

No Good In The Flesh

In the seventh chapter of his letter to the brethren in Rome, Paul says, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." This no doubt is totally mysterious language to those who are strangers to themselves and to the corruption of their flesh. Most people are of the opinion that there is everything in the flesh necessary to make them capable of responding to God in such way as to gain His favor and to become a member of the elect family.

It has not been long ago that I heard a man say he believed in the innate goodness of man. In other words, he believed man is basically good by his very nature, just as he is when born into the world. We've probably all heard the saying, "There is a little good in everybody." But so far as the natural man is concerned, unrenewed by the grace of God, there is no good thing in him. Among those who are yet in their native corruption, "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10-12).

Even when such characters participate in those deeds that men look upon as good works, their actions are still not acceptable unto God because those actions never proceed from right principles. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for they are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7).

Even men such as the apostle Paul, in whose heart the Holy Spirit has taken up His abode, still have that corrupt flesh that they inherited from their fallen father Adam, and in that flesh "dwelleth no good thing." If a man has any good in him it is because God has put a principle of grace within his heart, and it is only after he receives this divine principle that he begins to love God and seeks to follow Him. John says that if a man loves and knows God, it is because he is (past tense) born of God (I John 4:7).

---Elder Ralph Harris