



Commentary on Romans

“The Gospel of God”

Chapter 7

By

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We learned in Chapter 6 that we are “dead to sin and alive to God.” God in His great love, mercy and grace has changed us from “slaves of sin to slaves of God.” Paul used the example of slavery heavily in Chapter 6. A central point of Chapter 6 is when Paul made a truth claim followed by a question — “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (verses 14-15)

We move now to Chapter 7 where we will learn that we have been “freed from the Law.” Paul used an example from personal life (marital law) that helped his readers understand the obligation of Law as it relates to the power of the sin. He also addressed the experience of living “in the flesh” and “in the Spirit.”

Outlining Chapter 7

- Verses 1-6 are about being freed (liberated) from the Law.
- Verses 7-13 addresses how the Law works and the advantage sin has in the Law.
- Verses 14-25 shows the power of sin and how the Law cannot save us from sin. (NKJV)

Here are some other outlines you may find helpful in your study:

- Died to the Law .. 1-6
- Doomed by the Law .. 7-13
- Defeated by the Law .. 14-25 (Bible.org)
- Released From the Law, Bound to Christ .. 1-6
- The Law and Sin .. 7-25 (NIV)
- Believers United to Christ .. 1-13
- The Conflict of Serving Two Masters .. 14-25 (NASB)
- Released from the Law .. 1-6
- The Law and Sin .. 7-25

- No Longer Condemned by Law .. 1-25 (New American Commentary Vol 27: Romans)
- Released from the Law .. 1-6
- Law Good; Sin Bad .. 7-12
- The Role of Indwelling Sin .. 13-25 (Romans: Exegetical Guide To The Greek New Testament)

Verse One

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

η αγνοειτε αδελφοι γινωσκουσιν γαρ νομον λαλω οτι ο νομος κυριευει του ανθρωπου εφ οσον χρονον ζη

η αγνοειτε αδελφοι (Ē agnoeite adelphoi) “or are you ignorant brothers” ... it’s important to remember that Paul did not write his letter in chapters and verses .. this question flows naturally from what immediately preceded it ...

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of

*God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ROMANS
6:20-23*

Paul asked his readers another question: "Or do you not know, brethren ... ?" The word *agnoeite* means "do not know, am ignorant of" ... it was used sometimes of willful ignorance ... Paul called them "brethren" (*adelphoi* – brother, member of same religious community) .. these were people who believed in Jesus Christ .. they shared a common faith ..

γινωσκουσιν γαρ νομον λαλω (*ginōskousin gar nomon lalō*)
"to those knowing for law I speak" ... Paul was speaking specifically to Jewish believers who were well acquainted with the Mosaic Law .. the word *ginōskousin* means "knowledge gained through personal experience" .. Jews learned and experienced the Mosaic Law from childhood .. they were well-acquainted with its wording and meaning ..

οτι ο νομος κυριευει του ανθρωπου εφ οσον χρονον ζη
(*hoti ho nomos kurieuei tou anthrōrou eph' hoson chronon zē*) “that the law rules over the man for as long as long as the time he is alive” .. Jews knew that the Mosaic Law ruled over Jewish people from birth to death .. Paul’s question to them was rhetorical .. they knew the answer .. Paul used the question as part of his instructing them in the difference between Law and Grace .. the word *kurieuei* means “to be lord of, have authority over

Verse Two

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband.

η γαρ υπανδρος γυνη τω ζωντι ανδρι δεδεται νομω εαν δε αποθανη ο ανηρ κατηργηται απο του νομου του ανδρος

η γαρ υπανδρος γυνη τω ζωντι ανδρι δεδεται νομω (*hē gar hupandros gynē tō zōnti andri dedetai nomō*) “the for married woman to the living husband is bound by law” .. the word *hupandros* means “under the power or subject to a man, subject to a husband, married) .. *zōnti* means “am alive” .. *dedetai* means “to tie, bind, fasten” .. *nomō* means “law” ..

Paul used the example of marriage to demonstrate the power of the law while someone is alive .. a married woman was "bound" by Law to her living husband as long as he was alive ..

εαν δε αποθανη ο ανηρ κατηργηται απο του νομου του ανδρος (*ean de apothanē ho anēr katērgētai apo tou nomou tou andros*) "if however should die the husband she is cleared from the law of the husband" .. the word *katērgētai* means "to render inoperative, abolish, make of no effect, annul, sever, separate from" .. a married woman was no longer under the "law" of her husband after his death .. even though she was still alive, the authority that her husband had over her legally ended upon his physical death .. a widow was no longer legally connected to her dead husband, though she would have emotional ties to her life with him .. she was released from the obligations of the law .. Jewish Christians would have acknowledged that to be true ..

Verse Three

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

αρα ουν ζωντος του ανδρος μοιχαλις χρηματισει εαν γενηται ανδρι ετερω εαν δε αποθανη ο ανηρ ελευθερα εστιν απο του νομου του μη ειναι αυτην μοιχαλιδα γενομενην ανδρι ετερω

αρα ουν ζωντος του ανδρος μοιχαλις χρηματισει εαν γενηται ανδρι ετερω (*ara oun zōntos tou andros moichalis chrēmatisēi ean genētai andri heterō*) “then therefore being alive the husband an adulteress she will be called if she is to man another” .. *moichalis* means “married woman who commits adultery” .. as long as a woman’s husband was alive, she would be a law breaker if she had sexual relations with a man who was not her husband .. the consequences of a married woman committing adultery were severe .. “The man

who commits adultery with *another* man's wife, *he* who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death." (Leviticus 20:10)

εαν δε αποθανη ο ανηρ ελευθερα εστιν απο του νομου του μη ειναι αυτην μοιχαλιδα γενομενην ανδρι ετερω (*ean de apothanē ho anēr eleuthera estin apo tou nomou tou mē einai autēn moichalida genomenēn andri heterō*) "if however should die the husband free she is from the law so as for not to be her an adulteress having been to man another" .. a married woman whose husband had died would not be an adulteress if she was with another man .. why? because she was freed from the law of her husband upon his death ..

Verse Four

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

ωστε αδελφοι μου και υμεις εθανατωθητε τω νομω δια του σωματος του χριστου εις το γενεσθαι υμας ετερω τω εκ νεκρων εγερθεντι ινα καρποφορησωμεν τω θεω

ωστε αδελφοι μου (*hōste adelphoi mou*) “likewise brothers of me” .. the word *hōste* means “so then, as both and” .. it’s a conjunction that connects cause to effect which emphasizes result (Strong’s Concordance) .. Paul used a term of endearment (brothers of me, my brethren), which reminded the Romans that Paul was writing to them from a position of love and concern for them ..

και υμεις εθανατωθητε τω νομω δια του σωματος του χριστου (*kai humeis ethanatōthēte tō nomō dia tou sōματος του χριστου*) “also you have been put to death to the law through the body of Christ” .. Paul wrote that like the widow who was severed from the obligation of the law by the death of her husband, so a Christian is severed from obligation of the law by their death to the law .. as Paul wrote in Romans 6:14, “for you are not under law but under grace.” .. the reason a Christian is not under law is because they died to the law .. how did that happen? They became dead to the law “through the body of Christ.” Here’s a reminder of what Paul wrote about this earlier in Romans:

And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus

Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. Romans 5:16-18

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:20-21

Or do you not know that as many of us as 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, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:3-4

Now 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 dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Romans 6:8-10

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:22-23

We died to the Law and its obligations and power through faith in Christ because Jesus died and rose again.

εις το γενεσθαι υμας ετερω τω εκ νεκρων εγερθεντι ινα καρποφορησωμεν τω θεω (*eis to genesthai humas heterō tō ek nekrōn egerthenti hina karpophorēsōmen tō Theō*) “for to belong you to another to the one out from the dead having been raised so that we should bear fruit to God” .. this

continues Paul's example of the married woman who became a widow at the death of her husband .. she could marry again and bear fruit (children, good works) to a new husband because she was free from the legal obligation she had been under with her first husband prior to his death .. in the same way, Christians are dead to the law through the death of Christ and are raised to life to serve God and bear fruit to Him.

It's important that we do not lose sight of the fact that Christians have a new obligation. It's no longer to the Mosaic Law. The new obligation is to Christ our Lord and Savior. Paul addressed the importance of bearing fruit several sentences earlier:

What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. Romans 6:21-22

God has prepared for each of us to bear fruit to His glory. As Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. Ephesians 5:8-9

And in his letter to the Colossians:

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it

has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. Colossians 1:3-6

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Colossians 1:9-12

And in his letter to the Galatians:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
l o n g s u f f e r i n g ,
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-
control. Against such there is no law. Galatians
5:22-23*

Other Commentaries

The apostle speaks of Christ as the husband of the believing Jews, because he was now become their Lord and head; and he calls him another husband, because they had been formerly, as it were, married to the Mosaic law, and relied on that alone for salvation. And the crucifixion of their old man, or corrupt nature, and their obtaining a new nature, through the death of Christ, was a fit preparation of them for being espoused to Christ. Benson Commentary

The sense, is, therefore, that by the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice; by his suffering for us what would be sufficient to meet the demands of the Law; by his taking our place, he has released us from the Law as a way of justification; freed us from its penalty; and saved us from its curse. Thus released, we are at liberty to be united to the law of him who has thus bought us with his blood. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

The death of the believer took place when by faith that person became identified with the crucified Christ (cf. 6:3–7). Christ’s death to and for sin becomes our death to sin (cf. Gal 2:19–20). The purpose of this death is that we might belong to another husband—to the one who was raised from the dead. The one in whom we died becomes the very one in whom we find our new life. Our Savior becomes our new ‘husband.’ And this, in turn, is in order that we may bear fruit to God. Robert H. Mounce (2012). New American Commentary Vol 27: Romans. B&H Publishing Group.

What an exciting truth Paul gives us in the first four verses of Romans 7! May we grasp this truth and live our lives freely and fully to bear fruit to God.

Verse Five

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

οτε γαρ ημεν εν τη σαρκι τα παθηματα των αμαρτιων τα δια του νομου ενεργειτο εν τοις μελεσιν ημων εις το καρποφορησαι τω θανατω

οτε γαρ ημεν εν τη σαρκι (*hote gar ēmen en tē sarkī*) “while for we were in the flesh” .. the phrase “*en tē sarkī*” speaks to the time in life prior to a person’s salvation .. the idea of being “in the flesh” is control .. an unsaved person is “in the flesh” in the sense that the flesh (the sin nature) controls their thinking and behavior .. the word *hote* concerns time (when) .. the word *gar* refers to a continuation .. Paul reminded his readers of their life before they became Christians .. he included himself, “For when we were in the flesh” ..

τα παθηματα των αμαρτιων (*ta pathēmata tōn hamartiōn*) “the passions of sins” .. the word *pathēmata* means “affection, impulse, passion, strong emotion” .. passion is not in itself a bad thing .. strong emotions can be connected to positive thoughts and behavior .. however, the strong emotion Paul referred to concerns *hamartiōn* (sins, failure, missing the mark) .. it is a negative passion .. Paul used the phrase to help explain the full implication of what it means to be “in the flesh” .. someone who is in the flesh is controlled by sinful passions .. (see Ephesians 2:1-3) ..

τα δια του νομου (*ta dia tou nomou*) “that were through the law” .. the word *dia* means “through, on account of, because of” .. it has the idea of going across something successfully .. sinful passions were “because of, on account of” the “law” .. Paul used the word “law” in Romans and other writings to refer to the Mosaic Law .. interesting that the NKJV, NIV and ESV chose to use the word “aroused” to translate the word .. the NASB chose the words “brought to light by” to translate.. We are reminded of what Paul wrote in Romans 3:30 —

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” We know about “sin” because we know the “law.” The Law of God reveals our sinfulness. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians — “The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. (1 Corinthians 15:56)

ενηργειτο εν τοις μελεσιν ημων (*enēргеito en tois melesin hēmōn*) “were at work in the members of us” .. *enēргеito* is a verb that means “to be at work, be energized, be operative, be active, put forth power, accomplish” .. this powerful action occurs “in the members of us” .. the word “members” is *melesin* and means “member of limb of the body, part belonging to the whole” .. the sinful passions we experienced as unbelievers had a powerful impact on our thinking and behavior .. what was that impact?

εις το καρποφορησαι τω θανατω (*eis to karpophorēsai tō thanatō*) “to the bringing forth of fruit to death” .. *karpophorēsai* means “to bear fruit, bring forth fruit” .. *thanatō* means “death – physical or spiritual, separation from life” ..

This is in direct contrast to verse four where Paul wrote – “we should bear fruit to God.” In verse four we see that becoming “dead to the law through the body of Christ” will bear fruit to God. In verse five we see that sinful passions aroused by the law “were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.” The Bible clearly tells disciples of Christ that they are to bear fruit to God (e.g. John 4; 12; 15). Only a saved person can bear fruit to God. All others bear fruit to death.

Verse Six

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

*νυνι δε κατηργηθημεν απο του νομου
αποθανοντες εν ω κατειχομεθα ωστε δουλευειν
ημας εν καινοτητι πνευματος και ου παλαιοτητι
γραμματος*

νυνι δε κατηργηθημεν απο του νομου (*nuni de katērgēthēmen apo tou nomou*) "now however we have been released from the law" .. *katērgēthēmen* is a verb that means "make idle, make inactive, abolish, rendered inoperative, make of no effect, sever, separate from, make completely inoperative, put out of use" ..

Paul uses a powerful contrast to make a powerful point. Even as a wife is released from her legal obligation when her husband dies, so a new believer is released (delivered) from the Law. Even as a widow is free to marry again, so a new believer is free to marry another – “to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”

That speaks to a personal relationship. The relationship of a wife to a husband is an intimate, personal relationship. If she were to have an intimate, personal relationship with another man while still married to her husband, that would be adultery. However, as a widow, she is free to develop a new intimate, personal relationship with another man who becomes her husband. The same is true with God. We cannot have an intimate, personal relationship with God as long as we are under the law of sin and death. However, as true believers in Jesus Christ, we are free to have an intimate, personal relationship with God.

αποθανοντες εν ω κατειχομεθα (*apothanontes en hō kateichometha*) “having died to that which we were bound” .. *kateichometha* is a verb that means “restrain, hold fast, hold back, hold down) .. The Law is confining, restraining on the unbeliever .. it keeps the unbeliever down, holds them back, from being able to serve God ..

ωστε δουλευειν ημας εν καινοτητι πνευματος (*hōste douleuein hēmas en kainotēti pneumatos*) “in order for to serve us in newness of the spirit” .. *douleuein* is a verb that means “to serve willingly as a slave, to obey from devotion” .. *kainotēti* is a noun that means “freshness, newness” .. *pneumatos* is a noun that means “wind, breath, spirit” ..

και ου παλαιοτητι γραμματος (*kai ou palaiotēti grammatos*) “and not in oldness of the letter” .. *palaiotēti* is a noun that means “obsolete, oldness” .. *grammatos* is a noun that means “writing, that which is written, document, letter” ..

This is another powerful contrast from Paul. A new believer dies to the Law that had previously restrained them from serving God freely. Instead of being an unwilling slave to the Law and sin, they become a willing and devoted slave (servant) of God. Their life is fresh and new, not like the old and obsolete life they had under the Law. We can serve God in the Spirit freely and fully, holding nothing back because nothing is holding us back from that service.

Other Commentaries

By the believer's death with Christ on the Cross, he was discharged from the law as the woman was discharged from the law which bound her to her husband. The believer is not under the law anymore, nor subject to it. Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Romans, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1955

By dying to that which was once in control, the believer is now released from the law and freed to serve in a new way. Formerly we were in bondage to written regulations. Law was our old master. But now we are set free to serve our new master in a new way, in the Spirit. The shift from law to Spirit is a shift from legalism to true spirituality. How unfortunate that so many believers continue to understand their Christian experience within an ethical framework determined by law. To serve in the Spirit is to live the resurrected life, to claim our rightful place in Christ. Dead to sin and

freed to live for righteousness, we now live lives that bear fruit for God. Robert H. Mounce, New American Commentary Vol 27: Romans, B&H Publishing Group, 2012

By death we are freed from obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her vows to her husband. In our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, and have no more to do with it than the dead servant, who is freed from his master, has to do with his master's yoke. The day of our believing, is the day of being united to the Lord Jesus. We enter upon a life of dependence on him, and duty to him. Good works are from union with Christ; as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its being united to its roots; there is no fruit to God, till we are united to Christ. The law, and the greatest efforts of one under the law, still in the flesh, under the power of corrupt principles, cannot set the heart right with regard to the love of God, overcome worldly lusts, or give truth and sincerity in the inward parts, or any thing that comes

by the special sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Nothing more than a formal obedience to the outward letter of any precept, can be performed by us, without the renewing, new-creating grace of the new covenant. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

The design of God in delivering us from the Law, is, that we might "serve him in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," that is, in such a spiritual way as the new state requires, and from such spiritual motives and aids as it furnishes; and not in the manner we were accustomed to do, under our old condition of subjection to the Law, in which we could yield only an external and forced obedience. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

*The Gospel thus both intends, and effects, the submission of the will to the will of God; a submission absolute and real; a bondservice. But the bond is now the power of adoring and grateful love.—It will be seen that we take 'Spirit' here to mean the Holy Paraclete. The Gr. word rarely, if ever, bears our modern sense of 'the spirit of a law, of an institution, &c.' It must here be, then, either the human spirit or the Divine Spirit. And as the idea of "the letter" is that of an objective ruling power, so it is best to explain 'the Spirit' as objective also to the man, and therefore here the Divine Spirit.—We may now paraphrase the last words, 'so that we might live as bondmen still, but in the sacred novelty of the bondservice which the Holy Ghost constrains, not in the now-obsolete way of the bondservice prescribed by the covenant of merit'.
Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*

Verse 7

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’

τι ουν ερουμεν ο νομος αμαρτια μη γενοιτο αλλα την αμαρτιαν ουκ εγνων ει μη δια νομου την τε γαρ επιθυμιαν ουκ ηδειν ει μη ο νομος ελεγεν ουκ επιθυμησεις

τι ουν ερουμεν (*ti oun eroumen*) “what then shall we say” .. Paul uses this literary technique to introduce a new division in the topic .. keep in mind that Paul’s audience includes Jews and Gentiles, however he said clearly just a few verses earlier that he was speaking “to those who know the law” (Romans 7:1) .. Paul is addressing his Jewish audience at this point in the letter .. Paul has already claimed that believers in Christ are not under the Law .. the apostle now takes it to the next

level by asking a question that some in his audience may have been asking at this point in reading the letter .. we might imagine how a Jew would have viewed what Paul had been claiming about the law and sin ..

ο νομος αμαρτια (*ho nomos hamartia*) "is the law sin" .. could it be the the Law of God is in itself sin or sinful? Was that what Paul was claiming? Jews would not have taken kindly to that, so Paul was quick to put that concern to rest ..

μη γενοιτο (*mē genoito*) "never may it be" .. the literal is "may it not become" .. Paul was saying "away with that thought!" Today, we might say something like "certainly not!" or "no way!" The Law being or becoming sin is not the point at all .. so, then, what is the point? Paul makes his point in an interesting way. He uses a personal experience from his spiritual life to answer the question about whether the Law could be sin.

αλλα την αμαρτιαν ουκ εγνων ει μη δια νομου (*alla tēn hamartian ouk egnōn ei mē dia nomō*) “but sin not have I known if not by law” .. Paul said he knew what sin was because of the Law of God ..

Paul wrote this in an earlier letter to Christians in the region of Galatia that helps us understand what Paul was telling the Romans: “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The Greek word for “tutor” is *paidagōgos* and means “trainer, tutor, schoolmaster, legally appointed overseers for training.” The Law, Paul wrote, is a tutor “to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The next verse is insightful – “But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Galatians 3:25). The words are consistent with what Paul later wrote the Romans.

Paul said he would not have known sin “if not by law.” The Law of God acted as a tutor, a trainer, to show Paul that he had sinned against God. What was the specific sin that opened Paul’s eyes to his sinfulness?

την τε γαρ επιθυμιαν ουκ ηδειν (*tēn te gar epithumian our ēdein*) “then for covetousness not I had been conscious of” .. the Holy Spirit convicted Paul of the sin of covetousness .. that’s how the Law tutored Paul about his spiritual need .. until that time Paul had seen himself as a model Jewish leader .. as most Pharisees of his day, Paul would have looked down on common sinners .. reminds me of what Jesus taught His disciples about the truth of sinfulness in the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) .. Pharisees had a very high view of their personal righteousness based on their keeping every aspect of the Law (though they couldn’t and didn’t which Jesus made clear in the Gospel accounts) ..

ει μη ο νομος ελεγεν ουκ επιθυμησεις (*ei mē ho nomos elegen ouk epithumēseis*) “if not the law had said not you shall covet” .. the words of the Law are what the Spirit of God used to tutor Paul .. because the Law said “you shall not covet,” Paul realized he had sinned against God .. the word for covet is *epithumia* and means “strong desire, passion, longing, lust” .. what did Paul covet? We don’t know for sure, but my guess it had something to do with his desire to climb

the ranks of Pharisaism .. the reason I think that is because of something the apostle wrote to the Philippians ..

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any

means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:4-11

You can see in Paul's words that he had once viewed his Jewish pedigree, training and service as a Pharisee, and his zeal in persecuting the Church as reasons to believe he was blameless and righteous. I think this is some of what Paul thought about during the three days after he was blinded and talked with Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul came to realize he was not blameless nor righteous. He saw clearly that covetousness had spiritually blinded him to the truth of the Gospel he was trying to destroy. As he continued to reflect in the months and years to come, that realization probably grew.

Verse 8

But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.

*αφορμην δε λαβουσα η αμαρτια δια της εντολης
κατειργασατο εν εμοι πασαν επιθυμιαν χωρις γαρ
νομου αμαρτια νεκρα*

αφορμην δε λαβουσα η αμαρτια δια της εντολης (*aphormēn de labousa hē hamartia dia tēs entolēs*) “an occasion however having taken sin by the commandment” .. *aphormēn* means “starting point, launching point, opportunity” .. Paul is the only New Testament writer to use the word (Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Timothy) .. Vincent wrote that the word carries the idea of a starting point for a base of operations .. “Emphatic, expressing the relation of the law to sin. The law is not sin, but sin found occasion in the law.” (Vincent, *Word Studies*, 1887) .. “a starting place from which to rush into acts of sin, excuses for doing what

they want to do" (Robertson, Word Pictures, 1931) .. "Sin is unable to act upon man without the co-operation of law, without being able to hold up law before him, and so show itself in its true colours." (Ellicott, Commentary on Romans, 1905)

κατειργασατο εν εμοι πασαν επιθυμιαν (*kateirgasato en emoi pasan epithumian*) "it produced in me all covetousness" .. *kateirgasato* means "to work out, work down to the end point, achieve, accomplish" .. Paul used the same word from the previous verse for "covet" – *epithumian* – "strong desire, inordinate desire, lust, passion, longing" ..

Paul wrote that once sin took opportunity by the "commandment" (*entolēs*), it "produced" (worked out) in him "all" (*pasan* – every kind of, every part of) "manner of evil desire" .. context determines whether *epithumian* is positive or negative and it's clear from the context here that Paul used the word in a negative way .. Paul realized that his desires were evil because of what the law produced in him .. "Denny says, 'He, Paul, says that the consciousness of sin awoke in

him in the shape of a conflict with a prohibitive law” (Wuest, Word Studies, 1955) .. Paul is not claiming to have been sinless at an earlier time of his life, but to have been unaware of his sinfulness until the commandment of the Law produced in him every kind of evil desire .. the Law was his spiritual wake-up call .. when we read about Saul of Tarsus in Acts 7 with the outer clothing of witnesses lying at his feet as those witnesses murdered Stephen, Paul had not yet awakened from his spiritual stupor .. it was the blindness from Heaven and the Voice of the Heavenly Man that led Paul to waken to his sin and realize his need for salvation ..

χωρις γαρ νομου αμαρτια νεκρα (*chōris gar nomou hamartia nekra*) “apart from law sin is dead” .. *chōris* means “separate from, apart from, without” .. *nekra* means “corpse, without life, lifeless, inactive, powerless, ineffective” .. Paul’s claim is that sin is dead “apart from law” .. the apostle is making a strong claim to the legal understanding of his Jewish audience .. even as sin is dead apart from the Law, sin is active and powerful with the Law .. the Mosaic Law activated the Jewish understanding of sin and acts as a tutor to lead

Jew and Gentile to Christ because only Christ can destroy sin and death .. here’s an interesting way of looking at this teaching ..

“Without the incitement produced by the law, the evil nature was relatively dormant. A fulcrum is an instrument in the form of a pole or long stick, which when applied beneath an object, will pry that object loose from its position. Just so, the sinful nature uses the law as a fulcrum by which to pry itself from its relative inactivity into activity.” (Wuest, Word Studies, 1955)

Other Commentaries

For without the law sin was dead — Neither so apparent nor so active; nor was I under the least apprehension of any danger from it. Sin, which he still represents as a person, would have had no being, or at least no strength to kill men, had not the law, revealed or natural, existed; for the essence of sin consists in its being a violation of law. Though the apostle speaks this primarily and directly of the law of Moses, it is equally true of the law of nature, and may be applied to the state of mankind before the law of Moses was given. For unless there had been a law written in men’s hearts, sin would have been dead, or have had neither existence nor power to kill. Benson Commentary

Paul was once a Pharisee, ignorant of the spirituality of the law, having some correctness of character, without knowing his inward depravity. When the commandment came to his conscience by the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and he saw what it demanded, he found his sinful mind rise against it. He felt at the same time the evil of sin, his own sinful state, that he was unable to fulfil the law, and was like a criminal when condemned. But though the evil principle in the human heart produces sinful motions, and the more by taking occasion of the commandment; yet the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. It is not favourable to sin, which it pursues into the heart, and discovers and reproveth in the inward motions thereof. Nothing is so good but a corrupt and vicious nature will pervert it. The same heat that softens wax, hardens clay. Food or medicine when taken wrong, may cause death, though its nature is to nourish or to heal. The law may cause death through man's depravity, but sin is the poison that brings death. Not the law, but sin

discovered by the law, was made death to the apostle. The ruinous nature of sin, and the sinfulness of the human heart, are here clearly shown. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

*It is supposed by most commentators that the expression κατειργάσατο in this verse means, not only that "the commandment" brought out lust **as sin**, but further that it **provoked** it, according to the alleged tendency of human nature to long all the more for what is forbidden. Pulpit Commentary*

this is particularly true in regard to a sinner. He is calm often, and apparently tranquil. But let the Law of God be brought home to his conscience, and he becomes maddened and enraged. He spurns its authority, yet his conscience tells him it is right; he attempts to throw it off, yet trembles at its power; and to show his independence, or his purpose to sin, he plunges into iniquity, and becomes a more dreadful and obstinate sinner. It becomes a struggle for victory; in the

controversy with God he resolves not to be overcome. It accordingly happens that many a man is more profane, blasphemous, and desperate when under conviction for sin than at other times. In revivals of religion it often happens that people evince violence, and rage, and cursing, which they do not in a state of spiritual death in the church; and it is often a very certain indication that a man is under conviction for sin when he becomes particularly violent, and abusive, and outrageous in his opposition to God. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

The law reveals the divine standard, and as believers compare themselves against that standard, they can accurately identify sin, which is the failure to meet the standards. John MacArthur, Notes to The MacArthur Study Bible, Second Edition, Thomas Nelson, 2019

Verse 9

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

εγω δε εζων χωρις νομου ποτε ελθουσης δε της εντολης η αμαρτια ανεζησεν εγω δε απεθανον

εγω δε εζων χωρις νομου ποτε (*egō de ezōn chōris nomou pote*) “I was alive apart from the law once” ... the word “once” (*chōris*) is a particle that gives us a sense of time in this context. The word means “formerly, former times, at one time or another.” It would be similar to our telling a story to our children — “there was once a little boy who lived in the woods” or “once upon a time” ... Paul was writing about a former experience ... “I was alive apart from the law at a former time” ... at some former time, Paul was alive “apart from” (*chōris* – separate from) “the law” ... the word *nomou* can be used for general laws or specific laws, like the Mosaic Law ... the context of Paul’s usage of the word in Romans so far has been about Mosaic Law. When would Paul have been

“alive apart from the law?” We’ll have to continue reading to see.

ελθουσης δε της εντολης η αμαρτια ανεζησεν (*elthousēs de tēs entolēs hē hamartia anezēsen*) “having come however the commandment the sin revived” ... the word *entolēs* means “order, injunction, law, command” .. even as Paul said that he lived “apart from the law at a former time,” there came a time when the *commandment* “having come” — “the sin revived” .. the word *anezēsen* means “come to life again, regain life, live again” .. *anezēsen* is a verb in the aorist tense (indicative mood, active voice) .. this indicates a past event ..

The question still lingers before us. When was Paul “alive apart from the law”? We know it was in the past, “at a former time,” but when was that?

As we think through Paul's life, several times come to mind. One time could have been when he was a little boy, before he knew about the Mosaic Law and sin. We might consider the "innocence" of childhood as a time that someone might be "alive apart from the law." However, Paul wrote that "when the commandment came, sin revived." How could sin come to life again if he was a young child and had not known anything about the Law and disobedience to it?

Let's read on.

εγω δε απεθανον (*egō de apethanon*) "I then died" .. the word *apethanon* means "to wither, decay, die off, die away from" .. it carries the idea of separation ..

Another possible time in Paul's life could have been prior to his meeting Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Paul was certainly full of himself, as he eloquently explained in Philippians 3:

... though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Philippians 3:4-6

We first meet Paul in Acts 8 where he was known as Saul. Saul consented to the stoning death of the deacon Stephen. That led to a time of great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem. Who led that persecution? Saul (Paul) did — “he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison” (Acts 8:3).

Paul later testified before King Agrippa about his life before and after meeting Jesus Christ. He spoke about his "manner of life" from his youth. He talked about how he was a member of the strictest sect of the Hebrew religion (Pharisee). He spoke about receiving authority from the chief priests in Jerusalem to hunt down and arrest followers of Jesus. Paul said that when they were put to death, he cast his vote against them. He said that he "punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme" because he was "exceedingly enraged against them." Paul said he persecuted followers of Jesus "even to foreign cities." Then, Paul said this:

While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?'

And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' Acts 26:12-18

We know from Acts 9 that the soldiers who journeyed with Paul stood speechless. They heard a voice, but didn't see anyone. Saul arose from the ground, but found that he was blind. The soldiers and others with him took him into Damascus. Paul spent three days without sight, "and neither ate nor drank." That would certainly have given Paul (Saul) time to consider his disobedience to God's commandments.

It's also possible that what Paul referred to in Romans 7 occurred even earlier than his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul was a scholar and had studied under the esteemed Rabbi Gamaliel. He was taught according to the strictness of the Mosaic Law. He was zealous toward God. The high priest and elders of Israel had put him in charge of putting an end to those who followed Jesus. However, Paul readily admitted to being a sinner. In fact, he called himself the "chief" of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

In our last study we looked at Romans 7:7-8. Remember what he wrote in verse 7?

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'

That's a clue to the time when Paul thought of himself as being "apart" from the commandment of God. It was the Law of God that showed Paul that he coveted and was therefore a sinner before God. It may be that Paul came to realize his "covetousness" during the three days he was blind after meeting Jesus or maybe the days following. It may be that he came to realize it before meeting Jesus.

Think of all the prestige and adulation that would have fallen on Saul of Tarsus in his position. The high priests and elders of Israel entrusted him with the work of ridding Judaism of those who believed in Jesus. Maybe Paul wanted even more. Maybe he wanted, like his teacher, to be a member of the honored Sanhedrin. We don't know what Paul coveted, but coveted he did. Paul wrote that he would not have known sin except through the Law. Which specific commandment of the Law? Paul didn't say, but there are many.

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." Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's. Deuteronomy 5:21

The sin of covetousness certainly flew in the face of the requirements to be a leader in Israel:

Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. Exodus 18:21

How did this discovery affect Paul?

Verse 10

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

και ευρεθη μοι η εντολη η εις ζωην αυτη εις θανατον

και ευρεθη μοι η εντολη η εις ζωην αυτη εις θανατον (*kai heurethē moi hē entolē hē eis zōēn hautē eis thanaton*) “and proved to be me the commandment that was to life this to death”

A Pharisee was a teacher of the Law. Paul was a Pharisee. He was a scholar, trained from childhood by Jewish scholar Rabban Gamaliel — son of Simeon ben Hillel, and grandson of Hillel the Elder. Paul knew the Law inside and out, and believed that the Law brought life and great reward.

You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord. Leviticus 18:5

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. Psalm 19:7-10

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

However, Paul learned that the law that was to bring life, in fact brought death. How could that be? Was Paul saying the Words of God written in the Hebrew Bible were wrong? Not at all. Paul was sharing an insight into the Law that Jesus Christ had given him. As Paul had written earlier to another group of Christians —

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Galatians 3:21-25

Fortunately, this is one of the first things I learned about the Law as a young Christian. The purpose of the Law was to bring me to Christ. It was the "tutor," the "schoolmaster," that showed me my sin and my need for the Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.

This is the lesson of Romans 7, as well as Galatians 3. The Law of God teaches us that we are sinners who are not able to save ourselves. We need a Savior and that Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came from Heaven to earth to demonstrate in the clearest way possible that God loves us great love and great grace.

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:16-17

Paul is also the apostle who wrote an epistle after he'd written to the Galatians and Romans that said he along with everyone else was "dead in trespasses and sin" (Ephesians 2:1). He went on to write the Ephesians:

... in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest

anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Paul understood what it meant to be “dead” in trespasses and sin. How did he know that? Because of the Law of God. He knew, and we know, that we are sinners because the great “tutor” showed us our sinfulness and led us to the Only One Who could save us — Jesus Christ the Lord.

Whether Paul learned that as a child or a teenager or a young man, the important thing is that Paul learned it. That is a lesson everyone must learn if they are to know God and Life.

But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.

Verses 11-12

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

η γαρ αμαρτια αφορμην λαβουσα δια της εντολης εξηπατησεν με και δι αυτης απεκτεινεν ωστε ο μεν νομος αγιος και η εντολη αγια και δικαια και αγαθη

The Apostle Paul was a great teacher and debater. He used a variety of ways of connecting with his audience for the purpose of guiding them toward the Gospel of Christ. Truth was always Paul’s objective. One of the ways Paul communicated personally and in his letters was through asking questions — then answering them.

Paul was trained in Greek, Roman, and Hebrew methods of communication and debate. We see his skills on full display in the Book of Acts and in his letters to churches and individuals. Paul's interest was in *persuading* people and for good reason. As he wrote in 2 Corinthians, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Paul used the process of reasoning with people that included explanations and demonstrations concerning what was true.

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. Acts 17:3-4

Paul was able to talk with people of many backgrounds. One example is when he ministered in Athens, Greece.

*Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?'
Acts 17:16-18*

Paul reasoned with Jews and Gentile worshipers in the synagogue, in the marketplace with anyone who happened to be there, and with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who encountered him. One of Paul's most powerful demonstrations of reasoning with philosophers is found in Acts 17:2-31.

We see Paul using his reasoning skills effectively with both Jews and Gentiles in his letter to the Romans. He used the process of questions and answers in Chapter Two —

And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? Romans 2:3-4

Paul asked and answered almost 80 questions in his letter to the Romans and we find five of them in Chapter 7 —

1. Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?
2. What shall we say then?
3. *Is* the law sin?
4. Has then what is good become death to me?
5. Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Our current verse (11) is part of Paul's answer to the questions – "What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin?" His answer included several important points —

- Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law.
- For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'
- But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire.
- For apart from the law sin *was* dead.
- I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.
- And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.
- For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.
- Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Verses 11 and 12 are at the end of Paul's answer to these questions.

η γαρ αμαρτια (*hē gar hamartia*) "the for sin" .. the word sin means "missing the mark" .. it was the idea of failure or loss

αφορμην λαβουσα δια της εντολης (*aphormēn labousa dia tēs entolēs*) "an occasion having taken by the commandment" .. the word *aphormēn* means "starting point, launching point, opportunity) .. the starting point for "sin" was "taken by the commandment" .. the word translated "commandment" is *entolēs* and means "an ordinance, commandment, law, injunction, precepts" .. the word is used through the New Testament in the context of religious and moral precepts .. the word comes from a combination of the words *en* (in) and *télos* (consummation, principal end, end goal, purpose) ..

This is similar to what Paul wrote a few sentences earlier — “But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment” (verse 8). Paul mentioned it again in the next verse — “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died” (verse 9). The next sentence is — “And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death” (verse 10).

It’s important to observe verses in their context before rushing to interpretation. It’s also important to notice when a particular word or phrase is repeated in the same context. Paul asked a question in verse 7, then used these words repeatedly in his answer —

- law (five times)
- sin (five times)
- commandment (five times)

It would appear from reading Romans 7:7-12 that those three words were important to understand. A good process for Bible study is to —

- Observe everything
- Ask questions for interpretation about everything observed
- Make an interpretation based on careful observation and answers to questions
- Move to application in both doctrine and practice after making a proper interpretation

εξηπατησεν με (*exēpatēsen me*) “deceived me” .. the word *exēpatēsen* means “seduce wholly, deceive thoroughly) .. this is the end product of deception ..

και δι αυτης απεκτεινεν (*kai di autēs apekteinen*) “and by it put me to death” .. the word *apekteinen* means “to kill, put to death, abolish” .. the word is used both literally and figuratively .. Paul used the word figuratively in this context ..

ωστε ο μεν νομος αγιος και η εντολη αγια και δικαια και αγαθη (*hōste ho men nomos hagios kai hē entolē hagia kai dikaia kai agathē*) “so indeed the law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” .. the word for law (*nomos*) means “that which is assigned, law” .. usually used in reference to the Mosaic Law (Scripture) .. the word for commandment (*entolē*) means “an injunction, order, command) .. the word intensifies the word *telos* (an end, consummation) and looks at the end result of a command .. the law of God is “holy,” as is the result of the commandments contained in the law .. the commandments are holy, righteous, and good .. *holy* means “set apart by (or for) God, holy, sacred” .. *righteous* means “correct, just, innocent” .. *good* means “intrinsically good, inherently good, good in nature” ..

God gave His Law, with specific commandments, to His people. That law is holy because the great God who gave it is Holy. The commandments are holy and righteous and good. God’s Law is perfect and shines a holy light on our sinful nature. It guides us to Jesus Christ as the only God/Man who is holy, righteous, and good. It is only through the holiness of Christ that we can be saved and live in ways that please God.

Other Commentary

Notice yet again how Paul blames sin and clears the law of any accusation .. Some people say that here Paul is not talking about the law of Moses but rather about the law of nature or of the commandment given in paradise. But surely Paul's aim is to reach beyond the authority of the law of Moses; he has no quarrel because the Jews feared the abolition of their law that they so obstinately opposed the working of grace, Moreover, it does not appear that Paul ever called the commandment given in paradise a law, nor has any other writer. Following Paul's logic, let us pursue the argument a little further. Having spoken to the Romans about proper standards of behavior, Paul goes on to say: "Do you not know, brethren—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during his life? But you are discharged from the law." Now if these things had been said about the natural law, we would now be without it. And if that were true, we would be more senseless than the

*irrational creatures are. But surely this is not so.
Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans (4th century AD)*

*Sin played the tempter, and then made use of the
Commandment to condemn and destroy its
victims. Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*

*Yet this result is not due to the commandment in itself.
It is indwelling sin, inherited from Adam, which, when it
has found a base of operations, employs the
commandment to deceive (cf. Genesis 3:13) and to
kill. "Sin here takes the place of the Tempter" in
Genesis (S. and H.). Expositor's Greek Testament*

*When the commandment came to his conscience by
the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and he saw what it
demanded, he found his sinful mind rise against it. He
felt at the same time the evil of sin, his own sinful
state, that he was unable to fulfil the law, and was like
a criminal when condemned. But though the evil
principle in the human heart produces sinful motions,
and the more by taking occasion of the*

commandment; yet the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

The meaning here seems to be, that his corrupt and rebellious propensities, excited by the Law, led him astray; caused him more and more to sin; practiced a species of deception on him by urging him on headlong, and without deliberation, into aggravated transgression. In this sense, all sinners are deceived. Their passions urge them on, deluding them, and leading them further and further from happiness, and involving them, before they are aware, in crime and death. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Holy, and just, and good: *the three epithets here given the law of God may be thus distinguished; it is holy in respect of the ceremonial part, it is just in respect of the judicial part, and good in respect of the moral part of it. Or else the law is holy, as it teacheth us our duty unto God; just, as it showeth us our duty to our neighbour; good, in regard of the effect and end,*

as it works goodness in the observer thereof, and is conducive to his temporal and eternal good. Matthew Poole's Commentary

By "the law" is meant the whole body of the precepts of it in general; and by the commandment, either the same, or everyone of the commandments in particular, and especially that which is cited, "thou shall not covet". Some have thought that the three properties of it design the threefold division of the law; and suppose that by that which is "holy" is meant the ceremonial law, which sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; by that which is "just", the judicial law, which pointed out to the Jewish commonwealth what was right and wrong; and by that which is "good", the moral law in all its precepts: but nothing is more certain, than that the moral law is only spoken of in this context, which may be said to be holy, because of its author, the holy God, from whom nothing can come but what is holy; and because of the matter of it, it is a transcript of the holy nature of God, a declaration of his holy will; it requires holiness both of heart and life; it forbids whatever is

unholy, and commands nothing but what is holy; it teaches men to live holy, sober, righteous, and godly lives. It may be truly called just, or righteous, as it demands perfect obedience to all its precepts, or it will not admit of it as a righteousness; as it pronounces guilty, curses and condemns for every disobedience of it; as it deals impartially with persons the transgressors of it; and as it acquits believers upon the foot of the righteousness of Christ, the fulfilling end of it. It is rightly called good, from the author of it, God, from whom every good thing comes, and nothing else; from the matter of it, and from the use of it both to saints and sinners. Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Paul expected his Christian life under law to issue in the production of a testimony and experience that would be a living one, alive with the life of God, and this, accomplished through his attempt at law-obedience. But he found that mere effort at obeying an outside law resulted in defeat. The law, using the evil nature in him as a fulcrum, brought out sin all the

more, and this condition he calls death. Wuest's Word Studies in Romans

Sin is personified again here and is the tempter. Sin tempts every man outside the Garden of Eden relative to himself and God. In the Garden of Eden Satan made man believe that God could not be trusted and that man was able to become god, apart from God. Sin, like a Pied Piper, leads the children of men into believing that they can keep the Law and that God is not needed. This is the false trail that he has been talking about, which leads to death. It was ordained to life, Paul says, and he found it led him to death. Sin at last will kill, for the Law did bring the knowledge of sin, and man is without excuse. Again, the difficulty is not with the Law, but within man. J. Vernon McGee, Romans, Through the Bible

sin...deceived me. By leading him to expect life from his keeping of the law, when what he found was death (v. 10); and by convincing him that he is acceptable to God because of his own merit and good works. The

fact that the law reveals, arouses, and condemns sin, bringing death to the sinner, does not mean that the law is evil (cr. 7). Rather the law is a perfect reflection of God's holy character (cf. vv. 14, 16, 22; Ps. 19:7-11) and the standard for believers to please him. McArthur Study Bible, p 1554

Welcome to the 100th edition of *Romans – The Gospel of God!* We started this series on [July 14, 2012](#) with these words:

*The **Book of Romans** is the “mountain peak” of the Apostle Paul’s inspired Writings. This great Book demonstrates the Power of God over sin and the astonishing efficacy of His Grace. Romans is Paul’s triumphant exposition about the truly amazing Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is through Romans that we learn about the sinfulness of sin and the Righteousness of God. We learn about the wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all sin. Paul writes about the extreme penalty for sin for all members of the human race and the extreme **payment** for sin by God’s Son, Jesus Christ. It is in Romans that we see the horror of sin and the honor of the sinless Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. God is the Judge of sin. Jesus is the Propitiation for that sin. We learn through Romans that God frees sinning slaves to become forgiven saints. God is*

Sovereign in all the universe and the Source of all Truth.

My hope and prayer is that you have found these studies helpful in your own understanding of Paul's great Letter to the Romans. The last part of our series was from Romans 7:11-12. We move now to verses 13-14.

Quick Review

As a quick review, remember that Paul had been addressing the fact that the Christians in Rome, Jews and Gentiles, had been freed from the Mosaic Law, along with the advantage that sin had in the Law. I summed up the last two verses (11-12) this way:

God gave His Law, with specific commandments, to His people. That law is holy because the great God who gave it is Holy. The commandments are holy and righteous and good. God's Law is perfect and shines a holy light on our sinful nature. It guides us to Jesus Christ as the only God/Man who is holy, righteous, and good. It is only through the holiness of Christ that we can be saved and live in ways that please God.

The Apostle Paul used a question-answer technique in Romans that is a good example for us today as we talk with both believers and non-believers. Paul's approach in Romans was within a letter, so he was asking and answering questions based on his understanding of what Jews and Gentiles believed and what they needed to know. We could use the technique in both a letter and talking with someone. It's important to think about what other people believe and address them with questions that lead them to consider the truth of God's Word.

The statement Paul made in verse 12 references back to the question he asked in verse 7: "What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?*" The answer is obvious: "Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law." Paul is slowly and carefully working his way through the faulty thinking among some in the church in Rome. He does that by asking and answering questions that shed a bright light on their incorrect beliefs about a number of spiritual topics.

Here's the next question in verse 13: “Has then what is good become death to me?” Paul is still looking at the effect of the question he posed in verse 7. Let see how Paul answered this one.

Verses 13-14

Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

*το ουν αγαθον εμοι γεγονεν θανατος μη γενοιτο
αλλα η αμαρτια ινα φανη αμαρτια δια του αγαθου
μοι κατεργαζομενη θανατον ινα γενηται καθ
υπερβολην αμαρτωλος η αμαρτια δια της εντολης
οιδαμεν γαρ οτι ο νομος πνευματικος εστιν εγω
δε σαρκικος ειμι πεπραμενος υπο την αμαρτιαν*

There were then, and still are, many people who believe that obedience to the Mosaic Law can save a person from sin. Remember that Paul just claimed in the previous verse (12) that "the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." If that is true, and it is, then why can't obedience to the Law save us from sin? Good question. Let's look deeper into Paul's response.

First, the question: Has then what is good become death to me? Let's look at the Greek:

το ουν αγαθον εμοι γεγονεν θανατος (*to oun agathon emoi gegonen thanatos*) "that which then is good to me has become death?" .. the word *agathon* means "intrinsically, inherently good" .. *gegonen* means "to come into being, come about, produce, to emerge" .. *thanatos* is used for both physical and spiritual death ..

The Law of God (Mosaic Law) is inherently good. Remember verse 12 because that's the context. Paul was asking if the Law of God, which is good, had become death. His answer? Certainly not! μη γενοιτο (*mē genoito*) "never may it be!" The good Law of God did not become "death" to Paul. Then what did?

αλλα η αμαρτια ινα φανη αμαρτια δια του αγαθου μοι κατεργαζομενη θανατον (*alla hē hamartia hina phanē harmatia dia tou agathou moi katergazomenē thanaton*) "but sin in order that it might be shown to be sin through that which is good to me is working out death" ..

Sin (*hamartia*) means "failure, missing the mark, no part of, no share of because of missing the target." In order for sin to be shown (*phanē* – to cause to appear, become visible, become clear, to bring to light, to shine) to be sin, God gave His good Law. Paul wrote the Galatian Christians this question: What purpose then *does the law serve?* His answer: "It was added because of transgressions .. the Scripture has confined all under sin" (Galatians 3:19, 22). We know that we're sinners before God because of His Law. Sin is what separates us

from God. The Law teaches us that we are separated from God by sin: “the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

Sin is deadly. How do we know? Because the Law tells us it is deadly. It is working out death to those who have not been freed from its work. The Law is our teacher to lead us to Christ as the only solution to our problem with sin – “that we might be justified by faith.”

ινα γενηται καθ υπερβολην αμαρτωλος η αμαρτια δια της εντολης (*hina genētai kath huperbolēn hamartōlos hē hamartia dia tēs entolēs*) “so that might become beyond excess sinful sin through the commandment” .. *huperbolēn* means “beyond measure, exceedingly, excess” .. *hamartōlos* means “depraved, detestable, forfeit/loss from falling short, sinful” .. humans suffered great loss because of sin .. they fell short of what God demands .. this hearkens back to what Paul wrote earlier in Romans – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) .. *entolēs* means “command, order” and focuses on the end result of a command ..

The first command of God to humans was this – “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” (Genesis 2:16-17) “Surely die” meant more than just physical death for humans. It means they would find themselves separated from God and die spiritually. Adam and Eve suffered a GREAT LOSS that continues to infect and affect the human race to this day.

God has added many more commandments since those early days in the Garden of Eden. We then stated powerfully and clearly in the Mosaic Law. We die because of sin. The Law was added to show us how sinful we are in God’s sight. The more we know and understand God’s holy Law, the more we understand the sinfulness of sin and how it kills. “But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.”

Verse 14

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

οιδαμεν γαρ οτι ο νομος πνευματικος εστιν εγω δε σαρκικος ειμι πεπραμενος υπο την αμαρτιαν

οιδαμεν γαρ οτι ο νομος πνευματικος εστιν (*oidamen gar hoti ho nomos pneumatikos estin*) "we know for that the law spiritual is" .. *oidamen* means "behold, be aware, perceive, consider, remember" .. the word was used for both physical sight awareness and spiritual awareness .. it is a knowledge (know) that comes from seeing and understanding .. *pneumatikos* means "spiritual, relating to the realm of the spirit" .. Christians should know that the Law of God is "spiritual" .. God's law is supernatural, from the realm of the spirit world ..

εγω δε σαρκικος ειμι πεπραμενος υπο την αμαρτιαν (*egō de sarkikos eimi pepramenos hupo tēn harmartian*) "I however fleshly am having been sold under sin" .. *sarkikos* means "pertaining to the flesh, having the nature of flesh .. *pepramenos* means "to sell, slave to, devoted to" .. it comes from *pernémi* (to export for sale) .. *hupo* means "under, under the authority of" .. *harmartian* means "missing the mark, failure, loss from not hitting the mark" ..

Paul knew that the Law of God was spiritual, but he was carnal .. he was "sold under sin" .. Paul had been a Pharisee, he knew the Law .. Paul knew that the Mosaic Law was spiritual, but he came to understand that his human nature was carnal and that he had been sold under the authority of sin ..

That was important for the Christians in Rome to understand almost two-thousand years ago, and it's important for us to understand today. The big question asked by Christians for centuries is whether Paul was referring to his life before salvation or before "and" after. We'll look for answers to that in the next part of our study.

Other Commentaries

By the very way he accuses sin, Paul shows how excellent the law is....It was the commandment which showed us just how evil is. At the same time, Paul also shows how grace is so much greater than the law. Grace is not in conflict with the law; it is superior to it. Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans (Ancient Christian Commentary On Scripture, Romans, IVP)

Here Paul elaborates on what he said [in verse 8]. It is not that a good thing (i.e., the law) had become death for him but rather that sin worked death through the law's goodness, i.e., that it became apparent whereas without the law it had lain hidden. For everyone recognizes that he is dead if he cannot fulfill a precept which he recognizes as just, and because of the criminal offense of the trespass he sins even more than he would have if it had not been forbidden. Before the coming of the law the offense was less, because without the law there is no transgression.

Augustine On Romans (Ancient Christian Commentary On Scripture, Romans, IVP)

Was it possible that the Law, holy and good as it was, could simply lead miserable men to death and ruin? No, it was not possible. It was not the Law that did this but Sin—acting, it is true, through the instrumentality of the Law. All this, however, only had for its end to show up Sin for the monster that it really is. Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

*Paul has hardly begun, in Romans 7:12, his exposition of the result of Romans 7:7-11, when his train of thought is again crossed by an inference that might possibly be drawn from what had just been said, and used against him (comp. Romans 7:7). He puts this inference as a question, and now gives in the form of a refutation of it what he had intended to give, according to the plan begun in Romans 7:12, not in polemical form, but in a sentence with **δέ** that should correspond to the sentence with **μέν**. Meyer's NT Commentary*

Was then that which is good ... – This is another objection which the apostle proceeds to answer. The objection is this, "Can it be possible that what is admitted to be good and pure, should be changed into evil? Can what tends to life, be made death to a man?" In answer to this, the apostle repeats that the fault was not in the Law, but was in himself, and in his sinful propensities. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Denny explains; "The description of the commandment as 'good' raises the problem of verse 7 in a new form. Can the good issue in evil? Did that which is good turn out to be death to me? This also is denied, or rather repelled. It was not the good law, but sin, which became death to the apostle. And in this there was a divine intention, namely, that sin might appear sin, might come out in its true colors, by working death for man through that which is good. Sin turns God's intended blessing into a curse; nothing could more clearly show what it is, or excite a stronger desire for deliverance from it." Robertson comments; "The excesses of sin reveal its real nature. Only then do

some people get their eyes opened." Kenneth Wuest,
Romans in the Greek New Testament, Wm. B.
Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955

The New King James Bible divides Romans chapter 7 into three parts:

- Freed from the Law: 1-6
- Sin’s Advantage in the Law: 7-12
- Law Cannot Save from Sin: 13-25

Today’s study is from verses 15-16.

Verses 15-16

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

*ο γαρ κατεργαζομαι ου γινωσκω ου γαρ ο θελω
τουτο πρασσω αλλ ο μισω τουτο ποιω ει δε ο ου
θελω τουτο ποιω συμφημι τω νομω οτι καλος*

ο γαρ κατεργαζομαι ου γινωσκω (*ho far katergazomai ou ginōskō*) “what for I do not I understand” ... the word “doing” comes from *katergazomai* ... it is a verb that means “to work out, bring about, perform, carry out” ... it is present indicative middle or passive ... Paul uses this statement in the context of spiritual slavery – “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin” (vs. 14) ... Paul is saying that he does not “understand” what he “does” or is “doing” ... the word “understand” comes from *ginōskō* – “to come to know, perceive, recognize, realize” ... the word speaks specifically

to a knowledge or an understanding that comes from "experience" ... based on other writings of Paul where he declares that he "knows" and "understands" what he is doing in living for Christ, Romans 7:15 raises some questions for proper interpretation ...

ου γαρ ο θελω τουτο πρασσω (*ou gar ho thelō touto prassō*) "not for what I want this I do" ... the verb *thelō* means "wish, desire, will, want, intent" ... *prassō* means "to do, practice, perform, accomplish" ... it is in the present indicative active ... this is the other side of not understanding what he does do because he does those things that he does not want to do ...

αλλ ο μισω τουτο ποιω (*all ho misō touto poiō*) "but what I hate this I do" ... the word *misō* means "detest, hate" ... Paul chose to use another strong comparative word ... he hated, detested what he did ... he did not do what he wanted to do, but did what he didn't want to do ...

Here the "willing" and the "hating," if carefully weighed, are good evidence for the reference of this whole section to the regenerate soul in its conflicts. It is certainly out of harmony with St Paul's doctrine of grace to represent the soul, before special grace, as "hating" sin as sin, and "willing" pure holiness as holiness.—On the whole passage we must again remember that a soul fully alive to the profound sanctity of the Law is in view. Not gross but minute deviations (minute on the human standard) occasion these complaints. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

... it is in fact the experience of all Christians. The habitual, fixed inclination and desire of their minds is to serve God. They have a fixed abhorrence of sin; and yet they are conscious of imperfection, and error, and sin, that is the source of uneasiness and trouble. The strength of natural passion may in an unguarded moment overcome them. The power of long habits of previous thoughts may annoy them. A man who was an infidel before his conversion, and whose mind was

filled with scepticism, and cavils, and blasphemy, will find the effect of his former habits of thinking lingering in his mind, and annoying his peace for years. These thoughts will start up with the rapidity of lightning. Thus, it is with every vice and every opinion. It is one of the effects of habit. "The very passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it," and where sin has been long indulged, it leaves its withering, desolating effect on the soul long after conversion, and produces that state of conflict with which every Christian is familiar. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Now, Paul explains his situation. 'Allow' is ginóskó, 'to know by experience, to understand.' He says, 'For that which I do, I do not understand.' He does not understand his experience as a Christian. He says, 'For that which I desire, this I do not practice, but that which I hate, this I am doing.' That is, the very thing he desires to do, namely, good, this he does not do, and that which he hates, this is the thing he does do. It is clear that Paul is recounting his experience as a saved

man. He desires to do good and hates sin. No unsaved man does that. The failure to achieve his purpose is found in the fact that he is attempting in his own strength that which can only be accomplished in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Kenneth Wuest

συμφημι τω νομω οτι καλος (*sumphēmi tō nomō hoti kalos*)
“I consent to the law that it is good” .. *sumphēmi* means
“agree with, confess, assent to, consent” .. what Paul is
agreeing with here is that the Mosaic Law is “good” .. keep in
mind that Paul has earlier made the argument that no one is
“saved” by the Law, so how can it be good? The Law is good
because it is God’s Law. God spoke the Law and Moses
wrote it down for Israel and the entire world to read. The Law
takes us to our knees as we see the holiness of God, how in
need we are of His spiritual help, and the wonderful ways in
which He helps us.

Other Commentators

In doing what he hates, i.e., in doing evil against his will, his will agrees with the law, that it is good. καλός suggests the moral beauty or nobility of the law, not like ἀγαθή (Romans 7:12) its beneficial purpose. Expositor's Greek Testament

But the fact that I desire to do what is right is itself a witness to the excellence of the Law, which commands that which I desire. Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

If then, &c.] The emphasis is obviously on 'that which I would not:' q. d., 'If my faulty course of action is contradicted by my will, I thereby consent to the goodness of the Law, which also contradicts it.' Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

*This very thing is an argument, that the law is such as I have before asserted, **Romans 7:12,14**. This shows my consent to the holiness and goodness of the law; I vote with it, and for it, as the only rule of right or righteousness. Matthew Poole's Commentary*

consented to the law, that it was good; lovely and amiable; that it forbade those things which were hateful, and commanded those things which were desirable to a good man; and so is acknowledged to be a very beautiful rule of obedience, walk, and conversation. Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

7:15 understand. This refers to knowledge that goes beyond the factual and includes the idea of an intimate relationship (cf. Gal. 4:9). By extension, this word was sometimes used to express approving or accepting (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3). That is its sense here, i.e., Paul found himself doing things he did not approve of. 7:16 I agree with the law that it is good. Paul's new nature defends the divine standard – the perfectly righteous law is not responsible for his sin (v. 12). His

new self longs to honor the law and keep it perfectly
(v. 22). *The MacArthur Study Bible, 2nd Edition,*
Thomas Nelson

Verses 17 – 20

But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

νυνι δε ουκετι εγω κατεργαζομαι αυτο αλλ η οικουσα εν εμοι αμαρτια οιδα γαρ οτι ουκ οικει εν εμοι τουτεστιν εν τη σαρκι μου αγαθον το γαρ θελειν παρακειται μοι το δε κατεργαζεσθαι το καλον ουχ ευρισκω ου γαρ ο θελω ποιω αγαθον αλλ ο ου θελω κακον τουτο πρασσω ει δε ο ου θελω εγω τουτο ποιω ουκετι εγω κατεργαζομαι αυτο αλλ η οικουσα εν εμοι αμαρτια

In the preceding verses the Apostle Paul began explaining how the Law that was so important to Jews was not able to save them. He wrote that 'sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.' That was certainly not how Jews understood the Law. Paul continued – 'For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good.' Again, an unusual thing for a Jew to say.

What was Paul's point? He makes it in the next verses –

Verse 17

But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

νυνι δε ουκετι εγω κατεργαζομαι αυτο αλλ η οικουσα εν εμοι αμαρτια

I want to first acknowledge that some theologians believe Paul was addressing his life 'before' becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. Other theologians believe Paul was addressing his life as it was at the time of his writing (after his conversion). I believe Paul was writing about his current condition after conversion, but I have read the 'other' perspectives and understand their arguments. However, I am not convinced they are correct. With that being said, let's look at the verse and see what we can learn from the Greek.

νυνὶ δὲ (*nuni de*) "in that case now" ... Paul used a phrase containing an adverb and conjunction that seems to denote the idea of something occurring 'now' in his life – at the 'present time.'

Paul stated in the preceding verse that by 'not doing' what the Law said proved that he agreed that the Law 'is good.' The Law is good when we understand why God gave it to Israel. As Paul wrote to the Galatians –

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.'
Galatians 3:23-25

Paul understood the goodness of the Law in that it was our 'tutor,' our 'teacher, instructor,' to 'bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' What happened after 'faith has come?' We are 'no longer under a tutor,' which in the context was the Law.

The Law has its place and it is important for us to remember that the Holy Spirit uses the Law to 'convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment' (John 16:8). However, keeping people 'under the Law' was not and is not God's intention. As the Apostle John wrote in his Gospel account – 'For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (John 1:17). Keeping people 'under the Law' after Jesus came to earth, died, rose from the dead, and ascended back to Heaven is counterproductive. That is a primary theme of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

The Law 'was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' Faith is how God saves. The Law is how God shows us that we must repent of our sins and 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.' What happens after a person repents of their sins and believes in Jesus Christ? They are 'no longer under a tutor.'

As for the word 'now,' let's turn to Dr. Marvin Vincent for some insight – 'Not *temporal*, pointing back to a time when it was otherwise, but *logical*, pointing to an inference. After this statement you can *no more* maintain that, etc.' (Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, 1887)

ουκετι εγω κατεργαζομαι αυτο (*outketi egō katergazomai auto*) "no longer I am doing it" ... *katergazomai* is important to note is a 'present tense' verb. It is 'present indicative middle' (or passive). Paul was not referring to something he 'did' before his conversion, but something he was doing at the time of his writing to the Romans. However, he does say that he was no longer 'doing it.' Then what was causing the problem?

Remember the context – 'For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good.'

αλλ η οικουσα εν εμοι αμαρτια (*alla hē oikousa en emoi hamartia*) 'but the dwelling in me sin' ... *oikousa* is also a present tense verb (present tense participle) .. Paul said he didn't understand what what he was doing (vs. 15). He didn't practice what he wanted to do, but did what he hated. Why? This is key –

But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Faith in Jesus changed Paul spiritual position (darkness into light), but it did not remove the sin that 'dwells' in him. That's why Christians have the struggles they do. They sin, they make bad choices, they do the things they don't want to do and do the things they don't want to do. Join the club is what Paul is saying.

Question. If God saves us from 'sin,' why do we still have it in us? Where does it live?

Verse 18

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

οιδα γαρ οτι ουκ οικει εν εμοι τουτεστιν εν τη σαρκι μου αγαθον το γαρ θελειν παρακειται μοι το δε κατεργαζεσθαι το καλον ουχ ευρισκω

οιδα γαρ οτι ουκ οικει εν εμοι (*oida gar oti ouk oikei en emoi*) "I know for that nothing there dwells in me" ... *oikei* (dwells) is again a present tense verb (present indicative active) .. where did sin 'dwell' in Paul?

τουτεστιν εν τη σαρκι μου (*toutestin en tē sarki mou to*) 'that is in the flesh of me' ... *sarki* means 'flesh' .. the idea of the word 'flesh' to the Greeks meant the 'body, human nature.' That's where sin dwelled in Paul and where it dwells in Christians today .. in our body, in our human nature. We have both a spiritual 'nature' and a 'fleshly' nature. That's one

reason why Christians, true Christians (really saved, not just pretending), struggle with sin. It's still part of their 'human nature.'

αγαθον το γαρ θελειν παρακειται μοι (*agathon to gar thelein parakeitai*) 'good for to will is present with me' ... *parakeitai* is another present tense verb (present indicative middle or passive) .. Paul had the 'will' (*thelein*), the 'desire' to do good, but ..

δε κατεργαζεσθαι το καλον ουχ ευρισκω (*de katergazesthai to kalon ouch eurisko*) 'but to do the good not' ... *katergazesthai* (to do, work out, achieve, perform, bring about, work down to the end point) is another present tense verb (present infinitive middle or passive) .. Paul had the will to do good, but (as the NKJV translates) 'how to perform what is good I do not find.'

Verse 19

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

*ου γαρ ο θελω ποιω αγαθον αλλ ο ου θελω κακον
τουτο πρασσω*

ου γαρ ο θελω ποιω αγαθον (*ou gar ho thelō poiō agathon*) 'not for that I desire I do good' ... *thelō* is a present tense verb (present indicative active) and means 'to will, to desire' .. *poiō* is a present tense verb (present indicative active) and means 'to make, manufacture, cause, do' ..

αλλ ο ου θελω κακον (*alla ho ou thelō kakon*) 'but that not I do want evil' ... *kakon* means 'bad, foul, rotten, evil in the widest sense' .. we don't often think of Christians having a foul or rotten side to them, until they say or do something that makes you think 'what a foul thing to say' or 'what a rotten thing to do.' It happened to Paul .. it happens to us.

ΤΟΥΤΟ ΠΡΑΣΣΩ (*touto prassō*) ‘this I practice’ ... *prassō* means ‘the active process in performing, accomplishing’ .. the word implies a ‘regular or routine practice’ .. this battle that resided inside Paul’s flesh, and resides in ours, causes us to struggle with fleshly sin regularly, routinely

Verse 20

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

*ει δε ο ου θελω εγω τουτο ποιω ουκετι εγω
κατεργαζομαι αυτο αλλ η οικουσα εν εμοι αμαρτια*

*ει δε ο ου θελω (ei de ho ou thelō) 'if now what not I do want'
... thelō is a present tense verb (present indicative active) ..*

*εγω τουτο ποιω (egō touto poiō) 'I this do' ... poiō is a
present tense verb (present indicative active) ..*

*ουκετι εγω κατεργαζομαι αυτο (ouketi egō katergazomai
auto) 'it is no longer I who do it' ... katergazomai is a present
tense verb (present indicative middle or passive) .. Paul said it
was not his saved 'ego', but ..*

αλλ η οικουσα εν εμοι αμαρτια (*alla hē oikousa en emoi hamartia*) 'but dwelling in me sin' ... *oikousa* is a present tense verb (present participle active) .. *hamartia* is 'sin, missing the mark, fault, sinful deed) ..

I pointed out that all of the verbs Paul used are 'present tense' to help support the interpretation that he was writing about a current struggle that he and all believers have. We need God's Holy Spirit to help us battle with the flesh. Paul wrote about that in some detail a few years earlier in his letter to the Galatians –

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Galatians 5:16-18

Paul made it clear in Galatians that Christians 'do not do the things' that they want. Why? Because the 'flesh' lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit 'against the flesh.' Interestingly, all of the verbs used in that section of Galatians are present tense. It's a battle that rages in us right now! We need God's help to fight this battle until Jesus comes to take us 'home' where 'this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality' ..

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. 1 Corinthians 15:53

Other Interpretations

Compared with the holy rule of conduct in the law of God, the apostle found himself so very far short of perfection, that he seemed to be carnal; like a man who is sold against his will to a hated master, from whom he cannot set himself at liberty. A real Christian unwillingly serves this hated master, yet cannot shake off the galling chain, till his powerful and gracious Friend above, rescues him. The remaining evil of his heart is a real and humbling hinderance to his serving God as angels do and the spirits of just made perfect. This strong language was the result of St. Paul's great advance in holiness, and the depth of his self-abasement and hatred of sin. If we do not understand this language, it is because we are so far beneath him in holiness, knowledge of the spirituality of God's law, and the evil of our own hearts, and hatred of moral evil. And many believers have adopted the apostle's language, showing that it is suitable to their deep feelings of abhorrence of sin, and self-abasement. The

apostle enlarges on the conflict he daily maintained with the remainder of his original depravity. He was frequently led into tempers, words, or actions, which he did not approve or allow in his renewed judgement and affections. By distinguishing his real self, his spiritual part, from the self, or flesh, in which sin dwelt, and by observing that the evil actions were done, not by him, but by sin dwelling in him, the apostle did not mean that men are not accountable for their sins, but he teaches the evil of their sins, by showing that they are all done against reason and conscience. Sin dwelling in a man, does not prove its ruling, or having dominion over him. If a man dwells in a city, or in a country, still he may not rule there. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

It is no more I that do it – This is evidently figurative language, for it is really the man that sins when evil is committed. But the apostle makes a distinction between sin and what he intends by the pronoun "I". By the former he evidently means his corrupt nature. By the latter he refers to his renewed nature, his

Christian principles. He means to say that he does not approve or love it in his present state, but that it is the result of his native propensities and passions. In his heart, and conscience, and habitual feeling, he did not choose to commit sin, but abhorred it. Thus, every Christian can say that he does not choose to do evil, but would wish to be perfect; that he hates sin, and yet that his corrupt passions lead him astray. Barnes' Notes on the Bible

7:18 in me...nothing good dwells. The flesh serves as a base camp from which sin operates in the Christian's life. It is not sinful inherently, but because of its fallenness, it is still subject to sin and is thoroughly contaminated. The MacArthur Study Bible

We will conclude our study into Romans chapter 7 today. We've seen previous parts of Chapter 7 where the Apostle Paul emphasized the fact that the Mosaic Law cannot save anyone from sin. We looked at verses 17 – 20 in the last part of our study, demonstrating from the Greek (present tense) that Paul was writing about the struggle he and all believers have with the sin nature. We move now to verses 21-25.

Rather than list each verb and its tense in this next section (as I did in the last), I'll just say that **all** of the verbs in verses 21-25 are present tense except for one future tense verb. I'll point that one out when we get to it in verse 24. The important thing to note is that Paul was writing about his personal struggle with sin at the time of his writing Romans. All Christians struggle with sinful thoughts and actions –

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Galatians 5:17

(All verbs are present tense in this verse as well).

Verses 21 – 25

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 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. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 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.

ευρισκω αρα τον νομον τω θελοντι εμοι ποιειν το καλον οτι εμοι το κακον παρακειται συνηδομαι γαρ τω νομω του θεου κατα τον εσω ανθρωπον βλεπω δε ετερον νομον εν τοις μελεσιν μου αντιστρατευομενον τω νομω του νοος μου και αιχμαλωτιζοντα με τω νομω της αμαρτιας τω οντι εν τοις μελεσιν μου ταλαιπωρος εγω ανθρωπος τις με ρυσεται εκ του σωματος του θανατου

τουτου ευχαριστω τω θεω δια ιησου χριστου του
κυριου ημων αρα ουν αυτος εγω τω μεν νοι
δουλευω νομω θεου τη δε σαρκι νομω αμαρτιας

Verse 21

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

ευρισκω αρα τον νομον τω θελοντι εμοι ποιειν το καλον οτι εμοι το κακον παρακειται

ευρισκω αρα τον νομον (*heuriskō ara ton nomon*) "I find so the principle" ... *heuriskō* means 'discovery after searching' .. *nomon* means 'law as general principle' .. Paul found a general principle to be true through the process of personal discovery .. because the word 'law' is preceded by the article (the), 'it could refer to a law as the constant rule of experience imposing itself on the will such as a modern scientific law, or the Mosaic law, or to the law of sin which Paul speaks of as in his members' (Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 1887) .. 'The law, in short, which Paul has discovered by experience, is the constant fact that when his inclination is to do good, evil is present with him...Possibly Paul meant, in using the word, to convey at the same time the idea of an

outward compulsion put on him by sin, which expressed itself in this constant incapacity to do the good he inclined to— authority or constraint as well as normality being included in his idea of the word.’ (*Expositor’s Greek Testament*) ..

τω θελοντι εμοι ποιειν το καλον (*tō thelonti moi poein to kalon*) “that desiring me to do good” ... *thelonti* means ‘desire, wish for, want, intend’ .. *kalon* means ‘beautiful as outward sign of inward good, noble, honorable character’ .. this is something Christians should ‘desire’ in their lives, ‘to do good’ ..

οτι εμοι το κακον παρακειται (*hoti emoi to kakon parakeital*) “that me evil is present with” ... *kakon* means ‘bad, evil in the widest sense’ .. *parakeital* means ‘to lie beside, be present with’ .. Paul’s deep desire was to ‘do good,’ but he struggled with a presence of evil within his flesh that caused him to sin .. evil is something we all have to contend with in our lives, and the lives of others, until God calls us home .. that’s what Paul referred to when he wrote, ‘that evil is present with me’ ..

Verse 22

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

συνηδομαι γαρ τω νομω του θεου κατα τον εσω ανθρωπον

συνηδομαι γαρ τω νομω του θεου (*sunēdomai gar tō nomō tou theou*) "I delight for in the law of God" ... *sunēdomai* means to 'rejoice together, delight inwardly' .. Paul's words remind me of what King David wrote in Psalm 1 – 'Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path 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. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.' .. Paul may have even had that Psalm in mind when he wrote those words to the Romans ..

κατα τον εσω ανθρωπον (*kata ton esō anthrōpon*)
"according to the inward man" ... Paul, like all true believers,
was a 'new man' in Christ .. Paul experienced Christ in the
'inward man' .. that's where the 'new man' lived .. Paul wrote
the Corinthians earlier that, 'Therefore we do not lose heart.
Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the
inward *man* is being renewed day by day.' .. Paul knew that
the 'flesh' of the outward man was perishing, but the 'inward
man' was being renewed day by day .. Paul addressed the
issue in more depth a few years after he wrote to the Romans

—

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in

Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:17-24

Paul appealed to believers not to conduct themselves 'as the rest of the Gentiles,' but to 'put off' their former conduct, 'the old man,' and 'be renewed in the spirit of your mind' .. that's a powerful demonstration of the battle that rages within every believer .. we are 'new' in spirit, but the 'old man' is still with us, slowly perishing, but still a challenge we have to face all day, every day ..

The 'natural' (unsaved) person does not have any physical or spiritual ability to "be renewed in the spirit" of their mind. Their conduct at all times is what Paul referred to as 'the old man.' Paul wrote earlier in Ephesians that all people are "dead in trespasses and sins." It is only have salvation that a person is made 'new' in spirit because of God's great love and mercy – 'even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive

together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:6-7). We have MUCH to be thankful for to God.

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.

βλεπω δε ετερον νομον εν τοις μελεσιν μου αντιστρατευομενον τω νομω του νοος μου και αιχμαλωτιζοντα με τω νομω της αμαρτιας τω οντι εν τοις μελεσιν μου

βλεπω δε ετερον νομον εν τοις μελεσιν μου (*blepō de heteron nomen en tois melesin mou*) "I see however another law in the members of me" ... Paul addressed a 'law' in verse 21 where he wrote – 'I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.' .. he referred to 'the law of God according to the inward man' in verse 22 .. Paul then referred to 'another law' that resided in his 'members' that warred against the 'law' of his mind, bringing him into 'captivity' to the 'law of sin which is in my members' .. the word *melesin* means 'a limb of the body, a part of the body' ..

the context would seem to direct us to understand that Paul's struggle was a 'fleshly' one that impacted his physical body (members) ..

αντιστρατευομενον τω νομω του νοος μου και αιχμαλωτιζοντα με τω νομω της αμαρτιας
(*antistrateuomenon tō nomō tou noos mou kai aichmalōtizonta me tō nomō tēs amartias*) "warring against the law of the mind of me and making captive me to the law of sin" .. *antistrateuomenon* means 'to make war against, campaign against' .. *aichmalōtizonta* means 'to take captive, to subdue, ensnare, take prisoner' .. *tō nomō tēs amartias* means 'the law of sin, the law of missing the mark, the law of failure, the law of committing sinful deeds' ..

This may come as a surprise to some Christians – that there exists 'a law of sin' and that a Christian can be taken captive to it through a campaign of spiritual warfare. However, given the many other writings of the Apostle Paul and other apostles we should not be surprised. Was it not Paul who wrote about spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10-18? He wrote that Christians needed to 'be strong in the Lord and in the power

of His might.’ He wrote that Christians needed to put on ‘the whole armor of God’ so that they ‘may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’ Paul wrote that we ‘wrestle’ against ‘principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.’ Paul wrote that it was necessary for God’s people to take up ‘the whole armor of God’ so that we might be able to ‘withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.’

What we learn from Ephesians 6 and other apostolic writings is that it is possible for a believer to ‘fall’ and ‘fail.’ That’s what Paul referred to in Romans 7:23 – ‘But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.’ The potential for failure and falling into sinful thinking and behavior is a possibility for believers because of ‘another law’ that warred against the ‘law’ of his mind. It is the battle of the flesh and spirit Paul referred to in Galatians 5.

Here's an interesting idea to consider from Dr. Wuest –

Paul does not see in his nature two normal modes in which certain forces operate: he sees two authorities saying to him, Do this, and the higher succumbing to the lower. As the lower prevails, it leads him captive to the law of sin which is in his members, or in other words, to itself: 'of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' The end therefore is that man as a creature of flesh, living under law, does what sin enjoins. It is the law of sin to which he gives obedience. Kenneth Wuest, Romans in the Greek New Testament, Eerdman's, 1955

Verse 24

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

ταλαιπωρος εγω ανθρωπος τις με ρυσεται εκ του σωματος του θανατου τουτου

ταλαιπωρος εγω ανθρωπος (*talaipōros egō anthrōpos*) “o wretched man I am” ... *talaipōros* means ‘distressed, miserable, afflicted, wretched, beaten-down’ .. this Greek word is used only twice in the New Testament, once by Paul and once by the Apostle John .. Jesus, who dictated these words to John, used the word in Revelation 3:17 as part of describing the ‘church in Laodicea’ .. a group of Christians that the Lord said were ‘wretched and miserable and and poor and blind and naked’ (ταλαίπωρος καὶ ἔλεεινὸς καὶ πτωχὸς καὶ τυφλὸς καὶ γυμνός) .. some of the churches that Jesus addressed directly in Revelation 2 and 3 are unfortunate examples of what we see in churches through the past centuries and today .. Paul wrote a letter to Laodicea and

John ministered to them, but they didn't heed the messengers or the message .. with Christ's dictated letter, it was a final warning – 'I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.'

τις με ρυσεται εκ του σωματος του θανατου τουτου (*tis me rusetai ek tou sōmatos tou thanatou toutou*) "who me will deliver out of the body of death this" .. I mentioned earlier that one of the verbs in this section is future tense .. *rusetai* is that verb (future indicative middle, 3rd personal singular) .. Paul was asking who would be able to 'deliver from danger or destruction, rescue, snatch up' him 'from this body of death' .. who out there in the universe would be able to deliver Paul from the 'wretched man' that lived within his 'members' .. I think we know the answer even before reading the next verse ..

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.

*ευχαριστω τω θεω δια ιησου χριστου του κυριου ημων
αρα ουν αυτοσ εγω τω μεν νοι δουλευω
νομω θεου τη δε σαρκι νομω αμαρτιας*

ευχαριστω τω θεω δια ιησου χριστου του κυριου ημων
(*eucharisto tō theō dia Iēsou Christou tou kuriou hēmōn*)
“thanks then be to God through Jesus Christ the Lord of us”
... Jesus is the only One in the universe any of us can turn to
for salvation from sin and death, the wretched man, and to
eternal life .. that’s the solution I would have expected from
the Apostle Paul .. I would also expect Paul to sum up his
teaching precisely and succinctly ..

αρα ουν αυτος εγω τω μεν νοι δουλευω νομω θεου τη δε σαρκι νομω αμαρτιας (*ara oun autos egō tō men noi douleuō nomō theou tē de sarki nomō hamartias*) “then so myself I with the indeed mind serve law God’s but with the flesh the law of sin” .. just a reminder that the verb *douleuō* (serve) is a present tense verb (indicative active) .. Paul ‘served’ God’s law with his mind, ‘but with the flesh the law of sin’ .. that is the condition of every Christian .. our flesh is at war with our mind .. or as Paul wrote to the Galatians, ‘For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.’

I find Paul’s words comforting because living as a Christian in this present world (age) is challenging. There are things we want to do that we know are the right thing to do because of what God’s Word tells us and what we sense in our mind and spirit. However, we sometimes do not do those things and even do the opposite. That threw me when I was a young Christian. I wondered whether I had really been saved or if I had somehow lost the gift of salvation God had given me. Romans 7 became a great comfort to me when I studied it

from the Greek and realized what Paul was saying. Galatians 5 confirmed it. As Paul wrote, ‘I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!’ We owe everything to Jesus. Everything.

Other Commentaries

This passage does not represent the apostle as one that walked after the flesh, but as one that had it greatly at heart, not to walk so. And if there are those who abuse this passage, as they also do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction, yet serious Christians find cause to bless God for having thus provided for their support and comfort. We are not, because of the abuse of such as are blinded by their own lusts, to find fault with the scripture, or any just and well warranted interpretation of it. And no man who is not engaged in this conflict, can clearly understand the meaning of these words, or rightly judge concerning this painful conflict, which led the apostle to bemoan himself as a wretched man, constrained to what he abhorred. He could not deliver himself; and this made him the more fervently thank God for the way of salvation revealed through Jesus Christ, which promised him, in the end, deliverance from this enemy. So then, says he, I myself, with my

mind, my prevailing judgement, affections, and purposes, as a regenerate man, by Divine grace, serve and obey the law of God; but with the flesh, the carnal nature, the remains of depravity, I serve the law of sin, which wars against the law of my mind. Not serving it so as to live in it, or to allow it, but as unable to free himself from it, even in his very best state, and needing to look for help and deliverance out of himself. It is evident that he thanks God for Christ, as our deliverer, as our atonement and righteousness in himself, and not because of any holiness wrought in us. He knew of no such salvation, and disowned any such title to it. He was willing to act in all points agreeable to the law, in his mind and conscience, but was hindered by indwelling sin, and never attained the perfection the law requires. What can be deliverance for a man always sinful, but the free grace of God, as offered in Christ Jesus? The power of Divine grace, and of the Holy Spirit, could root out sin from our hearts even in this life, if Divine wisdom had not otherwise thought fit. But it is suffered, that Christians

might constantly feel, and understand thoroughly, the wretched state from which Divine grace saves them; might be kept from trusting in themselves; and might ever hold all their consolation and hope, from the rich and free grace of God in Christ. Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

This is not an unsaved man who is crying, "O wretched man that I am."; this is a saved man ... He is helpless. His shoulders are pinned to the floor-he has been wrestled down. Like old Jacob, he has been crippled. He is calling for help from the outside. '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 is the answer to Paul's SOS. God has provided deliverance. It introduces chapter 8 in which the deliverance is given in detail. Both salvation and sanctification come through Christ; He has provided everything we need. Through the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Volume IV, 1983, p 694

Romans Resources

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Next eBook

We will look at Romans Chapter 8 in the next part of our study of the **Gospel of God**.

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