

## How to Perform that which is Good

There has been an ongoing debate whether Romans 7:7-25 is Paul's former life under the law, or his present struggle as a Christian. It's actually neither, but his former life without God's breath in his heart because in the next chapter he used *pneuma* for "breath" 22 times!

In chapter 7, he quoted the Tenth Commandment he was guilty of breaking, "I had not known **lust [epithymia 1939]**, except the law had said, **Thou shalt not covet [epithymeo 1937]**" (v. 7), then five verses in a row he referred to it simply as "the commandment" (vs. 9,10,11,12,13). He said repeatedly that he wanted to do good, "what I would" (v. 15), "perform that which is good" (v. 18), "the good that I would" (v. 19), "when I would do good" (v. 21). However, the evil of coveting and lusting that he didn't want to do, he was doing, "that which I do I allow not ... but what I hate, that do I" (v. 15), "I do that which I would not" (v. 16), "the evil which I would not, that I do" (v. 19), "I do that I would not" (v. 20).

Except for the two "positive" commands "Remember the sabbath day ... Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exo 20:8,12), the Ten Commandments are "negative" prohibitions: "**Thou shalt have no** other gods before me" (v. 3); "**Thou shalt not** make unto thee any graven image" (v. 4); "**Thou shalt not** take the name of the LORD thy God in vain" (v. 7); "**Thou shalt not** kill" (v. 13); "**Thou shalt not** commit adultery" (v. 14); "**Thou shalt not** steal" (v. 15); "**Thou shalt not** bear false witness" (v. 16); "**Thou shalt not** covet" (v. 17). But Jesus taught that all of the "Thou shalt nots" are kept by two "Thou shalts," "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And **thou shalt** love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ... **Thou shalt** love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mar 12:29-30,31). Paul wasn't doing the good "Thou shalts" because he was doing the evil of the "Thou shalt nots."

His members, "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**" (vs. 22-23), were his eyes for lust and his hands for getting what he coveted. This is the evil that Jesus taught against, "That whosoever **looketh on a woman to lust after [epithymeo 1937]** her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if **thy right eye** offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for

thee that one of **thy members** should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if **thy right hand** offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of **thy members** should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell." (Mat 5:28-30).

But Jesus also taught us to do the good: "**Love your enemies**, bless them that curse you, **do good** to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Mat 5:44), "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, **do ye even so to them**" (Mat 7:12), "And as ye would that men should do to you, **do ye also to them likewise**" (Luk 6:31), "But **love ye your enemies, and do good**, and lend, hoping for nothing again" (Luk 6:35). When Paul said "*how* to perform that which is good I find not," he meant that without God's breath in him, he *couldn't* find how to perform the good of doing to his enemy as he would want done to him. This is the litmus test of salvation—do we sincerely love as ourselves, our enemies and those that mistreat us? God's children do as He does, "Love your enemies ... **That ye may be the children of your Father** which is in heaven" (Mat 5:44,45), "The Spirit [*breath*] itself beareth witness with our spirit [*breath*], **that we are the children of God**" (Rom 8:16).

Those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit [*breath*]" (Rom 8:1,4), are those who walk after God's breath in their hearts. "**Thou shalt** love thy neighbor as thyself ... Walk in the Spirit [*breath*], and ye shall not fulfil **the lust [epithymia 1939] of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth [epithymeo 1937]** against the Spirit [*breath*], and the Spirit [*breath*] against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that **ye cannot do the things that ye would.**" (Gal 5:14,16-17). That we "cannot do the things that ye would" is that we cannot the "thou shalts" without God's breath. By the "thou shalt nots," the law manifested or revealed the works of the flesh, "But if ye be led of the Spirit [*breath*], **ye are not under the law.** Now the works of the flesh **are manifest, which are these**; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness ..." (Gal 5:18-19). But there are no "thou shalt nots" against the fruit of the breath, "But the fruit of the Spirit [*breath*] is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [*faithfulness*], Meekness, temperance: **against such there is no law**" (Gal 5:22-23). Do the "thou shalts" and we won't be doing the rest.

How do we NOT walk after the flesh? By walking after the breath. When we do the good by God's breath in our hearts, we won't "fulfil the lust of the flesh."