The Book of Romans

Chapter 7

 This chapter now leads us into Christian living and non-Christian living. After studying the justifying work of Christ, and then the ongoing work of sanctification through the Holy Spirit. Paul has led his readers on a step by step approach away from the works of the Law which the Jewish Christians were living by and trying to push the Gentile Christians to live by. Paul has explained that Jesus being the fulfillment of the law by His sacrificial death on that Roman cross, and then His resurrection, which gives the believer eternal life, and this sets us apart from the Law. The Law is always there, because it is the basis for recognizing sin, but we have forgiveness from God by grace, and the sacrifices are no more.

 So then, friends, the question arose, because of this grace can we go on sinning? And Paul answers his own question, ‘By no means’! I have had conversations with folks of a certain persuasion, who live a worldly lifestyle, and truly believe that God, being a forgiving God, will allow them to continue to live that lifestyle because He loves them. But I have asked them, ‘If you are not repentant of your lifestyle how can God forgive you when you are not sorry and have no intention of changing your lifestyle?’ “How can there be Forgiveness if there is no repentance?” Again, YOU look up ‘repentance’. Saying one is sorry AND whatever the infraction was, it will never happen again. I repent of my wrongdoing and I will change. Too many times I might make a vow, but was I repentant?

 Now let's look into chapter 7 and see the next step.

 A] Romans 7: 1 through 6; (read)

 1] "*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?"*

 So, to start with, Paul speaks to the Jewish believers because they are the ones who know the law. His point is that because the life of a sinner ends in death, not eternal life, as noted in the previous verse from the last chapter, and it is the law that points out sin, so the law does hold dominion over a man until he dies, that is, as long as you are alive, you are under the law and its consequences.

 2] "*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."*

 Paul now uses a clear example they should all recognize regarding where we die to the Law. Are we bound to the law once we are dead? Si in the laws regarding marriage, once the husband dies the woman becomes a widow, therefore she is no longer bound to her husband. No longer bound to his life and lifestyle. Death is the only way a person is released from the Law, as the wife is released from the husband.

 3] "*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."*

 So in clearing up the matter, as long as he is alive the law holds and she is not free to marry or otherwise play round with another man, thus if the husband then dies she is no longer bound to him under the law and she is free to do as she is legally allowed under the Law in her life.

 This explains the law and its relationship with man. As long as we live, the law, again, as explained before, tells us right from wrong through God's perspective, for man who lives, but when man dies, what hold does law have on one who is no more?

 4] "*Therefore my brethren, you also have become dead to the law 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 to God."*

 The Jews are so intent on the law, and remember, this is the Law of Moses direct from God, however, they never understood the sacrificial atonement gift of Jesus, thus never understood the relationship of what Jesus was to this sacrificial atonement. So Paul equates the law of the marriage bonds to the death and resurrection of Jesus and to us who believe in His death and resurrection, will have died in His death thus we are dead to sin, and no longer bound to our earthly sins but to the righteousness of God through the marriage vows of Christ to His bride the Church. Does that make sense? We are no longer bound to the Law if we have died to Christ.

 5] "*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 having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."*

 Fruit. Does your life have meaning as a Christian? In other words, what kind of relationship did you have with the world before you were saved? How much positive activity did you have within society? That is the "fruit" we talk about. As a Christian, are you doing works that bespeak of you as a Christian? Do you allow the Holy Spirit to act through you?

 Now Paul again mentions that by the law, our sins are made evident, and the 'fruit' of your sinful life is death. In other words, there is no fruit. Whatever benefit you could have had toward your fellow man, was wasted by sinful living.

 B] Romans 7: 7 through 12; (read)

 1] "*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law unless the Law had said, "You shall not covet."*

 Paul is breaking the intent of 'The Law" down into its real meaning. The Law sets the standard by which God has designed man to live. How would one know what coveting means except when it is spelled out?

 2] "*But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire, for apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death"*

 When one kept the law which was an impossibility, one could have life but because they couldn't keep the law they were then condemned. The law does not save anybody, does it? Now Paul was a Pharisee and was zealous for the Law and as best he could, kept the law to the letter. But he found out once he was brought to the Throne, that the law could do nothing for him. All it did was expose his weaknesses.

 3] "*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."*

 Now, although Paul, is speaking somewhat metaphorically, he still injects his truth into it. Paul pushed the boundaries of the Law when he persecuted the New believers, didn't he? This is what he is saying here, that through the zeal of the Law, he used the Law to go after the Christian community, and he is convicted.

 Now because sin tempts everyone doesn't it? Would Eve have taken the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil if God had not spoken to Adam about Not taking the fruit? It would not have been temptation because there would have been no law to forbid it. For God had His reasons in not allowing Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit. And the Law was for the BENEFIT of the people not the detriment. What does Holy mean? To be set apart for God's purposes. God is Just and Good therefore He is Holy and His word is, therefore, Just and Good, thus it is Holy.

 C] Romans 7: 13 through 20; (read)

 1] "*Has then, what is good, become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful."*

 Going back a verse, Paul finally explains that the Law was good and just, so then he raises another objection, that if it is good, does it still lead to death? And Paul answers, ‘Of course not’. Now then, Paul proceeds to his point, that he did evil deeds under the guise of doing good but as the law showed him, these were even worse. Remember his arresting the Christians under the guise of Pharisaic command? He did so because he believed the Pharisaic ideal of the Law and acted on it, but it was to his detriment.

 2] "*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 do, that I do not practice, but what I hate that I do."*

 Now these next few verses, we have to read slowly and carefully.

 The law was given by the Holy Spirit and therefore it is spiritual, but Paul says he is a mere mortal or carnal and truthfully unspiritual or quite sinful. So this sets up the next discussion, that being, the two selves, the good self and the bad self. Now have we ever wondered why we do some of the things we have done or are doing? There are things we want to do and don't do, and then there are things we don't want to do and yet, by golly, we will do them.

 3] "*If then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good."*

 Paul is really talking about the law as a deterrent, isn't he? I know what is right and wrong but sometimes I do wrong, however I also know that the law acts as a deterrent, so the law is good even if I don't heed its instructions. Friends, are we sometimes like that? This is that dual nature we all have, we rejoice in the presence of God in our life, we strive to do what He wants us to do, yet that old nature pushes us in the opposite direction.

 4] "*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."*

 Here is the discussion regarding when we received Christ we became a new creation or person in Christ. Does that then cancel out the old sinful self? Apparently not. According to Paul we are new in Christ, but the old self remains. However, friends, there is still that ongoing sanctification, we are a work in progress. It is here that I place my life and will in God's Hands, because on my own I can do nothing.

 5] "*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil that 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 the sin that dwells within me."*

 It is the will. That old sin nature being still active in me and in you. We want to do what pleases the Lord, but sometimes (oftimes actually) we just are not up to the task. We fail and capitulate to the temptation.

 In the three letters of John; John spoke of the purity of the believer, that the believer should not sin. But that was John's goal for the believer don’t you think, and that is what he validates later on in his letter. That should be our goal, is the sinless life, which on our own we cannot achieve. Therefore, to do that, we must step out in faith and put our whole being in God's hands, however friends, even when we strive to even to do that, that old nature still continues to lurk within. Do you see the conflict Paul speaks about in the above verses? WE as Christians will continue to live, and that means we must be dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit, not on self.

 D] Romans 7: 21 through 25; (read)

 1] "*I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good."*

 So continuing on with his thesis, he is the one who really wants to do good, but there is that evil presence within him. That old mosaic law is there to show him the way, but just as present is that sin nature, so which one will take over? Oh, the conflict!

 2] "*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."*

 Here he almost sounds like King David, who in his Psalms wrote about how much he loved the law, and how he would meditate on it day and night. I believe what we are being made to understand is as the law is our guide post, and gives us our directions, and we should rejoice that we can learn clear understanding of what God wants from us.

 Paul acknowledges that even with the delight of the Law, he still acknowledges that sin is still present in his life. Those temptations that keep harassing him, and how easy it is to succumb.

 3] "*Oh, wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*

 I separate this out from the answer, because it is the plaintive cry from a saved Christian who feels the pressure of the world closing in, don't you think? After Paul has explained the two natures of man, he comes to a conclusion that is meant to explain how to overcome these dualities that we discussed above.

 4] "*I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

 This is the answer. When I am saved, I have taken the sacrificial offering Jesus Christ has made as My own, and through Him I have my strength and hope. It is through the Holy Spirit who guides me.

 5] "*So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin."*

The conclusion of the matter is this; wherein, Paul tells his readers, spiritually and in his mind, he is wholly God's, but that old sin nature is still present within that physical body. But this reintroduces the justification of the Christian in the next chapter.