

BIBLE & BAGEL

Romans – Our Common Faith

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Did the Apostle Paul struggle with sin? In this passage he talks about his struggle with sin. Why did God allow him to tell us such struggles, don't people like Apostles live on a higher spiritual dimension where they are free from such mundane struggles? God exposes all this to teach us that our struggle against the flesh and sin is a life-long one, no one not even an Apostle like Paul is free from it but there is a solution. Read on...

Rom 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. NKJV

Again Apostle Paul makes his argument by asking and answering a question; he asks if what is good become a cause of death to him and again his answer is a definite no. He says that sin which would otherwise not matter so much, now because of Torah it becomes magnified. The Torah (Law) is spiritual (since it came from God) but we humans are carnal, meaning worldly or given to bodily pleasure. He further says that there is nothing in himself. He talks about how even though he knows what is right he finds it hard to do it, at the same time the things he knows he should not do he does them. This is the struggle between the flesh and the spirit.

Inwardly he delights in God's Torah but yet he sees that his human nature battling against this wanting to bring him into captivity of sin, he considers himself a terrible person and asks who will set him free from this sinful body and concludes by Praising Messiah Yeshua who is able to save us from the carnal mind.

It may seem to some people very strange that an Apostle like Paul actually struggled with sin. We have this picture in our minds that ministers, especially an Apostle should have reached a higher plane and they would be free from the struggle of sin, this kind of teaching comes especially from Eastern religions that teach that one must always strive to disconnect oneself from the worldly thoughts and desires. The truth as we see here is that there is no "higher plane", no matter how much meditation you do or how many good works you do the struggle against sin will always be there as long as we live in this physical body.



Some wonder what kind of sin Apostle Paul was struggling with, in verses 7 and 8 we see that he mentions one particular sin that he struggled with; covetousness. Normally covetousness is understood as “wanting something that does not belong to you”, but it can also be understood as having something and thinking that you are special and others do not have what you do. This can also be called “spiritual pride”. He mentions this in particular because of His Jewish and proselyte audience who thought themselves better than the other Gentiles, particularly the new believers because they had the Torah, the Torah then because a source of pride and thus sin. We see a fine example of this in the book of Galatians when Apostle Paul relates how he had to rebuke Peter because, he had been eating with the Gentiles for some time but when certain Jewish leaders arrived, he got caught up in their pride and withdrew from the Gentilesⁱ.

But knowing Torah meant that they should be able to see that their attitude was sinful, that’s how Torah works it shows us where we go wrong yet by itself has no power to help us change. Thus the Apostle says He thanks God that through Yeshua he can be changed. So this is all about not attaining righteousness on our own but remembering that we depend on Yeshua for our righteousnessⁱⁱ.

Have you ever tried being religious? Trying to change your ways by praying more, fasting more and giving more? All these are good but these are not able to change us on the inside only Yeshua has the power to do that, so the lesson we learn here is that the struggle against sin goes on as long as we live in this body but the solution to that struggle is in Messiah, so lean on Him and let Him help us in our struggle, we don’t have to do it alone.

ⁱ Galatians 2:11-18

ⁱⁱ Philipians 3:9

