

Romans Chapter 7 Continued

Romans 7:7, "What shall we say then? [is] the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

The law is not sin. It just makes us aware of right from wrong. When we know right from wrong and do wrong anyway, then we have sinned. Paul did not want his readers to conclude that the law itself was evil.

Galatians 3:24 "Therefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

We would not have even known we needed a Savior had there been no law.

The law reveals the divine standard, and as believers compare themselves against that standard, they can accurately identify sin, which is the failure to meet the standard.

Paul uses the personal pronoun "I" throughout the rest of the chapter, using his own experience as an example of what is true of unredeemed mankind and true of Christians.

Romans 7:8 "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin [was] dead."

Concupiscence means lust, or a desire for things that are forbidden. Sometimes the forbidden is the very thing the flesh lusts for.

Sin uses the specific requirements of the law as a base of operation from which to launch its evil work. Confronted by God's law, the sinner's rebellious nature finds the forbidden thing more attractive, not because it is inherently attractive, but because it furnishes an opportunity to assert one's self will.

"Sin was dead": meaning not lifeless or nonexistent, but dormant. When the law comes, sin becomes fully active and overwhelms the sinner.

Romans 7:9 "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

When we were without the law, we did not have a lack of concern for the law but a purely external, imperfect conception of it.

When God's law came, men began to understand the true requirements of God's moral law at some point prior to their conversion. He then began to realize his true condition as a desperately wicked sinner.

With the words "I died", it was then that man realized his deadness spiritually, that all his religious credentials and accomplishments were rubbish.

Romans 7:10 And the commandment, which [was ordained] to life, I found [to be] unto death.

The law was first given to help people understand what the will of God was and show that it was possible to please God by keeping His commandments.

Perfect obedience to the law could bring eternal life, and with it happiness and holiness. But no one except Christ could or has ever fully obeyed it.

Thus the law was our schoolmaster to show us that we needed Christ as the only way to eternal life.

Romans 7:11 "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew [me]."

By leading man to expect life from his keeping of the law, when what he found was death and by convincing him that he is acceptable to God because of his own merit and good works.

Romans 7:12 "Wherefore the law [is] holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

We see the fact that the law reveals, arouses and condemns sin, bringing death to the sinner, but does not mean the law is evil.

We read in Psalms about the perfect law:

Psalms 19:7 "The law of the LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD [is] sure, making wise the simple."

We also see a similar statement (in 1 Timothy):

1 Timothy 1:8 "But we know that the law [is] good, if a man use it lawfully;"

Romans 7:13 "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

This is speaking of the law and it's asking "has then what is good become death"? Sin is the cause of spiritual death, not the good law.

An awareness of the true nature of sin and its deadly character, which brings the sinner to see his need of salvation, is the very purpose God intended the law to serve.

Until Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, there was no knowledge of good and evil. Sin entered the world through Adam.

In the remaining verses of this chapter, some interpret this chronicle of Paul's inner conflict as describing his life before Christ. They point out that Paul describes the person as "sold under sin"; as having "nothing good" in him, and as a "wretched man" trapped in a "body of death".

Those descriptions seem to contradict the way Paul describes the believer in chapter 6. However, it is correct to understand Paul here to be speaking about a believer. This person desires to obey God's law and hates his sin. He is humble, recognizing that nothing good dwells in his humanness, he sees sin in himself, but not as all that is there and he serves Jesus Christ with his mind.

Paul has already established that none of those attitudes ever describe the unsaved. Paul's use of present tense verbs (in verses 14-25), strongly supports the idea that he is describing his life currently as a Christian. For those reasons, it seems certain that (chapter 7), describes a believer.

However, of those who agree that this is a believer, there is still disagreement. Some see a carnal, fleshly Christian; others a legalistic Christian, frustrated by his feeble attempts in his own power to please God by keeping the Mosaic Law. But the personal pronoun "I" refers to the apostle Paul, a standard of spiritual health and maturity.

Paul must be describing all Christians, even the most spiritual and mature who, when they honestly evaluate themselves against the righteous standard of God's law, realize how far short they fall. He does so in a series of four laments. (14-17, 18-20, 20-23, 24-25).

Romans 7:14 "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

The law is spiritual meaning it reflects God's holy character.

Carnal means "of flesh. This means earthbound, mortal and still incarcerated in unredeemed humanness. Paul does not say he is still "in the flesh", but the flesh is in him.

Sold under sin means that sin no longer controls the whole man as with an unbeliever, but it does hold captive the believer's members, or his fleshly body. Sin contaminates him and frustrates his inner desire to obey the will of God.

Romans 7:15 "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

The sense here is that Paul found himself doing things he did not approve of.

We see in verse 15, the struggle that all mankind faces. The struggle is truly between our flesh and spirit. Paul desires to have his spirit in control at all times. He says that sometimes his flesh wins out. It is a daily struggle for all of us. To live for Jesus the spirit has to overcome the flesh.

Galatians 5:17 "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Romans 7:16 "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good."

Paul's new nature defends the divine standard; the perfectly righteous law is not responsible for his sin. His new self longs to honor the law and keep it perfectly.

Romans 7:17 "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

The quickest way to tell if we are following after the flesh is if whatever you are doing feels good to the flesh. If the flesh is enjoying your actions, it is probably displeasing to the spirit.

Paul's new inner self, the new "I", no longer approved of the sin that was still residing in his flesh like his old self did, but rather strongly disapproved.

Paul was saying that his sin did not flow out of his new redeemed innermost ("I") self, but from his unredeemed humanness, his flesh "in me".

Romans 7:18 "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not."

No man's flesh follows God. Man's flesh must be crucified for the spirit to reign.

The flesh serves as a base camp from which sin operates in the Christian's life. It is not sinful inherently, but because of its fallenness, it is still subject to sin and is thoroughly contaminated.

The flesh is that part of the believer's present being that remains unredeemed.

Galatians 5:24-26 "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

Paul is trying to say that the flesh of man is a hindrance to him. Even Jesus, when facing the cruel death of the cross, said (my spirit is willing, but my flesh is weak). We must somehow get our flesh and the lusts thereof under subjection to the spirit of God within us.

Romans 7:19 "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

We see that flesh does not desire to do good, only evil. I feel Paul is making a point that we must stay away from the influence of the flesh.

Romans 7:20 "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Paul is making a point again, about the flesh (in verse 17). This in the flesh sin must be put to death.

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

Hear the cry of a man who desires to please God.

Psalms 19:12-14 "Who can understand [his] errors? *cleanse thou me from secret [faults].*" (added emphasis with italics by editor) "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous [sins]; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

This is not a reference to God's law, but to an inviolable spiritual principle.

Romans 7:22 "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:"

The believer's justified, new inner self no longer sides with sin, but joyfully agrees with the law of God against sin.

Romans 7:23 "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

This is a corresponding spiritual principle to the one in verse 21. But this principle, which Paul identifies as "the law of sin," operates in the members of his body, that is, his unredeemed and still sinful humanness, waging war against his desire to obey God's law.

"Law of my mind" is equivalent to the new inner self, which longs to obey the law of God. Paul is not saying his mind is spiritual and his body is inherently evil.

Romans 7:24 "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Now we see Paul's point in all of this. There is no way within ourselves that we can overcome the problems between our flesh wanting to sin and our spirit knowing sin is wrong. The only solution is to give ourselves over to Jesus Christ and no longer live our own lives, but let Jesus live in us and through us.

In frustration and grief, Paul laments his sin. A believer perceives his own sinfulness in direct proportion to how clearly he sees the holiness of God and perfection of His law.

The word deliver means "to rescue from danger" and was used of a soldier pulling his wounded comrade from the battlefield. Paul longed to be rescued from his sinful flesh.

“Body of this death”: The believer’s unredeemed humanness, which has its base of operation in the body. Tradition says that an ancient tribe near Tarsus tied the corpse of a murder victim to its murderer, allowing its spreading decay to slowly infect and execute the murderer. Perhaps that is the image Paul has in mind here.

Romans 7:25 "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."

The first part of this verse answers the question Paul just raised. He is certain that Christ will eventually rescue him when He returns. The second half summarizes the two sides of the struggle Paul has described.

“With the mind” is the new inner self, which longs to obey the law of God.

“The law of sin,” operates in the members of his body, waging war against his desire to obey God’s law.

Romans Chapter 7 Continued Questions

1. I had not known sin, but by the _____.
2. Is the law sin?
3. In Galatians Chapter 3:24 the law was our_____.
4. How are we justified?
5. By the works of the law_____ shall be justified.
6. What does concupiscence mean?
7. To mention something being a sin sometimes causes what?
8. When does a guilty conscience of sin come?
9. We dwelled in _____until Jesus Christ came and brought _____.
10. In verse 11, what deceived him?
11. The old man (of sin), is corrupt according to what?
12. In verse 12, we find the law is what?
13. In Psalms 19:7, we find what about the law of God?
14. When did sin enter into the world for our time?

15. In verse 14, the law is described how?
16. Who was the law made for as mentioned in 1 Timothy chapter 1:8?
17. In verse 15, what do we really see?
18. In Galatians 5:17, we find that the _____ lusteth against the _____.
19. What is the quickest way to find, if we are following the flesh?
20. In Galatians 5:24, we find that they that are Christ's have done what to the flesh?
21. If we live in the spirit, we must _____ in the spirit.
22. How was even Jesus' flesh a hindrance to him?
23. What point does the author think Paul is making in verse 19?
24. In Psalms chapter 19:12, we see the prayer of a man who desires to do what?
25. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?
26. In verse 25, Paul says with his mind he serves whom?
27. What verse in 1 Corinthians 15 shows how we take on the image of Jesus Christ?