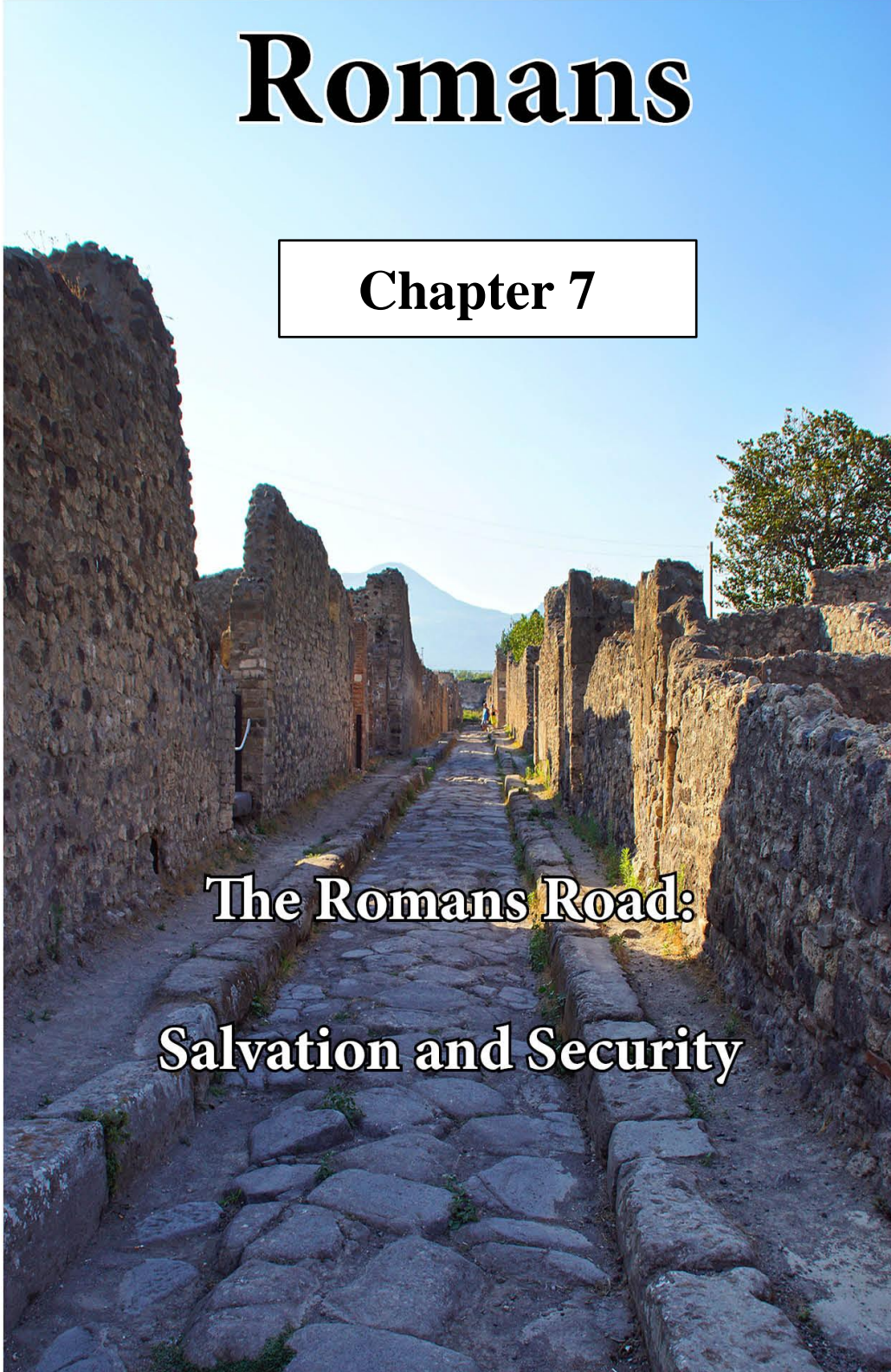


Journeys With God

Romans

Chapter 7

**The Romans Road:
Salvation and Security**



Romans

Chapter 7 Summary

Romans 7:1 - Our Savior, Our Husband

Or do you not know, brothers (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has Lordship over a man as long as he lives?

Truth to Learn

Christians are in a marriage relationship with Jesus Christ.

Behind the Words

The word translated “brothers” is *adelphos*, which is made up of *a*, denoting unity and *delphus*, meaning “a womb.” Literally it means those who have come from the same womb. In the New Testament it is used metaphorically of all Christians.

The Greek word translated “has lordship” is *kurieuō*, which we looked at a couple of times in chapter six (verses 9 and 14). It is the verb form of *kurios*, meaning “master, lord, or owner.” Thus, *kurieuō* refers to “lordship or ownership.”

Meaning Explained

In the previous chapter, Paul told us that sin should not have lordship over us because we are not under the Law but under Grace (**Romans 6:14**). When we got saved, we died to sin and now we live to God as our new ruler. In this chapter he will tell us why we are still affected by the Law even though we are not under obligation to it.

The metaphor that he used in the previous chapter was that of the master-slave relationship. In actuality, it is more than a metaphor because God is the Master of all creation and all things are in subjection to Him. In this chapter he uses a different metaphor, the marriage relationship. And once again, it is more than a metaphor, because those of us who are saved are declared to be the Bride of Christ.

Paul now shows how this new relationship is related (or not, as the case may be) to the Law. He starts out this section of his letter with another rhetorical question. He uses the question as an attention grabber. He says that he is speaking to those who know the Law. This certainly would apply to any Roman Christian who had been converted from the Jewish religion. All Jews know the Law. So when he asks, “Are you ignorant, brothers, that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?” the answer is clearly, “No, I’m not ignorant of that fact!” He will talk more about the marriage relationship in the next few verses.

We moved from a master-slave relationship with God to a marriage relationship when we were saved. Marriage is a picture of the intimate relationship that God wants to have with each one of us. One of my favorite proofs of this comes from the book of Proverbs. In **Proverbs 3:5,6** we are told:

trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways **acknowledge** Him, and He will make your paths straight.

The word translated “acknowledge” is the Hebrew word *yawdah*, which means “to know someone relationally and intimately.” It is the same word translated as “knew” in **Genesis 4:1**:

And Adam **knew** Eve his wife. And she conceived and bore Cain ...

Therefore, we could translate **Proverbs 3:6** as, “In all your ways become intimately familiar with God, and He will make your paths straight.” That’s what God wants from each and every one of us who is a born again Christian; He wants an intimate relationship with us!

Application

Do you want God to direct your paths? If so, then you need to have an intimate personal relationship with Him? That requires a lot of effort on your part.

Romans 7:2 - To Obey or Not

For the married woman is bound by the law to the husband while he lives. But if the husband should die, she is set free from the law of the husband.

Truth to Learn

Salvation releases us from the requirements of the Law.

Behind the Words

The words “**married woman**” are translated from two Greek words; *hupandros gunē*. The word *gunē* means “a woman” and is often translated as “a wife.” The word *hupandros* is made up of *hupo*, meaning “under” and *andros*, meaning “a man,” though often translated as “husband.” Literally, *hupandros* means “under a man.” We see, then, that these two words refer to a woman who is under a man. In other words “a married woman.”

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse Paul said that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. The implication is that he is freed from the law when he dies. He now carries that implication to the marriage relationship. Just as the man was under the dominion of the Law while he was alive, his wife is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But when he dies, the dominion of the law ceases for him as well as for his wife. She is now set free from the wedding bond and is free to marry another.

In the same way, as long as we were alive to sin we were bound by law to obey sin. But now that we have died to sin (when we were saved) we are no longer bound by that law, and we are free to be married to another, namely Christ.

You see, the early Christians, particularly those who were raised in the Jewish religion, did not yet understand that they were no longer obliged to obey the Law. They were trapped in a system that was trying to impose the restrictions of the Law on every believer. The point that Paul will get to in the next chapter is:

**But the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.
(Romans 8:2)**

When we got saved, we died to sin and to the requirements of the Law. We no longer have to fulfill the Law in order to obtain righteousness because God has imputed that righteousness to us as a free gift. Does that mean that we can live a lawless life because we are no longer under the dominion of sin? Paul would say, “No way!” What he will show us in this and the next chapter, is that we are actually under a higher law, a law of voluntary obedience to our new master and husband, Jesus Christ. We can choose to obey or not to obey.

Application

That’s the difference between a sinner and a saint. The sinner has no choice; since he is not able to obey God, he can only obey his or her sin nature. There are some Christians who get hung-up on free will, refusing to believe that God chose us, as Paul teaches. In reality, unsaved sinners

don't have a free will because they are slaves to the sin nature. Saints (born again Christians) do have a free will and that is the free will to obey God or not.

Which do you choose?

Romans 7:3 - Free to Remarry

So then if, while the husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband should die, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Truth to Learn

We are no longer bound to obey the Law just as a woman is no longer bound to her marriage vows when her husband dies.

Behind the Words

The word translated “adulteress” is *moichalis*, which means “a woman who is unfaithful to her husband.” In other words, it means “a married woman who engages in sexual activity with anyone other than her husband.”

The words “marries” and “married” do not actually appear in the Greek text. The first part of this verse literally reads, “so, then, the husband being alive, an adulteress she shall be called if she should become another man's.” In the culture of the first century, a woman was a man’s property very much like a slave was his property. That’s not the way our society views it, however, so we have paraphrased the text at this point to make the verse more understandable to us.

Meaning Explained

God does not approve of divorce any more than He approves of stealing or coveting. He never intended for divorce to happen because marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church. He has told us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. In other words, He will never divorce us. However, let me ease the mind of those of you who are divorced. God does forgive divorce just as He forgives any sin. Divorce does not make you any less a Christian than a brother or sister who has committed any other sin, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, having said that, let me repeat that God does not approve of divorce. So the metaphor that the Apostle Paul is using here is a picture of how God feels about the relationship between a man and a woman and about the relationship between Christ and the church. Paul says that if a woman is divorced from her husband and remarries, she is committing adultery. We need to take notice, however, that Paul is not teaching about divorce in this passage. He is teaching about being bound by the law just as a woman is bound to her husband until one of them dies.

Back in **Romans 6:6, 7** Paul introduced the idea that before we were saved, we were under bondage to our sin nature (our old man). And, he told us that our sin nature was crucified with Christ when we were saved. He now uses the metaphor of marriage to show that when our sin nature was crucified, we became free to join ourselves to another, that is, to Christ.

That’s what Paul is referencing when he says, if a woman’s husband dies she is no longer bound by the marriage obligation and she is free to remarry. Death breaks the legal bond in a marriage and death breaks the bond that the Law had on us. Therefore, since we died to sin and the Law when we were saved, we are no longer under the obligation to obey the Law.

Application

There are numerous churches today that add so many rules and laws above and beyond what is taught in Scripture that the members become enslaved to the church. That's not the way that God intended it. Thanks be to God for making us free!

Romans 7:4 - Free to Bear Fruit

So, my brothers, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, so that we might bear fruit to God.

Truth to Learn

We have been set free so that we can bear fruit for God.

Behind the Words

Just as in the previous verse the word for “**married**” does not appear in the Greek text. A literal translation of that portion of the verse would be “for you to become another's,” or as we have translated it, “that you may belong to another ...” More than implying the marriage relationship, it implies ownership. We belong to Him who was raised from the dead.

“**Bear fruit**” is translated from *karpophoreō*, which is made up of *karpos*, meaning “fruit” and a form of *pherō*, meaning “to bring” or “to bear.”

Meaning Explained

There are some who believe Paul is saying that the husband in this imagery is really the Law which is now dead. Because the Law is dead, we as Christians are free to marry another, which is Christ. Whereas that would parallel the previous verse and would demonstrate that we are no longer under obligation to the Law since it is now dead, that is **not** what Paul is saying.

In the current verse we see that Paul says we have become dead to the Law, not that the Law has become dead. His reason for using this imagery is to show that death causes a cessation of the bonds of law. If you re-read the first 11 verses of the previous chapter, you will see that it is our death to sin that Paul is talking about.

Romans 6:1-11 What shall we say then? Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so also we should walk in newness of life. For if we have been joined together in the likeness of His death, so also will we be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been set free from sin. And if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has lordship over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. In this way you also, reckon yourselves to be truly dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we were saved we were made dead to sin, being released from bondage to it. That bondage came from the Law to which all belonged (i.e. we were married to it). Now that we have been made dead to sin, we are no longer bound to try to obtain righteousness through the Law. Instead, as Paul has already said, we have received the gift of righteousness, not because we earned it but because it has been given to us by God.

Application

We are no longer under the Law. We do not have to obey all the rules to be acceptable to God. We are acceptable to God because of the blood of Christ. Therefore our works (fruit) are not the source of our righteousness, but are to be the result of our having been declared righteous.

Romans 7:5 - Fruit of Death

For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

Truth to Learn

Trying to live by a set of laws or rules produces spiritual death, not life.

Behind the Words

The word translated “flesh” in this verse is *sarx*, which means “the flesh, or muscle, of a living animal.” This is a contrasting word to *kreas*, which refers to “the flesh of a dead animal,” also sometimes translated as “meat.” Paul is using the word “flesh” here as a metonym, that is, a word used to represent something else. An example of a metonym is the use of the word “Washington” to refer to the U.S. Government. Paul uses “flesh” as a metonym for our sin nature.

“Passions” is from *pathēma*, which is a form of *paschō*, meaning “to experience strong feelings.” It is often translated “suffer,” although it can refer to strong feelings whether they are good or bad (or somewhere in between). The ending “*ma*” gives it the meaning “that which is felt strongly.”

The word “aroused” is *energeō*, from which we get our English word “energy.” It refers to “that which is active, effectual, or mighty.” We could easily translate the opening phrase of this verse as, “For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were energized by the law ...”

Meaning Explained

What does the Apostle Paul mean by the opening part of this verse, “For when we were in the flesh”? Aren’t we always in our flesh, at least until we die? Yes, but that’s not the kind of flesh Paul is talking about. In order to understand what he’s talking about we need to look at a verse in the next chapter of this letter where Paul says,

And those being in the flesh are not able to please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this one is not His. (Romans 8:8-9)

In these verses Paul is contrasting being “in the flesh” and “in the Spirit.” What he means is being controlled by the flesh, the sin nature, versus being controlled by the Spirit of God. Paul has already told us that before we were saved, we were in bondage to sin, or controlled by our sin nature. Now, in the current verse he is telling us that when we were controlled by our sin nature the passions, or overwhelming desires, of sin were not subdued but energized through the Law to bring forth fruit that resulted in death. I think Paul is talking about spiritual death or separation from fellowship with God, not physical death. And in the previous verse Paul told us that we should bring forth fruit to God by being married to Christ.

So, when we were controlled by our sin nature we produced fruit that resulted in spiritual death, but now that we have been saved and freed from the Law, we have become the bride of Christ, and the fruit that we produce should be fruit that is worthy of being brought to God.

Application

Now, the question is, what kind of fruit are you bringing to God? Are you allowing the desires of your flesh to control your actions? Or are you so tuned-in to God and walking so close to Him that your fleshly desires are easily resisted? The type of fruit that you produce will answer these questions for you.

Romans 7:6 - Free to Serve

But now we have been set free from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we should serve in the newness of Spirit and not in the oldness of letter.

Truth to Learn

We are free to serve God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Behind the Words

The word translated “set free” is *katargeō*, which is made up of *kata*, meaning “down” but used here as an intensifier and *argeō*, which means “to be idle or inactive.” *Katargeō*, therefore, means “to become completely ineffective” or “to cease being effective.” As Paul used it here it means “we have been completely set free from the effect of the Law.”

“Held” is from a form of *katechō*, which is also a compound word. This one is made up of *kata*, meaning “down” and *echō*, meaning “to have” or “to hold.” Thus we see that *katechō* literally means “to be held down.” It is a picture of someone who he being held down on the ground so that they are powerless to do anything.

Meaning Explained

In the previous two chapters Paul has spent considerable time and energy pointing out two things. The first is: before we were saved we were slaves to sin because of the Law. The second is: when we were saved, our sin nature was put to death. That is, we died with Christ. As he has just shown in the past few verses, death releases us from the requirements of the Law. Therefore, this verse is the culmination and summation of the results of these things.

Since we are dead with respect to the Law, like the wife who is free to marry after her husband has died, we are no longer under the dictates of the Law and are free to serve God. We are no longer held down by the Law. We are free from it! Let me say that again. We are free from the Law!

We do not have to keep the Ten Commandments or any other part of the Law in order to be righteous in God’s eyes. In fact, you will remember that Paul told us that we couldn’t obtain righteousness by keeping the Law anyway because no one (except Christ) is able to keep all the Law.

The second half of this verse is really a key statement and I don’t want any of us to miss it. We have been set free from the law to “**serve in the newness of Spirit and not in the oldness of letter.**” In other words, before we were saved by grace, we were unable to keep the Law and, therefore, could not serve God because the letter of the Law made us sinful and abhorrent to God. But ... now that we have been set free from the Law we can serve God in a way that we never could have before - in the spirit of righteousness. That is, since we are righteous in God’s eyes now, He will allow us to serve Him. We have spiritual life which we owe entirely to God. Therefore we should gladly serve Him with the life that He has given us.

Application

When we were saved we were set free from the penalty of our sins. We were also set free from the requirements of the Law and have become free to serve God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Are you serving God right now? If you are, are you doing so out of obligation or are you serving Him out of gratitude for what He has done for you? We should rejoice in our service for Him because we have been set free from bondage to the Law!

Romans 7:7 - The Revealing Law

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! I did not know sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness except the law said, "You shall not covet."

Truth to Learn

The Law reveals our sinfulness to us.

Behind the Words

The word translated “know” is a form of *ginōskō*, which means “to acquire knowledge” or “to have full knowledge.” It is expressed here in the aorist tense indicating action completed at a point in time in the past. Therefore, it should be translated as “I had not known” or “I did not know.”

“Covetousness” is from the Greek word *epithumia*, which we saw back in **Romans 6:12**, meaning “to have overly strong thoughts or desires.” It is often translated as “lust.”

Meaning Explained

Any good Jewish Christian having read or heard what Paul has just said about the Law might be inclined to say, “Are you saying that the holy Law of God is not only insufficient to sanctify us, but that it causes sin to increase? Does the Law increase sinful passions, and actually make people worse than they were before?” This is the theoretical objection that Paul is responding to here.

So Paul asks another of his rhetorical questions: “Is the law sin?” And he responds in typical Pauline style with the two Greek words, “*me genoito*” meaning, “May it not be!” or “No way!” As he will go on to say later in verse twelve, the law is holy and just and good! The evil is not in the law but the law brings out evil in us because of our sin nature.

Look very carefully at what Paul says here about the Law. He says, “I did not know sin except through the law.” You will notice that he did not say that he was not a sinner without the law, just that he did not know about his sin without the law. He then goes on to give an example from the Tenth Commandment, “For I would not have known covetousness except the law said, “You shall not covet.”” The law informs us about sin and, because of that, we become more aware of our own sinfulness. And, because of our sin nature, the knowledge of the sin makes us desire it even more, even though we know it is sin. This frustrates all of us at one time or another. Even the Apostle Paul was frustrated by this, which he will express later in this chapter.

In his letter to the Galatian Christians he explains the function of the Law this way,

So that the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (**Galations 3:24, 25**)

The law reveals our sinfulness and amplifies it so that we will be unable to deny our need for a Savior. Fortunately, God’s plan includes our Savior and salvation through faith in His sacrificial death. So you see, the Law, though it produces death, leads us to Christ and to God’s gift of grace which produces life.

Application

Are you still trying to keep the Law? Does it frustrate you because you can't do it? Do you now recognize your need for a Savior? If so, then it has successfully done its work on you.

Romans 7:8 - A Sinful Product

But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all covetousness. For apart from the law sin is dead.

Truth to Learn

The Law does not prevent sin, it produces sin.

Behind the Words

The Greek word translated “taking opportunity” is *aphormē*, which means “an occasion, an opportunity, or casual circumstance producing a tendency toward something else.” In this verse it means that sin took the opportunity to produce lust. This word, *aphormē*, is an aorist participle which means the action took place before the main verb (produced). Or, to put it another way, sin used the commandment as an opportunity to then produce covetousness in Paul.

The word translated as “produced” is *katergazomai*, which means not just simply to work on something but, “to carry out a task until it is completely finished.”

Meaning Explained

What Paul is telling us is that before the Law was declared, there was no sinful covetousness. Then the Tenth Commandment was declared:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's

As soon as the Tenth Commandment took effect, sin took this commandment and accomplished sinful covetousness in man’s heart, and he suddenly coveted after the very things that the law said we should not covet.

Paul goes on to say that “apart from the law,” in other words, when the law and sin were separated from each other, “sin was dead.” It’s very much like two siblings who are constantly fighting but as soon as you separate them from each other the fighting stops, it dies. Thus, Paul says that before the law was declared, it and sin were separated and sin was dead. But as soon as the law was declared, sin took the occasion of the presence of the law to completely work out sinful desires within man.

Adam and Eve are a good example of this. When they were first put in the garden, it was not wrong for them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they apparently had no particular desire for the fruit of that tree. But, as soon as God told Adam that they were not to eat of that tree, that’s when they both desired to eat of it, and their satisfying of that desire produced sin.

Did you ever wonder why, as a child when your mother baked cookies and put them in the cookie jar saying not to touch them until after dinner, all you could think about was sneaking into the kitchen to steal a cookie from the cookie jar?

That’s precisely the process that this verse is talking about!

Application

Now we can begin to see why obedience to the Law does not produce righteousness. The very declaration of the Law produces the desire to break it, and so we do!

Romans 7:9 - Understanding Produces Guilt

I was previously alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Truth to Learn

Without an understanding of what sin is, we feel innocent of it, but when we understand what it is, we realize our guilt.

Behind the Words

The word translated “alive” is *dzaō*, which means “to have life.” In early Greek writings this word was rarely used except in the present or past imperfect tense (I am alive or I was alive). For the other tenses, the verb *bioō* was used. This verb means “to spend one's existence or to pass one's life.” It is from this verb that we derive our English word “biography,” the narrative of how one spent his life.

The word “without” is translated from the adverb *chōris*, which means “separately or apart from.”

“Revived” is from the Greek word *anadzaō*, which is made up of *ana*, meaning “again” and *dzaō*, which we just saw means “to have life.” Hence, *anadzaō* means “to have life again” or “to come back to life” or “to be revived.”

Meaning Explained

This is another difficult verse, perhaps the most difficult so far because it is not clear what Paul means by the two expressions, “I was alive” and “I died.” There has been much discussion amongst Biblical scholars throughout the ages, but there is little consensus other than this: When Paul claims to have been alive, he must mean that he had a certain kind of peace, he felt innocent and secure, and he was free from the convictions of his conscience. That is, he believed himself to be righteous. When he says that he died, therefore, it must mean the opposite to his being alive. In other words sin reigned, producing its condemning effects leading to guilt and misery.

So, what Paul is telling us in this verse comes from personal experience. There was a time when he felt confident in his own righteousness. But as he learned more about the Law, he discovered how much of a sinner he really was, and the effect was that he no longer believed himself to be righteous. In other words, he realized that he was a sinner under God's condemnation.

This, I believe, is the first step towards salvation and a victorious Christian life for all of us. Unless and until we realize that we are not righteous, that we are sinful and lost, we cannot be saved. Once we realize our own depravity, however, we need to discover what it is that will take that depravity and its guilt away, and only the blood of Jesus Christ can accomplish this. Therefore, realizing that we are a sinner and in need of salvation, we find that the only way to receive forgiveness is to humble ourselves before the mighty hand of God and ask Him to forgive us. Then, we learn that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin, and all we have to do is to accept His payment for our sin and He saves us.

Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, He was buried as proof of His death, and He rose again as proof of His righteousness.

Application

Do you believe that you are a sinner in need of salvation? Do you believe that Christ died to pay the penalty for your sins?

Romans 7:10 - The Deadly Law

And the commandment, which *was to bring life, I found to bring death.*

Truth to Learn

The Law is supposed to bring life, but it only brings death.

Behind the Words

The word translated “found” is *heuriskō*, which means “to find, by having searched or without searching. Metaphorically, it means “to find out by inquiry, to learn, or to discover.”

Meaning Explained

As we said in the previous verse, Paul believed himself to be righteous until the Law stirred up in him all manner of sinfulness, showing him how unrighteous he really was. He now claims that the original purpose of the Law was to bring life, but instead it brought death. The reason he claims that the original purpose of the Law was to bring life can be seen in several Old Testament passages:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “I am the LORD your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I *am* the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD. (**Leviticus 18:1-5**)

And

And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them. (**Ezekiel 20:11**)

And

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he will surely live; he will not die. (**Ezekiel 18:20, 21**)

But, instead of obtaining life from the Law, Paul discovered that it caused him to have all sorts of sinful impulses that he couldn't resist, thus causing death in him. His conclusion is that the Law, which is supposed to bring life, only brings death.

Application

Now, lest you think that you and Paul are the only two people on earth who have ever had this frustrating experience, let me assure you that all Christians have this constant battle with sin. The ungodly don't have this battle because they don't know the Law (God's expectation) and they don't care. But you and I do know what God expects from us, and we know just as well that we can't possibly live up to His expectations.

That's where grace comes in! That's why God sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross, that whoever believes on Him should have all of his or her sins (past, present, and future) forgiven and receive everlasting life. And, God gladly did this because He loves you!

Romans 7:11 - Deception and Confession

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.

Truth to Learn

Sin is deceptive and causes separation between us and God.

Behind the Words

“Taking occasion” is translated from *aphormē*. This is a compound word made up of *apo*, meaning “from” or “away from” and *hormē*, meaning “an onset or an impetus.” When put together we get a word that means “an opportunity or casual circumstance producing a tendency toward something else.”

The word translated “deceived” is a form of the Greek word *exapataō*, which is another compound word. This one is made up of *ek*, used as an intensifier and *apataō*, meaning “to seduce or deceive.” Hence *exapataō* means “to deceive completely, to beguile, to seduce” or “to lead out of the right way into error.” This is translated from the same word used in **2Corinthians 11:3** where it is rendered “beguiled” in reference to Satan,

But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness

Meaning Explained

This verse is almost a repeat of verse eight but with a slight variation. Whereas in verse eight Paul said that sin completely produced in him all kinds of lust, in this verse he says that it deceived him.

What Paul is saying is that his corrupt and rebellious tendencies being excited by the Law, led him astray causing him to sin in spite of himself. As a result of his sin, as he said before, he was killed spiritually; that is, he became spiritually separated from God.

Do you find that you sometimes feel deceived by your own inner tendencies? Do you find that you do things that you know are wrong but you do them anyway? In just a few verses we will see that Paul faced this same struggle and the resulting frustration at his inability to control his sinfulness.

The bottom line is that we all sin in this way. But thanks be to God, the Apostle John has told us what to do about it:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (**1 John 1:8,9**)

Faithful means that God will always do it (forgive us), and just means that His righteousness **requires** Him to do it. When we sin, we turn away from God and walk another direction. When we confess our sins and repent, we turn around and begin walking with Him again.

Application

Are you struggling right now with, as the writer of Hebrews put it in **Hebrews 12:1**, that sin which so easily ensnares you? You are not alone, my friend. When sin deceives you and you realize it, simply confess it and get back in the race. Remember that God casts our sins away as far as the east is from the west, so each time we sin it is as if it is the first time to God. The only one who knows your sin history is you.

Romans 7:12 - The Holy Law

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

Truth to Learn

The Law and its commandments are holy, but we are sinful.

Behind the Words

“**Law**” is translated from the Greek word *nomos*, which we saw in the last chapter is the noun form of the verb *nemō*, meaning “to divide among” or “to parcel out.” Therefore *nomos* refers to that which has been parceled out, which someone has in his or her possession. It is also used to refer to a body of regulations that have been delivered or parceled out, such as the Law of Moses.

This word translated “**holy**” is *hagios*. Its fundamental meaning is “set apart from common use to the service of Deity” or “sharing in God's purity and abstaining from earth's defilement.” That which is separated unto God is free from any tainting of sin. It is pure and it is spotless. It is holy!

“**Commandment**” is from *entolē*, which comes from the verb *entellomai*, meaning “to give a charge or a command.” Therefore we see that *entolē* means “a charge, a precept, or commandment.”

The word translated “**just**” is *dikaios*, which means “that which is righteous” or “that which is just.”

“**Good**” is from the Greek word *agathos*, which means “good and benevolent, profitable, or useful.”

Meaning Explained

Back in verse seven Paul asked the rhetorical question, “**What shall we say then? Is the law sin?**” Since that verse he has been showing us why the law is not the culprit; rather it is our sin nature that is the cause of our sinfulness. The law simply causes our sin nature to be empowered. Paul now tells us very clearly that the Law is good but it was not provided to purify the heart of fallen man. Its tendency is to increase guilt, shame, and despair. In other words, man cannot obtain righteousness by obeying the law because the law, by exciting our fallen nature, actually increases our sinfulness.

The Law, says Paul, is holy. It is pure and it is spotless. Paul also says that the commandment is holy. So, what’s the difference between the law and the commandment? The easiest way to distinguish them is to recognize that the law is made up of many commandments. Paul’s point here is that not only is the law as a whole holy and good, but even down to the individual commandments it is holy and just and good.

We cannot blame the law or any one of the commandments for our sins, but the very presence of the law causes our sinfulness to be exceedingly sinful. In fact, we cannot blame anyone else for our sinfulness. We are guilty of our own sins and the Law does not remove that guilt, it increases it.

Application

Do you feel weighed down by guilt over the sins that you have committed? Do you feel guilty because you don't keep the Law or obey God all the time, or act out of selfish motives? Remember, only the grace of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, can take away the guilt! Confess your sins and lay them at the foot of the cross.

Romans 7:13 - Sinfulness Revealed

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? No way! But sin, that it might appear sinful, was producing death in me through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin might become exceedingly sinful.

Truth to Learn

The Law reveals our sinfulness to the fullest extent.

Behind the Words

The word translated “appear” is *phainō*, which is from the noun *phos*, meaning “to shine” or “to make apparent.” *Phainō* means “to illuminate,” “to become visibly apparent,” or “to reveal.”

“Producing” is from *katergazomai*, which we saw back in verse eight means, “to carry out a task until it is completely finished.” It is expressed in this verse as a participle, so it could be translated, “was completely accomplishing in me.”

The word “exceedingly” is from *huperbolē*, which is made up of *huper* (or hyper), meaning “above” and a form of *ballō*, meaning “to throw.” So it literally means “to throw above” or “to throw beyond.” Metaphorically, it means “to surpass” or “to be excessive.” From this we get our English word hyperbole, meaning “an extravagant exaggeration.”

Meaning Explained

Anticipating another objection, Paul now asks another of his rhetorical questions. The objection is this, “Is it possible that what is admitted to be good and pure (the law), might be changed into evil?” Paul’s response to his rhetorical question is the now familiar, *me genoito*, meaning “May it not be!” or “No way!”

This next sentence is very confusing to read in most translations. Let me take the liberty of making a couple of minor alterations to the translation so that it might appear to us more clearly what Paul is saying:

But sin, so that it might be made apparent as sin, is completely accomplishing death in me through that which is good (the law); so that sin might become exceedingly sinful, and this because of the commandment.

Do you see what Paul is saying? The law has not become death to us, but it has caused sin to be revealed as it truly is, very sinful, and it is the sin which causes death.

There was a comedian some years back by the name of Flip Wilson whose most famous line was, “The devil made me do it!” Well, if Flip had been around in Paul’s day he probably would have said, “The Law made me do it!” That is precisely what Paul is arguing against. The law does not make us sin, but it does cause sin to be exposed for what it really is so that we are without any excuse whatsoever.

So we can’t blame the law for our sinfulness. We have to take full responsibility for our own sin. Then we return to **1 John 1:9**. Do you remember what that verse says?

Application

It is relatively easy for each of us to excuse our own sinfulness for a variety of reasons. But the Law makes our sinfulness so apparent that we no longer have any grounds for denying it. Recognizing and admitting our own sinfulness is the first step in recognizing our need for salvation from the penalty of sin.

Praise be to God for His mercy and His grace!

Romans 7:14 - Flesh Versus Spirit

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold by sin.

Truth to Learn

There is a constant battle between our flesh and our spirit.

Behind the Words

The word translated “spiritual” is the Greek word *pneumatikos*, which means “that which pertains to the nature of spirits and the spirit world.”

“Fleshly” is translated from the Greek word *sarkikos*, which means, “that which pertains to our body, our human flesh.”

The word translated “sold” is *pipraskō*. It is based on the verb *peraō*, meaning “to traffic” or “to travel, especially overseas.” It is a reference to those who travel overseas to obtain merchandise which is then sold for profit. Hence, *pipraskō* refers to something that is sold.

Meaning Explained

The remainder of the chapter, starting with this verse, has been the subject of much debate for at least the past several centuries. The discussion is over whether this description of Paul’s is in reference to a time before his conversion or subsequent to his conversion. I believe that there is sufficient evidence to understand that Paul is making statements about his condition **after** conversion. First of all, it is the most obvious explanation of what Paul is teaching. Secondly, Paul has already shown that the Law doesn’t produce righteousness; rather, it makes sin more sinful and the sinner guilty. He doesn’t have to prove that again. Thirdly, the expressions that are used are not those that an unrepentant sinner would use. Instead, they express the same frustration that all Christians feel regarding their continued propensity to sin. And fourthly, there is a change made here from past tense to present tense, so Paul is expressing what is currently happening in his life as a born-again Christian who is still struggling with his sin nature.

He starts off this section restating what he already said in verse twelve; the Law is spiritual. That is, the Law is a spiritual entity, it was developed in the realm of spirituality and it was developed to show mankind what spirituality looks like. It is holy, that is, without sin itself, and it is basically good.

Mankind, of whom Paul uses himself as a representative, is not inherently spiritual. Rather, we are fleshly according to Paul. The sentence structure is one that contrasts spirituality (that which pertains to and is controlled by the spirit world) with fleshiness or carnality (that which pertains to and is controlled by the non spiritual part of man, called the flesh).

It is this dichotomy and conflict between the realms of spirituality and carnality that Paul will spend the remainder of this chapter on. Though we were created with both a body and a spirit, it is the sin nature (which is part of our body) that controls much of what we do, rather than our spirit.

Application

If you have ever been frustrated by the fact that you sin at times and in a manner in which you don't want to, stay with us because we are going to find out that Paul had this same battle. The Apostle Paul, one of the foundation stones of the Church of Jesus Christ and one of the greatest spiritual leaders of the early church, battled with his sin nature. And so do we!

Romans 7:15 - That Thing You Do

For the thing I do, I do not understand. For what I determine to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Truth to Learn

Paul battled his sin nature just as you and I do.

Behind the Words

The words “**the thing I do**” are from the Greek verb *katērgadzomai*, meaning “to work fully, to finish, or to fully accomplish.” In other words, it is not simply something that Paul comes close to doing or that he does a little bit of, it is something that he does completely.

“**Understand**” is from *ginoskō*, which means “to come to know completely or to understand thoroughly.”

“**Practice**” is from the Greek word *prassō*, meaning “to practice, to do habitually, or to do repeatedly.”

The word translated “**but**” is *alla*. It is an adversative participle which can best be expressed here as “but on the other hand.”

“**I do**” is translated from the Greek word *poieō*, which means “to make or do.” It is expressed in the present tense, active voice, indicative mood, implying continual action.

Meaning Explained

This is one of the most important verses of the entire book of Romans. It is Paul expressing the frustration concerning the power that his sin nature has over him. He starts out this verse by confessing that he doesn't understand why he acts the way he does. The thing which he wants to do (be obedient to God) he doesn't always do. He is not saying that he never does the things he wants to do. He is saying that he doesn't consistently do them. Paul wants to obey God and do those things which will glorify Him, but he doesn't always do them.

Instead, Paul finds that the thing which he hates is the very thing that he continually finds himself doing.

This is a very revealing (and to the rest of us, comforting) aspect of Paul's walk with God. He is the Apostle to the Gentiles, the most prolific writer of the New Testament and probably the finest example of “Obedience to God” in the entire New Testament. And yet, he has a constant battle with his sin nature and has not reached a state of perfect submission to Christ. Allow me to paraphrase this verse,

I don't understand my actions. For that which I want to do I don't always do. On the other hand, that which I hate to do, I keep on doing.

Application

Can you identify with Paul? Of course you can! Any Christian who is completely committed to God will undergo this same sense of frustration as he or she contemplates his or her daily walk with God. We want to be obedient, but we don't always obey and we don't understand why.

The answer, my friend, is our sin nature. It is constantly battling against us to produce sin in our lives, even when we want to be totally obedient to God.

Keep in mind that Paul wrote this letter toward the latter part of his life. He was not a “young Christian.” He was an experienced, mature Christian who was as submitted to God as any Christian has ever been. And – he struggled with obedience to God and submission to His will. Paul battled his sin nature until God took him to paradise. So don’t feel defeated when you have the same kind of struggles with your sin nature.

But you must understand that doesn’t excuse us! We are still guilty of the sin, but confession, and forgiveness through the grace of God, will restore our fellowship with Him even when we do that thing which we hate!

Romans 7:16 - Encouragement in Defeat

If, then, I do what I determine not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good.

Truth to Learn

Our battle against our sin nature is evidence that we are saved.

Behind the Words

The Greek word translated “determine” is *thelō*, which is often translated as “will.” However, there are two Greek words translated “will” or “willing.” They are *thelō* and *boulomai*. *Thelō* means to desire something, but it implies active volition and purpose. *Boulomai*, however, expresses an intent or desire, but without pressing on to execute that desire. Hence, *thelō* can be thought of as “determined will” whereas *boulomai* can be thought of as “desirous will.” So Paul is saying “If, then, I do what I am determined not to do ...”

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse Paul shared with us the frustration that he experienced as a result of his sin nature causing him to do the very thing that he was determined to avoid, that is, sin. What he was determined to do was to obey God, but he found that he didn’t always do it.

So, his conclusion now is that if he really wanted to keep the Law, then the Law (and avoiding sin) is good. Remember from just a few verses back, Paul said,

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. (**Romans 7:12**)

He then reiterated this fact and compared it to sinful man,

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been sold by sin. (**Romans 7:14**)

Finally, in the previous verse and this one Paul is showing that we all must admit that the Law is good but that we are sinful.

I like what Albert Barnes said about this struggle that Paul has just expressed:

The fact of struggling against evil, the desire to be free from it, and to overcome it, the anxiety and grief which it causes, is an evidence that we do not love it, and that therefore we are the friends of God. Perhaps nothing can be a more decisive test of piety than a long-continued and painful struggle against evil passions and desires in every form, and a panting of the soul to be delivered from the power and dominion of sin.

Do you feel this constant struggle against your own sinful tendencies? Does it make you wonder sometimes whether you really are saved? Barnes says that this very struggle is clear evidence that you are genuinely saved. The fact that you are aware of your sinful tendencies and that you are saddened every time you let your sinful nature win the battle is evidence that you are the child of God. And, since you are a true child of God, a born-again Christian, you will continue to have this struggle until the day that you pass into eternity and receive your perfect, sinless body.

Until that day, however, we are to continue to strive against our own sin nature, and though we may occasionally lose a battle, we will ultimately have victory. We know that He will never

leave us nor forsake us and ultimately, He will win not only the battle, but also the war against evil.

Application

Don't be discouraged when you lose the battle against the sin that you are determined to overcome. Instead, be encouraged and recognize that He will win the victory for you!

In that day we will praise Him perfectly because we will be perfect and He is worthy!

Romans 7:17 - Victory Through Surrender

But now, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin that is living in me.

Truth to Learn

There is a battle going on within us that requires surrender.

Behind the Words

The word translated “living” is the Greek word *oikeō*, which is a participial form of *oikos*, meaning “a dwelling place or a house.” *Oikeō* means “living somewhere as a permanent residence, as opposed to a temporary residence.”

Meaning Explained

Two verses back Paul lamented, “For that which I am determined to do I don’t always do but, on the other hand, that which I hate to do I keep on doing.” In the current verse he appears to absolve himself of any responsibility. What does he mean when he says, “I am no longer the one doing it”? We have to refer back to verse fifteen to answer this. There he said, “For what I want to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” You see that it is Paul’s desirous will (determination to do good) versus his actions that he is talking about. So, in the current verse he says that in his inner most self, his greatest desire is to do good, but this gets overpowered by the sin that dwells in him.

Now, what does he mean when he says that sin “dwells in me?” Paul is telling us that sin has taken up a permanent residence in him (and us); therefore, the natural propensity to sin is a permanent part of our human bodies. We can’t get away from it and we can’t overcome it. So we’re not responsible when we sin, right? Wrong!

Before we were saved, this was true; we had no choice but to sin. But now that we have been saved, we have someone else living inside us. **Romans 8:9** says, “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells (*oikeō*) in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” Also in **1 Corinthians 3:16** he says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells (*oikeō*) in you?”

When we were saved, a marvelous thing happened. God the Father gave us a token to guarantee His promise to redeem us, a seal of our salvation (see **Ephesians 1:13, 14**). That token, that seal, that guarantee, is the 3rd person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. God is permanently dwelling in us. That’s one reason that we are told that God will never leave us nor forsake us. He will always be with us because He has taken up permanent residence in us.

Now consider this, of the two that dwell within us, our sin nature (which Paul has been talking about here) and God, which do you think is stronger? “Well, that’s obvious!” you say. “God is stronger!”

You are absolutely correct. As we yield ourselves to God, as we surrender our will to His, He has control and He overcomes our sin nature. But, when we take the reins of our own lives, when it is our will that is calling the shots, our sin nature takes control because it is stronger than we are.

Application

He (or she) who desires to please God must continually surrender his or her will to God. That is the only way we can live a victorious life!

Is your will completely surrendered to God today?

Romans 7:18 - Surrender is the Key

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to perform what is good is not.

Truth to Learn

We can't work, or fight, our way to victory as a Christian.

Behind the Words

The word translated, "I know" is *eidō*, meaning "to see with perception." By implication it means "to know" or "to be aware of." This word is used here in the perfect tense, which indicates past completed action with an ongoing effect, where the emphasis is on the ongoing effect. What Paul means is that he knows it and has known it for some time because he learned it sometime in the past. That is, it's not new knowledge to him.

Thelō is the Greek word translated "will." As we saw in verse 16, this refers to our determined will.

"Perform" is from the word *katergazomai*, which we saw back in verse fifteen, meaning "to work fully, to finish, or to fully accomplish."

Meaning Explained

Paul has just told us that it is the sin dwelling in him (that is, his sin nature, his predisposition to sin) that causes him to do things that he has determined not to do. He now amplifies that a little bit. He says that he is aware that there is nothing dwelling in his flesh (that is, dwelling in the non-spirit part of him) that is any good. You will recall that back in chapter 3 verses 9 and 10, Paul quoted part of **Psalms 53:1-3** which says:

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable wickedness; there is no one doing good. God looked down from heaven upon the sons of mankind, to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Every one has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is no one doing good, not even one.

The reason that there is no one doing good is because of this sin nature that dwells in each and every one of us. It is what drives us to do that which we don't want to do and it is what keeps us from doing what we want to do.

Paul now restates the fact that he is determined to do what is good but he can't. He says, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good is not." The determination (will) to do good is there, but how to accomplish it isn't. As much as Paul is determined to do right, his sin nature won't always let him do it.

That's why we have said before that an unsaved person has no choice but to sin. There is no free will in those who are unsaved. Those of us who are saved, however, have the Holy Spirit living in us and we do have free will. We can choose to obey God by turning our will over to the Holy Spirit and letting Him have control of our lives. So you see, the only way we can have the free will to obey God is to surrender that will up to Him. Only then can we even hope to obey. And because we have a sin nature, we then take it back and exert our own will, leading us to sin. We all know how frustrating this is.

Application

As we have said before, the way to victory in the Christian life is through surrender. We don't stand up and fight to get the victory, we simply give in. It's totally against everything we have ever learned. We have to surrender to win the battle. Let us all pray that we will continually surrender our will to Him who has declared us righteous. After all, we're not righteous because we earned it, but because He declared it!

Romans 7:19 - Surrender to Him

For the good that I determine to do, I do not do; but the evil I determine to not do, that I practice.

Truth to Learn

Overcoming our enemy, our sin nature, is not ours to do.

Behind the Words

Back in verse sixteen we looked at the word “will.” There are two Greek words that are translated “will” or “wish:” *thelō* and *boulomai*. The difference is that *thelō* implies an active impulse whereas *boulomai* implies a passive acquiescence. Therefore, *boulomai* implies simply a wish or a desire whereas *thelō* implies a preference, a choosing, or a determination. To understand the difference, imagine that you give a child a dollar and let them go into a candy store to buy anything he or she wants. The child’s desire is to buy everything (desirous will) but the child determines to buy something specific for a dollar (determined will). The word in the current verse translated “determine” is *thelō*, determined will.

“Good” is from *agathos*, which refers to goodness in general. It is sometimes translated as benevolent, profitable, useful, or excellent.

“Evil” is from *kakos*, which refers to something that is worthless or wicked. It is believed to be derived from the verb *chazō*, meaning “to retreat.” It is a picture of a worthless soldier who, instead of standing up against the enemy, retreats.

Meaning Explained

At first glance this verse seems to say the same thing as verse fifteen did. But on closer inspection we can see that there is a slight difference between these verses. Verse fifteen says:

For the thing I do, I do not understand. For what I determine to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. (Romans 7:15)

In this earlier verse Paul is contrasting what he is determined to do versus what he hates. In the current verse (**Romans 7:19**) he is contrasting what he is determined to do versus evil. Paul is saying that his determined will is to do good but he doesn’t do it. His determined will is also not to do evil, but that’s exactly what he does do. This is another indication that Paul is truly saved. Only someone whose heart has been regenerated will truly desire to do good and truly desire not to do evil. Unfortunately for Paul, and for the rest of us as well, the sin nature that dwells in this flesh of ours continues to overpower us even against our desire.

The significant thing to take away from this verse is the fact that it is not the will of man that draws him away from God. Few people, if any, actually want to be evil, but none of us, left to our own devices, will avoid evil because of the powerful sin nature that has mastery over us.

Once again let me say that the only way to have victory over this sin nature is first to be genuinely saved and then to submit our will to God and obey Him as our master instead of obeying our sin nature. As we submit to Him and commit to His ways, we have victory and peace!

Application

It is far easier for us to do that which is evil than to stand and fight for that which is good. And, it is easier to stand and fight against evil in the face of incredible odds, than it is for us to stand against our sin nature. That's why we need the power of the Holy Spirit. Only a committed Christian surrendered to the will of God can succeed in overcoming his or her sin nature.

And, who gets the praise when we submit to God's will?

Romans 7:20 - Living on our Knees

Now if I do what I determine not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin dwelling in me.

Truth to Learn

When we lose a battle against our sin nature we simply need to confess our sin and God removes it from us.

Behind the Words

The word “do” (in the expression “I who do it”) is from the Greek word *katergadzomai*, which we saw back in verse fifteen, meaning “to work fully, to finish, or to fully accomplish.”

“Dwells” is also a word that we have looked at before. It is the word *oikeō*, which means “living somewhere as a permanent residence, as opposed to a temporary residence.”

Meaning Explained

This verse is very similar to verse seventeen, in which Paul identifies the sin dwelling in him as the reason that he does things that he hates. He now states a very similar fact, that it is the sin which has taken up permanent residence in him which fully accomplishes that which he has determined not to do.

According to Adam Clarke in his *Commentary on the Bible*, Paul is saying;

My will is against it; my reason and conscience condemn it. But it is the sin that dwells in me - the principle of sin, [the sin nature] which has possessed itself of all my carnal appetites and passions, and thus subjects my reason and domineers over my soul. Thus I am in perpetual contradiction to myself. Two principles are continually contending in me for the mastery: my reason, on which the light of God shines, to show what is evil; and my passions, in which the principle of sin works, to bring forth fruit unto death.

It is this contention between the Spirit of life within us and the sin nature within us which produces the daily battle that all Christians face: the wholesome desire to obey and please God versus the lustful desires of the sin nature that drag us into sin and guilt.

We will not leave this battleground until the day that we are taken to glory. We need to learn how to do battle effectively. We do that by submitting our will to God and learning repeatedly how to fall to our knees when our sinful tendencies win out over our desire to do good.

Remember:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just so that He might forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **(I John 1:8, 9)**

Also, keep in mind that when He forgives our sins, He removes them from us, as David said in the Psalms:

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. **(Psalms 103:11-12)**

Application

Even though we are in a constant battle with our sin nature, and frequently loose the battle, we know that through confession our sins are forgiven and sent away from us as far as the east is from the west. Lord, help us to learn the necessity of living on our knees!

Romans 7:21 - The “Badness” Law

I find then a law, when I desire to do what is right, that evil is present with me.

Truth to Learn

There is a “law of sin” that can control our actions.

Behind the Words

The word translated “a law” is the Greek word *nomos*, which means “something that has been parceled out.” In the Greek text there is a definite article before this word, so literally it says “the law.”

The word in this verse that is translated “evil” is the Greek word *kakos*, which means, “something that is bad or worthless.” It is not the word usually translated “evil.” That word is *poneros*, which means “malicious or indicating willful harm to others.” So, although it is not really a word, I guess we could translate *kakos* in this verse as “badness” to distinguish it from evil.

“Is present” is a translation of the Greek word *parakeimai*, which means “it lies near” or “it is nearby.” It is expressed here in the present tense, active voice, indicative mood which implies present continuous action, not a past event or a onetime event.

Meaning Explained

One confusing part about the current verse is Paul’s reference to “a law.” There has been considerable debate about what he means by this expression. The usual sense of “a law” is something to which we are subject, something that is imposed by a superior, something that binds, controls, or influences us. There are many things we call laws that really aren’t laws; rather they are things that we have learned by observation. We refer, for instance, to such things as the laws of physics, the law of gravity, or the scientific laws of thermodynamics. These are not really laws in the sense that some legislative or ruling body has declared them so and which has assigned officials to enforce these laws (unless, of course, you consider them as having been imposed by God Himself).

The law that Paul is talking about in today’s verse is just such a law. He is saying that he finds an unwritten law which seems to say that badness is constantly present, close at hand, ready to take over whenever he desires to do right. And, once again, we see the word “desire” which is from the Greek verb *thelō*, indicating not just a wish or a desire to do good, but a determination to do good.

Although we have said it before, this is an apt description of our sin nature, or our tendency to sin. Whenever we want to do the right thing, when we are determined to be obedient to God and to do His will, our sin nature is ever present and ready to lead us into doing the wrong thing instead.

In just a few verses Paul will refer to this sin nature, to this law that makes badness ever present when we’re determined to do good, as the law of sin.

If I were allowed to vote on this law, I would vote that we repeal it and make life a lot easier on all of us!

Application

Lord, help us to see this battle that is going on within us. Help us to recognize that even though we are saved through the blood of Christ and we are determined to obey You and do Your will, our sin nature keeps dragging us away from You. Lord, give us strength to resist our sin nature and give us the desire to submit ourselves completely to You. Amen!

Romans 7:22 - God's Delightful Law

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

Truth to Learn

For Christians, obeying God's law is delightful, not onerous.

Behind the Words

The word translated here as "I delight in" is *sunēdomai*, which only occurs in this one place in the New Testament. It is a compound word made up of *sun*, meaning "with" or "together with" and a form of *hēdomai*, meaning "to be pleased" or "to rejoice." So, we see that this word means "to be pleased with" or "to have delight in something." Paul actually finds delight, that is, inward pleasure, when he obeys the Law of God.

"Inward" is from the Greek word *esō*, which is a form of *eis*, meaning "into." It refers that which is already on the inside.

Meaning Explained

Paul said back in verse twelve that the Law is Holy and that the commandments that make up the law are holy, just, and good. Now he is saying that he actually finds pleasure in the Law. This is an obvious indication that Paul is "born-again," for without this conversion a man cannot find pleasure in obeying God's Law.

King David expressed a similar sentiment in Psalms 1:

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; **But his delight is in the law of the LORD,** And in His law he meditates day and night. (**Psalms 1:1-2**)

The law of God is not something that Christians should be afraid of; it should be a source of joy for us in our innermost being. Paul refers to this innermost being as "the inward man." Here's what Albert Barnes said about this expression in his *Notes on the Bible*:

The expression "the inward man" is used sometimes to denote the rational part of man as opposed to the sensual; sometimes the mind as opposed to the body (compare **2Co 4:16; 1Pe 3:4**). It is thus used by the Greek classic writers. Here it is used evidently in opposition to a carnal and corrupt nature; to the evil passions and desires of the soul in an unrenewed state; to what is called elsewhere "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." (**Eph 4:22**). The "inward man" is called elsewhere "the new man" (**Eph 4:24**); and denotes not the mere intellect, or conscience, but is a personification of the principles of action by which a Christian is governed; the new nature; the holy disposition; the inclination of the heart that is renewed.

So, Paul is saying that he finds inward, intellectual pleasure in obeying God's Law because of the regenerated spiritual life that God has given him. Unfortunately, as we will see in the next verse, the "old man" is still with us as well and it is in a constant battle with this "new man."

Application

As we said, the law of God is not something that Christians should fear, but we also know that obeying it does not make us holy or righteous. We should feel good when we are obedient to God, but we should also recognize that our sin nature will cause us to break God's law. Thank God for confession and for His grace!

Romans 7:23 - Captured, Then Confessed

But I see another law in my members, battling against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Truth to Learn

Because of the battle within us, we become captured by our sin nature, but confession sets us free.

Behind the Words

“**Members**” is from a Greek word we have seen before. It is *melos*, meaning “a limb or other part of the body.”

The word translated “**battling against**” is *antistrateuomai*, which is a compound word made up of *anti*, meaning “against” and *strateuomai*, which means “to make war (or battle) against a specific enemy.”

“**Bringing me into captivity**” is from *aichmalotidzō*, which means “to be taken away as a captive and made a prisoner of war.”

Meaning Explained

In verse 21 Paul said that he perceives an unwritten law that brings out evil in him whenever he is determined to do what is right. In verse 22 he said there is another law that he delights in: the Law of God. These are the two forces that are warring within him and within all of us. As we saw in the previous verse, these two forces are the “inner man” (the intellect of man) and the “old man” (the sin nature).

He now goes back to referring to these two opposing forces as laws, calling them the “law of my mind” (the intellect) and the “law of sin” (the sin nature). He aptly describes the conflict that occurs between these two as warfare. And, you will notice that Paul is astute enough to recognize that this is a warfare that is going on within his body. The two opposing forces have taken up residence in his (and our) physical body. These two opposing forces, these two laws, are at war specifically against each other and the battlefield is within our body.

He also recognizes that the law of sin is taking him captive and making him a prisoner of war. Hence, Paul is telling us that as the law of his mind, which delights in the Law of God (that is, obedience to God), and the law of sin (the sin nature) clash, the sin nature captures him, leads him away as a captive, and makes him a prisoner of war. In other words, his sin nature gains dominion over him.

I believe that this completely describes the battle that every Christian faces daily. We want to be obedient to God, we are determined to be obedient to our Heavenly Father and to please Him. But instead, we find ourselves succumbing to “**the sin which so easily ensnares us**” as **Hebrews 12:1** calls it.

I don’t know about you, but I find that I get almost angry with myself knowing what I should do and, instead, doing what I know I shouldn’t do. As hard as I try I can’t overcome this enemy and it makes me feel guilty! Thank goodness for confession.

Application

Let us give thanks to God that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from **all** sin! Though “our sins are like scarlet,” His blood washes them away completely so that we appear to God “as white as snow.” And we get that cleansing through confession, daily, hourly, minute-by-minute confession. For He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us – every time!

Now that’s grace!

Romans 7:24 - Winning a Losing Battle

O wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Truth to Learn

The ever presence of sin will bring a committed Christian to his or her knees ... over and over and over and over ...

Behind the Words

The Greek word translated “wretched” is *talaipōros*, which is based on *talas*, meaning “suffering” and a form of *pōreō*, meaning “miserable or distressed.” Hence, this word refers to someone who is suffering miserably.

“Rescue” is translated from *rhuomai*, which literally means “to draw out for oneself.” It is interpreted as meaning “to rescue” or “to deliver from danger or harm.”

The word translated “body” is the Greek word *somatos*, which in its basest meaning refers to the physical human body. Paul is using this word as a metaphor, however. So, it is not referring to our physical body, but something else.

Meaning Explained

As I shared with you in the previous verse, I get really irritated with myself when I do that which I know God wants me to avoid. It gives me a great sense of guilt that is only alleviated by personal confession and God’s grace. Obviously, the Apostle Paul feels similar. As a result of the battle between his intellect and his sin nature in which his sin nature carries him off as a prisoner of war and controls his actions against his own will, he declares, “O wretched man that I am!” And, he wants to be rescued from his body of death.

Our translation here says “... this body of death;” however, the Greek text reads “the body of this death.” That is, Paul is using the word “body” to refer to something non-physical (the sin nature). He is saying that his sin nature has such control over him that it is as if his whole body is inhabited by and controlled by his sinful tendencies.

Some commentators suppose that Paul is referring to an ancient custom of tying a dead body to a captive. In this manner the prisoner had to drag the heavy and abhorrent, smelly burden behind him for the lengthy trek back to the homeland of the captor. Although this may not have been Paul’s intent, it certainly is a vivid picture of the constant burden of our sin nature.

I don’t need to ask you whether you ever feel this way or not. If you are truly a born again Christian, then you have felt this way. That’s the battle which rages within all Christians as we desire to please God and try to do His will. But this battle frequently ends in defeat when our sin nature sneaks up and takes us captive.

This is not a hopeless battle, however. Paul will begin to explain in the next chapter how we, as sinners saved by grace, can overcome the sin nature and experience personal victory by the grace of God through the blood of Christ!

Application

Don't be too hard on yourself when you battle with sinful tendencies and the disobedience to God which follows. It doesn't mean you have lost your salvation. In fact, it is a constant reminder that confession and humility before God are necessities for every Christian. The more we recognize our own sin, the more we have to humble ourselves and draw near to God. And He will ALWAYS forgive our sins.

Romans 7:25 - He is Lord!

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself truly serve the law of God, but with the flesh *I serve* the law of sin.

Truth to Learn

Submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ is the only way to win the battle against our sin nature.

Behind the Words

“Thank” is translated from the Greek word *eucharisteō*, which means “to express gratitude” or “to give thanks.”

The word translated “through” is *dia*, which can imply “motion through something” or “through the instrumentality, or by means of someone or something.” The latter is the meaning as it is used here.

“Mind” is from the Greek word *nous*, which refers to “intellect or mental perception.”

The word translated “flesh” is *sarx*, which refers to the flesh of an animal, but it is used metaphorically to refer to our physical being.

Meaning Explained

Paul’s initial conclusion of this entire battle between his desire to obey God and his tendency to commit sin, is now expressed in the current verse. His conclusion is that with his mind, that is, his intellect, Paul serves the Law of God. As he said back in verse 22, he (his “new man”) delights in obeying the Law of God. The regenerated part of him wants to do God’s will. But with his flesh, that is his “old man” or his sin nature, Paul says he serves the law of sin.

Paul recognizes that the part of him that he has control over is focused on serving God, but the part of himself that he cannot control is a captive slave to sin. Again, let me point out that this does not absolve Paul of the responsibility for his sin. He is still guilty of violating God’s Law and of sinning against God. The difference, as we will see in the next chapter of this epistle to the Romans, is that God has provided a way for him (and us) to be free from the condemnation of sin.

That’s why he opens this verse with, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” You will notice that it is not Jesus to whom he is thankful, but to God (the Father) and his thanks is through, or by means of, Jesus Christ. Paul recognizes that it is because of what Jesus did for him on the Cross and by his resurrection from the dead that he is able to be freed from the dominion of his sin nature. By God’s grace the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of all unrighteousness. Hence, he thanks God **through** Jesus Christ. But he doesn’t stop there. You will notice that he says “through Jesus Christ **our Lord!**” Paul recognizes that it is through the lordship of Jesus that he is able to overcome the lordship of sin that he is battling. In other words, he recognizes that it is only through submitting his will to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Master that he finally overcomes his slavery to his own sin nature.

Application

Too often we hear of people who have “accepted” the gift of salvation, the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross to pay for their sins, but they have never really submitted themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If you have never submitted to Him as Lord and Master of your life, you have not been saved.