

Romans – Bible Study – Chapter 7:7-13

In Romans 5-7, Paul unpacks the glorious truth that those who come to faith in Christ (Romans 3-4) no longer live "under law", but "under grace". In chapter 6, he develops the implications of God's abounding grace towards us. He explains that we are no longer the slaves of sin because of our union with Christ (6:1-14), and he exhorts us to live out this reality - no longer continuing in sin nor yielding to sin as its slaves, but rather, living as slaves of righteousness (6:15-23). In Romans 7, he further explains the relationship between believers and the Law.

The Believer's Relationship to the Law (part 2)

For review: Read Romans 7:1-6. Summarize what Paul's saying about believers and the Mosaic Law (i.e. the OT law given by Moses) in these verses.

- The law only applies to those who are alive, using the law against adultery as an example (7:1-3)
- Just as death of the husband releases a wife from the 'law of marriage' and frees her to marry another, our death in Christ has freed us from the law so that we might belong to Him (7:4-6)
 - our lives used to bear fruit for death because of the sinful passions aroused by the law
 - but our death Christ frees us to bear fruit for God as we live in the new way of the Spirit (more on this in chapter 8)

Read Romans 7:7-13

In 7:7-13, Paul addresses a potential objection that someone might raise based on what he's taught so far, namely, that Paul makes it sound as though the Law is bad or sinful.

(Verse 7) What is the function of the Law? (see also 3:19-20) Why might someone think that Paul is saying that the Law is sin? (see 7:5-6; also 4:14-15; 5:20) How does Paul respond to this thought (see also 7:12)

- the way shows us God's righteous standard and makes us aware of what sin is - for example, what coveting is, as per 7:7
 - the law does not save or justify us, but rather shows us our sin and holds us accountable to God (3:19-20)
- Paul says that the sinful passions of the flesh are aroused by the law, and suggests that the law binds us captive to sin so that we bear fruit for death (7:5-6)
 - as a result, the law actually **increases** (not decreases) sin (5:20) and that it brings wrath (4:15)... which is why no one can be saved by the law (3:20)
- Paul categorically denies that the Law is sin ("by no means!" (7:7)); rather, he asserts that the Law is holy, righteous, and good (7:12)

(Verses 8-9)

-If the Law is holy good (v.12), how are "sinful passions aroused by the law" (v. 8; cf. 7:5)?

- Indwelling sin, arising from our sinful nature, "seizes the opportunity" presented by the Law - produces all kinds of sinful desires contrary to what the Law commands
 - e.g. the law says "Do not covet", but sin produces all kinds of covetous desires within us

-What is the relationship between the Law, sin, and the individual? (v.8-9) What is the end result of this relationship (v.10)?

	Sin	The individual ("I")
Apart from the Law	Sin lies dead (v.8)	"Alive" (v.9)
Under the Law	Sin comes alive (v.9)	"Dead" (v.9)

- the end result of this relationship is death, through what was intended for life (v.10)

-In what sense was sin "dead" and Paul "alive" apart from the Law? (v.8-9; cf. 5:12-13)

- Sin isn't "dead" in the sense that it doesn't exist apart from the Law, as Romans 1-3 (and 5:12-13a) makes clear
- Rather, sin is "dead" apart from the Law in the sense that without the Law, it lacks the 'opportunity through the commandment' (7:8) to produce all kinds of sinful desires (e.g. covetousness) and to use the Law to arouse sinful passions contrary to the Law (7:5)
- Paul was "alive" apart from the Law in the sense that sin was unable to use the Law to arouse sinful passions contrary to the Law and produce death in him through his disobedience to the Law
- Also, Romans 5:13 tells us that sin is not counted when there is no law
- Not that Paul was "alive" in an absolute sense of being free from sin, death & God's judgment, but in terms of his awareness of the Law and the extent its demands upon him
 - but when awareness of the Law came (using coveting as an example), sin 'came alive', and he 'died'
- **Note to leaders:**
 - it's controversial exactly who Paul is referring to by "I" in these verses, as well as in 7:14-25
 - simplest reading of the text is that he is referring to himself, i.e. this is 'autobiographical' (which is the position I have taken here), with broader application to everyone who is under the Law
 - however, other possibilities that have been suggested by various commentators include
 - Adam - i.e. Paul is identifying with Adam (or humanity in Adam) when he speaks of himself in these verses
 - if Paul being "alive" apart from Law is taken in an absolute sense as being completely free from sin, Adam would be the only one who qualifies; also, the idea that sin 'deceived' him (7:11) could be a reference to the deception of the serpent in Genesis 3
 - Israel - i.e. Paul is identifying with the nation of Israel
 - the coming of the law/commandment would then refer to God's giving of the Law at Mount Sinai
 - combination(s) of Paul himself, in solidarity with the nation of Israel and/or Adam
 - the main thrust of Paul's argument about the relationship between sin and the Law remains more or less the same, whichever position one takes

(Verses 10-13) How is it that the "very commandment that promised life" actually brings death instead? Is the Law the problem? (v.10-11) How does this show the utter 'sinfulness of sin' (v.12-13)

- Sin 'seized the opportunity' through the commandment
 - stirs up sinful passions and produces every kind of sinful desire contrary to the commandments, as previously seen
 - "deceives" us - promises good that it can't deliver; makes disobedience appear more attractive than obedience --> entices us to sin, which brings forth death
- the problem is not with the Law/commandment, which is holy, good, and righteous (v.12), but with sin in us
- the utter sinfulness of sin is revealed in how it takes something that is holy and good (i.e. the Law - promising life) and uses it to an unholy end (i.e. death) (v.13)

In Romans 7:7-13, Paul continues to unpack the relationship between believers and the Law. Here, he addresses a potential objection to his teaching thus far, namely, that he is making it sound like the Mosaic Law is bad or sinful. Paul vigorously denies this charge, affirming that the God's Law is holy, good, and righteous. However, sin, which indwells each one of us as a result of the Fall, seized the opportunity afforded by the commandment, using that holy Law for unholy ends by arousing in us sinful passions and desires contrary to that Law, and deceiving us and so producing death instead of life. But thankfully, this is not the end of the story; for as we saw in our previous study and as we will see again in the studies to come, through the body of Christ, we "died to that which held us captive" in order that we might bear fruit for God, and not for death (Rom. 7:4-6). As Paul also writes elsewhere, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:56-57)

Points to Ponder:

- What's your attitude towards sin in your life, and how should it change in view of what you've learned in this study?
- How can you be guarding against the deceitfulness of sin in your life? (see also Hebrews 3:12-13)