

ROM. 6-7 SANTIFICATION AND OVERCOMING SIN'S EFFECTS



We begin In **Romans 6**, where Paul has been covering the different steps of salvation, the current one being *sanctification*, or the lifelong process of overcoming sin and developing spiritual character. He urges them, "Therefore *do not* let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And *do not* present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as *instruments of righteousness* to God. For sin *shall not* have dominion over you, for you are *not under law but under grace*" (Rom. 6:12-14).

He explains that being "under grace" means to be "under God's forgiveness and help" -- as long as we do *our part* and *obey* His laws. But if we abandon God's laws, then we go back to being "under the law," which means its condemnation.

This is why Paul insists if one abuses the gift of grace, he will go back to being "under the law." As he states, "What then? Shall we sin *because we are not under law* [its penalty] *but under grace*? *Certainly not!* Do you *not* know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to *obey*, you are that one's slaves *whom you obey*, whether of sin leading to death, or of *obedience* leading to righteousness?" (Rom. 6:15-16).

Clearly, God did not forgive our sins so we could feel free to disregard His holy laws. Such a thought is absurd and abhorrent to Paul, but it is what traditional Christianity teaches, insisting you don't have to keep God's laws since one is under "grace" and can ignore God's commandments. Perhaps a quote from Martin Luther best illustrates this flawed concept. He said, "Be a sinner, and *sin boldly*, but believe more boldly...sin shall not drag us away from Him [Christ] even should we commit *fornication or murder, thousands and thousands of times a day*" (Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. 3, p. 196). This abominable and satanic idea is what Jude warned about in his day, saying, "They have perverted the message of God's grace into a license to *commit immorality*" (Jude 4, TPT).

To counteract this wrong belief, Paul repeats his warning about not disregarding God's law while appreciating grace, and states: "But now that you have been *freed* from sin [by Jesus' sacrifice] and

have become *servants of God* [servants obey their masters orders], you have *sanctification* as your fruit, and *eternal life* as your end" (Rom. 6:22).

Here the process of salvation is explained--first comes *justification* or the *forgiveness* of sins by Christ's sacrifice and thus declared free from God's death penalty. Next comes *sanctification* (committing to a life of *obedience* to God's laws *through* God's grace) and then one day, receiving eternal life. So, there are only two possible ways of ending up--eventually being forgiven by Christ's sacrifice and living God's way, resulting in eternal life or rejecting it and being condemned to dying permanently -- the second death (Rev. 20:14-15).

As Paul sums up: "For the *wages* of sin is *death*, but the *gift* of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). This verse shocked our Church leader Herbert Armstrong in the 1920's when he began studying the Bible. He had always heard that the penalty for sin was to go to hell. But the Bible here said the penalty was *death* and not an eternal life of an immortal soul in hell. Then he read, "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." Again, it stunned him, for he had always heard one already *has* eternal life because of one's immortal soul, but here it said we *do not* have eternal life in us, but that it is a *gift* from God.

So, this means that when one dies, you do not actually live on by a means of a soul, but "sleeps," or remains *in an unconscious state* until one is resurrected (1 Thes. 4:13-15). Then comes "the judgment" and, depending on what resurrection one is assigned to, it will be determined by God if the result is eternal life in His kingdom as a gift or if it is dying the second death by being incinerated in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

We now arrive to one of the most important sections of the Scriptures, where *in two chapters (Romans 7-8)*, we go from the state of human sinfulness to a *process* of being transformed into spiritual and eternal children in the family of God.

In **chapter 7**, Paul continues to develop the theme that once baptized and forgiven of the sins of the past through Christ's sacrifice, the condemnation and penalty of God's law is erased.

To illustrate the point, Paul now uses the analogy of the marriage law in the Old Covenant and then of coming under the New Covenant. The difference is that coming under the principle of forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice was not available in the Old Covenant (except for a few especially chosen people, see 1 Pet. 1:10-12).

The point Paul makes is that without having God's Holy Spirit, no one can fulfill His law correctly. As he had said, 'For *the wages* of sin is death, but *the gift* of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' And then goes on, "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? 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. 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. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become *dead to the law* [its penalty] 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* [or results] to God" (Rom. 6:23-7:4).

As long as we were under the old regime of the law, which condemned all serious sins with the death penalty, there was no salvation from it. The only exceptions were those called by God in the Old Testament who received the Holy Spirit and Christ's forgiveness in advance [or imputed], such as Abraham, Moses, and David. Paul mentions this principle when he quoted David as saying: "Blessed is the man whom the Lord does not impute sin" (Romans 4:8). But for the rest of mankind, all were under the law's condemnation.

Paul continues, "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. But now we have been delivered from the law [its penalty], having died to what we were held by, so that we should *serve* in the newness of the Spirit [having God's spirit] and not in the oldness [the penalty] of the letter" (Rom. 7:5-6).

Notice there are two administrations of the law, a former one that condemned us, because we

had a carnal mind, that even though we wanted to follow the holy law of God, it inexorably ended up condemning us for our transgressions to a spiritual and later, a physical death. We were "locked up and condemned" under that former application of the law. As Paul says of Jews and Gentiles under that previous system, "For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin" (Romans 3:9).

Now, in order not to be misunderstood, for some may think that the problem is with God's law and not with its administration, Paul immediately reiterates, "What shall we say then? Is *the law* sin? *Not at all*" (Rom. 7:7). He explains that the law is not the problem, but rather it is man's carnal nature. Under the old application of the law, man with his carnal mind could not fulfill the requirements of God's law and was condemned. The remedy was not to change or dilute God's law, but to change man's heart by having God's spirit in one.

Paul first candidly confesses his struggle against sin, even after conversion, for that carnal nature still exists [he calls it "the old man"] despite having God's spirit. He admits, "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' [the 10th commandment]" (Rom. 7:7).

This is perfectly logical. For example, in tennis, there is a rule that says the ball can only bounce once, and not twice, when hitting it, or you will lose the point. Therefore, it is the rules that clarify what the infractions are and the penalty. In the same way, one would not know what sin is if it were not for the law of God "the rules" defining and explaining it. For instance, there are people who do not know that coveting is wrong, because they don't know of a law against it. But the Bible does prohibit it, and so the struggle or temptation to avoid coveting arises.

Paul explains it this way, "But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, *produced* in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead [had no validity]" (Rom. 7:8). It is when something is forbidden that, suddenly, the temptation arises to want to do it. This is called

“the forbidden fruit effect.” It first happened in the Garden of Eden when God told Adam and Eve *not to eat* from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But under Satan's temptation, Eve began to lust after it. We read, “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6). It is one of life's challenges to resist the desire to do what is forbidden by God's law, and the carnal mind in general likes complete freedom to do what is pleasurable. Proverbs 9:17-18 explains this forbidden fruit effect: “*Stolen water tastes best, and the food you eat in secret [that is forbidden] tastes best of all. None who listen to [this temptation] understand that her guests are as good as dead.*” By the way, yielding to temptation never produces anything positive or good in the end, but instead, brings guilt, sorrow, suffering, and eventually, sickness and death.

Paul, as a former Pharisee and great spiritual leader of his people, had at times succumbed to the desire to covet. He explains, “I was alive once without the law [as a child], but when the commandment came [the awareness of it], sin revived [temptation appeared] and I died [he was guilty and under the penalty of death]. 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 [condemned me to death]” (Rom. 7:9-11).

Here, Paul openly admits his carnal nature before conversion. Thus under “the old regime of the letter of the law,” he, even though a great religious leader, still had a carnal mind and secretly coveted many things, though disguised so as not to be seen by men. He later wrote of having covetousness, pride, hate and self-righteousness (1 Tim. 1:13, 15). Before God and His law, despite the great effort, Paul was condemned by his sins.

He reiterates that the fault of committing sin was not God's law, but *his own carnal nature*. He candidly admits: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12). This is a very important statement that traditional Christianity ignores! He goes even further, “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 [or its evil influences]*” (Rom. 7:13-14).

As *The Jewish New Testament Commentary* mentions: “So the Torah [Law] is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good. Those who think Paul sought an escape from the Jewish Law in order to make Christianity easy for pagan converts must find this verse difficult. It proves that Paul neither had an un-Jewish view of the Law nor desired to abrogate it. The verse witnesses to Paul's lifelong high regard for the Torah, which corresponds to his lifelong observance of it. This attitude would have been with him from his youth, since his parents were Pharisees (Acts 23:6). It would have been strengthened by his studies with Rabban Gamaliel (Acts 22:3); and there is no reason to suppose that his coming to faith in Jesus — who did not ‘come to abolish the Torah’ (Mt 5:17)—would have changed it. So many errors about Paul's opinion of the Law could have been avoided had this verse been understood as constraining everything he writes about it. God's holy Torah for holy living does not change. Why? Because God himself does not change (Malachi 3:6) and holiness does not change. Moreover, this verse is not alone: Verses 10,14,16,22 and 8:2,4, 7-8 all show that Paul had a high regard for the Torah” (Note on Rom. 7:12).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary adds: “The law comes from God who is Spirit (John 4:24) and expresses God's will about how one should live.”

So, there is nothing wrong with God's laws about Sabbaths, Holy Days, tithes, or the right foods to eat. What is wrong is *our carnal attitude* that doesn't want to submit to God's holy laws (Rom. 8:7). It doesn't want to discipline itself to keep the Sabbath or to tithe, preferring to do something else, or not giving God what is His due, and instead spending it on oneself.

Yet, if one respects God, he will discipline himself and obey His laws, for as God says of those He rewards and blesses, “But on this one will I look: On him who is *poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word*” (Isaiah 66:2).