

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 18

I. Exposition of Chapter Seven. (Continued)

A. Verse 9 - Paul's state of innocence before he knew the Law.

1. **"I was alive once without the law..."** - Children can be innocent before they know or understand what law requires. (cf. Mark 10:13-14).

"He is not alive with the life that the New Testament writers so often speak about. He is alive in the sense that he has never been put to death as a result of confrontation with the law." – Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*

2. **"...but when the commandment came, sin revved and I died."** - But when we do know the law, the law shows us our guilt and it excites our rebellion, bringing forth more sin and death. (cf. I Corinthians 15:56).

"Sin is alive, indeed, and vigorous among men ever since the fall of Adam; yet it is destitute of power in innocent children ignorant of the law; but when they come to a knowledge of the law, sin recovers its power in them also."¹

B. Verses 10-12 - Sin corrupts the law and defeats its purpose of giving life; once law is corrupted by sin, it brings death.

1. **Verse 10 - "And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death."** - Sin does this by deception. Sin deceives us:
 - Because sin falsely promises satisfaction.
 - Because sin falsely claims an adequate excuse.
 - Because sin falsely promises an escape from punishment.
2. **Verse 11- "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me."** - It isn't the law that deceives us, but it is sin that uses the law as an occasion for rebellion. This is why Jesus said **"...If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed and you shall know the truth, And the truth will make you free."** John 8:31-32 The truth makes us free from the deceptions of sin. Sin, when followed, leads to death - not life. One of Satan's greatest deceptions is to get us to think of sin as something good that an unpleasant God wants to deprive us of. When God warns us away from sin, He warns us away from something that will kill us.
3. **Verse 12 - "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."** - Paul understands how someone might take him as saying that he is against the law - but he isn't at all. It is true that we must die to sin (6:2) and we must die to the law (7:4). But that should not be taken to say that Paul believes that sin and law are in the same basket. The problem is in us, not in the law. Nevertheless, sin corrupts the work or effect of the law, so we must die to both.

C. Verse 13 - The Law exposes and magnifies Sin.

1. **"...But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good..."** Though the law provokes our sin nature, this can be used for good because it more dramatically exposes our deep sinfulness. After all, if sin can use something as good as the law to its advantage in promoting evil, it shows how evil sin is.
2. **"...so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful."** - Sin **"becomes more sinful"** in light of the law in two ways. First, sin becomes **"exceedingly sinful"** through contrast with the law. Second, sin becomes **"exceedingly sinful"** because the law provokes its evil nature.

"Therefore, the good, to me did it become death? Away with the thought. But the sin (sinful nature) in order that it might become evident that it is sin, through the good (the commandment) brought about death, in order that sin (the sinful nature, its impulses and workings) may become exceedingly sinful." – Romans 7:13 – Wuest Translation

D. Verses 14-25 – The first step in understanding these verses is to determine whether they are written from the perspective of Paul as a Christian or Paul as an unbeliever.

1. There are many different viewpoints concerning these verses but our approach will be that Paul is talking about his present condition as a Christian. This seems to be the most natural flow of the context.
2. In **verses 5-13**, Paul is referring to his past (cf. **verses 7-9**) and now he begins referring to the present.
3. What we read here is most certainly the common Christian experience.

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 119–120. (Quoting Joseph H. Thayer).

E. Verse 14 - The Spiritual Law cannot restrain a Carnal Man.

1. **"...but I am carnal..."** - The word **"carnal"** simply means **"of the flesh."** Paul recognizes that a spiritual law cannot help a carnal man. Paul is also acknowledging that though believers are delivered from the power of sin, there is a carnal nature to contend with. Paul rebuked the Corinthian believers by saying, **"...for you are still carnal..." (I Corinthians 3:1-3).**
2. **"...sold under sin."** – This seems to contradict what Paul wrote earlier in chapter six about no longer being the slave of sin. However remember that in chapter six Paul did not say that being dead to sin means that sin has lost its appeal for the Christian. It still has a strong appeal to the Christian whose human nature is still sinful (6:15-23). He said that being dead to sin means that we no longer must follow sin's dictates.

"The child of God has "the divine nature" (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4), but also the fallen nature (cf. Gal. 5:17). Potentially, sin is made inoperative (cf. Rom. 6:6), but human experience follows chapter 7."²

F. Verses 15-19 - Paul describes his sense of Helplessness.

1. **Verse 15 – "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do."** - This describes the battle between the spirit and the flesh.
 - a. Man is a three-part being – **I Thessalonians 5:23.**
 - 1) Spirit – That part of us that is born again (cf. **John 3:3-6**)
 - 2) Soul – Mind, will and emotions – Must be renewed (cf. **Romans 12:1-2**).
 - 3) Body – The outward man – mortal now, immortal in the future (cf. **I Corinthians 15:51-54**).
 - b. I propose that the **"flesh"** is the unrenewed part of our soul coupled with our body. (**In Romans 8, Paul will be warning the believer not to be "carnally minded"**.)
2. **Verse 16** - Paul is still arguing that there is nothing wrong with the Law; it is the old "sin nature" that is bad.
3. **Verse 17 – "But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."** – The **"I"** is the spirit of Paul which has been born again and the place where "sin dwells" would be in the mind and body. Is Paul denying his responsibility if he sins? No. He recognizes that as he sins, he acts against his nature as a new man in Jesus Christ. A Christian must own up to his sin, yet realize that the impulse to sin does not come from who we really are in Jesus Christ.

"Believers have been freed from their fallen nature, but, God help us, we continue to yield to its lure. It is often surprising but true that the intense spiritual warfare begins after salvation. Maturity is a tension-filled daily fellowship with the Triune God and a daily conflict with evil."³

G. Verses 18-23 – The Battle Described.

1. **Verses 18 – "...in my flesh nothing good dwells..."** – This refers to the carnal nature.
2. **Verse 20 – "...sin that dwells in me."** (compare with verse 17). Acknowledging that in our flesh there is still a sin nature dwelling.
3. **Verse 21 – "I find then a law, that evil is present with me..."** – **Note: This is the first of three "laws" to take note of here. (This is also called; "...law in my members" (verse 23) and "the law of sin" (verse 23).**
4. **Verse 22 – "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."** – Here we have the second **"law"** mentioned; **"The law of God"**. (Remember, this isn't the written law on **"tablets of stone"** but His law has been written on our hearts. – **Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 10:16-18.**
 - a. The **"inward man"** is probably referring to the spirit and soul of man.
5. **Verse 23 – "...warring against the law of my mind..."** – The **"law of the mind"** is the third **"law"** mentioned in this context. The battle is in the mind!! The law of sin in the body wars against your mind to bring you into captivity!!

H. Verses 24-25 - The Victory found in Jesus Christ.

The glorious truth remains: there *is* victory in Jesus! Jesus didn't come and die just to give us more or better rules, but to live out victory through those who believe. The message of the Gospel is that there is victory over sin, hate, death, and all evil as we surrender our lives to Jesus and let Him live out victory through us.

²Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 7:15–24.

³Ibid.