

FRUSTRATED LIFE OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

BIBLE TEXT : Romans 7:1-25.

LESSON 386 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Romans 7:1-25

¹ Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ For 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.

⁶ But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

⁷ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead.

⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but when the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Revelation of Sin Through the Law

1. The law of marriage is used as an illustration, Romans 7:1-6;
1 Corinthians 7:39
³⁹ The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.
2. The Law revealed the sin of the heart, Romans 7:7, 8;
Galatians 3:19
¹⁹ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.
3. A child is innocent until he reaches the age of accountability, Romans 7:9;
Matthew 19:14
¹⁴ But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.
4. A knowledge of the Law brings condemnation, Romans 7:10, 11;
Romans 3:20
²⁰ 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.
5. The commandment is holy, Romans 7:12-14;
Psalms 19:7-9
⁷ The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.
⁸ The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.
⁹ The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

II The Struggle of Trying to Live Right Without the New Birth

1. Sin has the mastery of the body, Romans 7:14, 15, 17-21, 23;
John 8:34
³⁴ Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.
Romans 6:16
¹⁶ Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?
2. The mind acknowledges the righteousness of the Law, Romans 7:16, 22.
3. A cry is made for a deliverer, Romans 7:24;
Luke 18:13
¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
4. A Deliverer is named, Romans 7:25;
Matthew 1:21
²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

NOTES:

The Law of Marriage

Paul uses the law of marriage as an illustration to show the limits of the Law of Moses. Marriage vows are treated lightly in these days, but Jesus said: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female; and

commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death.

¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*.

¹² Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

²⁰ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

²¹ I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

²³ 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.

²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of

said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9). Marriage is binding, according to the laws of God and the example used in this chapter, "until death do us part."

Showing the freedom of the woman to marry again after the death of her husband, Paul tells his brethren who knew the Law and had been bound to it that they are now free from it by the death of Christ. First he states: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another." You are dead to the Law, or, in other words, you are no longer under the Law. Then he turns the statement around, stating that the Law is dead. "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held." Thus we see complete freedom from the Law of Moses.

In His death, Christ fulfilled the Law, and free those who were under the Law that they might be married to Him through His resurrection. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). Now that the Law is dead we can serve the Lord in "newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." By this phrase it can be seen wherein the Jews failed under the Law. They kept it in the "oldness of the letter," instead of by faith in the "newness of spirit." Where once they brought forth "fruit unto death," they should now "bring forth fruit unto God." What a vast difference!

The Revealing Power of the Law

The Law itself was not sin, but it revealed the sin that existed in that it gave specific commandments such as, "Thou shalt not covet." From a moral standpoint it was wrong to covet, regardless of whether it was stated in the Law. But the commandment revealed the sin of covetousness. Before the commandment came, Paul said, "I was alive." In other words, I felt no guilt of sin until it was revealed to me that it was wrong to covet. The conscience was awakened when the commandment came and he found himself unable to live up to it. "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." The commandment was good and holy; and it was not the commandment that brought the death, but it brought to light the sin that was there which was working death. "The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death."

The Appeal of the Law to the Conscience

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." When the knowledge of the Law first came to Paul he recognised the righteousness of it. There came a desire within him to be obedient to it because of its righteousness. His mind and conscience acknowledged the Law – his will was to obey it. But he found himself unable to live up to the Law in his own strength. In spite of his striving in his unregenerated state he found that he was weak and committed sin. He states: "I delight in the law of God after 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."

The Bondage of Sin

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). This verse of Scripture confirms Paul's

this death?

²⁵ 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.

testimony of the utter impossibility of overcoming sin without first being born again. There is only one remedy, and that is to come humbly to the foot of the Cross and plead for mercy. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This state of wretchedness was that of Paul after he was awakened but before he was converted. It is the state of many today who have the light of Christianity and try to live it without being born again. Some people go so far as to say that this is the struggle of a Christian against sin. However, the life of a Christian is not wretched and a war of defeat, but a victorious life free from the bondage of sin. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (I John 3:6).

Mental Acceptance versus Heart Repentance

"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Shall we call this Paul's condition after conversion? Is this the deliverance that Christ died to bring? Is this what the angel meant when he said, "He shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)? Is this to what Peter referred when he spoke of "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)?

Those who argue that this is the Christian experience after the new birth have never felt the joy of sins forgiven. They do not know the life of "no condemnation" of which Paul speaks in the eighth chapter of Romans. This serving God with the mind and sinning with the flesh is not true service to God. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). This life of defeat and wretchedness is self-righteousness. There are many who mentally accept the fact that the Law of Christ is good. They profess Christ as their saviour, but lack the change of heart, which enables them to live a victorious life. Striving to do right, but constantly failing, they acknowledge that the Gospel is good, but the power to do it is not present with them.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

QUESTIONS

1. Under what circumstances may a woman remarry without being an adulteress?
2. What is meant by being married to another, in verse 4?
3. What was it that worked death to those under the Law?
4. What was it that revealed sin to those under the Law?
5. Why could not Paul do that which he wanted to before he was saved?
6. What parallel condition exists today among those who are unable to perform that which is good?
7. Who is able to solve this conflict? How?
8. What is meant by the phrase, "We should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter"?