



Paul's Behavior Problem: Self-Summary of His Legalism, Acts 26:10-18; Paul's Conversion, 9:17-18; Becomes a Sincere Christian, Rom 7:20a

40. Paul provides a synopsis of his legalistic obsession with the production of human good and evil in:

Acts 26:10 - "And this is what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.

v. 11 - "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

v. 12 - "While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

v. 13 - at midday, O King [**Herod Agrippa II**], I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

v. 14 - "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

v. 15 - And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

v. 16 - 'But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

v. 17 - delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,

v. 18 - to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from domination of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

41. Acts 9:8 verifies that Paul had been blinded by this incident and thus among those who were in darkness. He was instructed to continue on to Damascus where he would be told what to do. There a disciple named Ananias was to minister to Paul:

Acts 9:17 - ... after laying his hands on him Ananias said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

v. 18 - And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized.

42. Up to this point Saul had been a good Jew who through zealotry for the Law had a sincere desire to serve God.

43. This is true of all religions. They are inventions of Lucifer, transmitted by demon influence, and followed by dupes co-opted into a lair of legalism or licentiousness.



44. Islam is so constricted by extreme legalism that it promotes and encourages licentiousness characterized by the perversion of homosexuality, the sanction of the murder of innocents, and the inspiration of suicides with the promise of a heavenly harem.
45. Saul's religious zeal allowed his soul to sanction murder of innocents. His desire was to please God but his deeds were evil.
46. Now saved, Paul brought his wheel-track of sincerely desiring to please God into the Christian life. But until he learned the doctrines which would replace the old wheel-tracks, the old ones remained dominant.
48. Therefore, whether as Saul the unbeliever or Paul the believer, his sincere efforts to please God did not accomplish their desired objectives.
49. This proves once again that desire plus emotion produces a sincere Christian but one who does not accomplish divine-good production.
50. Paul's desire to please God is facilitated but his capacity to accomplish his desire is undeveloped. Therefore, he keeps on doing what he doesn't desire to do, the present active indicative of the verb:

- (#21) **θέλω, *thelō*** - "Now if I am performing what I do not desire (and I am) ..."
- present: Customary; denotes that which habitually occurs or may be reasonably expected to occur. The act is assumed to be true in the past or future as well as the present. Paul habitually desires to please God.
- active: Paul produces the action of being a sincere Christian.
- indicative: Potential of obligation. We will go right on doing what we think we should do as Christians until we acquire the doctrine which indicates otherwise.

1. The first half of verse 20 forms the protasis: the subordinate clause of a conditional sentence: "Now if I am performing [***poieō***] what I do not desire [***thelō***] (first class condition: and I am)."
2. The present tense of the verb ***poieō*** has two implications. As a durative present it denotes that which has begun in the past and continues to the present. Thus it may also be viewed as a descriptive present indicating what is now going on.
3. This indicates that what Paul is performing is habitual and receives consistent volitional assent.
4. Consequently, we can expand our translation to read as follows:

Romans 7:20a - Now if, as a result of my personal volitional assent, I am performing what I do not desire (and I am) ...

5. This indicates that Paul is conflicted. He has a habitual desire to serve God but when it comes time to make a decision regarding the lust patterns of his sinful nature he does the opposite.
6. Volition grants permission for the cerebral cortex to activate a wheel-track but only if it is something it desires to do.
7. So what does Paul mean when he asserts that he does what he does not desire to do?



8. Paul does not desire to sin. But the temptations from the lust pattern are so subtle that, in a state of volitional weakness, he chooses the path of least resistance.
9. Under pressure, Paul does what is expedient and therefore familiar.
10. It is often very, very difficult to do the right thing. The right thing demands more than a decision. It also requires one to defend the decision, make a stand for truth if necessary, and endure the assaults of those who may disagree.