

## Studies in Romans 1 - 8 (7)

### Study 7: Reading – Romans 7 v 7, 8, 13 – 19, 24, 25 and 8 v 1 - 11

In the previous study (6 v 1 – 7 v 7) we considered the position of the Christian in the sight of God, dead to sin and alive unto God. In the remainder of chapter 7 the apostle tells of his own experience and repeatedly uses the personal pronoun. Paul describes the practical reality of Christian life, the conflict within between the flesh and the new nature

**7 v 7 – 13 The Purpose of the Law:** The purpose of the law is to make sin obvious v7 *“I had not known sin, but by the law”*.

**7 v 14 - 25 The Conflict Within:** In these verses we learn that although the old man is crucified and rendered inactive (6 v 6), it has not been removed and can still be stirred to activity v25 *“with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”*

**8 v 1 – 11 The Spirit Within:** The answer to the problem of the conflict within, the power to live a victorious and sanctified life v9 *“the Spirit of God dwell in you”*

#### **7 v 7 – 13 The Purpose of the Law:**

In v5 Paul writes of *“the passion of sins that are kindled by the law”* i.e. the prohibitions and commandments of the law results in evil desires being stirred up within us e.g. ‘keep off the grass’ leads to a desire to walk on the grass. The conclusion that might be drawn from this leads Paul to ask another question v7 *“Is the law sin?”* The apostle gives his usual answer to the questions he poses *“God forbid”*. Indeed says Paul, recalling personal experience, the truth is quite different for v7 *“I had not known sin, but by the law”*. He takes the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment to illustrate his point, *“Thou shalt not covet”*. Until he became aware of the commandment i.e. until the demands of the law challenged his conscience, lust did not stir within him. *“But sin,”* he writes in v8 took the opportunity that the prohibition offered to stir up all manner of lusts. Without the knowledge of right and wrong sin is not roused to activity, is powerless, but with the presence of the commandment the sinfulness of sin is seen.

In v9 Paul relates his own experience, *“I was alive without the law once”*. There was a time when the apostle was free from a disturbed conscience; unaware that he was dead in sin, *“but when the commandment came”* he became aware of all kinds of lusts in his life. The law that had the promise of life, *“this do, and thou shalt live”* in reality brings men to an awareness of their condition before God.

v11 has a similar thought to v8, in this verse sin taking the opportunity it finds in the law deceives men and the outcome is death (see Gen 3 v 13). In contrast to the thought in v7 *“Is the law sin?”* Paul states in v12 that it is *“holy, and just, and good.”* The section finishes at v13 with another question and the writer shows that sin is the culprit and uses that which is good to bring death.

#### **7 v 14 - 25 The Conflict Within:**

There are various views as to who the apostle is referring to in these verses and if he describes himself at what stage of his life. We will consider this to be Paul describing his own Christian experience, showing that sin never changes and is always looking for opportunity given by the commandments to work havoc. There is a continual conflict within; the flesh, the old man that has been *“crucified with Christ”* is still within and can still respond to opportunities given. In contrast to this there is v22 *“the inward man”*, the new life that delights in the law of God. I’m

sure we can relate to the conflict within described by the apostle v19 *"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."*

v14 – 17 is summarised by v16 *"I do that which I would not"* i.e. his inability to keep himself from doing that of which he disapproves. In contrast to the law which is *"spiritual"* and *"good"* Paul says *"I am carnal"*. This refers to the sinful element in man's nature, inherited from Adam. The carnal nature, the flesh, is in constant conflict with the new man. In v17 the culprit is again identified *"sin that dwelleth in me."*

v18 – 20 is summarised by v19 *"the good that I would I do not"* i.e. his inability to carry out that of which he approves. The apostle finds himself doing what he would not (*"sin that dwelleth in me"*) and not doing the good that he would (*"but how to perform that which is good I find not"*).

In v21 – 25 the writer brings the answer, the power to overcome v25 *"through Jesus Christ our Lord."* In the first few verses the conflict within is described, the conflict between the inward man, the new life, that approves of the law of God and *"the law of sin which is in my members."* This condition leads the apostle to ask *"who shall deliver me?"* The glorious answer is stated in v25 *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* At the return of the Lord Jesus the believer shall be delivered from *"the body of this death."*

### **8 v 1 – 11 The Spirit Within:**

Chapter 8 of the Roman epistle is a chapter of victory and triumph e.g. v37 *"in all these things we are more than conquerors"*. The Holy Spirit is prominent in the chapter, He is the power that enables the Christian to overcome and live a sanctified life. In previous chapters we have seen that the law is unable to make a man righteous before God and unable to give the power to live a sanctified life. However, in chapter 8 we have the answer v2 *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."*

In v1 – 4 the apostle presents v3 *"what the law could not do"*, or perhaps better what Christ has done. The chapter states by stating the great fact *"No condemnation"*. No condemnation; despite what we were (Rom 1 v 18 – 3 v 20), because of what God has done (Rom 3 v 21 – 5 v 21). *"No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* for v3 *"God ... condemned sin in the flesh"* i.e. in His son. In v2 we learn that the *"Spirit of life"* sets free from the *"the law (the controlling principle) of sin and death."*

In v3 we have the contrast between what the law could not do and what God has done. The law could not achieve the purpose of making men righteous because of the presence of the flesh, but God has provided the means. 'God's method for making bad men good' required *"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (the incarnation – God manifest in flesh) and for sin"*. How wonderful is God's provision. As a result, we who walk after the Spirit see *"the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us"*.

In v5 – 11 we have the flesh and the Spirit and the ultimate victory of the Spirit v11 *"shall quicken your mortal bodies"* (compare 1 Cor 15 v 52). In these verses contrasts are highlighted between those that *"are after the flesh"* and those that *"are after the Spirit"*. In v4 the contrast was between the different walks, in v5 it is the difference in the principle that controls, *"after the flesh"* or *"after the Spirit"*. The principle that controls leads to different aims and in v6 to different outcomes *"death"* or *"life and peace"*.

In v7, 8 the attitude of the ungodly is described as *"enmity against God"* and such *"cannot please God."* The contrast is given in v9 – 11 *"ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit"*. The apostle states that it is impossible to be a Christian and not have the indwelling Spirit. The section ends with a note of glory *"he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies"*.