not oldness of letter (**distinction between law & spirit**).
- Dead in sins; dead in the old law – It seems that Paul is equating the law with sin (v. 5 – "...sins, which were through the law"). BUT...He addresses this concern in v. 7-11.

II. THE EMPHASIS OF THE LAW (v. 7-11):

- A. Is the law sin? This is a logical question Paul anticipates after what he says in v. 4-6). **God forbid!**
- B. **The law exposed sin!** (E.g., if the law hadn't said "don't covet," we wouldn't haven't had known what coveting was!)
- C. (v. 8-11) Sin existed before law, but we were not held accountable for it before the law. But through law, sin is exposed.

III. THE EFFECT OF THE LAW (v. 12-23):

- A. The law is holy, and it made sin exceeding sinful (it showed sin for what it really is) (v. 12-13)
- B. (v. 14) The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.
 - *Here is the KEY:** Paul is continuing with the distinction between carnal and spiritual. Is Paul referring to himself? Is a Christian (and Apostle) still "carnal, sold under sin?" Let's consider **6:6-7; 11-12**, then answer this question.
 - 1. The Christian's old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed...we should not serve sin (**6:6**).
 - 2. He that is dead (in baptism) is freed from sin (**6:7**). He is "sold under sin" *no longer!*
 - 3. As Christ died to sin (v. 10), the Christian is "dead indeed unto sin" (**6:11**).
 - 4. A Christian does not let sin reign in his body...does not obey its lusts (**6:12**).
 - **Paul has continually put himself in the place of the reader and asked the obvious question based on what he's written. Here he is doing the same thing. He is *not* referring to himself, but rather putting himself again in the place of the reader...the Jew under the old law.**
- C. The problem with the man under the law (v. 14-20)
 - 1. What I do, I don't know (understand completely, realize). I don't do what I want to do (the law); and I do what I hate (sin).
 - 2. Because of this, I consent (agree, confess) that the law is good (because I *want* to do it, & I *don't* want to do what it forbids).
 - 3. (v. 17) It is not I, but sin that does it!
 - a. This is NOT an excuse to sin. It is not a statement of blame (not, "It's not *my* fault...*sin* did it!")
 - b. He's saying, "It's not the law...don't blame the law!" The Jew under the law is still living in his sin, unregenerate.
 - 4. (v. 18) In my flesh dwells no good thing (this cannot be talking about a Christian).
 - The *desire* is there, but how to do good I find not – why not? Where is he looking? His flesh, not his spirit (mind – v. 25).
 - 5. (v. 19-20) Same as v. 17 – The root of the problem is that this man is still a slave to sin.
- D. The problem with the law (v. 21-23)
 - Under the old law, evil is still present (v. 21). Even though one may delight in the law, his flesh wars against that (v. 22-23).

THE EMANCIPATION FROM THE LAW (v. 24-25):

- A. O wretched (miserable) man – the one who is trying to rely on the old law, without Christ. Who will deliver me from this?
- B. Only Christ (His law) will resolve this problem.
 - 1. E.g., a young boy must be told the Do's and Don'ts. Personally, I can remember the written list of do's and don'ts that I had as a kid. I don't have that list today. Why not? I don't need it. I'm an adult. I am quite capable of doing the do's and avoiding the don'ts without looking at a list. The list is written in my heart (even though I might break a rule occasionally).
 - 2. Under the old law, there was exposure of sin, but not freedom from sin. It took Christ to free us from sin. As Christians, we are beyond these feelings Paul is expressing because we have grown up spiritually & the law is written in our hearts (Heb 8).

CONCLUSION: As Christians, what we are to learn from this chapter is that the law is done away with, and we are NOT subject to these feelings! This is a great thing! **8:1** tells us what we ARE subject to today...no condemnation for those who are in Christ...! So, CAN I DO GOOD? YES! But only in Christ Jesus, where the problems of 7:12-23 are resolved. **Then** we are no longer slaves to sin. We are DEAD to sin (6:1-6). But this does not mean that we are sinless, or that we will never struggle with sin again. We still sin, but are promised forgiveness of sin when we repent and confess.