

Chapter 7:1-15

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

The apostle now takes up the question of the law. What role does it have in the believers relationship with God now? For the Christian, we have died with Christ, so now the law is not the basis of relationship with God. “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God” (Gal.2:19). We, being dead with Christ are set free from the life the law had dominion over. “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Rom. 6:8).

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

The Apostle now takes up the marriage relationship to illustrate the principle of the law. Only death could break the relationship those under law could be released from its authority. Marriage illustrates this principle. Of marriage the Lord said, “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mt. 19:6). God sees only death as an end to marriage on earth. Mankind is seen as married to the law, if under its authority.

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

There are two husbands alluded to in these verses, the Law, and Christ. You cannot be “married” to both, or you place yourself in a relationship that an adulteress woman would be in as having two husbands at the same time. Only death frees her from her first husband in order to be married to another.

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

Paul explains his marriage illustration in this way, we have become dead to the law, and thus free from its authority over us. This was accomplished for us, by Christ’s death. He is now risen, but in death took the penalty the law enforced upon man, He was cursed for us. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal.3:13). It would be unfaithfulness to Christ our new “husband” to return to the former “husband,” the Law. Putting ourselves under law, denies our new relationship with God we now have through Christ’s death and resurrection. We are now free from the law.

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

Christ, because of us (our sins) through death gives us life. The Law because of us, (our sins) demanded death. The simple solution to what relationship we have with the law is simply is Christ our Head, or the Law. Both we cannot be. It is either “in Christ” or “in the flesh”. The Christian is “in Christ”. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal.6:15). The apostle now takes up the question of the law. What role does it have in the believers relationship with God now? For the Christian, we have died with Christ, so now the law is not the basis of relationship with God. “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God” (Gal.2:19). We, being dead with Christ are set free from the life the law had dominion over. “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Rom. 6:8).

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

Paul says “But now.” Since Christ has died for us, and bore the penalty our sins deserved, on

the Cross, and has also been “made sin” for us, on the Cross, and has died, “ now “He is risen. Faith in Him has set us free from the “letter” of the law. Paul writes, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, (law) but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor.3:6). The “letter” could only condemn us, for it had only “us” to work with.

v 7 “What shall we say then? [Is] the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”

The law could not give life, it demanded a life, suitable to God’s presence. Instead of finding life, it disclosed lust. Paul had been blameless in the outward obedience of the law. “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Php. 3:6). But the Law searched out the heart, and disclosed covetous hidden there.

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

When it speaks of sin being dead, it simply means it was inactive, but when the law forbade covetous sin, because it is sin, desired to covet, and did covet.

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

Without the knowledge of the law, (God’s requirements from man) man can live in a measure of peace in his ignorance of God’s righteousness. In this way, Paul was alive, without law, but as soon as he learned he wasn’t to covet, sin was stirred to covetous, and the law, slew him.

v 10 “And the commandment, which [was ordained] to life, I found [to be] unto death.”

The Lord had said prior to the giving of the law, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant... ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These [are] the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel”. The people, confident in themselves said, “And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD” (Ex.19:1-8). The law was then given, “ordained to life,” that is, if they kept His commandments, they would be His holy nation. But man found there was no good in him to obey God. So he would have to die under the curse of the broken law.

v 11 “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew [me]”.

Sin, looked at as our enemy in this chapter, used the “spiritual” law, to condemn man in the flesh.

v 12, 13 “Wherefore the law [is] holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful”.

The problem is not with the Law, but with man. By nature, man is not holy, just, and good. Yet the Law required these things from man—not being able to produce these things, sin, (our enemy) used the law to justly condemn us, or as (in vs.11), slay us. But the fault was not with the Law, it simply shows how “exceeding sinful” we are. This would not have been known to us, except by means of the law.

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

Like the Priest and Levite in Luke 10, the Law could not help us, it required strength on our part, and we had/have none—we too were half dead. Alive in this world, dead to God. We were slaves to sin our master.

v15 “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”

A heart awakened to God, and now desiring to please Him, finds no help in the Law, for he still

finds himself without strength. This strength is known in the next chapter to be by means of the Spirit of God, when the soul realizes Christ needs to deliver him from himself, He finds himself to be a wretched man. Feeling himself to be so now, by a new knowledge of God, and God's laws. We need God's grace not the law.

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

The law gives us God's standards for man. If a man desires to meet those standards, even though he doesn't, he is admitting the law that gives those standards is good. But it is he that is bad.

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

But if a man desires to do good, and recognizes the law is good, then he sees that another force stronger than himself, is influencing him to do evil, he identifies it as sin that dwells in him, and is stronger than he is. But he does not own now, that it is himself that is ruling in his body, but rather sin. But he has no power to overcome it, rather, it rules him.

v 18 "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not."

Sometimes "the flesh" can simply refer to the human body. "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof" (Gen. 2:21). The body is referred to in this way before and after the fall of man. Animal bodies are spoken of in this manner also. "And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram.." (Exo.29-32).

Other times it refers to the fallen nature of man, thus having a moral connotation. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn.3:6). To be born of God spiritually man needs to be born again.

In resurrection the Lord spoke of Himself having flesh and bones. This was not a moral or spiritual condition, but simply a reference that He is now a Man, even in Glory (as well as being God "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

The context of where the word "flesh" occurs determines its meaning. Here the flesh is seen as what we are as fallen men having the first Adam as our head. No good can be found in us as such. The Christian is no longer seen as being "in the flesh" morally, but in Christ. "[There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ" (Rom. 8:1).

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

The illustration before us is a that of a man, with a desire to do good but finding no power in himself to do it. Sin (not sins) ruled him, and was stronger than he. The chapter closes with "who shall deliver me?" He realizes he cannot deliver himself from sin. He finds himself to be a wretched man, needing to be delivered. This comes by being "in Christ" and the power of the Holy Spirit. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom.8:13).

It is well to note the state spoken of in this chapter is not a proper Christian condition. First the person recognizes the law to be spiritual and himself sold under sin (v.14). Christ, and grace are not known.

However it is well also to know the "old man" never changes, and if allowed to act, always does wrong. But the true Christian is a new creation in Christ, and is no longer in bondage to the sin nature, or to the law. Neither sin nor the law gives strength to do good. The Holy Spirit is the power of life. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

Man did not lose the sense of good in his fall, but he did lose any ability to do good before God. We truly, without Christ, are without strength.

vv 21,22 "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in

the law of God after the inward man”.

Having a delight in the law of God, according to the inward man, there was no power to do the good desired. When we don't know that God's dealings for blessing us must be on the principle of grace (that is God's doing, not ours) we must be miserable. We cannot earn blessing.

I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind—bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

“The law in my members” is not the “law of God” which is delighted in verse 22, but the principle of sin, or the law (influence or power) that brings into captivity. We need deliverance from this, and another must do it. (Christ only can do this.)

The “law of my mind” is the desire or influence of our mind that would delight in the “law of God”.

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

Now, for the first time, we find a soul looking for deliverance from Someone other than self. That One is Christ. It is well to realize when we are considering ourselves as the source that brings blessing and liberty with God, all we can say in truth is “O wretched man that I am”.

v 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”.

Deliverance and power we find in chapter 8, (Christ, and the Spirit). Oh! How good it is to be free from seeking blessing from ourselves on the principle of law. How sad to find ourselves more occupied with ourselves than with our Blessed Saviour!