

Law and Flesh vs. Grace and Spirit

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[0:00] Romans chapter 7. I cannot think of a more appropriate quote to begin with than that which was uttered by Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse who said regarding Romans 7, It is one of the most misunderstood chapters in the Bible because most people read it with the attitude, It can't mean what it says.

The theme is that the believer is no longer under the law of God because he died to the law and is joined to Jesus Christ in his resurrection.

I could not agree more. The theme of the grace of God is undoubtedly the most misunderstood doctrine in all of the Bible. And I think it is equally safe to say that because law is the antithesis of grace, it is misunderstood to about the same degree, if you will, as is the doctrine of the grace of God.

In Romans 6 and verse 14 we read, For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Whatever can that mean?

Some say, I'm not real sure what it means, but I know it doesn't mean what it says. It can't mean that we are not under law. That is exactly what it does mean.

[1:15] The context, of course, makes it clear that we are not under the Mosaic law. We never really have been. We are not under the law insofar as its demands are concerned or insofar as its punishment is concerned.

We are not. We are not under law. Believers live in the sphere of grace. And you can appreciate, if you know anything at all about Judaism, and their great love for the law.

How they were steeped in the law and saturated with the law. How the rabbis spent hours and hours on end just poring over the law and going over it and over it, backwards and forwards and inside out.

When Paul made these statements, we are not under law but under grace. It was doctrinal dynamite. It was explosive. It was a volatile issue. What are you saying?

We are not under the law. Can you not understand then why Paul was accused by some of his brethren of teaching against the law and against Moses?

[2:16] And really, he never did that. Paul took the law where it was. And then he took the Christian where he was and brought him up to date and showed him the connection that one had with the other.

Which meant to say that there was a time when he was under the law, but it did its job. It is now passe. Christians have been removed out from under the sphere of law. They are under grace. Great many people do not understand that.

I do not think that any unbeliever understands that. I am satisfied that many who are believers do not understand that.

And I thank God that our salvation is not connected to our understanding this. I rejoice in the fact that many of us stand in a position in Jesus Christ that we little appreciate.

But that does not affect our standing. And it is a good thing. For if our standing were determined by our intelligence and our complete comprehension of what we have in Christ, then of course we would have little or no standing at all.

[3 : 21] When Paul made these statements, they sounded like the ramblings of a demented ex-Pharisee, someone who was just, what shall I say, arrived at senility a little sooner than others, and yet had a great deal of physical verve and vitality left, and he went about propagating these doctrines.

That's the way he was perceived by many. And you can understand, if you know anything at all about the Old Testament, you can understand the criticism that Paul met with when he went from place to place, especially when he went into the synagogue and began promulgating some of these doctrines.

There was almost every time an uproar. Someone said, everywhere Paul went and preached, there was a riot or a revival. One of the two. No one took this man in a neutral way.

They were either hostile toward him or they embraced him. The theme of chapter 7, which deals with our being dead to law, is as radical as chapter 6, which deals with our being dead to sin.

Both of these constituted doctrinal dynamite, and both of them got Paul into a great deal of trouble. And both of these chapters, now this is very important.

[4 : 34] Please understand this and how it relates to the whole of the book of Romans. This is very, very important. That which caused Paul to deal with these two great issues, dead to sin and dead to the law, is the statement that he made in chapter 5 and verse 21, one of the key verses in all of the book.

Now look at it, please. I want you to see the setting again. Romans 5, and let's begin reading with verse 20. Paul is talking about this great, great theme of justification by faith.

How that a man is justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. Then in verse 20, Paul says, Now that's Paul's basic premise.

I have told you that chapters 6 and 7 are parenthetical. That means they really, in a sense, do not introduce new material. They rather constitute an elaboration upon that which he has already said, or at least implied.

When we insert something that is parenthetical, what we mean there is we are stopping with the progress of our information, and we are camping there for a little while to develop a theme that we have mentioned.

[6 : 19] We are offering further explanation upon something we've already talked about. Then when we are finished with the parenthesis, we take up where we left off with the original thought. Now what I am saying here is this.

In chapter 5, beginning, well, let's just pick out verse 15. Look at verse 15. Or I'm sorry, verse 16. We've got transgression. See these themes? Transgression.

Condemnation. Transgression. Justification. Verse 17. Transgression. Righteousness. Verse 18. Transgression. Condemnation.

Righteousness. Justification. Verse 19. Disobedience. Obedience. Many being made righteous. Verse 20. Transgression. Sin increasing. Grace abounding.

Then Paul closes out in verse 21 that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, what I want you to do is for a little experiment, and I think we touched on this when we opened the chapter.

[7 : 21] We are going to skip all of chapter 6 and skip all of chapter 7 because of their parenthetical nature. Pretend that they don't even exist.

If you really want to see the connection, look at it this way. Let me read verse 20 and 21 again. Let's skip those two chapters. Let's come right over and start in on chapter 8 and verse 1.

You'll see how Paul is putting this together. Verse 20, chapter 5. The law came in that the transgression might increase, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. You see the flow of that? And how the chapters 6 and 7 actually interrupt, intentionally so, they interrupt Paul's main thought of being delivered from condemnation.

He reaches the conclusion then in chapter 8 and verse 1, which is somewhat beclouded when you inject 6 and 7. I'm not suggesting for a moment that they aren't necessary.

[8 : 35] Of course they are. But in order to understand the flow of this and the way the apostle is setting forth the argument, I think we need to take that parenthesis into consideration.

Chapter 6 then is designed to answer the question, what about sin? Alright. Grace is going to reign in righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Fine, Paul.

What are you going to do about sin? Grace is going to reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Great. Well, just exactly what does the law have to do with this?

What are you going to do about the law? There are two great obstacles here, Paul. To say that we're justified by faith is great. What does God do with sin? What about sin? What about you as a believer?

Because you are justified by faith, does that mean that sin is no longer a relevant issue? That it's completely out of sight? That you can just forget all about it? Is that what you're saying? He realizes he's going to have these kind of objections.

[9 : 34] And because of that, he devotes an entire chapter to the issue of the believer in Christ being dead to sin. Then he devotes chapter 7 to the issue of the believer being dead to the law.

Now, you know, Paul could have simply said this. Well, as regards sin, don't worry, you're dead to it. So far as the law is concerned, you're dead to the law.

All right, next question now. Wait a minute. Hold the phone. What do you mean we're dead to sin? What are you talking about we're dead to sin? I'm not dead.

I'm living, breathing, walking. How can you say I'm dead to sin? How can you say I'm dead to the law? Does this mean that the law just doesn't count for anything anymore?

Does this mean that I'm lawless? That I'm not under any obligation to obey any law? Is that what it means? So the apostle knew full well.

[10 : 32] He simply could not level charges and make statements like that without some explanation. And for those, he devoted an entire chapter to each. Now, in chapter 7, in the first six verses, we see that the Christian is not under law.

Now, verses 7 through 13, the Christian not being under the law. The law is recognized as not being sinful. That's a point that needs clarified, for some would charge Paul with that.

And then in 14 through 25, we are told that the law cannot gain us victory over the flesh. And his great premise here, in chapter 7, if you'll turn to it now, and the first three verses, his premise is, the law has applicability only to living people.

The law has no claim upon deceased persons. That's Paul's argument. Now, immediately, someone comes back and says, well, that's all well and good to say that the law has no application to deceased persons.

That would be just great, except we have one real problem. Christians are not deceased persons. And Paul says, oh, yes, they are. Indeed, we are dead. We are dead to sin.

[11 : 46] We are dead to the law. How is that? When Christ died, we who are in Christ died with him. We are buried with him. We are identified with him.

We are raised with him in newness of life. We are enthroned with him in the heavenlies. All that is true of Christ is true of you. You aren't lacking in any of these things.

Now, that which further muddies and complicates the water somewhat is the fact that we're still here in this work-a-day, live-a-day world. And we all know it's great to be positionally seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

But for right now, for the next 20, 30, 40, some of you may be 70 years, we're right here on terra firma. What are we going to do about that?

And to that issue, the apostle devotes the entire chapter. He says, Do you not know, brethren, for I'm speaking to those who know the law, that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives.

[12 : 45] You'll never find the law trying to imprison a dead man. If a criminal is trying to escape in the commission of a crime and he gets killed, nobody thinks about dragging the corpse into the law court and having charges brought and having him sentenced and having a trial and all.

The man's dead. The law has no claim over him. He's dead. He's free from the law. That is precisely what Paul is saying. The law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives and only as long as he lives.

Then he gives an illustration, which some, I think, with good intent, but I suspect erroneously plug into to build a great case for or against marriage, depending on the way you look at it, or divorce, I'm sorry, not for or against marriage, but divorce.

And I don't think the apostle is attempting to teach that. But I think he is simply using it as an illustration. And he says, The married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

[13 : 57] The point that I have made and taken from this is that the woman, in Paul's illustration, and I don't think we ought to push this too far, but the woman was never married to the law.

What the woman was married to, by way of analogy, is the old man of chapter 6 and verse 6. And it is the old self that has been crucified with him and left this woman, if you please, a veritable widow, and free and unencumbered to be joined to another, and the one that she is joined to is Jesus Christ.

That is made clear in verse 4. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the law. You were made to die to the law. You didn't make yourself die to the law.

You were acted upon by an outside force, and that outside force is God who put you to death with Jesus Christ. You are in solidarity with Christ. You are in union with Christ.

As the Father put Jesus Christ to death on that cross, you were there with him. Were you there? Says the old Negro spiritual. When they crucified my Lord.

[15 : 01] That doesn't mean were you, can you get the picture? It doesn't mean were you there at the foot of the cross looking up at the crucified Jesus and all of the wounds and everything, and can you visualize that, and do you have sympathy for the whole thing?

That's not what it's saying at all. What it's saying is, are you in Christ? Were you there when Christ died? Were you in Christ? Raised with Christ? Seated with Christ?

And so on. You were made to die to the law through the body of Christ. That is, it is the death of Christ that is the instrumentality through which you were made to die.

That purpose clause. In order that you might be joined to another. To him who was raised from the dead that we might bear fruit for God.

This means that we died to the law so as to be free, unattached, and available to be married again. We are free to be united again.

[15 : 58] What Paul is saying here is the same thing he said in 6.18 regarding sin. Look at 6.18. But having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. Nobody's in between.

What are you? A slave of sin or a slave of righteousness? Well, I haven't made up my mind yet. I'm someplace right in between trying to decide which way I shall go. You've already gone one way or another. You're already in one state or the other.

There's no neutrality here. Everybody serves somebody. Everybody is locked into one of these two. And as regards sin, we are either serving sin or we are serving righteousness.

And as regards the law, we are either married to the law. We are either in and under the law or we are separated from it and joined to Jesus Christ.

Raised with him that we might bear fruit for God. Now notice that. Bear fruit for God. What is he saying? He's saying that when a believer is married spiritually to Jesus Christ, they are in a position of parenthood.

[17 : 03] A believer married to Jesus Christ is in a spiritual position to produce spiritual fruit. There will be fruit of the womb from that spiritual union.

And that fruit will be acceptable and well-pleasing to God. The believer as the spiritual wife, Jesus Christ as the spiritual husband, and the fruit of the spirit that is produced as a result of that relationship described in Galatians chapter 5 is the divine product that comes from that holy offspring, if you will.

And only when a believer is in union with Christ can this kind of fruit be acceptable and pleasing to him. Only in that way can it even be produced. He contrasts that in verse 5 by saying, You see, that's the way it used to be.

Fruit for death. As opposed to fruit for God in verse 4. What's the difference? One is fruit unto eternal life with its attendant rewards. The other is fruit that is corruptible fruit.

It is rotten fruit, if you will. Now, ladies, what can you do with rotten fruit? Well, you can't eat it raw. It's terribly distasteful.

[18 : 30] You can't put it in a pie. It won't work out that way. If it is rotten fruit, it's just good for nothing. That's all you can say. It's good for nothing. It isn't acceptable. It isn't well-pleasing to anybody. In fact, it's a stench.

You get rid of it. That's all that the flesh can produce. That kind of fruit. The flesh is described as several ways in the New Testament.

It could mean all biological life. That's what it means in Genesis 6, but it doesn't mean that here. It could mean physical or material substance, such as Leviticus 17.11, but flesh doesn't mean that here.

It could mean blood-related people that Paul is talking about in Romans 11.14, but it doesn't mean that here. It could mean physical and intellectual weaknesses, such as are described in 2 Corinthians 7.5 and in Romans 6.19, but it doesn't mean that here.

And it could mean, sometimes, flesh can mean the ethical quality as affected by sin or the old sin nature. And that's what it means here.

[19 : 38] That's what flesh is talking about. In 8.3-9, we have a commentary on the flesh. In verses 12 and 14 of chapter 8, we have additional information on the flesh.

The apostle says that in this flesh there are sinful passions. Sinful passions is resident evil.

It is evil that resides in each and every one of us. It abides in us. Further, he tells us that these sinful passions are aroused by the law.

Do you realize that all that the law prohibits, that same law also stimulates? This is what the apostle was talking about in 520 of Romans when he talked about the commandment came and offenses abounded.

Because the commandment defines sin and particularizes sin and diagnoses sin. And whereas before you looked at something that you thought was relatively pure and relatively clean, the commandment came in, you contrasted that with the commandment, and good grief, Paul says, sin is sticking out all over it.

[20 : 58] Because the law aggravates and it excites and it motivates, it impels us to sin. It stirs up these sinful passions that Paul is talking about here within us.

Transgressions increase. Then he says, notice if you will, in verse 5 he says, these transgressions aroused by the law were at work.

Our sinful passions, I'm sorry to say, are not lazy. Our sinful passions have abundant energy.

They never wear down. They never get tired. They're always in their pitching. Our sinful passions are skilled opportunists. Our sinful passions lie in wait, looking for a foothold, waiting to spring into action and do a job on us when we have our defenses down and are least expecting it.

That's what our sinful passions are. And they bear fruit for death when we are in union with them. But now, by way of contrast, we have been released from the law.

[22 : 10] You see that? Released from the law. By what means? Well, because we were able, we were so strong, we were able to break the power and the grip that the law. Of course not. There's only one way we were released from the law.

We died. We spiritually died. And the law has no more claim on us. That is contrasted with the flesh that went before.

Paul says, we have been released. He doesn't say we are working on. Now, that's where most Christians are. They're always working on something. Rather than realize that the work is already done.

Now, I'm not suggesting that there isn't a great deal of practical things, a great many practical things that we can do. We do have room for improvement. There is a work for us to do.

No question about it. We'll see that later on in the chapter. But in so far as establishing our position is concerned, there isn't any work that you have done or are doing or ever can do to affect that.

[23 : 09] It has been done for us. We have been released from the law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

This newness of the spirit is that which was never known before. This is the second Corinthians 5:17. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Newness of the spirit is a totally new concept and dynamic.

It is a breath of fresh air in the soul. The newness of the spirit is that which is available only to the child of God. When he becomes a child of God, he partakes of this newness of spirit.

At the instant he is regenerated by the spirit of God, this newness is his. It is there in the person of the Holy Spirit and it is contrasted to the oldness of the letter.

That is the strict legal requirement, obsolete codes and demands. You see, what happens is there's a radical change in relationships. From a relationship of legality to a relationship of love.

[24 : 17] The best way I can think to illustrate this contrast is the relationship that exists between an executive and his secretary. That is very business-like, very legal.

She agrees to work for a prescribed amount of money, certain benefits, certain hours. He agrees to pay her. Her job description is thus and so. Strictly business.

Nothing personal. Strictly business. But as this business relationship goes on, there are some feelings that begin to develop. And lo and behold, nature takes its course and the bells ring and the sparks fly and all those good romantic things.

And the next thing you know, they're walking down the aisle to be joined in matrimony. The two people are the same, really. But they are both now in a totally new relationship.

So that the legal requirements that were imposed upon this woman as secretary are no longer binding because she now has a new relationship.

[25 : 29] And she is moved from the place of being a servant to her employer to being a co-heir, a joint participant with her former employer in a new capacity that is cemented by love and mutual devotion.

And she now is a partaker of all that he is and all that he has. It is now hers. She comes into it by virtue of this new relationship.

And all that he is and all that he has equally belongs to her. That is precisely what happens when we came to Jesus Christ.

We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And we are partakers of all that he is and all that he will accomplish. Radical change in relationship.

Then as the apostle comes into verse 7, he says, Now what am I saying? Do you think I am downplaying the law? That I am disparaging the law? Is the law sin? Is that what I am saying? Oh no. No, no. I do not disparage the law.

[26 : 36] The law did its job. But now I am done with it. The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. But we have come to Christ. Then what binding does the law have upon us?

It has none. The law has tremendous significance for unbelievers. Every unbeliever's perception of the law, it will be that law that judges him.

Whether it is the Mosaic law. Whether it is the law of Romans 2, which is the law of God written on the heart. Whether it is the law that the heathen have. Because you see, no man in any society anywhere ever lives up to his own law.

Well, that is a really unique thing about us. We do not even live up to our own personal standards of the law. Jesus said, the words that I have spoken, they shall judge him in the last day.

That is, those to whom he was speaking. Men are going to be judged by all kinds of standards. In part they will be the standard that they themselves have set. I do not think that it will be necessary for God to impose his standard of absolute holiness upon everyone and judge all men by that.

[27 : 38] Because I am confident that this will be what will be realized in the final analysis. But the point I am making is this. Man's own laws and his own infractions of those laws are enough to condemn him.

Right there. We have blown the thing away without God imposing any of his laws upon us. We are not even true to our own laws. I do not disparage the law.

The law is not the problem. The law is not the enemy. In fact, I would not have come to know sin except through the law. For I would not have known about coveting if the law had not said, you shall not covet.

But sin, which is the real enemy. Here he is identifying it. Sin. Taking opportunity. That means sin opportunistically exploits every possible avenue for activity.

And it uses the commandment to produce in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law, sin is dead. Then the apostle says, I was once alive apart from the law.

[28 : 42] But when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died. He is saying that sin used the law as a fulcrum. Sin actually used that which was good to do an evil thing in me.

It used the law as a pry, as a fulcrum, to get leverage, to get an advantage against me. And it worked.

The apostle says, the law is a divine diagnostic tool. We illustrated this when we went through the passage. How that an x-ray machine may be used by a medical technician or a physician to determine the soundness of your lungs.

And when the machine is turned on your lungs, if there are some very ominous signs that are there, and the x-ray machine reveals the presence of disease, can you blame the machine and say, well, I really wouldn't have these cancerous tumors and these spots on my lungs if it weren't for this stupid machine?

It's the machine's fault. No, it isn't. The spots were there all the time. All the machine did was reveal what was already there. And so it is with the law.

[29 : 58] We cannot blame the law. Well, the problem is the law. No, Paul says, the law is just and holy and good. The problem is sin, not the law. Because all the law does is reveal the presence of sin.

It doesn't put sin there. It doesn't make sin. It doesn't produce sin. It reveals sin. For by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Sin was there all the time. But the commandment not to covet, he says in verse 9, brought sin into sharp focus from dormancy to full-blown activity, and I entered spiritual death.

The commandment came. Sin that was in me was fanned alive. And it broke out. And I've determined personally that this is at the age of accountability when the Apostle Paul, as but a lad I don't know of what age, came into a personal familiarization with the presence of sin in his life.

And when he did, he died spiritually. And he wasn't reborn until the Damascus Road experience, or shortly thereafter, perhaps through the ministry of Ananias.

[31 : 15] It proved to result in death to me. Notice what he says here in verse 10. The commandment, which was to result in life, and would have, according to Leviticus 18.5, because the commandment is a means of life to one who has never violated it.

The commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me. Surprise! For sin, there's the culprit again, taking opportunity through the commandment.

There it is again, the same idea, using the commandment as a fulcrum. Sin deceived me. It always deceives. Sin never does anything. Sin never does anything that is open and above board.

It always deceives. It always promises to deliver this, to deliver that, to give you this feeling, to give you that feeling, to give you this happiness, to give you something else. But it never delivers. Sin is like some politicians.

Long on promise and short on delivery. They promise you the moon when they're running for office and want that vote. But when they get in, they run into all kinds of problems why they can't deliver.

[32 : 30] And that's human nature. Sin will promise you anything. Listen, if you want to bargain with sin, if you want to negotiate with sin, you can strike a deal with it. Oh, just like that.

It's always ready. Sin is the original wheeler-dealer. Always ready to negotiate. And it will allow you to negotiate it in a corner. And you may think you've got the upper hand.

And you've got this thing all sewn up. But you've got to remember that sin is a terrible liar. A terrible deceiver. It has no integrity. All it does is lie. All it does is deceive.

It'll promise you the moon. But it'll never deliver. And some of us have found that to be very, very true. Those of you who haven't, will. Eureka, says Paul.

Hmm. In the word here. Verse 13. Therefore did that which is good become a curse for me?

[33 : 27] May it never be. Rather, it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin, by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment, sin might be utterly sinful.

And the phrase Eureka is a surprise. I found it. And what he found was death, not life. What he expected to find was life and fulfillment. What he found instead was death.

And the result was he needed to be regenerated. In verse 12, he makes it clear in case there's any misunderstanding. The law is holy.

The commandment is holy and righteous and good. I want you to make sure you understand where I stand regarding the law. Sin is described as a perverter. Paul says in verse 13, In order that sin might be shown up to be what it really is, it uses that which was intended for good to turn it into evil.

It is an abuse. It is a perversion. And this is exactly what sin does. And I want to show you how terrible sin is, says Paul. Sin actually took the commandment of God, pure, holy, and just commandment, and used it on me in a perverted, corrupted way that resulted in evil.

[34 : 44] That's how sinful sin is. It was put on display that the exceeding sinfulness of sin might be revealed in taking something that God had intended for man's blessing, and he used it for man's cursing.

Now the question may arise, and I think should quite naturally arise, if we are dead to sin, chapter 6, if we are dead to law, chapter 7, why am I continuing to have this spiritual hassle?

Why am I continuing this spiritual struggle that's going on within me? And how long is this thing going to last? Let me answer the last question first. It's going to last as long as you do.

You will never arrive at a time in your life on this earth, in this body, when you'll no longer have a struggle against sin. It is with you as long as you provide living quarters for the flesh.

And that is this body, this veil of flesh. When it drops away and you depart this life, when you leave this physical body behind, you're going to leave the flesh and the old sin nature with it.

[35 : 53] And all that will remain for you to be caught unto Christ is your new nature. And that which Paul describes in the upcoming verses. So here is the rub.

The deaths, both to sin and to the law, are judicial and legal. They are not literal nor practical, of course, but they do provide the basis for the practical. Then when we come to verse 14, here's the rub.

This is what Paul is talking about when he describes the conflict, the ongoing nature of it. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am a flesh sold into bondage to sin.

That's the problem. We've got a spiritual law, but we've got fleshly people who are supposed to keep it. And that is an impossibility. I am sold into bondage to sin.

All believers have two bases of operation and one headquarters. The total U constitutes the headquarters. The old sin nature and the new nature constitute the two bases of operation.

[36 : 59] They are locked in continual, perpetual combat. I think we ought to look for just a moment at Galatians chapter 5 to see a commentary on this. Galatians 5.

Then we'll go to the overhead and quickly run through our verses. Consider, if you will, please, Galatians 5 verse 13.

Galatians 5 verse 13. For you were called to freedom, brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh.

But through law serve one another. That means you can. But through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word in the statement, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

[38 : 06] Now, Paul isn't going to tell us to do something that we really can't do. Well, now, I'm going to tell you to walk in the Spirit, and I know you probably won't be able to handle it, but try to anyway, will you? Make the best of it as you can.

You know, most Christians say, I'm doing the best I can, which is miserable. It's usually a cop-out. What they mean is, I'm falling and floundering all over the place. But they say, I'm doing the best I can.

Paul says, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Why? Because you can't do both at the same time. You can do both, but you can't do both at once.

While you are walking in the Spirit, you cannot fulfill the desires of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

For these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

[39 : 05] Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are immorality, impurity, sensuality, and so on and so on. The fruit of the Spirit, verse 22, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and so on.

Verse 24, Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Is it by the Spirit that you have life? Yes? Then walk by the Spirit. You have no obligation to the flesh. This is what Paul is going to deal with in Romans 8.

You have no obligation to the flesh. Brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh to walk after the flesh. We are debtors to God. We need to walk after the Spirit. Then in chapter 14, or verse 14 of chapter 7, Paul begins to develop these themes.

We have told you that there are two different eyes, two different natures represented in this portion of Scripture. One is the new nature.

[40 : 08] One is the old nature. We have labeled the old nature the red eye. Red for danger. Red for stop. The green is for good.

The green is for go. That's the new nature. Both are found in these verses. You have to use the context to sort them out. You see, the great dilemma that has plagued theologians for centuries about Romans 7, 14 through 25 is this.

Some say there is no way that these verses can be spoken of in regards to a believer. Can't be. Because a believer just isn't capable of these things found here in Romans chapter 7.

Someone else comes along on the other side and says, Look, when you read verses like verse 22 of Romans 7, it is obvious, it is intuitively obvious, that there is no way this passage can be speaking of an unbeliever, for an unbeliever does not delight himself in the law of God.

He's hostile to the law of God in chapter 8, and he cannot subject himself to the law of God. So there's no way that this passage can be talking about an unbeliever, which is right.

[41 : 20] They're both right. They're both wrong. Paul is talking about a believer, his own personal experience, his own testimony. But he is saying, I am made up of two natures.

I have an old sin nature, and I have a new nature, and all these guys do is fight constantly. Each one is trying to gain the upper hand. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I, the old, am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

Well, the new nature isn't that. The new nature is dead to sin. I, the old, am not practicing what I, the new, would like to do, but I, the old, am doing the very thing I, the new, hate.

It becomes very, very apparent, I think, as we go through here, that Paul is actually talking from two different vantage points, and that's the key to understanding the whole thing.

If you try to make the eyes refer to the same entity all the way through, you have nothing but a hopeless mumbo-jumbo. It just does not make sense.

[42 : 30] And let's face it, Romans 7 does not make sense to most people. I've had a number of people confide in me privately that they have difficulty even reading the passage, much less understanding it.

And I think this will help a great deal. But if I, the old, do the very thing I, the new, do not wish to do, I, I don't know whether that's old or new, agree with the law, confessing that it is good, I suspect that this is the new nature, this I.

So now, no longer am I the new nature of the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. These, by the way, are all from the New American Standard Bible.

For I, the new, know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. For the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I, the new, wish, I, the old, do not do.

But I, the old, practice the very evil that I, the new, do not wish. But if I, the old, am doing the very thing, I, the new, do not wish.

[43 : 48] I, the new, am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I, the new, find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

And here, when he's talking about the one who wishes to do good, he is talking about the total personality. Evil is not present in the new nature. Evil is present in the corporate person, in the description of the flesh.

For I, the new, joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man. But I, the new, see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

And the members here refer to body parts. Then our last two verses. Wretched man that I am.

Wretched man that I, the old, am. Who will set me free from the body of this death? And do you know when that's going to be realized? Chapter 8 where Paul deals with the resurrection of the body.

[45 : 09] Jesus Christ is going to set us free from the body of this death by giving us a new incorruptible body. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, on the one hand, I, the new, myself, with my mind, am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh, the law of sin.

The new nature can only serve God. It isn't capable of being corrupted. It isn't capable of doing anything but pleasing God. The old nature isn't capable of doing anything but serving the flesh, doesn't want to, and never will.

The two are locked together in continual combat. You hold the key. You, the total person, you are the one who is in charge of headquarters, and you, by an act of your will, can give sway to the old nature or to the new nature.

You are in charge. That furthermore means that you are responsible for the level of spiritual life that you live. God has provided us with all that is needed. We are responsible for the manner in which we use it.

The key, then, for any unbeliever who is considering these things is that he, first of all, has to exercise faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior before he can even acquire a new nature.

[46 : 34] He isn't in a position to do anything but be constantly defeated. That's all he can know. He'll never know spiritual victory because he doesn't have the accoutrements of warfare with which he may combat his old nature.

He is at the mercy of his old nature. All he can do is live in a state of constant surrender, and he walks in the flesh day after day after day. That's all he can do.

The believer in Jesus Christ, however, has a new nature with which the old may be combated, and he is able to render works that are pleasing and acceptable unto God. Well, that's a very hurried run-through of Romans 7, and anyone who would like a more detailed explanation of the verses is advised that we've got nine or ten hours on chapter 7, and it is dealt with in a much more detailed fashion in those individual studies as opposed to what we were able to give it today.

Now, we'll take any questions or comments that you might have. By the way, don't feel badly if you do not completely understand what I've presented.

because I don't either. All you can do is give it your best shot while you're in it and go on. Don? Here then is another expression of the grace of God that knowing that when he comes in to a life at the conversion of that life, that he is to come identified with that life and is subject to all the ridicule that that life is subject to.

[48 : 26] Because the outsider, the unbeliever, has no way of knowing what is of God and what is not of God.

and this believer claims to have God inside it and yet he still does the things of the flesh. He's brought all this ridicule from God.

Very interesting point. One I must confess I had not considered. But what Don, I think, is saying in another way is we realize the grace of our God when we understand what it is that he knowingly bought into.

when he came in and took up residency within us because we do not always set forth a nice, clear, holy representation of the indwelling God, do we?

Good point. Excellent point. Jim? Can you think of any examples where the old nature manifested itself in the life of Paul?

[49 : 27] I'm just trying to run through my mind his letters and I can't really think of where the old nature actually manifested in his conduct.

Can we think of any place where the old nature manifested itself in Paul? I would suggest that what am I looking for here?

Well, true. Yeah. I think simply on the basis of what he said in Romans 7 he is admitting to the fact although he isn't specifying an instance.

I think he is. I think Paul is saying in Romans 7 that I do not always totally, constantly, continuously walk in the Spirit. I think that where is it that Paul got the vision and was told, yes, in chapter 21 of Acts.

I think this is an instance where Paul was just simply out of the will of God. I really do. You know, for some strange reason as I've said before, Christians don't have any difficulty with a disobedient Peter.

[50 : 59] We can all line up to that. We can see Peter really blowing it. You know, he denied the Lord and he was very presumptuous and always suffering from hoof and mouth disease.

But we somehow tend to put the Apostle Paul up on a pedestal as though he was an equal to Jesus Christ when it came to purity of life. And yet I know that Paul would be the first to deny that.

In chapter 21 and verse 9, Paul says, this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses, or Luke says rather, and as we were staying there for some days, now Luke is writing in first person plural here because he obviously was with the Apostle at this time.

He says, now as we were staying there for some days a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea, and coming to us he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, this is what the Holy Spirit says, in this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And when we heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, what are you doing weeping and breaking my heart?

[52 : 31] For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Now that's all well and good. We all ought to be willing to die or to be bound for the name of the Lord Jesus, providing that's what he wants us to do.

But if it isn't what he wants us to do, then we ought to do that. There of course is a question here as to whether Paul was actually being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and it was an act of disobedience for him to do so, or whether it was simply a case that the prophet was telling Paul that this was what was going to happen to him when he did go to Jerusalem.

For my part, I simply think that Paul was wrong in going to Jerusalem. I don't think he should have. I think he should have listened to these other brethren. Now, there are some pretty good men who will disagree with that, but verse 14 can be interpreted in a couple of different ways too, depending on where you put the comma.

And you must remember that these commas and punctuations were lacking in the original altogether. other, and since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, the will of the Lord be done.

Now, how are you going to read that? Does that mean that what these people are saying is that Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem? God didn't want him to. And what we are saying is we fell silent, remarking, or the King James renders it, we ceased saying the will of the Lord be done.

[53 : 58] Or we ceased saying the will of the Lord be done. What was the will of the Lord? I take the position that it was the will of the Lord that Paul not go to Jerusalem.

In fact, the Lord himself is going to talk to him and tell him that they do not go to Jerusalem for they will not receive your witness concerning me. You know what Paul said to the Lord?

I'm going anyway. Surely they'll change their mind when I get there. I can persuade them. And he didn't. And from a human standpoint, this was the beginning of the end for the Apostle Paul's ministry.

Because here he is bound, imprisoned, taken to Rome, and held there under house arrest and turned loose and then about a year and a half or two years later arrested again.

And then he was executed. So that would be the only illustration I can think of off the top of my head. And it is problematical. I'm not dogmatic about it, but this is the way I see it.

[55 : 01] Cliff? Could Paul be excited in Acts 15 about his contention with Barnabas over who to take on the missionary journey?

Well, that too is a moot point. I don't know for sure, but I am confident of one thing, that there sure is some flesh that's prevailing here on the part of somebody.

No question about it. Any time these two Christian adults could not have a meeting of the minds and could not overcome their legitimate differences by discussion, by preferring each other before themselves, by reaching some amicable conclusion, any time they had to say, okay, if that's the way you feel about it, you go ahead and go your way and I'm going to go my way.

That to me is not a spiritual operation. I can see there being two teams developed. I can see God wanting two different missionary teams.

But I cannot believe that the Spirit of God used fleshly divisiveness in order to bring it about. I think God took something that was fleshly on the part of these two men and ultimately used it for good and he'll do the same thing for us.

[56 : 23] But that does not vindicate the flesh or the fleshly activity. I would say that probably both of these men are at fault here. I think Paul is wrong and I think Barnabas is wrong.

Probably both of them. Anybody else? Yes. In verse 25 of Romans 7 where it says, so then I myself served the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I served the law of sin.

Someplace else it makes mention about not being able to serve two masses. two masters. Isn't there any connection there? Nobody does serve two masters.

I think what Paul is saying here is that you see, whichever what I'm saying is there is no way that anyone can serve two masters at the same time.

We can all serve two masters. in point of fact I think we do. When we are serving the flesh, when we are walking in the flesh, we are not serving the new nature.

[57 : 41] We are not serving the spirit. At the time we are walking in the flesh, we are serving the flesh. The flesh is our master. Then we change masters. masters. And we make the flesh be subservient to the spirit.

When we walk in the spirit, we are serving the spirit and the spirit is our master. No one can be master at the same time. No one can have two masters simultaneously.

Anytime you are serving the interests or desires of any given thing at any given time, that is your master right then and there. Now, what we are supposed to do, of course, is consistently serve one master.

And that is our Lord. But what we do is we flip-flop. We walk in the spirit today and we walk in the flesh tomorrow. Thank you.