



Roman's 7:21: The 10th Commandment Reveals to Paul His Lust Pattern; His Heuristic Discovery of the Law of Evil, Romans 7:21a

Romans 7:21

Paul's Discovery of the Law of Evil:

Romans 7:21 - (NKJV) I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

NOTE: See visual: "Present Tenses in Romans 7:15-25, page 2."
(http://www.gdcmedia.org/visuals/PresentTensesInRom7_15-25.pdf)

1. This verse begins with the inferential illative particle:
ἀρα, ara - In the apodosis of a conditional sentence, it is used to express a result and therefore is translated "consequently." It is followed by the present active indicative of the verb:
(#25) **εὑρίσκω, huriskō** - "I discover"
2. An English interjection has been developed from this verb. The exclamation, eureka, is used to express triumph upon an unexpected discovery or long-sought solution. How this expression came about is a very interesting story many of you have probably heard. It apparently has been embellished a bit but here are the details from:

Mish, Frederick C. (ed.). *The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories.* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Publishers, 1991), 163-64:

Εὕρηκα, heurēka: "I have found," is the first person singular perfect active indicative of the verb **εὑρίσκω, huriskō**.

Some of us perhaps wonder why we often exclaim "Eureka!" at the moment of a sudden discovery, whether it be the finding of a long-lost item or the determination of the solution to a problem. Some may even wonder if they are calling out the name of a city in California (or Missouri) or a college in Illinois. Actually, the elated discoverer is reenacting ... the legend of an event that is supposed to have happened in the third century B.C. in the Greek city-state of Syracuse in Sicily.

The famous Greek mathematician and mechanical inventor Archimedes \ar-ka-mēd' ēz\ (c. 287-212 B.C.) was asked by Hiero \hī' e-rō\ II, the tyrant of Syracuse, to test the purity of the gold in a crown that he had commissioned. Hiero suspected that the crown had been adulterated with some other metal, such as silver. For a time the problem frustrated Archimedes. The solution arrived the day Archimedes patronized a public bath. Upon stepping into his bath, which was nearly full, he observed that some of the water ran over. The thought immediately struck the mathematician that a body must remove its own bulk of water when it is immersed; if silver is less dense than gold, then a given weight of silver would have more bulk than a given weight of gold and consequently would remove more water. As the idea flashed through Archimedes' mind, he leaped out of his bath, exclaiming, "Heurēka! Heurēka! ('I have found')." Without thinking to dress himself, the euphoric mathematician raced home, eager to put his sudden discovery to the test.

While the notion of an absentminded mathematician running naked through the streets has charmed many, that part of the story is in all likelihood pure fabrication. While Archimedes probably did determine the proportion of gold and silver in a crown for Hiero by weighing it in water, later writers have not been able to resist embellishing the tale.



3. The English word “heuristic” comes from the *hurisk* □ word group and is defined by:

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. 11th ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Publishing, 2003), 584:

Heuristic *hū-ris’ tikl*: Serving as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem-solving by experimental and especially trial-and-error methods.

4. In Romans 7 Paul becomes heuristic. He draws the conclusion that there is a law of evil from a trial-and-error process.
5. The origin of his discovery goes back to personal revelation derived from perception of an absolute principle of divine policy, namely the Tenth Commandment:

Romans 7:7 - I was not cognizant of the sinful nature except through the Law. For example, I did not understand the lust pattern except the Law kept on saying, “You will not lust.”

6. Paul’s recognition of the Tenth Commandment’s prohibition is recorded in:

Exodus 20:17 - “You shall not covet [*חַמַּת* *hamath*: to lust after; an inordinate, unrestrained, & selfish desire along with an intense passion to possess something] your neighbor’s house; you shall not lust after your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

7. This is an imperative of prohibition from the Order Code of the Mosaic Law which establishes divine policies for acceptable human behavior.
8. It is from the Tenth Commandment that Paul discovered the presence of the sinful nature in his members, the most influential of which are located in the neurons of the brain.

Romans 7:5 - While we were in the flesh [under the authority of the first husband], the sinful trends, which through the Law were operative in our members [e.g., the brain], resulted in the production of fruit from the source of our spiritual death.

9. Having become aware of the total depravity of his body of corruption, Paul begins to observe through trial-and-error his inability to control the desires of the flesh which lead to sin, human good, and evil:

Romans 7:18 - In fact, I know [*οἶδα*, *oida*] with certainty that in me (that is [*εἰμί*, *eimi*], in my flesh) there does not reside [*οικέω*, *oikeō*] any good thing of intrinsic value; for the consistent desire [*θέλω*, *thelō*] is always present [*παράκειμαι*, *parakeimai*] in me but the honorable accomplishment [*κατεργάζομαι*, *katergazomai*] is habitually not [in me].

v. 19 - For the intrinsic good I habitually desire [*θέλω*, *thelō*], I do not in retrospect perform [*ποιέω*, *poieō*], but the evil which I continuously do not desire [*θέλω*, *thelō*], this I keep on practicing [*πρασσω*, *prassō*].

10. We just learned in verse 20 that Paul is able to deduce from his own behavior pattern that it is the presence and function of the sinful nature within him which produces the fruit of sin:



Romans 7:20 - Now if, as a result of my personal volitional decision, I am performing [**ποιέω, poieō**] what I do not desire [**θέλω, thelō**] (and I am), I am no longer the one accomplishing [**κατεργάζομαι, katergazomai**] it but the sinful nature which continuously resides [**οικέω, oikeō**] inside of me.

11. Now as we move into verse 21 Paul mentions his discovery of a law of evil present in him.
12. What made Paul aware of the presence of the sinful nature was a statement of absolute truth from the Tenth Commandment.
13. However, from that point, Paul began to deduce, heuristically, from personal observation—trial-and-error if you will—that his behavior pattern was based on trends of the sinful nature which progressed from sin, to human good, to evil.
14. Another definition of “heuristic” is helpful here:

Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “heuristic”:

Exploratory problem-solving techniques that utilize self-education to improve one’s performance.

15. Once Paul learned he had a sinful nature he then began to observe his behavior patterns.
16. From this “self-education process” he was able to solve the problem of why he acted the way he did: the law of evil was present within him.”
17. Upon doing so Paul begins verse 21 with an exclamation about his discovery:

(#25)

εὐρίσκω, huriskō - “Consequently, I discover”

present: Historical; views the past discovery of the sinful nature and its trend toward evil with the vividness of a present occurrence.

active: Paul discovered this phenomenon of human good and evil coexisting within him but also in conflict with his desires.

The bromide, “There is a little good in all of us” is true if stated, “There is a little human good in all of us, (if not a whole lot of it).”

indicative: Paul’s discovery is a statement of fact.

1. Next comes Paul’s explanation of what he discovered: the accusative singular direct object from the noun:
νόμος, nomos - “principle”
2. The King James and New International Versions correctly translate **nomos** with “law.” However, the word is accompanied by the definite article, **τόν, ton**, which is used as a demonstrative pronoun. This results in the development of the idiom, “a rule governing one’s actions.” It can be translated with one English word “principle,” which is the case with the New American Standard Bible. Therefore, the verse begins, “Consequently, I discover this principle.”
3. This principle can be stated with the same degree of certainty as can Archimedes’s principle of displacement.
4. This law becomes evident once the believer accumulates a certain amount of doctrine.



5. Because human good and evil are the fruits of the flesh, it means that God is not free to bless a believer until he learns doctrine.
6. Knowledge of God's plan and purpose is required before a believer can gain the capacity for blessing.