



[Romans 7:13-25](#)

(13) Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. (14) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. (16) If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. (17) But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. (19) For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. (20) Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (21) I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. (22) For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (25) I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

New King James Version

Do we not believe that Paul was a sincere and dedicated example of a fully committed Christian? Yet, his testimony confirms that we have to face and accept the humbling fact that [sin](#), as long as we are in the flesh, forever stains our character. We will never be rid of it until our change in the resurrection. Can we accept the fact that no amount of personal exertion to purge ourselves of sin will be completely effective? Paul did, and it led him to be thoroughly humbled and thankfully aware of God's mercy.

However, it did not cause him to disregard whether he sinned. Paul resolved not to sin because he loved Christ for what He had already done and continued to do every day. As a former Pharisee, he understood that super-righteousness ([Ecclesiastes 7:16](#)) on his part would never work.

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In [1 Corinthians 15:8-10](#), he makes a telling statement about how he judged his past before his conversion:

Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I [persecuted](#) the church of [God](#). But by the [grace](#) of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Paul had a firm understanding that super-righteousness could not replace what Christ had already mercifully done in his behalf, and nothing he did could ever replace it. He used this as an example, as a prod to himself, so he would never forget exactly where he stood in terms of being gifted by God's grace. It took a perfect Sacrifice to pay for his past sins and also those he continued to commit as a Christian! Despite sin still being a part of him, he says, "I am what I am by means of God's grace." He valued what was done on his behalf so deeply that he never let his appreciation lag.

He adds in [Romans 4:4-8](#)

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his [faith](#) is accounted for righteousness, just as [David](#) also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;
Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.

Do we truly understand that we cannot add to the quality of the righteousness of [Jesus Christ](#), the Son of God, who lived without sinning His entire life? When His pure righteousness is accounted to us, we stand before God blameless because of His sinlessness. Even our righteousness done through our obedience following [baptism](#) and receipt of God's [Holy Spirit](#) lacks the purity of Christ's righteousness imparted and accounted to us, because our righteousness is still tainted by sin that remains within us.

[1 Corinthians 1:26-31](#) contains a [truth](#) of supreme importance to us: God called the weak

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and base of [the world](#), and no flesh will ever glory in His presence. This is why our integrity must be guarded by humility because our obedience—given because of God's mercy and which He graciously accepts—is still flawed.

None of this removes our responsibilities regarding our continuing sanctification; it does not do away with our accountability to obey God's law and grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We do not stop learning, obeying more perfectly, and maturing within the relationship that we now have with the Father and Son. Nevertheless, we cannot add to the righteousness of Christ. It is futile even to think such a thing—and that is why it is dangerous.

Upon receiving God's Spirit, attitude is of major importance. [Conversion](#) is a matter of a changed heart combined with more perfect knowledge of His truth. It is a matter of knowing, believing, living in, and accepting our place within the relationship. It is a matter of submitting with all our heart to the Father's placement of us within the body. A person with [wisdom](#) will know he must not go beyond what the relationship will permit.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Eleven\): Paradox, Continued](#)

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