

# Romans 6... 7... 8

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE  
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

**Romans 7:13** Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

**Romans 7:14** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Do you feel as though you are in a battle against sin? Good! It's a strong indication you've been born again and recognize yourself as a sinner in need of the grace of God.

Paul was definitely talking about himself in this chapter. He refers to himself in the first person forty-six times. He was referring to himself as a mature believer. He was describing a sensitivity to sin that grows and grows as we continue to walk with the Lord.

**What is good** refers to God's Law. Is God's Law the reason I sin and thus dooming me to **death**?

Of course not! Sin originates in me. In our last study we compared God's Law to an x-ray. If I have a tumor, making me sick, that is exposed by the x-ray machine, do I blame the x-ray? No; it's the tumor that is to blame. It is what the x-ray found within me that is the problem.

What God's Law exposes and what I find within me is sin.

The Bible presents sin in these three ways:

1. Sin is imputed to me. Imputed is a banking term. If, for example, you made a deposit into your bank account, you'd say that the funds were imputed to your account. Because I am descended from Adam and Eve, and because they sinned, I am born with sin in my heavenly ledger. Sin is imputed into my account. The whole human race has sin imputed to it because Adam and Eve represented us.

2. They not only represented us, they gave birth to us. Thus I inherit a sin nature from them. I am born with a sin nature.
3. I also commit individual acts of sin throughout my lifetime. I can't blame Adam and Eve but am held personally responsible.

Paul takes the exposing of sin one step further. God's Law shows me the **exceeding sinfulness** of sin.

I'm always amazed at the capacity we have to make sin sound less sinful. As an example I'd cite the current trend to rename sinful behavior as syndromes or disorders that are somehow beyond our control. Instead of someone losing their temper, which indicates they were personally responsible, we label it Sudden Anger Disorder.

Other sins now carry the label 'addiction' which, once again, puts it into a realm where I am no longer responsible.

Then there is a whole realm of denying sin is sinful in the first place. We live in a world in which marriage is being redefined. God says marriage is between one man and one woman. Anything else is sin. It's abominable sin. But we change our laws and talk about 'being born that way' in order to mask the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

That's why I'd again stress that it's good to use God's Law when sharing with nonbelievers. There really is a divine standard that really does expose sin.

The ultimate purpose of God's Law was (and is) to drive men to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin and the condemnation of God's Law. Jesus fulfilled the demands of God's Law on behalf of the human race. If sin is imputed to us because we were born from Adam, then righteousness can be imputed to us if we are born again in Jesus.

After we're born again we are not lawless. We find ourselves keeping God's Law in the deepest parts of our lives motivated to do so by love and empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit.

Still there is an ongoing struggle within. I still have the flesh to contend with. The flesh refers to the fact I am in a physical body

prone to sin. Until I am free from my current physical body and receive a glorified body fit for Heaven I will struggle against the flesh which has been trained and is constantly being tempted by the devil and the world to sin.

**Romans 7:14** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

**Carnal** is a word meaning *characterized by the flesh*. The flesh is something I find at work *within* my physical body. It is that tendency, that inclination, those impulses, to use my physical body in sinful ways.

A lot of commentators also point out that the flesh is that pride I find at work within me that thinks I can do something to please God. This aspect of the flesh can be called self-effort.

So on the one hand I find still at work in me a tendency to use my body in sinful ways – to do the works of the flesh listed in Galatians five:

**Galatians 5:19** Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

**Galatians 5:20** idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

**Galatians 5:21** envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

On the other hand there is a more refined aspect of my flesh that tries to please God by self-effort leading to self-righteousness.

Paul sees this flesh, this carnality, in himself and knows that the **law**, though it **is spiritual**, has no solution for his carnality. It only exposes the flesh; or the flesh tries to 'keep' the Law, or some portion of it, as a statement of self-righteousness.

**Sold under sin** means Paul is in bondage **under sin** and the **law** can't help him out. He is like a man arrested for a crime and thrown in jail. The law will only help him if he is innocent, but Paul knows that he is guilty and that the law argues against him, not for him.

Even though Paul says that he is **carnal**, it doesn't mean that he is not a Christian. His *awareness* of his carnality is evidence that God has done a work in him.

Martin Luther said this, commenting on the phrase, **but I am carnal, sold under sin**:

That is the proof of the spiritual and wise man. He knows that he is carnal, and he is displeased with himself; indeed, he hates himself and praises the Law of God, which he recognizes because he is spiritual. But the proof of a foolish, carnal man is this, that he regards himself as spiritual and is pleased with himself.

We might call this growing awareness of sin a sensitivity to sin. John MacArthur has a passage worth quoting on a believer growing more and more sensitive to sin:

The... believer is sensitive to sin because he knows it grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), because it dishonors God (1Corinthians 6:19-20), because sin keeps his prayers from being answered (1Peter 3:12), and because sin makes his life spiritually powerless (1Corinthians 9:27). The... believer is sensitive to sin because it causes good things from God to be withheld (Jeremiah 5:25), because it robs him of the joy of his salvation (Psalm 51:12), because it inhibits spiritual growth (1Corinthians 3:1), because it brings chastisement from the Lord (Hebrews 12:57), and because it prevents his being a fit vessel for the Lord to use (2Timothy 2:21). The... believer is sensitive to sin because it pollutes Christian fellowship (1Corinthians 10:21), because it prevents participating properly in the Lord's Supper (1Corinthians 11:28-29), and because it can even endanger his physical life and health (1Corinthians 11:30).

The two things we want to take with us from these two verses are these:

1. Once saved we should not think we are going to be able to somehow perfect ourselves by keeping God's Law. We should not adopt Law as our principle for living. God's indwelling Spirit will empower us to say yes to God and no to sin. God's Law is still useful to continue showing us the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And we need that more and more as nonbelievers deny sin is sinful at all. If we do not understand God's Law we become desensitized ourselves. We substitute our own standards for

- God's. Our standards and values might be better than those in the world... But they are not God's!
2. The other thing we should take with us from these verses is that a growing sensitivity to sin is a good thing! Instead of constantly growing more comfortable with things that are sinful I should be seeking the Lord to empower me to overcome them. It is sadly true that I can overlook what I consider 'small' sins in my life. God doesn't want me to go around being tortured moment by moment at what a horrible person I am. But He doesn't want me to be ignoring sin either.

Let's keep sin **exceedingly sinful**.

