

That We Might Bear Fruit For God

Lesson 6

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus versus the law of sin and death. (Romans 7:25; 8:1-4)

By F. M. Perry

“(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. (1) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (3) For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 7:25; 8:1-4. NASV).

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The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus versus the law of sin and death. (Romans 7:25; 8:1-4).

Questions for study:

1. Explain the concepts of the phrases "law of God" and "law of sin" found in Romans 7:25. What part of the Christian desires to serve the "law of God?" What part of the Christian desires to serve the "law of sin?" Can a Christian serve both the "law of God" and the "law of sin?" What do these laws set up within the soul of a Christian?
2. How do the inner conflicts caused by these two laws affect a Christian's capacity to "bear fruit for God?" What is the legitimate question of a Christian who experiences these inner conflicts? (Romans 7:25).
3. What is Paul's inspired answer to the question concerning the inner conflict within himself? Is this an important question and answer for a Christian to heed? Why? (Romans 7: 25; 8: 1-4).
4. Relate the various aspects of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to the enabling of the Christian to "bear fruit for God." (Romans 6:1-15; 7:4; 8:1-4)
5. When does "the law of sin and death" become effective in our lives? When does "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" become effective in our lives? Was "the law of sin and death" abolished by Christ, or does it still exist, simply being nullified by a stronger law in Christ? Explain the interaction of the two laws in our Christian lives. (Romans 8:2; Matthew 5:17).
6. What did God do concerning "sin in the flesh?" Why is this important to the baptized believer who is already embarked on the Christian life?

(Romans 8:3).

7. Jesus stated that He came to "fulfill" the law. (Matthew 5:17). Paul said that Christ "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3) so that "the law might be fulfilled in us," that is, fulfilled in Christians. Why must the law be fulfilled in us who have already taken steps of obedience of faith to become Christians? When and how is the law fulfilled in Christians? (Romans 8:4).

8. What does it mean to "walk according to the Spirit?" (Romans 8: 4).

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Lesson 6. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus versus the law of sin and death. (Romans 7:25; 8:1-4).

Questions for study:

1. Explain the concepts of the phrases "law of God" and "law of sin." What part of the Christian desires to serve the "law of God?" What part of the Christian desires to serve the "law of sin?" Can a Christian serve both the "law of God" and the "law of sin?" What do these laws set up within the soul of a Christian? (Romans 7:25).

The "law of God" is any law imposed on mankind by God. To many people of the world it is the law which is learned through observance of the things God has created and especially the law written in the hearts of people. (Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-15). To the Jews it was (and perhaps is to some Jews today) the Law God presented to their nation through Moses. To many of us today it is any law of God which we have received in our hearts and which we know to be a part of God's guidance for us. For us who have the Bible it may be God's statutes reviewed therein originally intended for Gentiles or for Jews of old.

The "law of God" as the phrase is used in Romans 7:25 is the "law" which, according to Paul, is "holy and righteous and good." (Romans 7:12). We must remember it is the "law" which we are prone, as descendants of Adam, to break. However, when a Christian knows that a "law" is from God and is intended for his guidance, he desires in his mind to serve and keep it. Paul then calls it the "law of my mind." (Romans 7:23).

The "law of sin" mentioned in Romans 7:25 is the "law" which Paul said was "in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind." (Romans 7: 23). The "law of sin" is the principle that all breaking of God's law is sin against God. The deep rooted natural propensity of mankind to transgress the "law of God" has resulted in the fact that all have sinned and, indeed, do continue to sin. The "members

of my body," when tempted, have a predilection to break the "law of God."

The problem is that a Christian's being, referred to here as mind and body, is naturally divided when presented with these two opposing laws. With his mind the Christian desires to serve the "law of God." With the members of his body the Christian often desires to serve the "law of sin" and sometimes does. Of course he cannot serve both because they are diametrically opposed to each other. Therein is set up the inner conflict within the soul of every Christian.

2. How do the inner conflicts caused by these two laws affect a Christian's capacity to "bear fruit for God?" What is the legitimate question of a Christian who experiences these inner conflicts? (Romans 7:24).

The predilection of the "members of (his) body" for the "law of sin" completely ruins a Christian's capacity to "bear fruit for God." If a Christian is not aware and, therefore, does not avail himself of the remedy Christ has given through the Cross, his "continuance in sin" will prevent his sanctification for use as a "vessel of God." All his efforts to "bear fruit for God" will result in failure.

The inner conflicts within the Christian, caused by his growing knowledge of the two laws, sets the stage for his recognition of the solution which God has made available through Christ. The Christian must be brought to the point of admission that he has a problem which he cannot remedy by himself. At this point the Christian will be inclined to cry as Paul did, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

Knowledge of the remedy and steps of "obedience of faith" are necessary for the Christian to avail himself of the remedy which Christ has made available. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the Roman letter inform the Christian that the inner conflicts are all caused by the rebellious acts of the old man of flesh with whom one must still contend even after becoming a Christian. However, by faith the Christian knows that his

old man of flesh actually died on the Cross and was buried with Christ even as the Christian was buried in his act of baptism. Also by faith the Christian knows that he has a new spiritual man who arose from the watery grave of baptism, as with Christ from His tomb, a new man who is alive and can be presented to God for His use in a "walk" led by God's Holy Spirit. That "walk" of the new man will be without the inner conflicts and failures experienced by the old man of sin. The new man is sanctified for God's use and given the leadership of God's Holy Spirit.

3. What is Paul's inspired answer to the question concerning the inner conflict within himself? Is this an important question and answer for a Christian to heed? Why? (Romans 7:25; 8:1-4).

Paul's inspired answer to the question concerning the inner conflict within himself was, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ...There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." (Romans 7:25; 8:1-2). This is of utmost importance for the Christian to understand for it states the remedy for failures to "bear fruit for God" in the life of the Christian.

4. Relate the various aspects of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to the enabling of the Christian to "bear fruit for God." (Romans 6:1-15; 7:4; 8:1-4).

The various aspects of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are recalled and symbolized in a person's baptism. The atoning sacrifice achieved in the death of Christ results in forgiveness of sins to the person when he believes and responds in obedience of faith to the steps of repentance, confession, and baptism. He then may be called by the Biblical name Christian.

In baptism the Christian has enacted symbolism of Christ's burial and resurrection. He learns that his "old man of sin" died with Christ on the Cross and was buried with Christ in his earthly tomb. He has symbolized that fact in the act of baptism. In faith he learns that he is now "free" of his "old man of sin." He also learns that in Christ's

resurrection a "new man" free from sin was resurrected for him. He symbolized that in the act of baptism and in faith he gains that "new man." He learns that the "new man" was created in him by God's Holy Spirit who was given to him as he was baptized. All of this results in freedom from condemnation for his sinful nature.

5. When does "the law of sin and death" become effective in our lives? When does "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" become effective in our lives? Was "the law of sin and death" abolished by Christ, or does it still exist, simply being nullified by a stronger law in Christ? Explain the interaction of the two laws in our Christian lives. (Romans 8:2; Matthew 5:17).

"The law of sin and death" became effective in our own personal lives as soon as we first transgressed "the law of God." One might say it became effective when we reached the age of accountability.

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has been available for application to the lives of us who live on earth today since our birth and need for it. However, its application to our lives comes only after our acceptance of it through certain specified steps of obedience. First we must become Christians through steps of belief, repentance, confession, and baptism. In these steps we accept Christ's sacrifice, which God has already accepted, and receive forgiveness of our sins and the gift of God's Holy Spirit. Then, in order to "bear fruit for God," we must accept the sanctification for God's use available to us through further steps of obedience, namely "knowing, reckoning, and presenting." We must "know and reckon" that our "old man" is dead and that our "new man" was raised with Christ. Then we must "present" our "new man" to God to follow the leading of His Holy Spirit in life. Through these simple steps of obedience of faith in all aspects of the Cross of Christ, God applies to our lives "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which nullifies "the law of sin and death."

"The law of sin and death" still exists. It has been necessary in our lives to bring us to conversion and remains in effect to bring an awareness of the danger of sin to the lives of all the rest of mankind, an awareness to

bring them to Christ. Even in our own Christian lives, the old danger still remains if we "walk" too near and fall over the precipice that lies at the boundary of the Holy Spirit's path for our lives. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is only effective as we follow the Holy Spirit's leading of our lives. The Holy Spirit will not lead us to transgress God's law.

6. What did God do concerning "sin in the flesh?" Why is this important to the baptized believer who is already embarked on the Christian life? (Romans 8: 3) .

God "condemned sin in the flesh" through "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" and letting Him become "an offering for sin." It was "sin" itself that God "condemned," not the sinner. The meaning is, I think, that God judged sin and pronounced the doom of its consequences. The benefit was for the Christian, each of whom has a problem with sin. He did it by producing through Christ a new law to be applied in the lives of Christians which nullifies the law of sin and death in their lives.

In the taking of all sins upon Himself, the otherwise sinless Son appeared "in the likeness of sinful flesh." In this taking of sins upon Himself, the Son became the anti-type of the "scapegoat" in the lives of the Israelite people of old. It is recorded in Leviticus 16:21-22 that Aaron laid both of his hands upon a certain selected live goat and confessed over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins. And the goat bore on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land in the wilderness.

In God's use of the Son as an "offering for sin," the Son became the anti-type of the goat chosen for a sin offering in the lives of the Israelite people of old. It is recorded in Leviticus 16:15 that Aaron slaughtered the goat of the sin offering which was for the people, and brought its blood inside the veil to be sprinkled on, and in front of, the mercy (or propitiatory) seat. In these ceremonies which the Israelites enacted on their day of atonement, two male goats were used to serve as types of the perfect atonement to later be made through the one Son, Jesus Christ.

Let us remember that the nullification of condemnation by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is indicated to be "for those who are in Christ Jesus." That is, it is for baptized believers who are already embarked on Christian lives. But why do they, at their stage of Christian living, need further nullification of condemnation? Christians know that when they became believers, repented, and were baptized their past sins were forgiven. (Acts 2:38). Christians also usually know that when they sin, after their baptism, they need to continue to repent and pray for forgiveness and God will continue to grant them forgiveness. (Acts 8:22-24). Why does such a Christian need the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to set him free from the law of sin and death? Has he not already been set free through the limited steps of obedient faith which led to his baptism?

The answer is no! He has not yet appropriated his freedom from the law of sin and death, freedom which has been reserved for him through the Cross of Christ! The fact is that he continues to sin even as a baptized believer trying with limited knowledge to live the Christian life. The fact is that he is still "a prisoner of the law of sin which is in (his) members." (Romans 1:23). As such a "prisoner" he cannot be sanctified to serve God. That is why it is important for the Christian to know how to activate in his life "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" and grasp the freedom from condemnation that is available to him now that he is a Christian.

7. Jesus stated that He came to "fulfill" the law. (Matthew 5:11). Paul said that the law must be "fulfilled in us," that is, fulfilled in Christians. Why must it be fulfilled in us who have already taken steps of obedience of faith to become Christians? When and how is the law fulfilled in Christians? (Romans 8:4).

In Romans 8:3-4 Paul said that Christ "condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." We know from Christ's statement in His sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:11) that he came "to fulfill" the law. And Paul has informed us in Colossians 2:14 that the law was "taken out of the way" by Christ who "nailed it to

the cross." But now in Romans 8:4 Paul seems to tell us that the law must be fulfilled in us. We have learned that we, of our own volition, cannot fully obey, or fulfill God's law perfectly, and that our striving to fulfill law only results in our breaking of law. Why does Paul tell us that the law must be fulfilled in us, when it is an impossible task for us to perform, and, especially, when it has already been fulfilled in Christ?

The answer seems to be that, in Paul's reference to the law's fulfillment in us, he refers not to something we must do but to something more that Christ does for us when we start our "walk according to the Spirit." Christ has done, or His Spirit will do, everything of substance that is necessary for our freedom from bondage to the law of sin in our Christian lives. The only thing we are called upon to do to have freedom is to have faith and to obey the things which we are called upon to do in the expression of our faith. The answer is that the law's "fulfillment in us" is a work of the Spirit in our lives when we exercise our faith to "walk according to the Spirit."

Praise God! He has made it possible for us, who are unclean because of the law of sin in our members, to become free from that law and to serve Him as a holy vessel. The Spirit whom He has given to dwell within us works to fulfill the requirements of the law in our lives so that we might actually serve as a sanctified and holy vessel to "bear fruit for God."

8. What does it mean to "walk according to the Spirit?" (Romans 8:4).

The goal of the Christian life is to be able to accomplish "the good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10). Our walk in "good works" then, is something that God's Spirit has in mind, and not just something we choose to suit our whimsy. I believe that God's Spirit has a way of pointing out what we are to do continuously day by day and moment by moment as we stay in touch with His word. Paul tells us the attitude to have as we "walk" in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."