

LESSON 7

NEW LIFE AND THE LAW

Romans 6:1-7:25

Introduction

Paul has shown that acceptance by God cannot be achieved through a life of ceremonialism and legalism. He has emphasized the inadequacy of man's performance and efforts and the adequacy of God's gift by grace. Since grace means that the gift is undeserved and unearned, what is the relation of human moral efforts to salvation? Can man be passive and depend completely on God's grace without human efforts? Can man be negative and indulge in sin yet expect the grace of God to abound? The Law gives guidance to man in moral performance. Is there no place in Paul's doctrine of salvation by grace for human efforts? Catholics answer that salvation requires a combination of human merit and divine grace. Calvinists believe that salvation is totally by grace; nevertheless, there is a place for good works in Christianity, but they are not adequate for gaining salvation.

Righteousness as a Gift Does Not Encourage Sin

Romans 6:1-11

The meaning of baptism (6:1-7)

Paul anticipated objection to his statement in 5:20 that where sin has abounded, the gift of grace has overflowed to surpass it. The slightest misunderstanding of his doctrine could lead to the position that if God's grace so abounded over sin, why should we not go on sinning so as to give His grace the opportunity of abounding all the more? This conclusion is more common than is often realized. Denominations which continue to require human merit and achievement for salvation base their arguments on this line of reasoning. The Russian monk Rasputin taught and exemplified the doctrine of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and repentance. He held that those who sin most require most forgiveness. A

Is this statement true or false?

Paul had not expected objection to his statement that where sin abounded, grace overflowed to surpass it. _____

Misunderstanding of this doctrine leads to the position that if God's grace so abounded, why should we not go on _____ to give His _____ the opportunity to _____ all the more.

(false, sinning, grace, abound)

sinner who continues to sin with abandonment enjoys, each time he repents, more of God's forgiving grace than any ordinary sinner.¹

The concept that a saved man can do morally what he likes is heresy. This perverted doctrine is known as antinomianism. Sometimes it is rationalized in explicit arguments which justify immoral actions. On other occasions, Christians speak in the most glorious manner of Christ and righteousness but indulge in immorality. Because the problem is so prevalent, many conscientious souls seek a solution. It appears on the surface that enforcing strict laws would solve the problem. Unfortunately, laws can be perverted and circumvented. Often those who are most vocal on a legal purity of life are deceptive and evasive in their personal lives.

Paul had another solution for the problem. Pharisaical legal observances had not led to the absence of sin. Righteousness by faith is not oblivious to practical Christian morality but actually is the proper foundation for it. Paul presented justification by faith, but he did not explain for our benefit all that faith includes.

Faith is best defined as turning to Christ in trustful surrender. Through faith, the sinner submits the control of his life to his Lord. Sin is the result of man's attempting to control his own life but actually being ruled by the power of sin. A person must renounce life under the control of sin and receive Christ who controls his life. The renouncing of the old life of sin is described as a death to sin (v. 2). If a person has renounced sin and died to it, how can he continue to be controlled in life by it (v. 2)? His death to sin is pictured by baptism which is burial in a watery grave (v. 3).

Baptism is described as an immersion into Christ since the experience of faith brings one into union with his Lord (v. 3). Justification by faith is more than being declared righteous; it involves becoming righteous. Man becomes righteous by being cleansed of his sin through forgiveness and by a spiritual union with Christ. Immersion in water depicts several truths related to the salvation experience. Since water is a cleansing agent, baptism by immersion communicates the concept of cleansing. Water will wash away the filth of the skin but not the filth of the heart. The shed blood of Christ applied to man's heart by repentance and faith does cleanse the heart, and baptism expresses the experience.

¹F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, Vol. 6 of The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: The Tyndale Press, 1963) p. 134.

The doctrine that man can do morally what he likes is called _____.

Grace is superior to Law in overcoming sin because laws can be _____ and _____.

(antinomianism, perverted, circumvented)

What is the proper foundation for practical Christian morality? _____

(righteousness by faith)

Faith is turning to _____ in trustful _____. Death to sin is renouncing the old life of _____.

(Christ, surrender, sin)

Baptism depicts the cleansing of the _____ by the shed blood of _____.

(heart, Christ)

Immersion in water also depicts burial in a watery grave (v.4). Not only are confession and forgiveness required in the conversion experience, but the renouncing or dying to the life of sin is necessary also (cf. v.2). Baptism pictures the burial of the old life which was controlled by sin (v.4).

Baptism portrays also an identity and unity with Christ (v.5). Christ died for sins; the believer dies to sin. Christ was resurrected from the dead and delivered from the grave to live a new kind of life. The believer is lifted from the watery grave of baptism to walk in union with Christ in the new life. The expression of being baptized into Jesus Christ (v.3) expresses a new union with Christ in which the resurrected and living Lord abides within the heart of the believer. Those who are "planted together in the likeness of his death" are also united with Him in the likeness of His resurrected life (v.5). Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; the believer is given new life by the power of God's indwelling Spirit. Because of the new power abiding within, the believer is able to live or walk according to a new pattern of life (v.4).

Justification by faith involves more than an objective legal transaction by God. Subjectively, it requires a renouncing of the old life in which man was controlled by the ruling power of sin (v.6). It also means a personal encounter and union with the resurrected Christ. Life becomes new in its walk because man no longer depends on his own strength and performance, but he is controlled and empowered by the indwelling Spirit. Paul presented this aspect of redemption more fully in Chapter 8.

In verse 6, Paul specifically stated that the old man or self who controlled life was put to death with Christ; therefore, the old self is not alive to control the life of the believer. Sin, as a personalized power, had its sphere of operation in the old self. After the old man has been put away or made powerless by not being allowed to control the life of the person, the believer is no longer enslaved to the principle or power of sin (v.6).

As long as a person attempts to live by the Law, he is defeated because his personal pride and selfishness are the controlling factors of his life. Pride causes a person to boast of the few good things he has done in life and to deny the multitude of evil things of which he is guilty. It refuses to admit failures and the need of dependence on God. Humility must replace pride before conversion is possible. To recognize and renounce the old life of pride and self-interest and to die to its control is the only way to be freed from sin (v.7). It is a person's pride which causes him to depend on his own ability to perform perfectly the works of the Law. It is also

Immersion pictures the _____ of the old life of _____.

(burial, sin)

Baptism portrays an _____ and _____ with Christ.

(identity, unity)

You have studied 3 aspects of salvation which are pictured by baptism by immersion. Can you name them?

Justification by faith involves:

1. a renouncing of the old _____ which was controlled by _____,
2. a personal _____ and _____ with _____.

(life, sin, encounter, union, Christ)

For the believer, the old man or _____ was put to death with _____.

(self, Christ)

What are the controlling factors in the life of one who attempts to live by the Law?

_____ and _____

Before conversion is possible _____ must replace _____.

(pride, selfishness, humility, pride)

pride and self-interest which cause a person to yield to his desires in seeking a full life. A person must abandon this old way of thinking and living before he turns to the grace of God for help. He must renounce himself as incapable and evil as he entrusts himself to the mercy of God by faith. Only by surrender to God can one become free from sin.

The example of Christ (6:8-11)

In contradiction to the many who believe that self-accomplished morality is the way to a religious life, Paul set forth a very different and often misunderstood view. It is often believed that the Law prepares for grace and leads to it because only he who tries to fulfil the demands of the Law can count on receiving God's grace and favour. This attitude leads to striving for success. Paul spoke of the opposite: complete self-abandonment and renunciation, which is described as death (v.8). Man who is created by God cannot succeed spiritually through human power. He must look to his Creator for the power necessary to live the new life. His greatest hindrance is his refusal to die to self with Christ in order to be able to live with Him through the power of God (v.8).

Although Christ was put to death, He did not remain in death because God's power raised Him from the dead, never to die again (v.9). Moody explains this verse to mean that the death of Christ took Him out of the old dominion of sin and death and His resurrection put Him into the new dominion of life. Before His resurrection, death could 'lord it over him', but now He is Lord of life.² As long as Christ lived in the old age controlled by sin and death, He was subject to physical death along with the human race with which He was identified. This condition existed even though He had not sinned. Christ had entered the old age to identify with and rescue man. After He died for sin and was raised from the dead, He became the first of the new age in which death is not master. Through His death and resurrection, Christ became the head of a new humanity. In order to emphasize the participation and union of His people with Him, Christ is described as the Head and the redeemed as His Body.

In the light of the new life made available through Christ's death and resurrection, the believer is called upon to consider or reckon himself to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (v.11). The word 'consider' or 'reckon' is the same as used in connexion with the faith of Abraham (4:3). By faith

²Dale Moody, Romans, p. 200.

When Paul used the word 'death' in 6:8, he meant _____ and _____.

(self-abandonment, renunciation)

Romans 6:9 means Christ's _____ took Him out of the old dominion of sin and _____ and His resurrection put Him in the new _____ of life.

(death, death, dominion)

the believer is to accept himself as dead to sin and alive to God. To be dead to sin means that his life is no longer to be controlled by sin. To be alive unto God in Christ Jesus means that his life is under God's dominion in the new Kingdom.

The Human Will and Grace

Romans 6:12-23

Although man does not have the power to keep the Law and must accept righteousness by faith, he does have the freedom to choose his way of life. Faith includes man's attitude which selects the object to which he commits his life. God does not force man to be justified by faith, but He does invite him to receive the gift of righteousness by faith. Man can reject God's gift and choose to continue in the old age under the reign of sin. Sin as a ruling power operates within man's death-doomed body (v. 12). Even though the body is subject to death in the old age, it will be resurrected to life by Christ in the new age. The body has strong passions, and if sin is permitted to control the body its lusts will be yielded to and wrongs will be committed.

Although a person does not have the power to live perfectly according to the Law because of sin, he does have the ability to choose the controller of his life. He can yield the members of his body to the power of sin which will use them as instruments to commit unrighteousness, or he can present the members of his body to God (v. 13). If a person reserves his abilities and physical body for himself, sin will gain control and guide to actions of unrighteousness. If a person presents his abilities and body to God, he will be guided in righteous attitudes and actions.

Sin is able to master or control man when he attempts to keep the Law in his own strength (v. 14). When a person is under grace, sin cannot control him. By faith man receives God's gift of grace, that is, the gift of the forgiveness of sins through the death of Christ and the gift of the indwelling Spirit who is the resurrected and living Lord. The indwelling Spirit takes control of his life and gives guidance, right desires, and strength for doing God's will and living righteously. The person who achieves righteousness by God's gift through faith will not live in sin (v. 15). The life of the person under grace is not self-controlled nor sin-controlled but Christ-controlled. The life of the person who attempts to accomplish righteousness by the Law is self-controlled and becomes sin-controlled; therefore, he fails to perform what the Law commands.

'Reckon' means to _____ or to consider.

(accept)

Is this statement true or false?

Man has the freedom to choose his way of life. _____

(true)

If a person depends on his own abilities and strength, sin will gain _____ and guide to actions of _____.

If a person depends on God, he will be guided in righteous _____ and _____.

(control, unrighteousness, attitudes, actions)

In verse 16, Paul spoke of man under grace being similar to a slave who is committed to obedience. Although he did not explicitly define faith as submission to a lord, he implied it in this verse. Apparently Paul did not view man as having ultimate freedom. As a creature, man is subject either to his Creator or the evil power of sin which invades his life. The rule of sin is more powerful than man. Thus he becomes a slave of the power of sin which rewards him with death, or he voluntarily submits himself as a bond-slave to the Lord which results in righteousness (v.16). To be submitted by faith to Christ results in obedience unto righteousness.

Man always has a master. He does not have the choice of being a slave to sin, a slave to God, or individual freedom. Jesus warned that everyone who commits sin becomes the slave of sin (John 8:34). Also, Jesus implied that man has a master: "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24). Contemporary man who claims freedom for himself is disillusioned and lives a deceptive life in sin. To declare one's independence of God's authority and commandments does not bring freedom but slavery.

The new life by faith requires obedience from the heart to a standard of teaching, a creed, or a rule of conduct (v.17). The rule of conduct does not become a law which the believer attempts to accomplish in his own strength, but it is a guide which is followed in the power of the Holy Spirit. When those enslaved in sin are freed from their bondage through redemption, they submit themselves as bond-servants to righteousness (v.18). Paul admitted that the standard of righteousness was necessary because of the weakness of their flesh (v.19). "Freedom from sin does not leave one to his own whims and passions: it introduces him to a new obedience."³ A code of conduct does not exclude the heart. Such a code can only be accomplished through faith by which the indwelling Christ guides the Christian to live according to ethics consistent with life in the Kingdom.

Many Christians fail to live by Christian ethics because they depend on the old life which is subject to the control of sin. When the Christian hands himself over to a new standard of ethics by faith, he receives divine grace and strength for living by that standard. Impurity and lawlessness result because of the weakness of the human flesh, but sanctification is the result of living the new life in the power of God (v.19). Sanctification is the process towards perfection that eliminates sins of both the human

³Dale Moody, Romans, p. 202.

Read the first two paragraphs on this page, then do the following activities.

Paul spoke of man under grace being similar to a _____ who is committed to _____.

Is this statement true or false?

Apparently Paul viewed man as having ultimate freedom. _____

As a creature, man is subject either to his _____ or the evil power of _____ which invades his life. He becomes either a bond-_____ of the Lord or a _____ of the power of sin.

(slave, obedience, false, Creator, sin, slave, slave)

Freedom from sin introduces to a new _____.

(obedience)

Why do many Christians fail to live by Christian ethics? _____

(They depend on the old life which is controlled by sin.)

flesh and the human spirit. It is the process of being set apart from the world and into God's service.

Paul continued the analogy of slaves in illustrating the life of faith. Before receiving the new life through faith, the Romans were slaves of the power of sin, but they were not under the control of God's power. Until the righteousness offered by Christ was received, they were not in the new dominion of God's Kingdom; therefore, they were not under His rule (v.20). Once delivered from the old age or old dominion, they were brought into the new dominion or new age and under the power of God's righteousness. After experiencing the blessings of the new age, the Romans had become aware that the accomplishments and achievements for which they had previously striven were of no benefit to them (v.21). That which was sought in the old life led to death. The pleasures of sin and activities of self-interest do not ultimately benefit the person, but they destroy him. The activities and goals of the new life under God's Spirit result in the fruit of holiness, and eternal life is the final outcome (v.22).

Paul gave the summary which is familiar to many people in verse 23. The old life of false freedom and sin pays the wages of death. The man who sins deserves and earns wages in contrast to the free gift of eternal life which comes as a result of faith in God. Sin is a paymaster of death; God is the giver of eternal life (v.23). The free gift of eternal life is by participation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Freedom from the Law

Romans 7:1-6

At first, it seems strange Paul argued that the Christian gains freedom from the Law since it is an expression of God's will. Three factors should be remembered in understanding Paul's attitude towards the Law:

1. To the Pharisees, the Law was more than bare commandments. It had become a legalistic and burdensome system for approaching God.
2. Those who claimed to keep the Law actually did not, but in their self-righteousness they became harsh critics of others, especially the Gentiles.
3. The Law was set forth as a means of salvation. It was claimed to be the way to establish righteousness and gain acceptance by God.

Paul often used the analogy of _____
to illustrate the life of faith.

(slaves)

"For the wages of sin is _____; but the
gift of God is _____"

(Rom. 6:23)

(death, eternal life)

For the Pharisees, the Law was the means
for approaching _____ and for _____.

Is this statement true or false?

The Christian is dependent also on the Law
for salvation. _____

(God, salvation, false)

Paul used the analogy of death to illustrate the abrogation of the Law for the Christian. He introduced the analogy with the question, "Do you not know, brethren—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during his life?" (v.1—RSV). He used the affectionate term 'brethren' and made reference to a law of Moses which they should know. The Rabbis taught that death ends legal obligations. According to their interpretation of the law, a divorced woman who remarried while her first husband was alive committed adultery. If her first husband died, she was free to remarry without being guilty of adultery. Death was the means by which she gained freedom from the Law. Unless her husband died, she was bound by the Law to be faithful to him.

Paul's point was that by death a person gains freedom from the jurisdiction of the Law. With regard to Christians, death with Christ gives freedom from the Law (v.4). The analogy applied because of Paul's concept of two ages: the old age to which the Law is related and the new age of life in Christ. A person must die in order to be liberated from the old age of the Law and sin. He is raised from the dead with Christ to participate in the new humanity of the new age. The Law remains binding on those of the old age, but those who have died and been resurrected with Christ have been removed from the dominion of the Law, sin, death, and the wrath of God into the realm of the dominion of the new humanity in Christ. The new realm is characterized by grace, life, the Spirit of God, and union with Christ. The old age is characterized by flesh, sinful passions, the Law, and death (v.5).

Paul conceived of an evil power, sin, working within man's mind and body to influence him to do evil. The influence is so strong that man is actually controlled by it. This controlling power of sin influences him to activities which are condemned by the Law and thus brings forth the fruit of death (v.5).

In the old life, sin is closely connected to the Law even though the Law is not sinful in itself. The ruling power of sin uses the Law as well as man's body and instincts which are normally good. Because of the power of sin, man finds the Law repressive and condemning instead of life-giving. It is necessary for him to die to the old life in order to gain release from his defeat by sin as he attempts to gain righteousness through keeping the Law (v.6). After he dies to the old way of life (a renouncing as futile his own efforts to do right), he is resurrected to a new world or dominion of the Spirit. That which he cannot do through his own efforts becomes possible in the new life through the Spirit of God.

To illustrate the abrogation of the Law for the Christian, Paul used the analogy of _____.

(death)

The Christian's _____ with Christ gives freedom from the _____.

Connect with lines Paul's concept of the two ages.

<i>Old age</i>	<i>Life in Christ</i>
<i>New age</i>	<i>Law</i>

(death, Law, Old age—Law, New age—Life in Christ)

What does it mean to die to the old way of life? _____

(to renounce as futile one's own efforts to do right)

Why the Law Fails

Romans 7:7-23

Although sin uses the Law in the old dominion, the Law itself is not sinful nor wrong. It does express God's will; therefore, it expresses what is right and wrong or what is righteous and sinful. The Law clearly states that coveting, a law in the realm of the spirit, is wrong (v. 7). A person could covet without knowing that covetousness is wrong if he did not have the Law. After he is instructed by the Law that it is wrong, to covet becomes more than sin. It becomes transgression of the Law which means that guilt and responsibility are added to man's sin. Knowledge of the Law adds guilt to sin; therefore, man is justly condemned by the Law when he transgresses it. To covet is sinful even though man does not know that it is wrong. The commandment which tells him it is wrong becomes the basis for condemnation to death (v. 9).

In verse 8, Paul spoke of sin as an evil power which desires to destroy man. Sin cannot cause man's condemnation to death as long as man does not realize that he is doing wrong: "For apart from the Law sin is dead" (v. 8—NASB). Sin takes on its greatest effectiveness when commandments prohibiting actions become known: "But when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died" (v. 9—NASB). Knowledge of the commandment adds guilt and responsibility and leaves man inexcusable. The commandment causes sinful man to deserve justly the condemnation of death.

The Law does not create man's carnal nature or sinful passions, but the old sinful nature and passions take on new energy when confronted by the Law. From Adam man inherited sinful inclinations. He has strong desires to do that which is prohibited by the commandments of God. His instincts have good purposes and are necessary for the perpetuation of God's plan for His creation. However, instincts and fleshly passions can be abused and misused. The Law informs man concerning the right use of his bodily passions. No problem of sin arises as long as man expresses his instincts and natural passions within the scope of the Law. The problem of temptation and sin arises because sin as a powerful ruler invades man's body and life to encourage the expression of passions beyond their normal purposes.

Apparently Paul had the theology of Genesis 3 as a background to his views of sin as a power or ruler which tempts man. The serpent appeared as the tempter of Eve to influence her to disobey God's special commandment. Sin is an evil power which

Are these statements true or false?

1. The Law itself is sinful and wrong. _____
2. The Law expresses God's will. _____
3. The Law expresses what is righteous and sinful. _____
4. Knowledge of the Law does not add guilt to sin. _____
5. Man is justly condemned by the Law when he transgresses it. _____

(false, true, true, false, true)

Romans 7:9 tells us that knowledge of the Law adds _____ and _____ and leaves man _____.

(guilt, responsibility, inexcusable)

The Law does not create man's _____ nature. The Law informs man of the right use of his bodily _____.

(carnal, passions)

works against the Law and influences man to disobey it. The more man knows about the Law, the more sly, cunning, and powerful is the desire aroused by sin to do that which is prohibited by the Law. Paul was attempting to explain the reason why man rationalizes his doing what he desires even though the Old Testament Law prohibits it. Although a person knows that stealing, lying, and fornication are wrong, he reasons with his conscience: "Other people are doing it;" and, "It will make little difference if I lie, steal, or commit adultery just this one time."

The commandments teach man what is right and should result in life (v.10). Man's desires and feelings are stronger factors in controlling him than his knowledge and reason. Knowledge of a commandment does not restrain him from breaking it because his strong passions control him. Paul pointed out that desires, intensified by the power of sin, deceive man with regard to the commandment and through it bring about his death (vv.10-11). Through rationalization, man deceives himself by justifying his desires for breaking the commandments. Paul attributed the devious perversion of desires, reasoning, and actions to the power of sin.

The Law in itself is not evil or sinful (v.12). "The commandment is holy and righteous and good" (v.12—NASB). It appears illogical that that which is good can be used to pervert, defeat, and condemn to death (v.13). The commandment itself does not deceive or attempt to destroy man; it points to life. Rather it is the principle of sin working within man which uses the commandment to bring about his death (v.13). The power of sin, like the subtle and deceitful serpent, uses the good to accomplish its own ends—enslavement and death. Sin appeals to man as that which is good, pleasurable, and beneficial, but it is exposed in the end as deadly and destructive (v.13). God permitted Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of every tree of the Garden except one. The serpent slyly suggested that since God had approved of man's eating of the fruit of the trees, surely there would be little harm in eating of the fruit of all the trees. To use God's endowments within His plan is beneficial and enjoyable, but life does not consist only of eating! Beyond the physical needs of man is God who gives commandments to His creatures. Life cannot exist in fullness apart from recognizing the commands of God as well as the needs of the physical body. Sin constantly attempts to influence man to ignore the commands of God and to try to satisfy life with that which is in the realm of the created.

The Law points to the realm of the spiritual which is vital to man's existence and meaning, but the principle of sin influences man to seek fulfillment in the realm of the created (v.14). Because of his

Man's desires and feelings are stronger than his _____ and _____.

(knowledge, reason)

According to Romans 7:13, is the Law responsible for man's sin? _____

(no)

carnal nature (his natural instincts and desires under the control of the power of sin), man becomes a slave to his own passions (v.14). These are not limited to the instincts or passions of the body. Desires growing out of pride create selfish goals and ambitions. In achieving those selfish ambitions, man tramples under foot the rights and concerns of others. He becomes so enslaved to his own selfish ambitions and prejudices that he may even cause the death of another. This was Paul's experience with reference to Stephen. Paul was blinded by his prejudice towards Gentiles and his selfish ambition to succeed as a Pharisee. Apparently he recognized that Stephen had not actually blasphemed and did not deserve death, but his death came as a result of the pride and prejudice of the Sanhedrin. Stephen had told them that they were in error, but their pride would not permit them to admit it. Paul seemed to be admitting the strange way of man in verse 15. He pointed out that man knows and has a desire to do right, but there exists within him principles which cause him not to do what he knows is right. Paul desired to do right with regard to Stephen, but he ended up doing the very thing he hated—murdering him (cf. v.15).

Within his own mind, Paul knew that what the Law commands is good and right. He agreed that covetousness and murder are wrong. Nevertheless, he admitted guilt in doing both (cf. Gal. 1:13-14; Acts 22:4). The inner man, the true self, agrees with the Law that what it commands is good (v.16); therefore, neither the true self nor the Law must be the source of the erring actions of the person. Since the true spiritual self desires to do right, wrong actions must be caused by another power indwelling man (v.17). This other power is sin which works through man's flesh (v.18).

The spiritual man created in the image of God desires to do good and to keep the Law. Adam and Eve were tempted to know evil by experience. Through disobedience, they experienced evil and received an appetite for that which is wrong—the lower nature or the fallen man. The image of God or the higher spiritual nature remains in man and desires good, but the fallen or carnal nature is also present and becomes the sphere of operation for the power of sin. Sinful man is disintegrated and frustrated. Sin works through his appetites or desires in leading him to know evil by experience, and sin causes him to do that which his nature in the image of God abhors (v.19). It is not actually, then, man in God's image who desires the wrong but fallen man who has a carnal nature in which sin dwells (v.20).

What did Paul mean by the carnal nature?

(man's natural instincts and desires under the control of sin)

The inner man, the true self, agrees with the _____ that what it commands is _____. Therefore, what causes man to do wrong?

(Law, good, the power of sin)

The spiritual man desires to do _____ and to keep the _____.

(good, Law)

Paul did not state explicitly that man is composed of two natures: the true self which desires good and the carnal man which desires evil. Nevertheless, there exists within each person the aspects of nature or spheres which permit either the principle of evil or the Spirit of God to function. Paul's concept of man was different from ours, making it difficult for us to follow his line of reasoning. Contemporary man sees himself as independent and complete. Apparently Paul saw man as creaturely and, therefore, utterly dependent on higher powers. The life of man functions only in relation to a higher power; he does not stand alone nor live to himself. For man to be complete and to live according to the original plan, the power of God must operate in his life. Since man has freedom of choice, there is the possibility that the power of evil can operate in his life and influence him to do evil (v.21). The power of evil has his spiritual kingdom in which man exists as long as he is separated from the power of God. Nevertheless, there remains within the inner man the true spiritual man (the image of God) which joyfully concurs with the Law of God (v.22).

In verse 23, Paul seems to be saying that an alien power had invaded his life and struggled against his true nature, "the law of my mind". The "law of my mind" is the same as the "inner man" (v.22). It is the higher self that agrees that the Law of God is good (vv. 12,16,22). A different warring and invading principle carries on a campaign against man's true self. As a creature, man does not have within himself the resources to successfully combat the invading evil power.

Apparently Chapter 7 is Paul's autobiography. On the road to Damascus, he found release from the burden of legalistic attempts to gain righteousness (vv.1-6). It is obvious that verses 7-12 refer to the period of Paul's innocence before he learnt the difference in right and wrong. The Protestant doctrine that infants and children are not condemned until they reach an age of accountability is based on these verses. This age comes when they know the wrong but deliberately do it.

Scholars are disagreed on the period of Paul's life referred to in verses 13-20. Some believe that he is speaking of a pre-Christian experience; others believe that he is describing life after he became a Christian. Probably Paul was describing the struggles and temptations confronted by Christians. The carnal nature is not eradicated at conversion but must be put to death daily. The evil power continues to reign and attempts to regain control of the Christian through his carnal nature. If man reverts back to his own strength to keep the Law and attain righteousness, he becomes controlled by

Does man have within himself the power to combat sin? _____

The "law of the mind" is the same as the "_____".

(no, inner man)

What chapter in Romans gives Paul's autobiography? _____

What Protestant doctrine is based on Romans 7:7-12? _____

(7, infants and children are not condemned until they reach an age of accountability)

Romans 7:13-20 probably describes the _____ and _____ confronted by Christians.

(struggles, temptations)

the principle of evil and yields to his sinful desires. His only hope as a Christian is to live by faith; that is, he must renounce his own inadequacy and sinfulness and trust the indwelling Christ to empower and control his life.

Some Christians believe that once they are converted and forgiven they are rid of the old nature of sin and living the Christian life becomes easy. They tend to return to a dependence on their own strength and wisdom in place of the power of the indwelling Christ. Paul spoke of Christians in this condition as carnal in contrast to spiritual men (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15, 3:1-3). The struggle with the carnal or fleshly nature and the power of sin is not limited to the pre-Christian experience. The power of sin continues its efforts to invade the life of the Christian in order to regain control of his life.

Hope for the Carnal Man

Romans 7:24-25

Paul took Christian life seriously and was distressed by the fact that he frequently was defeated by his carnal nature. He desired to become a perfect man in the image of Christ, but he was honest enough to recognize his sinful desires and motives. As he examined his own life, he despaired and cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (v. 24-NASB). The statement expresses the recognition of his own inadequacy and inability to please God. It reveals that if man is left to his own resources and ability to do right and to keep the Law, he is without hope because his carnal nature can be used by the power of sin to produce works of death.

Life is hopeless when it depends on man's power and performance in keeping the Law to obtain righteousness. Life is not hopeless because of God's grace in Jesus Christ. God has provided an adequate salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord (v. 25). Salvation by grace includes not only the remitting of sins but also includes a new power which indwells man and guides his mind in fulfilling God's will expressed through the Law. The old nature of the flesh continues to be subject to the power of sin, but the life of a person is not dominated by the old nature or the old dominion. The Christian has died to the old man and has been raised with Christ to participate in the new humanity under His reign or control. The despairing Christian can truly sing the doxology when he understands the fullness of God's grace in Jesus Christ!

Paul spoke of Christians who return to a dependence on their own strength instead of the power of the indwelling Christ as _____ Christians.

(carnal)

In 7:24, Paul expressed his own _____ and _____ to please God.

(inadequacy, inability)

There is hope for the Christian who desires victory over his carnal nature because God has provided an adequate _____ through _____ our _____.

(salvation, Jesus Christ, Lord)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What doctrinal statement did Paul anticipate would be misunderstood and how is it sometimes misunderstood? (see 5:20) _____

2. Why is grace superior to the Law in overcoming the life of sin? _____

3. What aspects of salvation are depicted in baptism? _____

4. What is the meaning of "our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (6:6)? _____

5. What is the meaning of death in verse 8? _____

6. Explain Romans 6:9. _____

7. What happens to the person who depends on his own abilities and strength? _____

8. Describe man's freedom. _____

9. Why do many Christians fail to live by the new standard of Christian ethics? _____

10. In contrast to the view of the Pharisees, the Christian is not dependent on the Law for what?

11. Explain how a Christian is liberated from the Law. _____

12. Explain how the Law is good yet it is an instrument of the old age. _____

13. Explain, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (7:9). _____

14. Is the Law responsible for man's death (See 7:13)? _____

15. What are two aspects of nature Paul found within himself? _____

16. What does 7:24 express? _____

17. What hope is there for the Christian who desires victory over his carnal nature? _____

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

1. Read pages 62-76 in The Epistle to the Romans by Hunter.
2. Summarize Paul's argument of freedom from sin based on the analogy of baptism.
3. Summarize Paul's argument of freedom from sin based on the analogy of the slave.
4. Summarize Paul's argument of freedom from the Law based on the analogy of marriage.
5. What evidence is there that Paul was talking about the struggles of the Christian in 7:14-24?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Read pages 134-156 in The Epistle of Paul to the Romans by Bruce.
2. Review Paul's use of 'flesh' and 'spirit' in Romans (Bruce, pp. 40-52).
3. Explain the meanings of "being baptized into Christ" and "baptized into his death".
4. List the terms Paul used in Romans 6 and 7 to refer to man's sinful nature. (Use the NEB or the NASB.)
5. What evidence is there that Paul was talking about the struggles of the Christian in 7:14-24?

Seminar Discussion

1. What are the meaning and purpose of baptism?
2. What is the meaning of "being dead to sin" or "being crucified with Christ"?
3. Do you agree with the person who says, "I'm free to do what I please"?
4. In what sense should the Christian be free from the Law?
5. Are infants condemned in sin?
6. What period of Paul's life did he describe in 7:13-24?
7. Invite Level 3 members to share their answers to question 4 under Advanced activity.