

## 15. ROMANS SERIES: Sin's Advantage in the Law

### Romans 7:7-12

Within professing Christianity today, there are many that live by the motto, 'were not under Law were under grace.' Though this statement can mean a profound theological truth that is indeed true of all Christians, it is not always meant in the Biblical way. For many, such a motto is a license for moral freedom and excess, and is really an abuse of the truth that being in Christ means freedom from the Law.

In our last study we understood that Paul, under inspiration of the Spirit, defined our freedom from the Law as being in fact a marriage to another. This means that being freed from Law, we are now slaves of righteousness as Romans six highlighted, '*that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Rom 7:6b).*'

Paul here begins to give an autobiographical account that is also true of all men who come under the influence of the Law (7:7-12) and then are renewed (7:13-25).

Please Read Romans 7:7-12

**Verse 7:** If the sinful passions are aroused by the Law (5:20; 7:5) and we now serve '*in the newness of the Spirit,*' what shall we say then about the Law - is it sin, or evil? Is there really any point to the Law?

Paul's response to this anticipated question is, 'no, it isn't evil (7:12)', rather it is good. The Law, in this case the Moral Law, brings both an intellectual knowledge of sin and also a personal knowledge of sin. Without the standard being known our lack of conformity to that standard could not be known. There is nothing wrong with the Law, it only highlights our own sin, thereby showing where the real trouble is and that of course is with us.

For example, Paul would not have known what it meant to covet except the Law said, '*you shall not covet (Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21).*' He didn't know he was guilty of breaking that standard and all that that involved, until he discovered what the Law said about covetousness. When he understood the command, then he understood his real sinfulness.

**Verse 8:** But even though this is true, the corrupted nature contaminated by indwelling sin

took advantage of the revealed standard and stirred up all manner of covetousness and evil desire. When Paul didn't know the Law, sin was somewhat inactive and unknown, but with the Law revealed, its true nature burst forth in rebellion. It was not going to heed the command of God and so it burst into action.

**Verse 9:** Paul had felt alive and secure, for he had no conviction of sin and the implications of a broken Law had not registered with him. He believed himself acceptable to God and therefore spiritually alive. But when he understood the full implications of the Law (Mk 12:29-31), sin was aroused within him and Paul became conscious of His guilt and condemnation before God. Paul recognized that spiritually he was in fact dead.

**NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION:** How did the Law bring death?

**Verse 10:** The Moral Law which was to secure everlasting life by obedience to it (Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:11; Rom 10:5; Philip 3:6), rather brought condemnation to death (Is 64:6). Paul had thought that this was something of which he was quite capable of achieving, and indeed was achieving - until he understood his real state by understanding the Law.

**Verse 11:** The sinful nature took advantage of the Law, allowing him to think that he was OK (cf 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14 - same word used) and that he could obey it. He thought he had gained life, but in reality it brought him death, for he had not in fact kept it at all.

**QUESTION:** How should believers view the Law - what should our attitude be?

**Verse 12:** So what should really be thought of the Law? The Law is certainly not evil (7:5). In itself it is holy, just and good. It does its job correctly, for if you obey there is life, and if not there is death. The problem is with the sinner, for the sinner is evil. It is not the Law's fault that we are sinners and unable to keep it. In reality it is a mercy that the Law shows us our sin, for it prevents us from trusting our own efforts and drives us elsewhere for relief.

## **INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY**

What state (saved/unsaved) was Paul thinking of in Romans 7:13-25? How did you come to this conclusion?

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