

# ADDRESSES ON ROMANS

by

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## CHAPTER SIX

### RIGHTEOUSNESS REALIZED (Continued)

Romans 6:1-8:39

LET US remember that because of the vital importance of the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans, we are devoting a separate lecture to each chapter. Because we do not want to miss a single detail of the message God has for us here, we are not hurrying over this portion of the book. However, let us remember also that these three chapters form a unit — the fourth great division of the epistle — and in reality should not be separated, the one from the other.

In the earliest manuscripts there were no chapter divisions, and these three chapters form one logical, progressive development of the theme of the epistle: The gospel of God, which provides for sinful man His righteousness in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We saw in our last lesson that this righteousness, required by God, revealed in Christ, and received by faith, may be realized in the life of the believer who acknowledges himself to be dead to sin.

We saw that the believer's standing before God is one of death, burial, and resurrection with Christ; and that it is his responsibility to reckon on this fact and yield his members unto God in obedience to his new Master.

Today we shall see from the first fourteen verses of chapter seven that our standing before God also involves death to the Mosaic Law. Then in the remaining verses of this chapter we shall see the believer's state in the flesh and the way to victory over sin.

In our next study, in chapter eight, we shall reach the climax, not only of this division of the epistle, "Righteousness Realized," but the climax of the whole book as well.

The way to victory over sin, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, is so marvelously presented in the eighth chapter that we find ourselves on the mountain-top of the Christian experience.

## **II. OUR STANDING IN CHRIST— DEAD TO THE LAW, (7:1-13)**

Paul realized the necessity of showing that the believer in Christ is dead to the law, because many of the early Christians held to the doctrine that the Mosaic Law was still to be their rule of life. Even today there are hundreds of Gentile believers who adhere to this false teaching. Legalists we call them.

There were evidently Jewish Christians in the church at Rome who introduced their legalistic ideas; and the matter needed to be settled with apostolic authority.

These legalists held that Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification, but they taught that all believers are still under the Mosaic Law as a rule or guide for daily life. They professed to believe in Christ and His grace, but they surely did not understand the truth taught in the seventh chapter of Romans. Since the grace of God was his theme, Paul had to do away with such false conceptions. If a believer has died to his old master, sin, he has also died to the law.

Legalism aims a terrific blow at the doctrine of the grace of God, because any teaching that seeks to detract from the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work on Calvary is false and contrary to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul realized where legalism would lead. Therefore, in chapter seven he presented the negative side of the question — how righteousness is not realized; in chapter eight, the positive side — how righteousness is realized in the Christian life. Not by the works of the law, but by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, is the gift of His righteousness made a living, powerful experience in the human heart. It is all of grace! Not the Mosaic Law, but the risen Christ is the believer's rule of life. If only Christians would grasp this fundamental truth!

Thousands of people do not know the truth that Paul presents in this chapter.

Many in evangelical denominations think we are saved by the keeping of the law. Others feel that it is the rule of life for the believer. Many of the cults, such as Seventh Day Adventism, teach this false doctrine. But it is absolutely necessary for believers to be delivered from the law.

Some years ago I was conducting a Bible conference in the city of Indianapolis, a stronghold of legalistic teachers of a certain sect. They profess to believe the finished work of Christ, but they still maintain that the Mosaic Law is the believer's rule of life. After the services many of these legalists approached me to tell me how serious a mistake it was to preach salvation by grace alone.

One day a lumberman came up to me after one of the meetings and said:

“Mr. Talbot, what you teach is all right as far as it goes, but you should go on to the Mosaic Law. You and I are still under law as a rule of life; and if you do not keep it, you will be annihilated at death, or when Jesus comes.”

He emphasized especially the fourth commandment, insisting that Christians should observe the Jewish Sabbath, which is the seventh day. He even said that the pope was the Antichrist, and that he had changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first. He went so far as to say that the first day is “*the mark of the beast*,” referred to in Revelation. Surely this man had never read the seventh chapter of Romans with understanding. Such teaching as he held leads back to bondage, and is contrary to the gospel of the grace of God. And no portion of the Scriptures states the case more plainly than does the seventh chapter of Romans.

### **ISRAEL’S BLINDNESS IN ASKING FOR THE LAW**

Before we go into the discussion of this chapter, which shows that the believer is dead to the law, let us recall why the Mosaic Law was given in the first place.

If we do not have clearly in mind the circumstances under which the law was given, we shall miss Paul’s real message here. It was not necessary for him to recount that Old Testament experience in his letter to the Romans; for, as he explained in Romans 7:1, he was speaking to those who already knew the law.

Moreover, these words show that the apostle had in mind legalistic Jewish Christians; therefore, his message here aptly fits all legalists, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.

But what were the circumstances under which the law was given?

**Turn back to the story in Exodus, and you will see that Israel presumptuously demanded the law. Otherwise, it would never have been given.**

From the beginning, God had dealt with His people in grace. Little realizing their sinfulness and their utter inability to keep God’s holy law, however, “**all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do**” (Exodus 19:8). And even while Moses was on Mount Sinai, receiving from God the law, Israel at the foot of the mount was worshipping a golden calf! The people had asked for that which they could not keep; and God let them have the law, that they might see for themselves how far short they had come in obeying it.

**“By the law is the knowledge of sin”** (Romans 3:20).

I know this is not the popular way of presenting this subject, for Satan has blinded the eyes of hundreds of well-meaning souls. He wants to rob the Christian of the joy and peace of heart that come from the assurance of salvation in Christ that is all of grace. And he receives lost men by leading them into a false sense of security by poor, paltry works that can never save the soul. But the Word of God speaks plainly on the subject, and it is our infallible guide.

Let us turn back to the Old Testament record to verify what God’s Word plainly declares:

**That the law was given to reveal sin to a presumptuous, rebellious people; and that in Christ it has been done away.**

Let us go back to the twelfth chapter of Genesis where we find the account of how God dealt with Abraham—on unconditional promises. There is grace for you! All blessing upon Abraham and his descendants rested on God's promises, and not on what they could do. All God required was that Abraham should believe Him. And what did God promise Abraham? A son in his old age, through whom a great nation was to come, through whom the Redeemer and "**the oracles of God**" were to be given to a sin-darkened world. All these promises were given on the ground of grace—and grace alone.

Then when Abraham asked God, "**Whereby shall I know?**" (Genesis 15:8), God told him to build an altar and offer sacrifices. These offerings were pictures of what Christ was going to do on Calvary's cross. God was going to do things because He said He would, not because of what Abraham did. That is what we call promise; it is what we call grace.

God also dealt with Israel on that very same ground, even as He promised Abraham that He would.

From the time Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage, until the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, God dealt with His people on the ground of grace. Even though Israel showed themselves to be a stiff-necked people, still God dealt with them in grace. He gave them manna and quail to eat, and still they murmured and complained. Because they stood dependent on God and because He was dealing with them in grace, He could and did show kindness and bless them in spite of their stiff necks.

Then at Sinai God made them a proposition: He showed them what He had done for them, and that they were a self-righteous people.

He said to them something like this: "*Suppose you make your relation to Me from this time on depend upon your obedience to what I require of you. Since you think you can measure up to My holy standard, try it for yourselves; and My holy law will only reveal to you your great sin and your utter inability to keep My righteous commandments.*"

If rash Israel had only known of her sinfulness, she would have realized that she could not do anything but sin.

She would have known that if her relation to God depended on her obedience, she would have to be perfect, because God must have perfection. But Israel was ignorant and proud, instead of prostrate at the feet of her Creator. And presumptuously the people said, "**All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.**"

Thus the covenant at Sinai was made. God put before His people His requirements—the Ten Commandments—all the moral, ceremonial, and civil law. It was a covenant with which God had nothing to do, but to watch their actions, then act accordingly. He knew that they could not keep His commandments, and that He would have to punish their disobedience. But, as Paul explains in Galatians 3:24, "**the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.**"

God permitted Israel to have the law, that she might realize her weakness and utter inability to save herself; for **“by the law is the knowledge of sin”** (Romans 3:20). And the law makes sin to appear in its true character, **“exceeding sinful”** (Romans 7:14).

With Abraham God dealt in grace; in the **“covenant with death”** He required obedience to His holy standard. It was Israel’s part to obey. And who were the children of Israel? They were poor lost sinners who could only act as sinners.

It doubtless sounded well to them when they said, **“All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.”** But their relationship to God depended upon their own efforts, whereas they might have continued under His unconditional promises of grace.

Likewise today those who despise grace want salvation to depend on works.

It sounds well to the flesh; but when we get God’s measuring stick and measure ourselves, we find out what His requirements are. We read the Ten Commandments, which sum up the law; we realize that we cannot keep them; and James tells us that **“whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”** (James 2:10). He has broken God’s law, which demands perfect obedience.

When the Israelites said they would do what God commanded it was evident that sin had them so blinded that they supposed themselves capable of obedience. They were in a hopeless state. God had to punish disobedience. Even though Israel was so ignorant, God showed how necessary it was to do away with the law.

How thankful we should be that **“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”** (Romans 10:4)! And even to sin-blinded Israel, hundreds of years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God was teaching this eternal truth.

For example, the golden-covered Ark of the Covenant was a type of Christ, and wonderfully illustrates the believer’s death to the law.

It was made of acacia wood illustrating Christ’s humanity; and it was covered with gold, typical of His deity. The mercy seat, or lid, was of solid gold. The ark was kept out of sight. Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies, where the ark was kept; and only once a year could he enter there; for God dwelt above the mercy seat in the Shekinah Glory, which was a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. Moreover, the high priest could enter into the presence of God only on the ground of shed blood, which he sprinkled on mercy seat.

**The ark was a type of the Lord Jesus, who was eternal God and perfect Man.**

The blood of the animal sacrifice was a foreshadowing of His own blood, shed for the atonement of sin. *And the law; the two tables of stone, were hidden in the ark.* The high priest could enter God’s presence because, between him and the law, there were the mercy seat and the sprinkled blood!

Surely you see, my friend, what God was teaching sinful man.

He alone in the Person of His holy Son, could keep the law. He came to bear the awful curse we incurred because of disobedience. For thirty-three and one-half years, He demonstrated that He could keep both the spirit and the letter of the law. God's broken law demanded death; but He Himself died to bear the awful penalty of sin on our behalf; for nothing less than a *perfect* sacrifice would satisfy the law's demands.

Yes; it was pride that brought about the dispensation of law. Sin had blinded Israel's eyes, and God allowed them to have the law, that they might see their need of a Saviour. Likewise, if you can meet the requirements, my legalistic friend, then you will get to heaven on your own merits. But if you fail—and you will, for you are a sinner—then the law must kill.

### **“THE LAW” INCLUDES THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

Let me make clear one other point just here. The lumberman in Indianapolis and other legalists who argue that Christians must observe the Jewish Sabbath, which is the seventh day, tell us that

Paul, in the seventh chapter of Romans, had in mind the *ceremonial* law, and not the *moral* law. They admit that we no longer need to offer the Jewish sacrifices; that is, the *ceremonial* law; and they claim that Paul refers to this ritualism when he tells us in the seventh chapter of Romans that we are dead to the law.

Now verse 7 proves beyond all controversy that this is not so; for “**Thou shalt not covet**” is one of the Ten Commandments. And Paul uses these words here to prove that he has in mind this *moral* law, as well as the *ceremonial* law, when he says that the believer in Christ is dead to the law. *And the fourth commandment, regarding the observance of the seventh day, is one of the ten!*

I am seeking to lay the foundation of our study of this chapter; and it is important for us to keep this point in mind. In other words, “**the law**” here referred to is no different from “**the law**” mentioned repeatedly elsewhere in Romans.

For example, we read such statements as these, which are but a few of the many of like nature to be found in this epistle:

**“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (3:20).**

**“Ye are not under the law, but under grace” (6:14).**

**“Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held” (7:6).**

**“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (10:4).**

*(1) The Old Husband and the New (7:1-6)*

Now please read carefully Romans 7:1-4, in which the believer's death to the law is explained by an illustration so simple that a child can grasp it.

The law is compared with a husband, to whom a woman is bound as long as he lives. He may be hard to live with because of his rigid demands; he may make her life miserable; yet she is bound to him. But if he dies, she is free from him and his rules. She is at liberty to marry again.

**“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”** (v. 3).

Now Paul uses this illustration to show what takes place when the sinner accepts Christ as his Saviour.

He dies to the law.

When we were crucified with Christ, buried with Him, and raised with Him, we not only died to sin, the old master; but we also died to the old husband, which is the law. To quote the words written to us by the apostle:

**“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”** (v. 4).

**The figure of the bride and the bridegroom is a familiar New Testament illustration of the union of Christ and the church. And here in Romans the meaning is clear. We cannot be married to Christ unless death takes place. Then we are severed from the law. But if we claim to be married to Christ, and yet are married to the law, we are spiritual adulterers and adulteresses. It is impossible to be married to Christ and know Him as the new Husband, and yet be married to the law.**

In chapter six Paul shows that we are severed from sin, the old master; in chapter seven, that we are severed from the law, the old husband. We are dead to the old husband and his law. We not only died with Christ, but we were raised with Him, and have been united to Him, just as a woman may be united to another man after the death of her husband. Therefore, the bond that once connected us to the Ten Commandments and all the Mosaic Law has been severed.

Being united to the law is like being united to a man who has rigid rules, one who cannot be pleased. The woman who tries to please her husband, but cannot, cries out in desperation, “O wretched woman that I am!” So also the man who struggles to keep the law and fails—and only One has ever kept God's holy law; only He could keep it—that man cries out in desperation concerning the old husband, which is the law: **“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?”** (v. 24).

When Paul raised this cry of despair, he added the only answer known to the human heart: “**I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (v. 25). And what an easy Husband He is to get along with! How great is our deliverance! We were once married to the old husband, whom we could not please; but we died with Christ and were raised with Him, united to our new Bridegroom. And life is entirely different now!

You see, my friend, that here in chapter seven Paul is not only putting before us the absolute necessity of our being free from the law, but he is also showing us that the law has no connection with us. We must die to it.

It is significant that the implication is in reverse to the illustration which Paul uses here.

According to the illustration, the husband dies, while the wife lives and marries again. But the law cannot die; it slays the faithless wife. God’s holy law never changes; but Christ kept the law, satisfied its claims; and judicially the sinner who accepts Christ as his Substitute on the cross dies with Him. Thus it is that we are dead to the old husband, the law, and are united to our new Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. The old husband, which is the law, can inflict death, but cannot give life. However, when we died with Christ, we were released from the claims of death. Our death and resurrection have formed a new relationship with Him.

Those who say that the law is our rule of life are living with their old husband. They say that Christ puts those who are married to Him under the old, legal master to be controlled. Do not be misled, my brother. Christ Himself is the Head of the church; He is the Bridegroom; and His commandments are to be our rule of life. Let me tell you this: If you believe that Christ died for you and at the same time think you are under the Mosaic Law, you are a spiritual adulterer; you are married to another before your first husband is dead. You claim to be united with Christ, yet you remain under law. Paul says this cannot be so in the spiritual life any more than in the domestic life. Many people today are walking around with two husbands. The Mosaic Law is not your husband, my Christian friend. The risen Christ is your new Husband, and the law of His love is your rule of life.

It is difficult to bring a legalist to the end of himself, to bring him to the place where he flings himself at the feet of Christ. But even as the law kills when we are “**in the flesh**”; that is, out of Christ; so also it will do so again. The only fruit it can bring forth is “**unto death**” (v. 5), whether for the saved or the unsaved.

“This world is not a friend to grace,” we sometimes sing. And we discover this to be true as soon as we begin to magnify the grace of God.

Many people would bear anything, in order to obtain merit in God’s sight, rather than have to take the place of a guilty, helpless sinner, a debtor before God. It is hard to get a legalist to see that he cannot keep the law. But even after we know Christ, we have no more strength in ourselves than we had before we knew Him. The only strength we have is that which comes as a result of our being linked with the risen Lord.

To all those who would stay in bondage to the law, the question must be faced: Who is going to order and control this new bride? The first husband, the law, says, "I am"; the second Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, says, "I am."

Those who say their rule of life is the law put themselves under the old husband. Others say they receive the old husband from Christ. But the fact that we are new creatures in Christ does not give us any more strength in ourselves than we had in our unregenerate state. Christ died so that we might be delivered from the law. He is the Head of the church, and should control the new bride.

### **The Word of the Lord and His commandments become our rule and standard of life.**

When I was conducting a Bible conference in Minneapolis, a man who had not died to the old master came to me, presenting the claims of the law.

Then I said to him, "But I am already married."

Again he argued, and again I said, "But I am already married."

Finally he asked, "What does your being married have to do with this?" And I read to him the first four verses of the seventh chapter of Romans. "You are trying to marry me to the old husband," I said. And this is exactly what every legalist who professes to know Christ is doing. He is a spiritual adulterer.

I am glad to know that I am dead to the old husband. My new Husband is not hard to please; and He gives me His all-powerful indwelling Holy Spirit, about whom we shall read in Romans eight, to enable me to do His will.

As a result of our union with Christ, "**we should bring forth fruit unto God**" (v. 4).

Here the figure is developed further: Even as children are born of the earthly marriage, so also "**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**" (v. 5).

But since we have died to the old husband, and are "**married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead . . . we should bring forth fruit unto God**" (v. 4).

If we are ever to bring forth fruit unto God, my friend, it will not be because of law, but because of the risen Christ.

The only kind of fruit the law can produce is fruit unto death. When we were in the flesh, we were in our natural, unregenerate state. And Christ said to Nicodemus, "**That which is born of the flesh is flesh**" (John 3:6). Paul puts before us here our experience in the flesh. He shows us that our desires in the flesh work to bring forth fruit unto death. The law provokes evil. It produces no good.

Now look at verse 6. The words “**but now**” refer to the state we are in by virtue of Christ’s death. Once we were married to the old husband, “**but now**” our new Husband is our Head.

We died to the law, and it is a broken bond. We serve in the newness of the Spirit and are not in a hopeless state. We should be helpless in trying to keep the demand of the law; but because of our new relation to Christ, who speaks and rules, we are conscious of new power and new motives. He makes obedience a joyful thing!

(2) *The Purpose of the Law (7:7-13)*

Earlier in this lesson, in reviewing the Old Testament record concerning Israel’s blindness in asking for the law, we touched upon the topic Paul refers to in verses 7-13: that is, the purpose of the law. In this portion of the chapter he leaves no room for doubt on the subject, and shows plainly that the law was given to reveal sin, and to show the sinner his need of a Saviour. It was, indeed, “**our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.**”

In verse 7 the objector raises the question, “**Is the law sin?**” And immediately the apostle replies, “**God forbid.**”

And the words which follow tell of his own experience. The law was given to Saul of Tarsus to show him his lost condition. There was a time when he thought he was all right. In his self-righteous state, he thought he was keeping the law. But one day he saw the risen Christ on the Damascus road; and from that time on, he realized that the law was a detector of sin.

“**Nay, I had not known sin,**” he wrote in Romans 7:7, “**but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.**”

The sinful nature rebels against this, but Paul tells us plainly that the law wrought in him unsatisfied desires. That is, he did not know that covetousness was a sin, as long as he did not actually take that which belonged to someone else. Covetousness, we know, *is desiring what another person has*. Saul thought he was not a sinner when he did not take the things of others, but God showed him his evil nature by saying in the law, “**Thou shalt not covet.**” And remember! This is one of the Ten Commandments; Paul calls them “**the law,**” to which the believer has died. And the fourth commandment is one of ten!

Apart from the law, sin was not recognized. But when law came into the picture, Paul began to see himself as God saw him. Then he said, “**I was alive without the law once**” (v. 9).

What Paul means here is that he was blissfully unconscious of himself, his true position before God as a sinner, until the law showed him his hopeless condition. Until the law came in, he was alive in his own estimation. Had God not said at the time the law was given, “**Do, and thou shalt live**”?

Israel had found out that she could not keep the law, but that it was a “**covenant with death.**” And hundreds of years later Paul realized the same thing.

Let me illustrate by a practical device known to medical science. What the fluoroscope is to the diagnostician in the medical world, the law is to the sinner. I have a friend in the East who is the head of a large clinic. They do not perform operations there, but they do diagnose case after case. They examine the patient to show him the cause of his illness; then they send him to a surgeon or other physician for treatment.

One day, as my friend was taking me through his clinic, I saw a man there who did not go to be examined himself. He had taken a relative to the clinic for diagnosis. Looking at him, however, my friend saw that he, too, needed to be examined.

“Oh, no,” the man said; “I’m all right.” But he did agree to the examination, assured in his own mind that it was not at all necessary.

My friend placed him before the fluoroscope; the light was turned on; and we saw what could never be seen except for the instrument. We could even see the heart beating. But my medical friend saw more; and turning to me, he said: “Do you see that shadow there? It is a cancer. And it has developed to such an extent that an operation would only hasten death. That man is doomed to die.”

While that man was doomed to die of cancer, yet he was blissfully unconscious of his state. For months, possibly for years, the dreadful disease had been fastening its grip upon him; still he thought he was all right.

So it is with sin, that awful cancer of the soul. It is deeply rooted in the human heart; but “**the heart is deceitful**,” Jeremiah tells us; and it takes God’s holy law, like the fluoroscope, to reveal to the sinner his true condition. The law is the great detector of sin. And Paul is telling us here something like this: “*Once I was blissfully unconscious of my helpless condition; but when I got before God’s fluoroscope, I saw my need for redemption from sin.*”

This is the purpose of the law, my friend. A man does not recognize the enormity of sin until he knows the law. The desire to do wrong is sin, even though that desire is not put into execution. Law gives recognition. Paul says that he was blissfully unconscious of his state before God as a sinner until he learned the law. He did not realize that his evil desires were sinful. This is what law was intended to do. The law was given to show transgression; it gave to sin the specific character of transgression against God’s righteous standard.

Again, Paul raises the question, “*Does the law sentence men to death?*” Note the words in verse 13, immediately following his statement that “**the law is holy . . . and just, and good.**” “**Was then that which is good made death unto me?**” And his answer is clear: “**God forbid.**” It is sin that sentences the man to death. The cancer, not the fluoroscope, sealed the sick man’s doom. Likewise, sin, not the law, condemns the guilty sinner. The fluoroscope revealed the cancer, even as the law reveals sin. And as the fluoroscope could never heal the cancer, neither can the law cleanse the sinner’s heart. The law is the detector of sin. It is like the diagnostician, and sends the sinner to the Great Physician for cleansing and healing from sin.

What a terrible thing sin is! It sentences to death the creatures whom God wanted to live with Him and reign with Him. There are those who underrate sin, or deny its existence altogether. But when we look into God's fluoroscope, we see what a terrible thing it is, and how subtle Satan is in leading men to believe that it will not kill.

Sin is shown to be "**exceeding sinful**" (v. 13), when exposed to the light of God's holy law. And sin slays the sinner.

But God offers a Fountain of cleansing:

. . . a Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

### III. OUR STATE IN THE FLESH (7:14-25)

As we have seen in the first part of this seventh chapter of Romans, Paul has made it plain that the risen Christ, and not the law, is the believer's rule of life.

Now in verses 14-24 he shows the futile struggle of the man who tries to find victory over sin by taking the law as his rule of life. Many who admit that the law cannot save, at the same time try to live by the law. Here in verses 14-24 Paul shows how futile such an effort is; then in verse 25 he gets a vision of the risen Lord in glory—the only Way to victory. And in chapter eight he goes on to dwell fully upon the Spirit-filled life, the only victorious life.

Let us read carefully these verses. They are greatly misunderstood. Many believe the struggle described here is the legitimate experience of the Christian throughout life—hating evil and loving good, but doing what he should not. Note the despair in the words: "**What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do**" (vv. 15, 19).

This is not the normal Christian life, my friend; it is not what God wants you and me to experience.

There are others who say that Paul is describing here the conflict of an unconverted man under law; but that is not the case either. Here in these verses we have a believing Jew struggling to obtain victory over sin by using the law as a rule of life. And in Christendom today, thousands of Gentiles try to do this same thing. But it is not God's way for us to find victory over sin, as we shall see.

Chapter seven shows us how righteousness is not realized; chapter eight, how it is realized. And God permitted Paul to make this test in his own experience, in order to help us.

In chapter seven we read repeatedly: "**The law**" and The Holy Spirit is not mentioned once.

We see Paul converted, but defeated in his struggle against sin, trying to make the law his rule of life. And all the way through these verses, it is “**I—I—I**” and “**the law.**” Not until we reach verse 25 do we see by faith the risen Christ. And in chapter eight the Holy Spirit fills the scene. He is mentioned eighteen or nineteen times directly and many times indirectly. Through His presence and power Paul learned the secret of victory over sin!

But in chapter seven he has his eyes on himself and the law.

I believe the Holy Spirit led him to tell this experience in the first person, in order that every reader might enter into it sympathetically and understandingly for himself. And Paul begins by saying, “**I am carnal**” (v. 14). There is a difference between the carnal nature and our natural state.

**The natural man is the unconverted man; the carnal man is a child of God not delivered from the law; the spiritual man is the Spirit-filled man, who takes Christ as his rule of life.**

Here in this chapter, however, we see the struggle of the carnal man. He has died to the evil nature, but is subject to it. He is not apprehending the great truth presented in the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of Romans. He finds himself going contrary to the new nature. He cannot carry out his desires to be good.

This shows that there is something within him that is to be distinguished from the new nature. He slowly comes to the consciousness that the old and new natures are in conflict. He wants to do good, but has no power to perform his will. Therefore, he comes to the conclusion that this struggle must go on through life, and finally cries out in anguish, “**O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?**”

He is a man walking around with a body of death upon him. In ancient times they punished a murderer by putting the dead man on his back and forcing him to carry the corpse around. That is a true picture of the Christian under the law. The old nature is wrapped around him. He tries to free himself, but finds no way, and finally cries out in despair. It is the cry of the hopelessness of the man who is brought to the end of human resources.

Is this your sad experience, my Christian friend? Then read on to verse 25, and, with Paul, find the only way to deliverance through the living Christ. The moment He is allowed to control the life, there is power over indwelling sin. There is more; all the freedom and hope of chapter eight floods the soul; and defeat gives way to victory.

Some there are who tell us to eradicate the old Adamic nature; others there are who tell us to suppress it by the law; but God tells us to counteract it by the power of His own Holy Spirit. And this is the only way to realize the righteousness which He has provided for us in Christ.

Our state is in the flesh, and will be until we have our immortal bodies; but our standing before God is one of death to sin and death to the law. It is ours to reckon on this fact, and seek to please our new Bridegroom by the power of His own Holy Spirit, letting Him control our lives.

Do this, my brother, and with Paul you will be able to change the dirge of defeat into a song of victory—**“through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

### A FURTHER WORD TO LEGALISTS

I have received letters from legalists who ask, “If we are no longer under the Law of Moses, do we have a right to steal, to kill, or to commit adultery?”

My friend, can you imagine a person’s asking this question after studying the first seven chapters of Romans?

We have learned that we are dead to sin, and alive unto God. If we yield our members as instruments of righteousness, then God gives us victory over the power of sin by the Holy Spirit.

#### *(1) The Law of Christ*

To say that we are free from the law, does not mean that we are not under any law.

We are under the law of Christ, which is **“the royal law”** of love (James 2:8); and **“love is the fulfilling of the law”** (Romans 13: 10).

The law of Christ is to believe on Him and to love our neighbor as ourselves. That will take care of stealing and all other sins. We are under a higher law than that of the Mosaic Law. We are governed by the Holy Spirit.

I might say, in this connection, that the law of Christ reiterates nine of the ten commandments of the Mosaic Law. The only one not in the law of Christ is the fourth; yet strangely enough, it is the one which legalists emphasize more than any other.

Let me prove this from the Word of God by listing below New Testament quotations which reiterate nine of the Ten Commandments in explaining to us the law of Christ. Other New Testament references might be cited.

And please note that the New Testament commandment regarding the seventh-day Sabbath positively forbids its observance by Christians.

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. **“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”** (Exodus 20:3).
2. **“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . .”** (Exodus 20:4-6).
3. **“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain . . .”** (Exodus 20:7).

#### THE LAW OF CHRIST

1. **“To us there is but one God, the Father . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ”** (I Corinthians 8:6).
2. **“Little children, keep yourselves from idols”** (I John 5:21).
3. **“Hallowed be thy name** (Matthew 6:9).

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| <p>4. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy . . .” (Exodus 20:8-11).</p> <p>5. “Honour thy father and thy mother . . .” (Exodus 20:12).</p> <p>6. “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13).</p> <p>7. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).</p> <p>8. “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15).</p> <p>9. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exodus 20:16).</p> <p>10. “Thou shalt not covet . . .” (Exodus 20:17).</p> | <p>4. “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17)</p> <p>5. “Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise . . .” (Ephesians 6:2, 3).</p> <p>6. “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (I John 3:15).</p> <p>7. “Now the works of the flesh are . . . adultery . . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).</p> <p>8. “Let him that stole steal no more” (Ephesians 4:28).</p> <p>9. “Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Romans 13:9).</p> <p>10. “Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 13:19; compare Hebrews 13:5).</p> |
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*(2) The Jewish Sabbath—A “Shadow” of Rest in Christ*

In the Authorized Version the word “*days*” following “**sabbath**” in Colossians 2:16, quoted above, is in italics, which means that it was not in the Greek language. Here Paul puts the Sabbath in with all other “**shadows**,” or types which are fulfilled in Christ. Some people say that the word “**sabbath**” here does not mean the seventh day, but that it has reference to the special feast days. If that had been the case, Paul would have said so. On the contrary, he had already referred to these special feast days in the same text, calling them “**holy days**.”

The Sabbath was just a “**shadow**” of the rest we have in Jesus Christ. That is why it was not given to man in Genesis. It was given only after the shedding of the blood of the paschal lamb (Exodus 16:23-30), because it was a picture of Christ on Calvary.

My friend, Christ is my Paschal Lamb and He is my Sabbath. You should follow the “**shadow**” in the killing of the paschal lamb if you do so in respect to the Sabbath. But “**Christ our passover is sacrificed for us**” (I Corinthians 5:7). And He Himself has said, “**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest**” (Matthew 11:28). These are some of the “**shadows**,” to which Paul referred in Colossians 2:16, 17.

*(3) We Could Not Keep the Sabbath if We Would*

To those of you who argue for the observance of the Jewish, or seventh-day, Sabbath let me remind you that the regulations on this day were very strict. I have never known anyone who kept them. The Israelites were commanded strictly to stay inside on the Sabbath (See Exodus 16:29).

It was not a day of worship, but one of enforced idleness. They were not to kindle a fire (Exodus 35:3). They were to bear no burdens (Jeremiah 17:21). The man who defied God and gathered sticks on the Sabbath was stoned (Numbers 15:32-36).

The law shows no mercy, my friend. Do you ever kindle a fire on the Sabbath? You may not need to in Southern California, but in Chicago you would. The law says you must not.

If you do and yet are seeking righteousness by the works of the law, then, according to the law, you should be stoned to death. Do you ride street cars on the seventh day? Do you turn on the electricity?

The fourth commandment says that those who obeyed it could neither work themselves nor cause others to work. When you use electricity or ride street cars, you are causing others to work—the motormen, and the men in the power house. Do you lift a chair? The law says, “**Bear no burdens.**” I have never known a legalist who really kept the law. It is one thing to say you keep it, and another thing to keep it. Do you say, “Times have changed. They could do those things in Palestine, but we can’t in the United States.” God’s holy law does not change.

The Sabbath was from sunset to sunset. I wonder if the people in the northern countries who have no sun six months of the year could keep the Sabbath? It was given to Israel to be obeyed while in Palestine.

He that despised the Mosaic Law died without mercy. If you put yourself under it, you are under “**the ministration of death**” and condemnation. The only reason there was ever mercy during the ministration of death, was because the ark was made and the tables of stone were shut up in it.

God saw that it was necessary for the law to be taken out of sight, even as we have already seen in this study.

We have seen that the Jewish Sabbath was a “**shadow**” of our rest in Christ. You and I enter into God’s Sabbath rest when we come to know Christ as the One who died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

That man gathering sticks was a legalist.

Instead of putting his trust in the promised Redeemer, he was gathering sticks. He was depending on what he could do. The wages of works, as well as the wages of sin, “**is death.**” God was careful of that Sabbath rest.

The man who carried a burden on that day was a picture of the man who shoulders his own burdens of guilt and sin, instead of confessing it and casting it upon Christ. The rest into which we enter after ceasing from our own works and trusting Christ, is the rest taught in Hebrews and in all the New Testament.

(4) *Christ is “Lord Even of the Sabbath Day” Matthew 12:8*

Christ healed the sick and gathered corn on the Sabbath Day. He deliberately did those things to show that He had come to be “**the end of the law**” to the Christian, to show that He is “**Lord even of the sabbath day.**” The very One who said in Old Testament times, “**Bear no burden,**” now said, “**Take up thy bed, and walk.**”

In Colossians 2:16 we are commanded not to allow these shadows to rule us, now that Christ has come; for they were really only shadows. The Lord was the answer to those shadows.

Consequently He told the lame man to do the very thing the law had forbidden. Christ was the anti-type. This world is filled with shadows at night; but when the great sun rises in the east, the shadows flee away. In like manner, when Christ came into the world, the shadows passed away. No, my friend; you are not to observe the “**shadows,**” even if you could. “**The ministration of death, written and engraven in stones . . . was . . . done away**” (II Corinthians 3:7). And the fourth commandment was one of the ten “**engraven in stones.**”

(5) *The Lord’s Day*

Let me add one more word to Christians who refer to the first day of the week as “**the Sabbath.**” That is not a scriptural term; all we have said hitherto regarding the Jewish Sabbath has to do with the seventh day. Never is the first day of the week called the “**sabbath**”; it is called “**the Lord’s day**” (Revelation 1:10).

Moreover, while we are not under law—we are under grace—yet when I see a man going to fish or play golf on the Lord’s Day, I am sure that he knows nothing of the grace of God. While there is no commandment in the New Testament for a believer to keep the first day, yet a real believer will reverence it and thus honor Christ. It commemorates His resurrection from the dead, the guarantee of a finished redemption.

And if we love Him, we shall heed the exhortation of the Word, to forsake not “**the assembling of ourselves together**” (Hebrews 10:25).

For worship and for fellowship with His people for service and for a testimony to Him, we shall set aside a day to honor Him before a Christ-rejecting world.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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