

# I don't understand

## Introduction:

- The story of the woman whose husband bought her some expensive jewelry (probably pearls)
- Our perspective on life –use it or save it.
- We are confronted with conflicting drives. Those who cheat seem to prosper. Drug dealers make lots of money fast – Wild Bill's story
- We are also faced with trying to sort out conflicting values. There are the world's values and then there are God's values
- And the simple fact of the matter is that we don't always get it right.
- I am sure that at least once this year, perhaps even once this week you have said something like, I wish I hadn't done that. I wish I hadn't said that. I wish I had said that differently, perhaps softer and more caring.

## P1 Genesis 18:1-15 (The Lord Appears to Abraham)

- V-15 (*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*)
  - This is one of Paul's most quoted passages and is a clear comment on the human condition and our seeming inability to do the right thing all the time. Our inability to turn away from sin and seek God's will for our lives.
  - There is nothing good that comes from breaking or ignoring God's ten commandments
    - Ask Cain about breaking the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment (*Thou shall not commit murder*) and how that worked out. Ask him what good came of it.
    - Ask the Hebrew people as they camped at the base of the mountain while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments about breaking the 1<sup>st</sup> (*No other Gods before the Lord God*) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> (*No carved images*).
    - Ask King David about breaking the 10<sup>th</sup> (*Coveting- wanting what is not yours*), 7<sup>th</sup> (*Adultery*), 8<sup>th</sup> (*False witness – lying*), and once again the ever popular 6<sup>th</sup>. Did all of that bring him any real satisfaction? Peace? Happiness? Better his country in ANY way?
    - The list goes on and on and on and on. For thousands of years we have been doing the very things God has warned us not to do. The **NEVER** result in good. Not once in all the years we have been at it – yet being the stubborn, stiff necked, and determined people we are we keep trying; thinking that maybe this will be the time.
  - We do what we ought not do, and at the same time do not do that which we should.
  - But to stop there is to miss a great deal.
  - The why behind the what we do is always an interesting question and it often has a lot to do in determining what we are going to do. Especially in those moments when we have to act without having time to think.
  - There are things that we think, say, and do without thinking about them. And in some cases without even really being aware of the fact that we are thinking, saying, or doing them
  - I know that sounds a little out there and many of you may be thinking that it is impossible. But in part that is what habits are.
  - If you want to see it in action, ask someone to glance at their watch and tell you if at that moment the second hand is between 12 and six, or between the six and the 12. After they answer ask them what time it is. Most people will not know despite having just looked at their watches.
  - Part of our growing and maturing as Christians is to move towards a place, a way of living that makes doing the right thing and living according to God's law second nature. It also includes learning to really see what is before us. To recognize the opportunities to share the Gospel in word and deed with others.

- V-16 (*And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.*)
  - Whoa. What is this all about?
  - At first glance it does not appear to make any sense. *if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.*
  - I am not going to presume to think that I know what was in Paul's mind when he said/wrote those words. Nor is this particular passage treated specifically in any of the commentaries I consulted. However two related points present themselves.
  - The first point became clear as I looked at other versions of this passage. In one I discovered a very small change. The addition of a single word and the changing of the tense of another. Consider this alternative translation (*if I do what I do not want to do, I AM AGREEING that the law is good.*) Here the Paul seems to be saying that by modifying his behavior to conform to the law he was admitting that the law was a good thing. The law is a good thing because when we follow it, when we conform to it, when we constrict our desires and actions we all benefit.
  - There is a second point, one that comes from some of Paul's earlier comments about the law. Namely that without the law, without standards, without knowing God's will for us there is no sin – or at least we are unaware of it. If we are unaware of what sin is and how we sin we can neither repent, change our ways, nor receive God's forgiveness – and that dear friends is something that we as individuals and as a species **DESPERATELY** need.
- V-18 (*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*)
  - Now there is some harsh self-evaluation. Perhaps a little harsher than is absolutely true. We were created in God's image, God has written his law on our hearts, and there is the eternal spirit that lives with in us.
  - But I can see where Paul is coming from and what he is getting at. Remember that Paul (when he was Saul) was a deeply religious man who had a deep desire in his heart to do that which was right, that which furthered God's kingdom. He accepted the mission to hunt down and eliminate all of the followers of Jesus because he was **CONVINCED** in his heart and in his mind that Jesus and Christianity were a threat to God's people.
  - He wanted to do right, but he got it wrong. He got it **SOOOOO** wrong.
  - We are more like Paul than we would like to admit. We seek to do good but often fail to achieve it

### Conclusion ( A call to action )

- *Do you remember the parable of the talents?*
- *One man given 5, another 3, and the third man only one?*
- *The last man's sin was not that he failed – it was that he didn't try.*
- *Like the last man in the parable many people are afraid to live because they are afraid of making a mistake, afraid of failing*
- *Well, get over it. Take a chance. Do the deed.*
- *If you make a mistake fix it and try again. If you fail, learn from it and move on and try to do better then next time.*
- *Peter tried and failed. God never stopped loving him. God used him and his imperfections anyway.*
- *Paul got it wrong and failed. God never stopped loving him. God used him and his imperfections anyway.*
- *There is nothing you can do to change the past – it is what it. We have no idea what the future holds and will only discover that as we go about the business of living out lives.*
- *However, the right now is a different thing all together. We can do something about it and something with it. By making the right choices we can influence what the future will be and we can improve the odds of our liking today once it becomes history. There is a reason the right now is called the present – because it is God's gift to us. To squander that gift would be a sin. This is the day that the Lord has created- the question is how are you going to use it?*