

In the Flesh



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The Seventh Chapter of Romans

What you believe about the Apostle Paul's message in the seventh chapter of Romans will absolutely determine the nature of your walk with Christ. In the book of Romans Paul lay's the gospel foundation for every child of God to build upon (I Corinthians 3:10). If the foundation is wrong, the house that is built is also wrong. If a person misses the message of the apostle and believes something other than what he clearly says, they will absolutely live their entire lifetime in the "*Romans Seven*" struggle with sin in their own heart. Before Paul gave his controversial scenario in the seventh chapter of Romans, he first told about "*freedom from sin*" in the sixth chapter, and "*freedom from the Law*" in the first four verses of the seventh chapter. That being the case, the great struggle he describes in the remainder of the seventh chapter cannot be a "*believer*" who "*knows the truth*" that Jesus said will "*make you free ...indeed.*"

The message for this month is an excerpt from the expanded version of the commentary on Romans, written by Leroy Surface, titled "**The Foundation.**"

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Foreword to Paul's Letter to the Romans

I Corinthians 3:10-11: *“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

The Apostle Paul makes several bold claims in his writings. For example, as he wrote in the text above, *“...I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”* In Galatians 1:11-12 he writes, *“...I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* We must make a choice as to what we believe about the apostle Paul. Did he truly receive the gospel he preached by revelation of Jesus Christ to be laid as the foundation of the church or was he just arrogant and egotistical? Was the gospel Paul preached indeed *“the gospel”* or was it just Paul's opinion?

Whether you believe that Paul was *“arrogant”* and *“egotistical,”* as some do, or whether you believe he was *an humble servant of Christ* as I believe, it is his claims concerning his *“revelation”* of the gospel and that he *“laid the foundation”* that every believer must consider. Paul said, *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, (from us) let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8-9).”* Was this *“arrogance”* on Paul's part or was it an awareness of the fact that even the slightest change in the gospel of Christ that was revealed to him would render it powerless? I believe it was the latter! When stating that he had *“laid the foundation,”* Paul gave a warning to all who would come after him, saying *“let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”* Again, was this *“arrogance”* on Paul's part or did the Lord choose this man to reveal His gospel so that in preaching

it he might lay the foundation of the church? I believe it was the latter.

Either the gospel Paul preached is the foundation the church was built upon, or Paul was an arrogant liar and a deceiver, and we should not accept or believe anything he said or wrote. This is similar to the argument that has been made for centuries concerning Jesus because of His claims to be the Son of God. If Jesus was not the Son of God, then He was a liar and a deceiver; but if He was not a liar and a deceiver, He was of necessity the “*Son of God*,” which His resurrection proved Him to be (Romans 1:4). There can be no middle ground for those who make such claims. If Paul was in fact an “*apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*” as He claimed (I & II Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; I & II Timothy 1:1), and if he received the gospel by the revelation of Jesus Christ as he claimed (Galatians 1:11-12), then the gospel he preached **is** the foundation of the church. It is the gospel of “*Christ-crucified*,” and there is no other foundation.

Section Fourteen: In the Flesh ***“The Working of Sin”***

The message of this seventh chapter, just as the fourth chapter is to chapters three and five, seems to be a parenthesis inserted between the sixth and the eighth chapters, interrupting the message of the “*glorious liberty*” of the children of God. This seventh chapter is written to reveal the plight of those who are both “*in the flesh*” and “*married to the law*.” It is one of the “*darkest*” chapters in all of Paul’s writings. Even the reading of it seeks to pull the reader down into the despair of the twenty-fourth verse. It is necessarily so, because Paul is telling of his own experience as it was before he met Jesus. Romans 7:7-25 relates the experience of Saul of Tarsus.

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.

“...when we were in the flesh...” The word “*flesh*” is translated from the Greek word “*sarx*,” and has various meanings and applications as follows:

Strong’s definition of “sarx:” flesh (as stripped of the skin), i.e. (strictly) ***the meat of an animal*** (as food), or (by extension) ***the body*** (as opposed to the soul [or spirit], or as ***the symbol of what is external***, or as ***the means of kindred***), or (by implication) ***HUMAN NATURE*** (with its frailties [physically or morally] and passions), or (specifically) ***a human being*** (as such):

The proper understanding of the word “*flesh*” as used in the book of Romans is “*human nature*.” The term, “*when we were in the flesh*,” however, speaks of more than human nature. Paul was speaking of the time before he believed that Jesus is the Christ and tried to serve God through fleshly means under the Law of Moses. Paul asked the question of the Galatians who turned from Christ to trust in the law, “*Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh*” (Galatians 3:3). They had been “*born of the Spirit*,” but they were seeking to fulfill their salvation through the keeping of ordinances, principles, holy days, feast days, and rituals, all of which are dead works of religion, and all of which are performed “*by the flesh*.”

“...the motions of sins, which were by the law...” The word “*motions*” comes from the Greek word “*pathema*” which means “*something undergone, that is, hardship or pain; subjectively an emotion or influence*.” It is almost always translated as *sufferings or afflictions*. This verse speaks of the internal sufferings and strong emotional disturbances a person endures as the rebellious nature of fallen man struggles with the law that is imposed upon it. It is a seldom understood truth that the inner struggle with sin will increase when a person is brought under a law of commandments. The law gives the nature of man something to rebel against, thus exposing its sinfulness.

The Law does not create sin; it only identifies and forbids it. The very nature of sin is to rebel against the law. “*The motions of*

sins (the **emotions** of sins)” speaks of “*concupiscence*,” which is defined as “*longing, especially for that which is forbidden.*” It “*works in the members*” of every unregenerate person, but especially those who are “*under the law.*” When it is “*at work* (in motion),” every fiber of the human body will seem to crave what the law forbids. Its only fruit is “*unto death.*”

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.

“**But now we are delivered from the law...**” Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin. Being “*saved from sin*” we are also “*delivered from the law.*” And we are “*saved from sin*” in that we are “*dead to sin.*” It is in this same manner that we are delivered from the law. In this verse, Paul uses two corresponding phrases which mean the same thing. They are, “*...we are delivered from the law,*” and “*being dead wherein we were held.*” We are delivered from the law only “*through death with Christ.*” “*Our old man is crucified with Christ...*” (Romans 6:6) through faith in Christ, and we are freed from both sin and the Law. I cannot emphasize enough that “*sin*” and “*the law*” are irrevocably connected. The “*law*” is the proper husband for a sinner. Wherever you find sin, there you will also find the law. Do not be deceived that the answer to the sin problem is to “*revoke the Law.*” A great shame in the church today is that so many rejoice that they are “*free from the Law*” even as they angrily deny that we are “*freed from sin.*”

“**...that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.**” God promised (Jeremiah 31:31-33), and the writer of Hebrews confirms (Hebrews 8:8-13) that the “*New Covenant*” is “*God’s law written in the heart of His children.*” This is “*newness of spirit.*” This is “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” It is Christ who now **lives** in us. To serve God in the “*oldness of the letter*” is to try to please God through human obedience to laws, whether they are written in ink, or engraved in stone.

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 the remaining verses of this chapter, Paul relates his experience as Saul of Tarsus. In this verse, he is speaking as one “*delivered from the law*” to “*serve God in newness of spirit,*” while looking back at his experience under the law. He shows that the law was not his problem, but even as a devout Jew, sin had been the problem all along. The law only identified sin. When the law said to Paul (Saul of Tarsus), “*Thou shalt not covet* (the tenth commandment),” Saul discovered that even the “*desires of his heart*” were also sin.

“...for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” Jesus said, “*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees had no problem keeping the first nine commandments, because these only regulated outward behavior. In these they were “*blameless.*” It is the tenth and last commandment, “*Thou shalt not covet,*” that destroys the “*righteousness*” of the “*self-righteous.*” It is the only commandment that discovers and uncovers the sin that is resident in the heart of man. It is the only commandment that no one can obey by the force of his or her will power. The tenth commandment is the source of the breaking of all other commandments. Take covetousness out of the heart of man and he cannot break any law of God, because “*covetousness*” is the nature and source of all sin. This one commandment ultimately stripped Saul of Tarsus of all *his* righteousness that was by the law, and destroyed *him* in his own sight.

There are Ten Commandments of God, six hundred and thirteen commandments of Moses, and many hundreds of “*traditions of the fathers.*” Saul of Tarsus kept all of these so blamelessly in their outward form that he found none that could condemn him. But from the moment he understood the tenth commandment,

which exposed sin in his heart, it was as though there was but one commandment, *“Thou shalt not covet,”* and from that day he spoke of it in the singular as **“The Commandment.”** In the next six verses, he will use this term six times. In every case he is speaking of the tenth commandment: *“Thou shalt not covet.”*

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

“But sin, taking occasion by *the commandment...*” To this point, Paul has used the word *“law”* fifty three times in this book of Romans. This is the first time he uses the word *“commandment,”* which he will use six times within the next five verses, after which he will use the word *“law”* another twenty two times in the remainder of his letter. His brief usage of the term *“the commandment”* does not speak of the law in general, but of the one specific commandment, *“thou shalt not covet.”* Notice Paul’s words in the seventh verse; *“I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”* Something awakened Saul of Tarsus to the sin that was in his heart; the sin that could only be identified by the tenth commandment: *“Thou shalt not covet.”*

Saul of Tarsus had been taught the law from the time he was an infant. It was with him day and night. Saul was not, as the Jews called others, a *“sinner of the Gentiles”* (Galatians 2:15). His lifestyle was blameless (Philippians 3:6). No one could convict Saul of transgressing the law. He was *“exceedingly zealous”* of the traditions of the fathers, and *“profited in the Jew’s religion above his equals”* (Galatians 1:14). Saul was never *“without the law”* in the sense of being *“lawless;”* he kept the law to the tiniest detail. He loved the law; he meditated on it day and night. To Saul, the law was not a harsh taskmaster. It identified no sin in Saul, for he was righteous according to all that he read and understood in the law. There came a day, however, that Saul *“read”* the law as it was written on the heart of a man.

Jesus said of the Pharisees, *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin...If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father”* (John 15:22, 24). In the case of Saul of Tarsus, it was not Jesus, but Stephen who came to touch his life. It was Stephen, whose face was seen *“as it had been the face of an angel,”* even while he was being falsely accused (Acts 6:15). It was Stephen, who spoke the truth without fear to a court predetermined to slay him (Acts 7:1-53); who saw the glory of God and testified to seeing Jesus at the right hand of God even as the members of the religious court *“gnashed on him with their teeth.”* It was this same Stephen who used his last breath to pray for the angry mob who stoned him to death, saying, *“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”*

We know that the New Covenant is God’s law written on the hearts of His children. Oh what a contrast Saul of Tarsus saw that day between Stephen, who had God’s law written on his heart, and those devout Jews, including himself, who only had it as it was *“engraved in stone.”* For the first time Saul of Tarsus saw the *“Law of God”* written in life, and it identified him as a sinner. He now understood the tenth commandment, *“Thou shalt not covet,”* because in Stephen, he saw a man with a *“pure heart”* who was free from *“covetousness.”*

“But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence...” *“Concupiscence”* in this verse is the same as *“lust”* in the previous verse. In Romans 5:20, Paul said, *“The law entered, that the offence might abound.”* *“Sin, taking occasion by the commandment (thou shalt not covet),”* found a place in Saul to bring every manner of sinful desire, and he became a *“wretched man”* filled with hatred and murder against the Christians. Saul was just like the Pharisees that Jesus spoke of; if he had never seen Stephen, he *“would not have had sin,”* that is, he would not be aware of his sinfulness, but now he had seen Stephen, and hated both Stephen and his Lord. In Saul’s sight, the *“Christians”* were the cause of his

every problem. It was after Saul “*consented to the death of Stephen* (Acts 8:1)” that he “*made havoc of the church*” (Acts 8:3), and “*breathed out slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*” (Acts 9:1).

“For without the law sin was dead.” This phrase is best understood when connected to the next verse...

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

“For I was alive without the law once...” Over forty years ago, during the time of the civil rights movement in America, I knew of a man who was Sunday School Superintendent in a church near Houston. He was a good man, who served God along with his wife and small children. He loved the brethren and the church loved and respected him as a wonderful Christian man. One Sunday a godly black man visited their church, arriving just as the superintendent finished his duties. Upon seeing the black man enter, the superintendent walked down the aisle to his family, said out loud to his wife and children, “*Let’s go! If ‘they’ are coming, we are not,*” and with that, they left the service. The black man never came back, and the superintendent tried to continue as before, but he could not. Everything about him was changed, and it was not long until he quit the church and entered a life of open sin. That man had “*been alive*” once (he was alive in his own sight), but when he discovered the sinfulness of his own heart (hatred), he died, and sin became his master. In fact, sin had always been there, but it had been dormant, or as the Greek word Paul used, it had been a “*corpse*.” The “*corpse*” revived that day, and slew the man. As with Saul of Tarsus, if he had never come face to face with the target of his hatred, he would never have known his sinfulness, but now, he knew, and he died.

In everything Paul relates about his experience with sin and the law before he was saved, there is a parallel experience for every “*Christian*” who is moved away from Christ-crucified to trust, either in the law, or in the thousands of man-made principles of religion which promise righteousness. Notice the wording in this

verse; “...*sin revived, and I died.*” Whether this chapter speaks of Saul of Tarsus, a man married to the law, but never to Christ, or whether it speaks of one who was “*married to Christ,*” but turned once again to the law for righteousness, the results are the same; “*sin*” is “*alive,*” and the man is “*dead.*” This chapter cannot relate the experience of any person God will receive. He may have once known God, but if so, he is now backslidden and lost, though he may also be very religious.

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

The commandment, “*Thou shalt not covet*” is life to one and death to another. Let me explain! A sinner is convicted of sin and repents. He comes to God believing the gospel that his “*old man of sin*” (Romans 6:6) is nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ. He hears the words, “*thou shalt not covet,*” and rejoices, because his former life had been destroyed by covetousness (as is every life without Christ). His heart, having now been “*purified by faith*” (Acts 15:9), has no covetousness in it. He rejoices that “*the Son has made him free*” and he is “**free indeed**” (John 8:36). “*Thou shalt not covet*” is good and wonderful news to this man, because covetousness has been taken out of his heart and if he “*abides in Christ*” he will never “*covet*” again. To this man, “*thou shalt not covet*” is not a carnal commandment, but it is the reality of what God has written on his heart. On the other hand, to those who are merely religious, “*thou shalt not covet*” is the most “*grievous*” of all commandments. For Saul of Tarsus in his self-righteous state, the commandment was “*unto death.*”

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

When Paul speaks of “*the commandment,*” he is still speaking of that one commandment, “*thou shalt not covet.*” Sin had no occasion against Saul of Tarsus in any other commandment. He was much like the “*rich young ruler,*” who walked sorrowfully away from Jesus; “*All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*” (Matthew 16:19-22). The “*lack*” of both these young

men was revealed by the tenth commandment, “*thou shalt not covet.*” The rich young ruler walked away “*sorrowful*” because he had great riches. Saul, discovering the meaning of the tenth commandment, was deceived. He would obey this commandment also and be perfect. It was only then that he began to discover the nature of “*sin*” that was in him. The warfare had begun.

Multitudes in the churches today are also deceived by sin and condemned by the same commandment. In order to make the fact of sin in their heart acceptable, they are taught that the Law of God has been abolished. Others teach that the things we have no control over cannot condemn us. In fact, the tenth commandment is the only commandment that exposes the sin that is in the heart of man, and that “*sin*” is what Jesus died to take away (John 1:29). Saul of Tarsus found no remedy in the Law of Moses that would satisfy the Law of God. When “*the commandment came,*” that is, when understanding of the commandment came, it destroyed all his righteousness and he became as a living dead man.

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

Paul defends the Law of God, and specifically the tenth commandment as “*holy, and just, and good.*”

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.

Paul continues his defense of the tenth commandment. Remember that the commandment was “*ordained unto life*” (verse ten). It is the source of “*glorious liberty*” to the redeemed (Romans 8:21). Saul’s problem was not “*the commandment;*” it was the covetousness of his heart.

“...that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful...” Saul of Tarsus was a man who could not be condemned

by any of the first nine commandments (Philippians 3:6). He had never considered the desires of his heart to be sin because of the fact that he did not obey them. Now that he understood the tenth commandment, *“thou shalt not covet,”* Saul understood that he was not only a *“sinner,”* but that he was *“exceeding sinful.”* In the definition of the Greek word translated *“exceeding,”* we see that Saul saw himself as a sinner *“beyond others.”* Years later Paul confirmed this in I Timothy 1:15 when he said he was *“chief of sinners.”* As Jesus had told the Pharisees, he was like the sepulchers of the prophets; he was *“beautiful on the outside,”* but on the inside he was *“full of dead men’s bones,”* and now, he knew it.

It is a good thing when *“sin”* becomes *“exceeding sinful”* in the eyes of man. Saul’s *“perfect righteousness* (Philippians 3:6) under the law kept Him from Jesus, but his *“exceeding sinfulness”* caused him to cry for a savior, which he found in Jesus.

Section Fifteen: In the Flesh ***“Sold Under Sin”***

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

With this verse we must make some distinctions between the *“Law of God”* and the *“Law of Moses.”* The Law of God is spiritual, and is written in the hearts of those who are *“born again”* of the Spirit of God (Hebrews 8:8-13). The Law of Moses, which was *“added because of transgressions,”* (Galatians 3:19) is a carnal law (Hebrews 7:16, 9:10), which was given to a carnal people. When God spoke from the mountain to give His Law to the congregation of Israel in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, they could not receive it because they were a *“carnal people.”* God defined the problem to Moses in Deuteronomy 5:29, *“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would*

fear me, and keep all my commandments always....” They could not, because they were *“carnal, sold under sin.”*

The Greek word *“sarkikos,”* which was translated *“carnal”* in this verse, means *“similar to flesh”* and was translated as both *“carnal,”* and *“fleshly.”* This was the state of Saul of Tarsus; He was *“...fleshly, and sold under sin.”* The Greek word for *“flesh”* is *“sarx,”* and speaks of the *“human nature”* which is *“sold under sin.”* In the verses that follow he lays out the proof that he was sold under sin. It is important to remember when reading this passage that the children of God are not *“sold under sin”* but they are *“redeemed from all iniquity”* (Titus 2:14). Saul of Tarsus was once *“sold under sin,”* but when he received Christ he became one who was *“bought with a price.”*

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

The great apostle Paul continues speaking as Saul of Tarsus for the remainder of this chapter. He offers proof of Saul’s carnality until the day of his surrender to Jesus Christ; *“...what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”* It is here that he begins to describe the *“motions of sin which were by the law”* that he spoke of in the fifth verse.

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

Saul recognizes that if righteousness does not reign in his heart, he must have a law to control his actions, therefore he consents that the law is good.

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

Saul recognizes that if he is doing things he doesn’t want to do then something else is in control. It is not him, but sin that is in his heart and nature. He is a slave to sin. This is how he came to understand that he was *“sold under sin”* as he said in verse fourteen.

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.

“...(that is, in my flesh,)...” The word “*flesh*” as used in this verse does not refer to the physical “*body*,” but rather to the “*human nature*” which controls the body. “*For I know that in me (that is, in my **human nature**,) dwelleth no good thing...*” It is Saul of Tarsus who comes to this realization, and the proof of it is, “*for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*” It was in his “*mind*” to serve God, but it was in his “*nature*” to serve sin. He had the “*will*” to perform, but he did not have the “*way*.” What a sad predicament for people to find themselves in, but there are far too many who are.

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

This verse continues to prove there was nothing good in Saul of Tarsus, even though he had lived “*blamelessly*” according to the Law of Moses for his entire lifetime (Philippians 3:6). Remember the saying of the rich young ruler who walked sorrowfully away from Jesus; “*All these have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*” (Matthew 19:20). Jesus revealed his “*lack*” in the next verse; “*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me*” (Matthew 19:21). It was the tenth commandment, “*thou shalt not covet,*” that caused the rich young ruler to “*go away sorrowful.*”

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

Saul of Tarsus discovered that even if he had never committed an outward act of sin, yet sin dwelt in him. It was proven to Saul because he began doing things he did not want to do.

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

It is the nature of sin to resist the good and do the evil. As long as sin remains in the heart he may struggle to do the good, and may even succeed in the working of good deeds, but sin is always present with its evil desires in the heart of the unregenerate man.

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

The “*inward man*” of Saul of Tarsus was his mind and intellect. Intellectually, he loved the Law of God, “*but...*”

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.

“*Human nature,*” when left to itself, is no better or higher than the beasts of the field. It is the intellect that makes man to be above the beasts. The Law of God, being “*spiritual,*” was given to “*define*” the higher divine nature, but Israel could not receive it. The Law of Moses was given to “*control*” human nature. Notice the level of some of the commandments: “*If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them*” (Leviticus 20:13-16). Human nature, without the restraints of law, will descend to the level of the beast of the field. It is only the “*disciplines*” of law, whether religious or secular, that hinders that bestial level of human nature.

Saul of Tarsus was well disciplined by the Law of Moses. Such behavior as described above was out of the question, yet he, as does every unregenerate person, had sin dwelling in his human nature, seeking control of his members. The “*law in his members*” that warred against the “*law of his mind*” was simply

his “*sinful human nature*” that warred against his mind and intellectual desire to please God.

“...warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin...” This phrase brings to mind the methods of ancient warfare. A city with strong walls would come under attack by a powerful enemy. For a time, the walls would hold against the siege, but the city would be cut off from all supplies from without. Daily, the battering rams and the catapults would batter the walls, while inside the city the food supplies would be rationed. The battering of the walls would continue night and day until the walls were breached, at which time the malnourished inhabitants would be taken captive and led away as slaves. This is the description of the warfare within Saul of Tarsus after the “*sin*” in his heart was discovered by “*the commandment* (thou shalt not covet).” His “*walls of defense*” built up by the Law of Moses were battered to the ground, and Saul could no longer keep himself. He was “*brought into captivity*” to that “*law of sin* (sinful human nature)” which was in his members.

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

It must have been during the time that Saul of Tarsus was “*breathing out threatenings and slaughter*” (Acts 9:1), and “*making havock of the churches*” (Acts 8:3), that he became a “*wretched man*” in his own sight. It is very likely that his words “*the evil which I would not, that I do*” was speaking of his rage against the church. He who had thought himself to be so righteous by the Law discovered in himself an uncontrollable hatred that dominated his every thought. From within, though never publicly, there came the cry, “*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*” The term “*body of this death*” is used in the same way as “*the body of sin*” in Romans 6:6, and speaks of the “*entire body* (or source) *of sin and death.*” It was that “*cry for deliverance*” that brought Saul of Tarsus into a direct confrontation with Jesus Christ (Acts 9:3-5). There, he found the

answer, given in the next verse, which is the basis for the gospel of Jesus Christ as the apostle Paul preached it.

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.

Thank God, there is deliverance from sin “*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” How this was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the indescribably “*good news*” which is called “*The gospel of Jesus Christ.*” The last phrase of this verse closes out the chapter, defining for one last time the dilemma of Saul of Tarsus before he met Jesus. With his mind (intellect) he served the Law of God, but in his human nature, he was the slave of sin.

Section Sixteen: In the Flesh ***“The Carnal Mind”***

In this eighth chapter, Paul shows the “*glorious liberty,*” the “*overcoming power,*” and the “*complete victory*” of those who are “*in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

“**There is therefore now...**” The word “*therefore,*” translated from the Greek word “*ara,*” draws a conclusion about those who are “*in Christ Jesus.*” They are not condemned. They do not live under the “*death sentence*” due to sin; neither do their “*hearts condemn them*” (I John 3:20-21). The word “*now*” speaks of “*now...in Christ Jesus,*” and draws a contrast between those who are “*married to Jesus*” and those who are “*married to the law.*” It is a contrast between those who have received the “*glorious liberty (from sin) of the children of God*” (Romans 8:21), and those who continually struggle in the bondage

expressed in the seventh chapter of those who are “*under the law.*”

“...no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...”

The word “*condemnation*” is translated from the Greek word “*katakrima,*” which means “*adverse sentence.*” It speaks of the “*death sentence*” that is upon every person because of sin that entered with Adam’s disobedience. It is in the third verse of this chapter that Paul will tell us why we are not condemned.

“...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The word “*after,*” used two times in this phrase, is translated from the Greek word “*kata.*” It was most commonly translated “*according to,*” and “*after.*” These translations do not do justice to the word as it is used in this verse. “*Kata,*” in this verse, is best understood to indicate the “*source*” of the walk of those who are in Christ. Their source is the Spirit, and not the flesh (or, human nature). It is also beneficial to understand that Paul often used “*flesh*” and “*Spirit*” to identify the two covenants, “*law,*” and “*grace*” (Galatians 3:3).

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The two “*laws*” spoken of in this verse are spiritual realities that are absolute in their dominion. The “*law of sin and death*” has dominion over those who are still “*in the flesh*” because they have not been “*born of the Spirit*” (John 3:6). The “*law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*” describes the reality of those who are “*in Christ.*”

“...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...” The “*law of the Spirit*” is “*life in Christ Jesus.*” Jesus Christ is the only source of “*life*” to fallen man. This term is describing the glorious life and freedom from sin that is given us in Christ Jesus. The phrase “*...hath made me free...*” should have been translated “*hath liberated me*” from the law of sin and death.

“...the law of sin and death.” If the “*law of the Spirit*” is “*life in Christ Jesus,*” it follows that the “*law of sin and death*” is the

“sin and death” that inherently reigns in the human nature of man. The *“law of sin and death”* speaks of the dominion that sin and death received over all mankind through Adam’s transgression. This is the same *“law”* that Saul of Tarsus discovered working in his members bringing him into captivity (Romans 7:23). Thank God, we are delivered from *“sin and death”* through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

“What the law could not do” is defined in the last phrase, *“condemned sin in the flesh.”* The law could *“condemn (try, condemn, and punish) the man,”* but it could never *“condemn (try, condemn, and punish)”* the sin that was in the man. God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (human nature) for the express purpose of condemning, not the man that was in sin, but the sin that was in the nature of the man. John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the world saying, *“Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). This is what Jesus did through His death on the cross. Paul explained it best in Romans 6:6; *“Knowing this, that our old man (of sin) is crucified with Him, that the body (the entire body and source) of sin might be destroyed....”*

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The Greek word *“hina,”* which was translated as *“that,”* means *“in order that.”* Jesus passed the death sentence against sin which is in the heart and nature of man, and nailed it to His cross, *“in order that”* the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us...” The only *“righteousness”* the Law of Moses could give was *“death to the sinner.”* The righteousness of God at Calvary was to slay the sin which is in the sinner, hence *“the righteousness of the law (of Moses),”* which is death to the sinner, is *“fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after*

the Spirit.” The Law of God, which had been engraved in stone, is now engraved in the hearts of those who are “*born of God*” and thus the righteousness of the God’s law is also “*fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

Those who live by their human nature think on and desire the things of the natural man. Their “*affection*” is on “*things of earth* (Colossians 3:2),” and they take care of those things. Those whose life is of the Spirit and grace of God think on and desire the things of God. Their affection is on “*things above,*” and they “*seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*” (Colossians 3:1). It is actually a matter of what you are “*born of.*” Jesus said, “*That which is born of the flesh* (fallen human nature) *is flesh* (fallen human nature); *and that which is born* (born again) *of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6).

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

In this verse a new English word is introduced. The word “*carnally*” is translated from the Greek word “*sarx,*” and is used just as the word “*flesh*” was used in previous verses. It speaks of “*human nature*” under the control of sin. The word “*minded,*” translated from the Greek word “*phronema,*” speaks of “*inclination or purpose.*” “*Carnally minded*” relates to those who are “*born of the flesh;*” they are “*flesh;*” sin dwells in their nature, and their inclinations and purposes are “*fleshly.*” That is the definition of “(spiritual) *death.*” Paul did not say the “*carnally minded will die;*” he said “*to be carnally minded is death.*” To be “*spiritually minded*” relates to those who are “*born of the Spirit;*” they are spirit, and their inclinations and purposes are spiritual. Paul makes the conclusion, “*to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*”

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Human nature under the control of sin is the enemy of God. The inclinations and purposes of man, which have their source in a nature polluted with sin, is what Paul called “*enmity*” in this verse. The Greek word “*echthra*,” translated “*enmity*,” is defined by “*Strong’s concordance*” as “*hostility; ... a reason for opposition.*” It is the “*quality*” that makes unregenerate man the “*enemy of God.*” Paul concludes that human nature with indwelling sin is not subject to the Law of God because it cannot be. That “*impossibility*” brings another conclusion in the next verse:

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

We must keep in mind that it is not our “*body*” that is the enemy of God, but the “*human nature*” that sin dwells in. The conclusion is that “*fallen human nature*” cannot please God.

Section Seventeen: In the Spirit
“Quickened by the Holy Ghost”

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Paul has drawn several conclusions in previous verses, each of them proving more and more that man can never please God through his own abilities or the inclinations of human nature. In this ninth verse, he brings yet another conclusion, this one with great hope. “*...ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*” All previous conclusions were based upon the fact of sin dwelling in the nature of man. This conclusion is based upon the fact of the “*Spirit of God*” dwelling “*in us*,” that is, “*in our nature.*” It is impossible for the Spirit of God to “*co-habit*” with sin, therefore the conclusion, “*Ye are not in the flesh...if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*”

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