

# The Infirmity of the Flesh

(Rom 6:19)

- Paul is still addressing the objections of antinomianism

## I. Mechanics

A) This chapter is split into 2 corresponding subsections:

1. Rom 6:1-14 & Rom 6:15-23

i. Just as v.18 was parallel to v.11, so now v.19 is parallel to v.12-13

ii. After having made a summary statement on the doctrine proved, Paul gives and exhortation to practice

## II. "I speak after the manner of men"

A) Why does the apostle Paul make this statement?

1. Negative: It isn't an apology for using an illustration

i. Illustrations are used throughout scripture and are very helpful; in many ways the O/T is overall an illustration for us

a) But illustrations can be dangerous if used for entertainment

b) The prohibition of illustrations can also be dangerous

1) Compare the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

2) Compare the written treatises with the 20 minute story

2. Positive: It is an explanation

i. The preacher's job is to make the meaning of scripture plain, and then to exhort to practice

ii. Illustrations and analogies can be a great help in this

a) So the apostle uses the analogy of slavery to help the reader to understand the doctrine of union with Christ

B) Answer- "Because of the infirmity of your flesh" several things are possible:

1. Because he doesn't want them to twist or wrest the scriptures to their own harm (2 Pet 3:15-16) as "flesh" is so likely to do (**remaining lust**)

i. Paul is fully aware that the doctrine he is teaching could be misunderstood and with devastating results

a) His statement in v.14 could very easily lead to antinomianism

1) A person might conclude, "Great, we have been set free from the law and are fully free, no limitations"

(a) The power of the remaining sinful nature in the "mortal body" will be quick to leap to this conclusion

(b) Because of this, Paul uses the analogy of a slave set free from one master, only to be possessed by another

- (c) We are not “set free” unto ourselves, we are enslaved to Christ and to practice righteousness (serve Him)
2. Because of the limitation of an illustration (**limits of the physical world**)
    - i. Every human illustration, example, or even biblical “types” fall short at some point
    - ii. An illustration must not be pressed too far and every element made to be a corresponding doctrine
      - a) Christian life is not “slavery” as we think of slavery; Paul has used an analogy to answer an objection, but doesn’t want a new doctrine rising up in its place
        - 1) The “slavery” is not identical in every point or respect, as Paul goes on to show
        - 2) Salvation involves both slavery and freedom, whereas sin did not
        - 3) In Christ, there is a new compulsion or motivation that was not found in Adam: love
          - (a) 2 Cor 5:14- “For the love of Christ constraineth us”
            - (1) A man that is in love is a willing “slave” to that love (1 Cor 9:16)
              - I. In Adam their was no choice, it was all domination
            - (2) He lives for the other and is controlled by the love
              - I. In Adam the controlling factor is fear and death
            - (3) Thus the believer is “under grace” as he was “under law”
        - b) In other words, be careful how we apply this analogy; we are slaves now, but not exactly as we were before. And we are free now, but not free to self
          - 1) Thus the objection of v.15 becomes ridiculous
  3. Because although regenerated, the infirmity of the flesh remains (**not yet fully perfected**)
    - i. 1 Cor 3:1-3- Babes in Christ
      - a) 1 Cor 2:6- “I speak wisdom among them that are perfect (mature)”
      - b) Therefore we see that Christians are not all identical in terms of growth or maturity
        - 1) Once regenerated, we are called to utilize and to cultivate the faculties and gifts God has given us, to apply ourselves to the knowledge of God
          - (a) But none are perfected in this lifetime (Phil 3:10-14)
            - (1) Due to neglect- Heb 5:11-14- They were “dull of hearing” because they had not been “exercising their spiritual discernment”
              - I. Compare pitiful site of adult with undeveloped mind

- (2) Due to the fullness of God's love- "that passeth knowledge"  
(Eph 3:19)
- (b) Thus compare the Romans here and in Rom 15:14
  - (1) "Unto him that hath shall more be given...."
- 2) As we grow in Christ, analogies and illustrations become less needful
  - (a) What kind of food do we need and desire?
  - (b) Are illustrations and stories still our favorite part?
  - (c) Discouraging to hear basics called "deep" and to see the way people perk up at an illustration

### III. Infirmity of the FLESH" (Paul doesn't say mind as we would expect)

A) If Paul had said the "mind" then we would assume we just need to be smarter to comprehend

1. 1 Cor 1:12-3:14- Completely rules out man's intelligence as cause of understanding
  - i. Man's is a spiritual problem- In the fall, man lost his spiritual connection to God, now unable to know God, comprehend God or even to truly desire Him
    - a) The entire roadblock to salvation is not a mental one ("give your decision"), it is a spiritual one
      - 1) 1 Cor 2:14- It is spiritually discerned
      - 2) Eph 2:1-3- Man is spiritually dead
        - (a) Notice the way the greatest intellects in the world cannot comprehend spiritual matters (1 Cor 2:8)
          - (1) 1 Cor 1:26-29- Yet many "fools" do
        - (b) Consider the Greek philosophers
          - (1) Compare the Jewish fishermen
        - (c) Consider how that the intellectual can take up any subject and master it and talk intelligently upon all things, yet cannot make any sense of God nor reach a single conclusion that is true
          - (1) Look at the ignorance of the educator today
          - (2) Consider the theory of evolution
          - (3) Compare Modern atheistic society with that of the Puritan era in our country
2. How is all this possible?
  - i. 1 Cor 2:9-13- God had comprised a method of salvation that lays every man in the dust, unable to do a single thing about it
    - a) 1 Cor 1:29- "That no flesh shall glory in His sight"
    - b) 1 Cor 1:30 – ALL is of Christ
      - 1) "By His Spirit"
        - (a) 1 Cor 2:10, Rom 8:11, Eph 3:16,
        - (b) Psa 127:1- Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain"

