***Paul Wanted to Do Right, but he Couldn't
RO89-02***

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Our subject is "The Law and the Principle of Carnality." This is segment number one in Romans 7:14-17.

**The Sin Nature (The Flesh)**

Beginning at Romans 7:7, the apostle Paul has begun to explain to us what God, as the supreme moral judge of the universe, has done to enable Christians to overcome the evil desires of the sin nature . . . in our daily lives. Paul here is dealing with what we call experiential sanctification. Sanctification is being set aside to God's will – set aside to godliness. "Experiential" means in your daily living (in your experience). Even a man like the apostle Paul, whose regeneration; whose spiritual maturity; and, whose dedication to the will of God cannot be questioned, still struggles with the inherent propensity to do evil which all of us have inherited from Adam.

Paul deals with the control of the flesh (or the sin nature) which expresses itself in self-centered animal lusts. The sin nature is actually a state of mind which reflects upon sensual, moral gratification through the physical body. The sin nature is, first of all, a state of the mind. The core features of animal mindedness is demonstrated in the self-gratification of the mind and the physical body through earthly things that anyone's expense. That is the character of the sin nature.

The issue for the Christian then is how to reject the appeals of the sin nature and maintain a state of mind which is controlled by spiritual values and biblical morality. This does not come automatically into the Christian life. What in fact we take into the Christian life is the sin nature. And along with that nature comes that propensity to animal lusts, and to doing our own thing. That expression is a splendid summary of the characteristics of the sin nature – doing your own thing. And every Christian, sooner or later, discovers that after the euphoria of salvation and regeneration, has found that the disease of the sin nature is still there to plague him, and that it expresses itself in ways that are unbelievable – his the state of mind. And if he has the mind of carnality, we will fulfill the desires of the flesh.

**God's Judicial Solution**

The divine solution, that we have mentioned several times, for controlling the sin nature (or the flesh) is twofold. There was on God's part a solution which He provided as the judge of the universe. We call that the judicial solution. The judicial solution is God's decree to remove the believer from a position of death in Adam (into which he was born), to a position of life in Christ, thereby identifying the believer with the final payment made for sin by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, God has a judicial solution for the sin nature. He takes you out of Adam, and He places you in Christ. Now the back of the sin nature has been broken in terms of its absolute control. It is still alive; it is still kicking; and, it is still powerful, but because you have been placed in Christ, the control of sin nature has been terminated.

**God's Experiential Solution**

Then God has an experiential solution, and that solution is the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, which has been provided to guide the spiritual believer to conquer the mind of the sin nature by renewing our minds with Bible doctrine truth.

So, we begin now with verse 14, where Paul says, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." The word "for" is significance. It's the word "gar" in the Greek Bible. It introduces Paul's explanation of the problem the sin nature causes in the believer. The beneficial moral code of the Mosaic Law (which he said was holy, just, and good) serves to reveal the exceedingly degraded vileness of the nature which is in us. The quality of the sin nature is unchanged in the born again person.

Furthermore, what Paul is driving at here is that the Mosaic Law cannot destroy it. You cannot control evil within you by deciding to obey some code of rules like the Mosaic Law. As good as the Mosaic Law is – as proper and right, and as much as it was an expression of God's absolute righteousness, keeping the Mosaic Law is an impossibility. Trying to attain experiential sanctification through the Mosaic Law is doomed. It doesn't work.

What this word "gar" is doing is tying back to Romans 7:7-13, where Paul has declared that the Law received from God is holy. But that holy Law has the made an instrument of eternal death by the sin nature.

Paul says, "For, in view of the fact that the holy Law is an instrument that leads to eternal death (that is, it condemns us) we know." In the Greek Bible, it looks like this: "oida." The word "oida" refers to knowledge which we receive via intuition or via our reasoning powers. It indicates a mental process which is based on information that we have received – information about the Law of God.

Paul is referring to something here which is obvious to all Christians. So, he says, "We know." What we know is introduced by the word "that," which is the word "hoti" – this conjunction introducing what is known about the Mosaic Law. The word "Law" is we usual word "nomos." In the Greek language, it says, "*the* Law." It has the specific law in mind – that of the context which refers to the Mosaic code. We know, by our past information, something about the Mosaic Law – "that it is." The word "is" is important. It's the word "eimi." I want you to notice that the tense here is present tense. We're going to see in a moment that that's very important, because, from Romans 7:7-14, the apostle Paul has been using past tenses – everything in the past. Suddenly, you get to verse 14, and from here to the end of the chapter, it's all present tense. This is a significant bit of information that we'll pick up in a moment.

Present tense tells us that this is always the case about the Law. It is active voice, which means that it's inherent in the law itself. It is indicative mood – a statement of fact about the Law of God. And what is that? What is always true about the law? What is a statement of fact about the Mosaic Law? That is that "That law is spiritual." This is kind of a long word in the Greek Bible: "pneumatikos." "Pneumatikos" here indicate an association with God the Holy Spirit. That's why it's spiritual. The Law of Moses is associated with God the Holy Spirit. It indicates that the law is compatible with God's thinking. The Mosaic Law had its origin with God. Therefore, it is in harmony with God's character of holiness. Because it is compatible with God's character, and because it is a product of the Spirit of God, it is declared to be spiritual.

The moral code of the Mosaic Law was not arrived at by human consensus. That is the kind of morality that humanists come up with. That is the kind of morality that our society is pursuing today. That is that consensus is to determine what is right and what is wrong. Whereas, this very word tells us that God's law is not human consensus, because it is not simply that people agreed upon as being acceptable. It is what God the Creator has declared to be acceptable. It is what God the Holy Spirit has Himself produced. Therefore, it is spiritual in orientation. It is compatible with God's holiness.

It is easy for Christians to get contaminated by this idea of consensus. It is not unusual to be shocked to discover that Christians are engaged in some very evil thing. They are engaged in the very things that the Bible condemns and says, "You shall not do these things." And yet they do them. And I'm talking about the folks who sit around in church just like you do. . . . The moral quality of our day is portrayed to us everywhere. If you attend the motion picture theaters, you get a lot of immorality justification. If you watch television programs, you get a lot of immorality justification. If you read publications are various kinds, you get a lot of immorality justified. It is what everybody has agreed is all right to do, in direct opposition to the fact that the Bible has condemned it.

The very thing that Paul is going to explain to us is the thing that happens to the Christian, who knows that God has said, "Act this way," and instead, that Christian chooses to act with immorality. You ask yourself: how do they do it? Why do they do it? The individual believer, sometimes, who is a victim of that says, "Why did I do this? How did I fall into this – into this act of immorality?"

Part of it is because your mind has accepted the carnal viewpoint of the religion of humanism, which is expressed in our day all around us. You have not recoiled in horror every time you saw an immorality portrayed on the screen, and every time you heard an immorality being justified, and being turned into some innocent act that is acceptable, because human consensus has now agreed to tolerate it. Human consensus can only produce what is carnal – what is the product of the flesh: the sin nature. Only God can give us a code that can be described as "pneumatikos" – a code which can be described as spiritual – as the product of the mind of God.

So, it is no small thing to break God's rules. And it destroys our lives in a variety of ways when we break God's rules. And please remember that those rules are not just these terrible thing of the lying; the cheating; the stealing; the sexual immorality; the premarital sex; the extramarital sex; the using of curse words that use the name of God; the covetousness against what other people have; and, everything else that the Bible condemns. It's not just those things those. Those we tend to recoil from and think that that's where it's at. It's also the things that we don't view with such seriousness that are the guidelines for assisted living. There is the fact that man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. There is the fact that, daily, we are to be in the Word – that our day-by-day mental outlook needs to be preoccupied with Christ. There is the fact that we are to associate in the local church services regularly for the learning and the study of the Word of God, and for fellowship with God's people. There is the fact that we have spiritual Gifts which are to be imposed and used in sacrifice within our society, so that we can act as a beacon of light holding forth the Word of Life.

All of these things we also violate. Why? Because it has become acceptable, even among Christians, that you don't do this. The average church member is simply and totally uninvolved with his society. He who goes to church. He has this little religious exercise, and that's the end of it. He is not involved with being a light in society. He is not involved with being an element that has preserved the freedoms that we have in our country.

So, Paul says, "We know that the law is spiritual” – a product of the mind of God, not of human consensus. "But" (on the other hand), and he uses this Greek word "de" which is a conjunction indicating that a contrast is to be declared. "But," he says, "I am." Now in the Greek Bible, the personal pronouns, like "I," are generally not listed separately. They're just part of the verb. You have a certain ending, and you know that that means "I;" that means "you;" that means "he;" and so on. In this case, the apostle Paul lists the word out separately: ego." And when he uses it separately, it is because he is emphasizing it. Paul is going to tell us something about his personal experience. Paul is introducing a struggle that he himself went through, and a victory that he achieved. It's the struggle of every normal divine Christian. And the victory that he has achieved is the victory we need to achieve.

**Paul is Carnal**

So, he stresses the fact that he's talking from some first-hand witness. This is not hearsay. This is personal first-hand testimony: "I am." And again, he uses that same verb "eimi." And again, I stress that it is present tense. He has shifted gears. He's no longer talking in the past tense, as you get up through verse 13. Now he's talking in present tense. Constantly something is true about Paul. It is personally true of him. Here's a statement of fact about himself, and that is that he is carnal. He is "sarkinos." The word "sarkinos" means "fleshly." It describes his human nature in its natural state. He is referring to his natural state of perverted, sinful, animal desires, and his quality of inborn, self-centeredness. The ending here "inos" is significant. The ending "inos" on an adjective in the Greek language tells us that it is stressing the substance of which a thing is made. It is referring to what the thing is made of. And Paul is saying, “I am made of flesh. I'm made of bones, and muscles, and sinews, and blood, and veins, and I am flesh – I'm a physical being. And he is referring to himself in that sense – that he is fleshly; that is, made of flesh.

We have the word "lithinos" in Greek. The word "lithinos" means "made of stone." And it has it that "inos" ending that indicates that what the writer is talking about is the substance that the thing is made of. This word "lithinos" is used in 2 Corinthians 3:3, where it says, "For as much as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of 'lithinos' (not in tables of stone – not in tables made of stone, like Moses got the Law), but in fleshly tables (and he uses the word "sarkinos") – but in fleshly tables of the heart" (but in physical, material tables of the heart). This is saying, "Upon your very physical being," or "Upon your very physical structure:" "God has written His law." So, you have these two as contrasted, with the "inos" ending, indicating the substance of which it's made.

We have another example of that – that kind of ending which is as important clue to us in the word: "xulinos." "Xulinos" means made of wood. Again, the "inos" ending is stressing what the thing is made of. "Xulinos" is used in 2 Timothy 3:20: "But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of 'xulinos" (made of wood). . . .

So, these words with this particular ending, when they appear, tell us that what the writer is stressing is the substance of which the thing is made.

So, Paul is saying that he's made of flesh. He is a human body. Since man is flesh, he possesses from Adam a nature which is inclined to moral evil, because that moral evil is transmitted to us – that sin nature is transmitted to us in our genetic structure which we received from our human father. It is in the genetic structure of the father that the sin nature is passed on. That was bypassed in the case of the Lord Jesus. He did not have a sin nature because he did not have a human father. So, the genetic structure of the sin nature was not passed on to Him. It's a condition of the flesh. The condition of the flesh expresses itself in selfish, animal urges in spite of all the other noble qualities that indeed are in man.

So, Paul when he says, "I am fleshly," is simply saying, "I have the limitations that anybody in the flesh has. I have an animal propensity to indulge my sexual desires, and I'm self-centered. I'll do it no matter what." In our society, the business of premarital sex is dignified. But when you get a Christian point of view on it, you realize that you have to be some of the lowest elements of humanity that any man would impose premarital sex upon a woman that he loves. He would be very stupid and foolish, and certainly picking up the humanistic viewpoint of our society to accept it. But you really have to come out of a low rock to do that to another human being.

The apostle Paul says, "That is expressing what you do naturally. Your propensity for animal lust is there, and you are so self-centered that you don't care if you get some gal pregnant. You don't care if you destroy someone's life. You don't care if you bring enormous injury into a home. You want it – you do it. That is what Paul is talking about.

Man was not treated with the mind of self-centered. He was created with the mind of God-centeredness. But Adam's original sin changed all that. It perverted our thinking. And from then on, everybody who was born into the human race, came in with this perverted, self-centered type of mentality.

A Christian who is under the control of his flesh, and who is under the control of his natural propensity, is a carnal Christian. And the apostle Paul says that he himself is carnal. He himself has that kind of a natural propensity.

Furthermore, he says, "He is sold." The Greek word is "tiprasko." "Tiprasko" means "doing business, and thus securing ownership of a thing." The carnal Christian is doing business with the flesh, and he is under the ownership of the sin nature. This is perfect tense, which tells us that it happened in the past (it happened with Adam), and it continues down to the present. We are under the ownership (under the control) of the sin nature. It is passive. It is something that was done to us by our first parents. Romans 5 Paul tells us how that sin nature quality came into the human race by one man. It is in the participle mood, which gives us a statement of a spiritual principle.

"We are sold under." The word "under" is this preposition "hupo," which means "control:" "Under the control of sin." And here we have the word we have so frequently: "hamartia." And again in the Greek Bible, it has the word "the" in front of it: "*the* sine," indicating the specific sin nature. Sin in the singular, with the word "the" in front of it, is referring to the old sin nature, or the flesh.

So, what Paul is saying is that he finds himself as the regenerated person, struggling against being under the control of the sin nature. Paul wants to do right. But he finds his sincere efforts ending up in spiritual defeat. He sees himself doing evil. And you want to remember that when we observe other Christians doing some terribly evil things. And by terrible evil things, I mean everything that's involved: disloyalty; reversion of your love (giving it to the wrong person); being loyal to the wrong elements, to the wrong concepts, to the wrong person; and, everything that is involved in the carnal life. When Paul finds himself struggling here to do what is right, yet he finds himself under the control of doing that which is evil. He wants to do right, but his sincere efforts bring him spirituality.

So, when other Christians falling into that kind of defeatism, please remember that they didn't want to do that. You could go up and say, "Why did you want to do that?" They would say, "I didn't want to do that. I just did it." We are inclined to think that they want to do that. That's not true. Anybody who is a child of God has a powerful force of the Spirit of God striking against them; holding them back; struggling with Him; dealing with Him; and, living in misery. He can't sin as a child of God, and do it comfortably.

It's important for you now to understand, from Romans 7:14-25, the particular religious condition from which Paul is speaking. Perhaps this is a good place to give a sort of a summary so that, as we go through these verses in the weeks that lie ahead, you'll understand the frame of reference from which Paul is speaking. You must understand the frame of reference.

**A Past Historical Experience**

The frame of reference, first of all, is that Paul in Romans 7:7-13 was looking at a past historical experience. He was looking back in the days when he was not a Christian – back in the days before salvation. And everything that we studied there, concerning the law and how it condemns him, was the condition in which he found himself as a faithful religious man, but one without Christ.

However, coming to verse 14, he switches to the present. And he is talking now about himself as Paul the Christian. This passage tell such terrible things about personal defeat in the spiritual life, that a lot of people have said, "That can't be talking about a Christian. That must be talking about a person who is a non-Christian. A Christian couldn't feel like this; couldn't act like this; and, couldn't do all the things that are implied in this passage." That's wrong. This is Paul, the Christian, in Romans 7:14-25. He is now speaking about that, which is his present condition.

His past condition he summarized in Romans 7:5, where he said, "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful impulses which were by the Law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." When we were in the condition of just the sin nature (which is all an unsaved person is in), the Law of God did nothing but condemn us, and made it sure that we were headed for the lake of fire.

However, Romans 7:6 summarizes Romans 7:14-25. In Romans 7:6, Paul says, "But now we are delivered from the Law (that being dead in which we were held), that we should serve in newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter." In verse 6, Paul says, "But now I have come to the point where I am no longer under the condemnation of the Law like I was in Romans 7:5. I have been released from that condemnation. And I have been called to serve in a new lifestyle. The problem is that I don't do it." He has the desire for godly living. But in these verses from verse 14 on, he laments the fact that he finds himself a victim of the sin nature. Paul hates the evil, but helplessly succumbs to it.

Let's look ahead. Notice Romans 7:19: "For the good that I would, I do not; but, the evil which I would not, that I do." When you see Christians falling into terrible sins, it's not just because they want to do it. They have a problem of control. The conflict is between a person's will and what he does. The conflict is between a person's intentions and what he actually performs. The Christian is not only in Christ, but he is also under the powerful potential influence of the Adamic sin nature which is seeking to express itself in a variety of evils.

In Galatians 5:17, the apostle Paul says, "For the flesh (the sin nature) lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) against the flesh. These are contrary – the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would."

So, in the passage which begins with Romans 7:14 here, we are dealing with the meaning of the Mosaic Law, and how it fits into the Christian life. That is what Paul is explaining. He is trying to head us off from making the mistake that we can do good by trying – that we can be godly, by just determining that we're going to do it.

**"Rededicating One's Life"**

If you remember the old days when you used to be out there in all those usual church services, how often a service was guided toward the point where you were challenged to make a decision for Christ. You were challenged to make a decision to make a public move. Since you had already become a Christian, they could not invite you to walk the aisle to be save, and thereby to confuse you with the fact that you could do something physically to be saved. So, instead you were called upon to rededicate. How many times (in some of my past experiences) I used to see church members get up and walk forward to dedicate their lives. What was their problem? They were in the agony of the fact that, like Paul, their mind said, "I want to be right," but their performance was to do wrong. Their will said, "I want to obey God," and what they did was obey the sin nature, and thus Satan. So, they were given the illusion that if they just make a new beginning (a new resolution – a new dedication), and to indicate that dedication to walk down the aisle, and to rededicate themselves to the will of God, that they'd be able to make it. And they were only to find, in short order, that they were still victimized by the sin nature.

This is one of the grossest things that happens out there, even in churches that are dedicated to the Bible as the Word of God – that people are given impression that they can simply make a resolve, and solve the problem of being victimized by evil in their lives. And even in churches that don't go so far (it's not their tradition to ask people to make public moves), they still are preaching challenge to people: "Stand up. Make a new decision. Dedicate yourself to the Lord. Make a new beginning." And you get the impression that all you have to do is to decide that you're going to try harder.

Well, what Paul is trying to do here is to show that, no matter how you try, and that even a code of rules that came from God himself, which is holy, just, and good, like the Mosaic Law), you're never going to control the sin nature in you that way. The Christian is not superior to the Law of God. The Christian is free from the sin nature's is controlled by a judicial act of God, but he still carries the disease in his genetic structure; in his body; and, in his flesh.

So, the Law of God is right, and Paul says, "I agree to obey it, but I don't obey it." So, that's why he stressed: "I." He said, "I want to make it clear that this is me – Paul. I don't want to do what is wrong. I do want to do what is right. But there's something that overrides my will, and brings me into evil.

That's why, in Romans 7:17, he says, "Now then it is no longer I that do it, but the sin nature that dwells in me. That is the problem – the sin nature. It's not an external force. It's something that is within us. The non-Christian has no conflict with this. He can do nothing but evil. He is innately evil, and that's all he can do. But the Christian, who know God's Word and God's rules, struggles to serve the Lord, but doesn't do it.

That is the whole issue that Paul is dealing with in this passage. He has shown that the Christian is not under obligation to live by the Mosaic Law. He has been saved apart from the Law. The Law cannot save. Now he is trying to show us that you cannot come to sanctification by the Law. The Law merely is going to show you your guilt. It has no solution. The solution for moral guilt has to come entirely from God through the Lord Jesus. So, God has provided the salvation. But once a person is justified, you still cannot obey God's rules. And that's the mistake you make. You think that: "Boy, now I'm a Christian, and now I'm going to obey the Ten Commandments." Wrong! You will not obey them very long. In short order, you will discover that you have a mental attitude lying there someplace, like Paul discovered when he discovered the law of covetousness. It's not something outside. It's in the mind – a mental attitude thing.

Immediately he had to say, I'm not spiritual. I'm carnal as can be." But thank God, I'm happy to tell you, as Paul tells us that: "Our Father has not left us on our own to struggle to live a godly life. Since the believer is in Christ, he has at his disposal a divine power with which to face that evil. These powers are designed to enable the Christian to attain experiential sanctification.

The Lord Jesus is not our righteousness in the sense that He gives us power to keep the Law, and thereby to attain spirituality. He is our righteousness in that He has imputed to us the very righteousness of God. And with the presence of God the Holy Spirit, He has put us into the position where we can override the sin nature. It is the Spirit of God that enables you to control what is done within your life.

So, the issue that Paul is dealing with here is to clarify this dependence upon the Law for sanctification. Let's do a brief review of some pertinent facts about the law.

**The Law**

You remember that the law is in three parts.

1. There was the moral law expressed in the Ten Commandments which proved that man is a sinner, and that he needs a Savior.
2. **The Ceremonial Law**

Secondly, there was the ceremonial law, which were shadows of the person and the work of Jesus Christ, which showed Him in these ceremonies to be the solution for the sin problem.

1. **The Civil Law**

Then third, there was the Civil law, which was the way of life for the Jews in their social relationships, one with another.

The Lord Jesus Christ kept all 613 points of the Mosaic Law perfectly. He fulfilled the Law for us. There was no violation of the moral section on the part of Jesus. He fulfilled all of the shadows of the ceremonial section. And He established, for the believer, a new social relationship. The new way of life is based upon the fact of the permanent indwelling of the third person of the Trinity within the believer: God the Holy Spirit.

So, the demands of the Mosaic Law, we must understand, have been totally fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Having fulfilled those demands, the Law is no longer in operation. The Lord Jesus Christ made it obsolete. And it is not terror over the Christian today. For this reason, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the end of the Law for the Christian.

For example, in Romans 10:4: "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes." Whatever condemnation the Law speaks of, you have been released from that condemnation. You have no fear of it you are in Christ.

Galatians 5:18 says, "But if you be led by the spirit, you are not under the Law. Verses 22-23 say that: "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. Against such, there is no Law."

**The Old Testament Priesthood**

In the Old Testament, we had a priesthood. Under the Mosaic Law, there was the priesthood which was limited to one family in the Levi tribe – the family of Arron. It was a specialized priesthood. When the Law ended, that specialized priesthood ended with it. That is why it is a blasphemy to call any man a priest in the sense that the Old Testament priest was there representing God to the people, and the people to God. That is what any religious group (any church that you walk into), and they have an altar – that also is a blasphemy to the grace of God. To stand up there in robes, acting as a priest before God, carrying on a ritual before this altar is a blasphemy to the grace of God, because the Law is terminated, and with it all of the elements of the Law. Why was it terminated? Because everything those priests did in foreshadowing what Christ was going to do has been fulfilled. And to pretend that those things have not been fulfilled by carrying on the shadows is an insult to God.

**The New Testament Priesthood**

The Christian now operates under a priesthood, alright, but it's a totally different kind of priesthood, as you know. It's a priesthood that includes every one of you. Everybody who's born again is in this priesthood. 1 Peter 2:5 says, "You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house: a holy priesthood." Verse 5 is the principle. We are a priesthood, every one of us, as part of the body of Christ.

That is further indicated in Revelation 5:10: "And has made them unto our God a kingdom of priests, and they shall reign upon the earth." The Bible is clear that we believers (each one of us) are not priests. Well, the fact that there is a new priesthood shows that the Mosaic system is over. You couldn't have the universal priesthood of believers, and have the Mosaic Law still in operation. How did it terminate? By Jesus Christ's keeping the Law for us. And churches are putting Christians under the Mosaic Law in such a way that it neutralizes the grace that God will showered upon them. Any Christian who is still struggling, living under the Mosaic system, trying to please God by keeping the Mosaic Law, might just as well try and go to heaven for all the good that he's going to do with his life.

However, we do not want to leave the impression that the Christian is an outlaw, or that the Christian is lawless. What he does, in fact, is operate under a new law. We're going to jump ahead a little bit to the great solution in Romans 8:2-4: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (that's one law – the law of the indwelling Holy Spirit) has made me free from the law of sin and death" – the Law imposed by the Mosaic Law: "For what the Law (the Mosaic Law) could not do, that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

The Mosaic Law was holy, just, and good, but it depended on man's own capacities (his flesh) to fulfill it. So, it was weak: "That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." God the Holy Spirit is the new law. He is called the law of the spirit. He operates in Christ Jesus. He operates only for Christians. That has made us free, once and for all, from the Mosaic Law. And it revealed that man's sin could not produce anything else but evil. His nature of evil could not produce anything but evil. So, he was condemned to hell. But we have been released from that condemnation.

Verse 3 tells us that the Mosaic Law was limited. The sin nature limited it on the inside of the believer. But God sent help, so that verse 4 says, "That the righteousness of the Law could be fulfilled by we Christians through Jesus Christ.

The greatest strength of the Old Testament could not fulfill the Law. But the New Testament Christian, who still has a sin nature within him, can fulfill the righteousness of the Law. And that is what the apostle Paul is dealing with here in Romans 7. While we are still contaminated by the sin nature, there is a way for us to live apart from this contamination.

It is a painful thing to want to do right, and to find that you do wrong. For the Christian who, for the first time in his life, begins to walk in godliness day-by-day, I guarantee you it's a scary experience. It is awesome to discover that you're coming up against evil. You're coming up against opportunities to do evil – to break all those rules. And you have no problem in resisting. You have no problem in rejecting. The thing that becomes most awesome is that, suddenly, you discover that you have eyes that can discern evil where you never saw it before. You could see a quality of vileness that you were acclimated to, and that you took in stride. Once you learn to walk by means of the Spirit, you will be amazed at what kind of a person you can become, and then what kind of prosperity and blessing God can pour forth on you, and how effective He can make you in His work. It's worth learning the secret that Paul finally discovered, to his great joy.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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