

## That We Might Bear Fruit For God

### Lesson 5

Evil is present in me. If I walk in the flesh, I cannot please God.  
(Romans 7:7-25)

By F. M, Perry

“(7) What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." (8) But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. (9) And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died, (10) and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; (11) for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. (12) So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (13) Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? My it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. (14) For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. (15) For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. (16) But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. (17) So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which

indwells me. (18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh, for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. (19) For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. (20) But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. (21) I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. (22) For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, (23) but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. (24) Wretched man that I am! who will set me free from the body of this death? (25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.” (Romans 7:7-25 NASV).

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Questions for study.

1. What is the meaning of the phrase "apart from the law sin is dead"? (Romans 7:8).
2. When was Paul alive apart from the law? (Romans 7:9; Deut. 1:39; Isaiah 7:14-15).
3. How did the law cause Paul to die? (Romans 7:9-10; Galatians 3:10).
4. Explain Paul's conclusion that, although his reaction to the law brought death to him, the law nevertheless was "holy and righteous and good." (Romans 7:12). What are God's purposes for "law?"
5. What was the great dichotomy of Paul's life that caused inner conflict and made it difficult for him to "bear fruit for God?" (Romans 7:14). Was Paul's problem a typical one for Christians today?
6. What did Paul mean by saying, "I am ... sold into bondage to sin?" (Romans 7:14).
7. Discuss the relevance to Christians today of Paul's statement, "The wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not." (Romans 7:18).
8. According to Paul what different "laws" are involved in a Christian's inner conflict? (Romans 7:21-23).
9. What different parts of the spiritual/fleshly Christian are mentioned as being involved in "waging war" within the Christian? (Romans

7:4,22-25). How are these parts related and how do they function within the Christian in his overall spiritual and fleshly environment?

10. How did Jesus Christ our Lord set us free from "the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24-8:2).

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Lesson 5. Evil is present in me. If I walk in the flesh, I cannot please God. (Romans 7:7-25)

Questions for study:

1. What is the meaning of the phrase "apart from the Law sin is dead" in Romans 7:8?

In this phrase the word "dead" is an adjective modifying the word "sin." In other words the phrase says, "apart from the Law" we have "dead sin." That is, God's Law makes "sin" effective.

And, "apart from the Law," "sin" is ineffective. Remember that the purpose of "God's law" and the "sin" that it produces in us is to teach us the utter evilness of "sin" and to lead us as a "tutor to Christ." Thus "dead sin," that is "sin apart from Law," is ineffective in performing its purpose of leading us to Christ.

The word "dead" is similarly used in James 2: 17, and in James 2:26, where "faith apart from works" is said to be "dead." In other words, "apart from works" we have "dead faith," or "faith" which is not effective for its designated purpose.

Also the word "dead" is similarly used in James 2:26 with respect to the word "body." In this verse "the body without the spirit is dead." In other words, "without the spirit" we have a "dead body," or a "body" which is not effective for its designated purpose. In the case of the fleshly body, it becomes dead indeed when the spirit leaves it.

Going back to the phrase in Romans 7:8, "apart from the Law sin is dead," the concept of "dead sin" seems strange indeed. Certainly "sin," in any case, produces spiritual death, for always, "the wages of sin is death." When Paul said, "I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'you shall not covet,'" Paul was speaking of the special Law of Moses given to the Israelites. Paul was not without sin

in his coveting before he learned the Law of Moses. He simply was unaware of his sin of coveting and thus the Law of Moses was ineffective for him until he learned it. Therefore he could say, "apart from the Law sin is dead," or sin is ineffective.

"The Law" which Paul speaks of here is the case of a special law which was added to whatever "law" was already in effect and known when God gave it to the Israelites. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's twelve sons, and the twelve tribes of Israel were not without law from God when they went into Egyptian captivity. They had law which God had given to the patriarchs and had "written in their hearts," but they did not yet have the Law of Moses which was given in Sinai after the Israelites' departure from Egypt. Paul says in Romans 5:13, "for until the Law (of Moses) sin was in the world" ... and in Romans 5:20, "the Law (of Moses) came in that the transgression might increase." The Law of Moses was not the first or only law to which the twelve tribes had been subject. The Law of Moses was given for the purpose that "the transgression (under a previous law) might increase," or that sin might more clearly be known to be sin. Thus the Law of Moses was given for the purpose of making sin better known to the Jews and to show them the way away from sin.

2. When was Paul alive apart from the law? (Romans 7:9; Deut. 1:39; Isaiah 7:14-15).

Paul, speaking of himself, said in Romans 7:9, "I was once alive apart from the Law, but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died." This is true in that Paul at first had no knowledge of good or evil with respect to the things in the Law of Moses. For apparently he did not really know the Law. He conducted his life without knowledge of his wrong doing. Perhaps this is the origin of the misleading saying, "ignorance is bliss." When Paul learned the Law of Moses, he realized his ignorance really was not bliss, for he had learned the areas in which he must chose right from wrong.

3. How did the law cause Paul to die? (Romans 7:9-10; Galatians 3:10).

I think that Paul is saying that the law caused him to realize his true condition of which he had previously been blissfully unaware. He had thought himself acting true to God's wishes when he persecuted Christians. He had persecuted Christians in all good conscience because his conscience had been untrained. On the road to Damascus, he realized he was spiritually dead in the eyes of God.

4. Explain Paul's conclusion that, although his reaction to "the Law brought death to him, the Law nevertheless was "holy and righteous and good." (Romans 7:1-2). What are God's purposes for "law?"

The Hebrew word for "law" is TORAH which means "instruction," "guidance," or "direction." So the Law of Moses, given specifically to the Israelites, was added "guidelines" by God to "lead" them to full and useful lives in God's service. Any God given "law" is an expression of the God who loves, gives grace, and extends mercy and forgiveness. Thus, the God given "laws," including the Law of Moses, were never given as something mankind had to obey perfectly to avoid God's punishment. God knows that mankind could never obey law perfectly. God's laws were to bring mankind to a knowledge of sin and to lead them to an "obedience of faith" through which the graceful God would forgive them of their sins. God's Law for the Israelites was indeed "holy and righteous and good" as is everything given to us by God.

Paul tells us in Romans 3:20 that the law was to bring all to the knowledge of sin. And in Romans 11:32 Paul tells us that the law was to shut up all in disobedience that God might show mercy to all. And in Galatians 3:24 Paul tells us that the law is a tutor to lead us to Christ. The purpose of the Law of Moses is indicated in Paul's example of "coveting" in Romans 7:7-8. The Law was given to make the Jews (Paul being among them) aware that they were sinners. In Romans 5:20 Paul said that "the Law came in that the transgression might increase." It might be said that God "married" them to "Law" on the path to their salvation.

5. What was the great dichotomy of Paul's life that caused inner conflict and made it difficult for him to "bear fruit for God?" (Romans 7:14).

Was Paul's problem a typical one for Christians today?

Paul said in Romans 7:14, "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am" of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." The invisible spiritual God has produced and given "law" to mankind from the invisible spiritual realm. Then "the Law is spiritual, holy and righteous and good." And Paul had within himself a "spirit" which God had imparted to him from the spiritual realm which gave him life in the natural realm. Indeed, Paul as a Christian also had the Holy Spirit dwelling in himself which gave him spiritual life in eternity. But Paul said that his natural "flesh" was opposed to "spirit." That is, he, as are all people, was descended from his natural forebear Adam, an inhabitant of the material world, and had inherited a propensity to sin. Through Adam, Paul's flesh had been "sold into bondage to sin." This set up the dichotomy of inner conflict within Paul's life.

People have within themselves their personal "spirits" as well as their personal "flesh." Christians have within themselves not only their personal "spirits" and personal "flesh" but also God's Holy Spirit. Christians are both "flesh" and "spirit." The "spirit" is of God but the "flesh" has been "sold into bondage to sin." This sets up the dichotomy of inner conflict within all of us, especially Christians. Paul's problem was a typical one for Christians today. The Holy Spirit sees it as such a serious problem for Christians that He moved Paul to devote a large portion of his Roman letter to the problem.

6. What did Paul mean by saying, "I am ...sold into bondage to sin"?

Paul was referring to the fact that his forbear, Adam, had rejected the spiritual God and had made choice for himself as well as all his progeny to live outside the paradise of God in the fleshly world where Satan holds sway. Adam sinned in his choice thereby selling his flesh as well as the flesh of his progeny to Satan. Therefore Paul, as well as all the rest of us, must live in the fleshly realm of Satan where there are great pressures placed upon us to sin. We too are "sold into bondage to sin."

7. Discuss the relevance to Christians today of Paul's statement, "The

wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not". (Romans 7:18).

Paul's statement was the result of the inner conflict which he had in trying, on his own, to "do good," or to "bear fruit for God." Paul used himself as an example of the problem which the Holy Spirit informed him was typical of us all. In fact the problem is so serious that Paul said that "the doing of the good is not" in me. Paul said that the reason for his problem is that "nothing good dwells in me." Later in Romans 8:7-8 Paul sums up with the statement, "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

The 7th chapter of the Roman letter makes it clear that this problem with the sin of law-breaking to which our flesh is subject is a most serious problem in the life of all Christians. Unless we Christians can "know and reckon" ourselves as "dead with Christ on His Cross," and can deny all which comes from our natural selves, the Holy Spirit will be prevented from producing "fruit for God" in our lives.

8. According to Paul what different "laws" are involved in a Christian's inner conflict? (Romans 7:21-23).

In verse 21 Paul reveals "the principle (law) that evil is present in me. In verse 23 he calls this "principle" the "law of sin" and says that his flesh is a "prisoner" of it. In verse 22 Paul refers to the "law of God" which is in his "inner man," or in the spiritual part of his being. He intimates in verse 23 that the spiritual principle has entered his "mind" to become the "law of (his) mind." But the "law of sin in (his) members" makes it impossible for him, on his own, to carry out the "law of God" which is now in his "mind."

The two different "laws" that are involved in the Christian's inner conflict are "the law of God," and "the law of sin."

9. What different parts of the spiritual/fleshly Christian are mentioned as being involved in "waging war" within the Christian? (Romans

7:22-25). How are these parts related and how do they function within the Christian in his overall spiritual and fleshly environment?

The parts of the spiritual/fleshly Christian which are mentioned are "inner man" (verse 22), "body" (verse 23), "mind" (verses 23 and 25), "my members" (verse 23), and "flesh" (verse 25) .

Careful study of the usage in the Old and New Testaments of such terms as "spirit," "soul," "body," "flesh," "inner man," "mind," "conscience," "heart," etc. reveal how these parts function and interrelate within the Christian. Paul informs us that the complete person is composed of three parts, "spirit and soul and body." (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The "soul" and the "spirit" comprise the invisible "inner man" while the "body," or "flesh," comprise the visible outer man. The functions of volition, intellect, and emotion are associated with the "soul." The functions of conscience, intuition, and communion are associated with the "spirit." The "heart" is a similar term to the term "inner man." Sometimes the functions of the "soul" are attributed to the "heart" and sometimes the functions of the "spirit" are attributed to the "heart." The functions of volition, intellect, conscience, and intuition all seem to be attributed to the "mind" making us conclude that the "mind" bridges between "spirit" and "soul."

(The functions and relationships of all these parts and terms are explored in a study paper referencing numerous Biblical passages and entitled "Fundamentals of Spiritual Understanding," dated 11/23/93, prepared by F. M. Perry. This study paper is published on the website FaithHopeLove.net. )

It is especially important for the Christian to know that he was given the Holy Spirit of God as a gift at the time of his baptism. (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit indwells the Christian in close association with the Christian's personal "spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17; Romans 8:16). The communion of the Christian's soul with God occurs through the personal spirit's link with God's Holy Spirit. And God's communication with the Christian's soul is through His Holy Spirit's link with the Christian's personal spirit. However, there is no indication in the Bible that God

"speaks" directly to Christians today through His Holy Spirit.

Rather Hebrews 1:2 tells Christians that God has spoken to them in His Son. The Holy Spirit of God's Son guided the writing of the New Testament and Christians receive the message of His Son in their own tongues through the senses of the body in study of the New Testament. There seems to be some indication in Biblical references that the indwelling Holy Spirit helps Christians to understand and assimilate the written word of the Bible into their minds through the Christian's intuition and conscience.

When Paul said, "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man," he especially referred to his acceptance of God's law by his soul which was a part of his inner man. He joyfully concurred because he realized in his mind and intellect that God's law was good guidance for him. His statement intimates that his volition or will power desired to comply with God's law. His emotional response was to be joyous at the receipt of something from God. Thus we understand the involvement of the functions of his soul: intellect, volition, and emotion.

However, Paul wants the readers of his Roman letter to know that there is a problem within himself. After his statement of joyful concurrence with the law of God in his soul, he said, "but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members." The "different law" is the "law of sin" which he naturally had in his fleshly body derived from his ancestor, Adam. The "law of my mind" refers to the "law of God" which was approved by God's Holy Spirit communicating through his personal spirit into his mind and in turn activating the emotional, volitional, and intellectual functions of his soul. The "law of sin" is in the "members" of his body and opposes the law of his mind (God's law) which is in his soul. This sets up the conflict that is in every Christian who seeks to "bear fruit for God" through the motivation of God's law to acts of his own volition.

10. How did Jesus Christ our Lord set us free from "the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24-8:2).

Paul had found his problem of inner conflict to be insoluble through the use of his own soul's faculties. His body was unable to keep God's law perfectly and, therefore, had brought him to spiritual death. He called his body, derived from his ancestor Adam, "the body of this death!" He intimated by his question, "Who will set me free?" that the only solution to the problem was in being set free from his body! Paul then intimated in Romans 7:25 that "Jesus Christ our Lord" has set him free.

Through the Cross of Christ, God put another law into effect, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:2). This other law of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" had been anticipated and accepted through faith since the time of creation just as it's activation by the Cross is now looked back upon and accepted by faith in our time. This other law, made effective by the Cross of Christ, has set us free from "the body of this death!"