

Introduction

The first six verses of Chapter 7 are telling us how the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. Paul was speaking to those who knew the law. From verse 7 to the end of the chapter is speaking autobiographically. It is important to understand this because he is speaking of an earlier time in his life. This is where the different opinions come from. Some think he is rehearsing a time after his new birth. I don't think so. I will say more on this as we study these verses. I do not believe these verses are describing the strife between the flesh and the spirit. This is Saul, the Pharisee thinking the law was making him a Godly man. In reality, the law was doing what it does, showing up sin, but not able to deliver from it.

Verse 1 *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?*

The writer is speaking to the Jewish nation. It doesn't mean his words are not for all people. His desire was to teach the church at Rome, which was predominantly Jewish. He had just written, "sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law but under grace." He wanted the Jews at Rome to understand that principle.

Verse 2 *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.*

The woman is bound by the law to her husband. This is almost a world-wide application. It is a good illustration and shows clearly the principle the Apostle desired to teach them. The issue here was that they were under law and Paul wants them to realize they had been set free from the law. Only death has the ability to break a legal claim.

Verse 3 *So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

The woman is therefore free because of the death of her husband. We realize that the subject matter here is far greater than just a husband-wife relation. Paul's intent is to show that we believers have been set free from our old headship, "Adam"; therefore from the law for the Jewish believers. Adam is no longer the Federal Head for those who now have accepted the headship of Jesus, the Second Adam.

Verse 4 *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

"Wherefore brethren" is referring to Jewish believers, but this is also true of all believers in that they are not under any law. Both Jew and Gentile are set free by the body of Christ. The cross and its meaning and its results. The result is that you should be married, (joined) to another. The "another" is referring to Jesus Christ, our new head, who was able to take that headship by virtue of being raised from the dead. The result of this union with Christ is intended to bring forth fruit in us. When it says "you are become dead to the law", this would not refer to the Gentile believers because they were never under the law. The law was peculiar to the Jewish nation. However read what Paul has to say in the following:

- **Romans 2:14** *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*
- **1 Corinthians 9:21** *To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

The important issue in Verse 4 is our union with Christ, both Jew and Gentile. After the new birth, there is neither Jew or Gentile. This union with Christ is intended to bring forth fruit unto God.

Verse 5 *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.*

The phrase, "were in the flesh" is understood that all men, before salvation, are said to be in the flesh. What are the "motions of sins?" These are our passions, or we could say the nature of our flesh and was true of both Jew and Gentile. The phrase "by the law," does not mean the law caused the sin; it only made manifest what was in the hearts of all men. The result? *"The wages of sin is death."*

Verse 6 *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

We are delivered from the law. This deliverance is for the Jew because he was under the law. The Gentile also needs this deliverance because he does by nature the things contained in the law. Though the Gentile does not have the law, as does the Jew, the things he does by nature are a law unto him.

So both the Jew and the Gentile have died to His laws. Therefore, the law that once made them feel secure in their efforts to please the Lord, is now annulled because both of them died with Christ. Now the law can have nothing to do with them, because they have been removed from the effort of, or the ability of their law to please God. So the result of this position of grace in which we have been placed by the Lord, enables us to be fruitful. We are now serving in newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter, or self effort.

Now we begin the part of Chapter 7 that is called Paul's autobiography (a biography of a person by that person!) It is generally thought Paul was saved on the road to Damascus in AD 34 and wrote the letter to the Romans Church about AD 59. That would be about 25 years after his salvation experience that he wrote the Roman letter.

Verse 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*

In at least three or four places in Romans, we read that we are dead to the law, or the law is replaced by grace. Therefore the question..."is the law sin?" God forbid. This shows us the important place the law had at that time and still has today. The law is an expression of the righteousness of God and God's intent is to show sin to be exceeding sinful. In our verse 7, we find the first unveiling of Saul's spiritual condition. He was covetous and did not know it until the law did its' work.

Verse 8 *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.*

"Sin taking occasion by the commandment ." As Paul looks back some 25 years at himself as Saul, he wants us to realize what he was dealing with. The issue here is sin, not necessarily committed sin, but sin

deep in the nature. At the time in question, Saul did not know this. This sin was a power and was a controlling factor in human life, working in human beings all manner of lawlessness and evil desires. Had there been no law, sin would not have become visible. Sin was still there when there was no law because there was death. Remember Saul was a Pharisee, and thought he could be a good man and please God by the law. What he did not understand was the sin in his nature. Though he knew the law very well, it did not bring deliverance. We must realize the law does its work in both the sinner and the believer. So we see the law doing its work in the heart of Saul.

Comment: Without the law, sin was dead. There is need of the law to awaken the conscience that something is sin.

Verse 9 *For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died* Saul thought he was doing well, alive without the law, but when the commandment became apparent to Saul, it showed up sin. Sin revived and became known to him...and he died. The wages of sin is death. This shows the work of the law in man's heart.

- **Romans 2:15** *Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*

Verse 10 *And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.*

Saul really thought the law could give him life, but when it revealed the sin in him, he found only death. It is only when God awakens our hearts to the law, or right and wrong, that there will begin a struggle in the heart. I suggest that for the long term Pharisees, their hearts were very hard, not allowing the voice of the law to penetrate their hearts.

Verse 11 *For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*

As in verse 8, this again is showing the remarkable ability of God's law to show up sin. Other laws of man do not carry this same ability.

Verse 12 *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

This is God's Law and expresses His intrinsic qualities and His nature. God stands alone being holy, just and good; yet God gives of Himself to us.

- **2 Peter 1:4** *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Verse 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.* The law did not cause death to be working in Saul. Sin was the quiet culprit, working death in him by that which was good. The issue is to show sin to be exceeding sinful.

Verse 14 *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

In Verse 12, Paul called the law holy, just and good. Here, he says it is spiritual but he says of himself that he is carnal. The word 'carnal' means fleshly; what we are by nature. Paul then says he is 'sold under sin' and is a condition explaining one in bondage under sin - slave-market talk. It describes those that are not

born again. This is man's state in Adam. His spirit is dead to God and under the dominion of sin; a condition from which the law could not deliver. This is the evil nature of all unsaved.

- **John 13:10** *Jesus saith to him, he that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*

The above mentioned verse shows Jesus pronouncing those who had been washed to be clean. They may be carnal as to their walk, but still clean as to their standing in Christ. You would never say of a man that had been made clean by the new birth— "He is sold under sin." What we see here is that the law had not the power to deliver from sin, to make clean. Only grace can do that. The one thing the law can do is describe our condition.

Verse 15 *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

We must realize that a man under the bondage of sin can wish he would do the things he wanted to do. But without the new birth and thus the Holy Spirit, it is not possible. Self cannot overcome the self-centered life. Only the blood of Christ can do that.

Verse 16 *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

We see Saul realizing he cannot clean himself up so as to please God. He thus gives consent to the law that it is doing its work in making Saul realize he is the sinner God says he is.

Verse 17 *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*

Some have misused this verse to remove responsibility but that is not the problem. This verse is showing the terrible power and bondage of sin. Only grace by the blood of Jesus can break this bondage; nothing or anyone but God can break this terrible condition.

Verse 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*

Saul, thus Paul is stating the true facts regarding our ability at self-improvement. "No good thing in the flesh."

- **1 Corinthians 2:14** *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

"To will is present with me." Saul was a Pharisee, trained in the law. He knew what God wanted but was finding he could not comply. Knowing the law as he did would cause him to have all sorts of desires or hopes that he could not fulfill.

Verse 19 and Verse 20 *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

These verses are a good description of the sin principle.

- **Romans 3:9** *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*

These verses are a clear picture of the fact that there is no good thing in the flesh. This is what is called total depravity. It is not enough to appeal to the will of man. Even if he willed it, he cannot do it. It is nothing short of tragic that many young people are being sent out to preach but do not know how to deal with the sin principle or how to reckon with God about their spiritual condition. When we see the statement "it is no more I that do it", we must not see it as an escape clause, but a recognizing the real problem: the nature of sin from Adam.

Verse 21 *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

This law is the sin principle found in the whole human race. The only solution for it is the blood of Jesus Christ. This law stops people from doing spiritual works. For a Pharisee to admit the presence of sin in him is unusual.

Verse 22 *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*

This is a much misunderstood verse. Many think that to delight in the law of God after the inward man proves being born again. This is possible. However, a good Pharisee loved the laws of God, but for the wrong reasons. The inward man is simply the man I am on the inside.

Verse 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.*

Another law in my members is the same law as in Verse 21.

Notice: It is warring against the law of my mind. In times of war, when a man was taken captive, this meant he was totally under the control of his captors. That is the condition of all human beings. Only the work of the cross can deliver from this.

One additional thought here: A believer can become captive to the enemy when he continues to walk in the flesh, doing his own will.

- **2 Timothy 2:26** *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

Verse 24 *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

This is the cry of a man that is yet not renewed. However, he was beginning to be awakened by the word and also the ministry of the Spirit. Only the work of God in the life of a man can cause him to see his condition as wretched.

Verse 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.*

This shows the continuing work of God in him. He can now say "with my mind I myself serve the law of God." This is still intellectual but he will soon give up his will and accept Jesus Christ. This probably occurred on the road to Damascus. By the time we arrive at Romans 8:1, the work is all completed.