

Parson to Person

ROMANS 7 PART 2

“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. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

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. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 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” (Romans 7:10–25 NKJV).

Up to this point in the book of Romans, Paul has made a great case for three major doctrines: 1) The depravity of man; 2) The believer’s justification by faith alone—through Christ alone; 3) Our deliverance from the law, the power of sin, and from death. He made clear that all men are sinners and, moreover, that the law pointed out—with great emphasis—the depth of our sinfulness.

One might ask where Paul is going with all of this. Well, the answer is both simple and sublime: the salvation provided us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

By recognizing the pattern laid out here, we can see that Paul is leading up to the fourth part of his thesis: the sanctification of every believer.

(I have mentioned that the believer is positionally and completely sanctified at the point of regeneration. However, I have also mentioned that theologians like to show that the believer, once regenerated, is progressively being sanctified as we grow up in the things and ways of the Lord. This progress is their way of explaining maturity—growing out of the old man and into the new.

I simply prefer to call this growth, “maturity,” because of the confusion “progressive sanctification” creates in those who have come from or have been influenced by the Roman Catholic doctrine of incremental grace—indicating a slow and incremental measure of saving grace, given to the penitent seeker, in hope of total sanctification and ultimately non-punitive passage into eternal life/salvation.)

Without question, the regenerated believer is positionally sanctified when born again. However, it is likewise true that the believer is called to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord—resulting in Christian maturity. This is the sublime “meat for men” Paul is driving at in these three chapters of Romans (6–8).

In great part, the progress of our maturity is described by the level of our consciousness of sin and the law. The more we grow in grace, the less we think of the law and the depths of our sinful past. The more we grow in grace, the more we know of our position as dead to the law, dead to sin, and alive to God—apart from any human performance or the lack thereof. We have passed from death unto life and are untouchable in relation to any future eternal consequence related to our sin(s). This my friends is the sublime truth communicated herein.

Here in this second half of Romans 7, Paul addresses the question of our battle with the old man (fleshly nature) and the answer to it—found only in and through Jesus Christ. He asserts that the believer is no longer set up to reckon himself with the old man and his ways but to see his/her life through the eyes of the risen Christ and his/her present and perfect positional sanctification. Paul does not suggest that sinning is acceptable as a result, but points out that we are not to identify ourselves with the old man and the sin that lingers in our human nature—but instead, to see that fallen and old nature as something other than our now true selves while awaiting the final and climactic arrival to the perfection still to come. Therefore, while mortifying the deeds of the flesh, we spend

our focus on who we are going to be (and positionally are) rather than on our struggle with the fallen nature of the old man.

Here is the most interesting part. Many Christians measure their Christian maturity based upon how they measure up to the law. I want to suggest that Christian maturity may be better measured by how far beyond human measurement we are, and by how far we have come to know the grace of God—apart from the law.

Don't let this condemn you. We are all still growing... Simply do as Paul suggested and glory in the risen Lord. He himself said, "*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*", but likewise answers the question by keeping his focus and glorying only in the Lord. This is what is intended in his answer, "*I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*"

I love you all, Pastor Paul