

The Teaching of Paul: A Series of Fifteen Studies

Paul Study 13 – Romans 7:1-25

taken from
Bible Studies for Enquirers and New Believers
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Readings: Romans 7:1-25

Note: This is one of the most difficult chapters in Romans.

Summary

We have died not only to sin but also to the law. This means that we no longer try to get right with God through obeying his law, because we are already right with him through Jesus Christ. But I do not mean to say that the law is bad in any way – only that it never helped me to conquer sin. Even now I know that evil is still present in me. But, because I love God's law, I hate evil and fight against it all the time – thanks to Jesus Christ, to whom I really belong. And he will deliver me from it completely in the end.

Romans 7:1-6 is God's word to the legalist. Just as death terminates a marriage, so death – Christ's death – has terminated our bondage to the law.

So, is the law still binding on the believer? Yes and no.

- No, in that our acceptance before God does not depend on it.
- Yes, in that we serve not because the law is our master and we have to, but because Christ is our husband and we want to. Obedience to the law does not lead to salvation but salvation leads to obedience to the law. We serve not by obedience to an external code, but by surrender to the indwelling Spirit.

Romans 7:7-13 is Paul's message to the antinomian, that is to the one who says you can do what you like. You can sin that grace may abound. In this passage Paul describes his own experience. In v 7-13 the verbs are mainly in the past tense (aorist) e.g. v 9,11,13. In v 7-13 Paul has shown that as an unbeliever he cannot keep the law by himself, that is, unaided by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-4).

Romans 7:14-8:4 is Paul's message to the law-abiding believer. From v 14 they are in the present tense and therefore seem to refer to Paul's present experience e.g. v 15 – his fierce continuing conflict with sin. John Bunyan describes his inner experience in his book Holy War. It is the conflict within a believer. It seems that the past tense describes Paul's life before he became a believer and then from v 14 he writes of this life as a believer. There are two things which have led the Reformers and others to think that this is a self-portrait:

- Paul's opinion of himself in v 18,24
- Paul's opinion of the law in v 16,19,22

In Romans 7:25, Paul sums up as follows: with my mind I serve the law of God but with my flesh until and unless it is subdued by the Holy Spirit I serve the law of sin. How can the mind gain ascendancy over the flesh? Only by the power of the Holy Spirit, as he goes on to explain in Romans 8 (Romans 8:1-4).

Questions and Comments

1. The bond of marriage is terminated by _____ (Romans 7:1-3).
2. Being dead to the law through Christ we may, therefore belong to _____ (Romans 7:4).
3. Life in the flesh under law was bearing fruit unto _____ (Romans 7:5).
4. Discharged from the law we serve in the _____ of the Spirit (Romans 7:6).
5. The law is not _____ but made sin possible (Romans 7:7-8).
6. How does sin deceive us? (Romans 7:9-11)
7. The law is holy _____ and _____ (Romans 7:12).
8. But _____ worked death through the good law (Romans 7:13).
9. The law is _____ but its good is not available for one who is carnal and sold under sin (Romans 7:14).
10. Under law man does not do what he desires to do but what he does not wish to do. Summarize v 15-20.
11. In v 21-23 what 2 laws are at work within?
12. What does Paul write about delighting in God's law?
13. How does Paul describe his state in v 24?
14. He appeals for deliverance in v 25. Who is the deliverer?