

MURPHY'S LAW

Everybody knows about Murphy's Law. In its general form it just says, "Anything that can go wrong will go wrong." My sister sent me a list of corollaries recently, some of which were quite humorous. The one we can all relate to is the Law of Variation – "If you change lines at the supermarket, the line you just left will begin moving faster and the one you got into will move slower." And one I have found particularly true is the Law of Commercial Marketing Strategy – "As soon as you find a product you really like, they stop making it." We make up silly laws like these and laugh at them to help us cope with our daily frustrations.

But did you know there is a Murphy's Law in the Bible? It's true, and it's not a laughing matter. Paul wrote it in Romans 7:21. "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand." He has just detailed how in spite of his desire to do good, he keeps on doing the evil things he doesn't want to do (v.15-19).

Is this not a common frustration to all of us? No matter how hard we try to do things right, we often manage to screw it up. And even when we do a genuinely good deed, there is always the possibility of mixed motives behind it to consider. And since God sees our hearts as well as our actions, we're nailed.

No wonder Paul came to the conclusion that there was nothing good in him, that is, in his flesh (v.18) and cried out for relief. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (v.24). If we're honest, we have to agree. It's not just that we have sinful tendencies or that we make mistakes. We are sinners, both because we are part of the human race that was infected with sin from very near the beginning, and because we do actively sin, if not in words and deeds then at least in our thoughts, attitudes, and motives. The prophet Jeremiah said the human heart was desperately sick and more deceitful than all else (Jer. 17:9). Even when we think we're doing okay, sin is lurking, waiting for an opportunity to trip us up. Is there no escape?

Yes, there is! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all sin for all time. For those who have received Christ, sin is no longer our master, even though we still struggle with it and fail more often than we wish. Paul's response to his own plea was, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v.25). He *has* defeated sin and death once for all. He *is* defeating sin and death as we live in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And He *will* defeat sin and death finally and forever when He returns to reign in His kingdom. Hallelujah!

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