



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Letter of St. Paul to the Romans

Chapter 7

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Introduction

- St. Paul explains that in baptism we die to sin
- Considering this fact (we died in Baptism to sin), St. Paul explain further that the relationship of the believer and the law has ended after baptism
- Then he emphasizes that the law is good and holy and its purpose is to reveal the sin
- The main limitation of the law is that it could not heal the person from the sin or provide a solution

The Believers And The Law (7:1-6)



- The relationship between humanity and the law is like that of marriage where we are the wife and the law is the husband
- According to the law, the wife (us) is under the dominion of the husband (the law)
- This dominion continues as long as both of them live
- This dominion ends by the death of any of them

The Believers And The Law (7:1-6)



- If the spouse marries another one while the first is alive, he commits adultery
- But if the spouse dies, the other spouse can marry
- In baptism, we died to the law and became members in the body of Christ (the new Bridegroom)
- Our relationship with the law was fruitless because the law did nothing more than just reveal my sin, condemn me to death, and could not save me

The Believers And The Law (7:1-6)



- The new bridegroom (Christ) has fulfilled the law on my behalf, so in Him, I also have fulfilled the law
- He gave me His grace, and the new nature
- He gave me power over death by His Resurrection from death
- So, my relationship with Christ is fruitful
- “In the flesh” means when we were led by the desires of the flesh before receiving the Holy Spirit

The Believers And The Law (7:1-6)



- “Aroused by the law” means that these sinful passions were exposed by the law and also triggered by the prohibition of the law
- Submitting to these sinful passions and fulfilling them in my members led to death
- We were held by the old man, the carnal man, the man of the flesh
- In Baptism, we died to the old man and thus were delivered from the law

The Believers And The Law (7:1-6)



- In Christ, we are a new creation that has the power to get rid of these sinful passions
- In Him, we are led by the Spirit of God not by the desires of the flesh
- In Him we died to the old man and old nature and thus we died to the letter of the law that condemned us
- So our worship now is according to the newness of the spirit and not to the oldness of the letter



Is The Law Sin? (7:7-12)

- The law was given by God, so it is holy and just
- The law exposed my sin and my rebellious nature
- The law could not heal me from my sin
- Because of my rebellious nature, I desired to do the sins against which the law warned me
- Apart from the law sin was dead: Sin did exist but I did not know that it was sin, so it is considered dead



Is The Law Sin? (7:7-12)

- I was alive once without the law: I thought that I was alive
- When the commandment came, sin revived and I died: Because the commandment exposed my sin and I realized that I am dead
- Thus the commandment, which was to bring life if obeyed and fulfilled, brought death because of my disobedience and transgression (cancer patient and physician)



Is The Law Sin? (7:7-12)

- The power of sin lies in its capacity to deceive
- This is exactly what happened with Eve
- Satan started his deception by casting doubt on the commandment of God, denying, and distorting it
- He lied about the commandment, God, and the sin
- Thus he was able to deceive Eve and put her under the sentence of death with Adam
- The commandment is holy (not evil), just (fair), and good (bears good fruits)

Limitation Of The Law (7:13-25)



- Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! I cannot describe him as a murderer the physician who diagnosed my cancer
- It is the sin that becomes death to me through deceiving me to rebel against the commandment of God
- The sun melts wax, but hardens clay
- Thus the true nature of sin has appeared as exceedingly sinful

Limitation Of The Law (7:13-25)



- The problem is not in the law because it is spiritual, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the problem is in me who is carnal and thus I sold myself to the dominion of sin
- Because of being “sold under sin” my understanding was distorted, I lost my self control, and my nature became corrupted
- If I hate what I am doing, then the law which prohibited me from such things is good

Limitation Of The Law (7:13-25)



- I am sold under sin, and this sin dictates what I do, so it is not me who does these sins but the sin to whom I sold myself
- This vice, or sin, or law of sin, wholly possesses those men who are sold under sin
- The real struggle is “the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find”
- When sin reigns, it predominates over human nature and rules it

Limitation Of The Law (7:13-25)



- Sin controls and not good intentions, so a man wills one thing and does another
- So the rule with me (v. 21), is that although I will to do good, evil is present with me
- The inner man, the better nature, our spiritual being, approves of and delights in the law of God
- This is the part of our being that wills to do good, spoken of in Rom 7:21, but is overcome by evil

Limitation Of The Law (7:13-25)



- One law of our being is the approval of righteousness; another is the inclination of the flesh to do evil
- This law wars against the law of the mind, the conscience and will, and brings it into captivity
- It prevails in those under sin and thus they are captives
- It is a miserable thing to be yet in part subject to sin

Limitation Of The Law (7:13-25)



- In this state, we are captives to the flesh, the members that are controlled by sin
- Hence, we are helpless slaves of sin, and as such are under the condemnation of death
- The body, the seat of the fleshly desires, has become a body of death, since it is under sin
- After St. Paul has described the bondage of the will to the flesh, he closes with the cry for deliverance

Limitation Of The Law (7:13-25)



- I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, through Him the deliverance comes
- I myself: without Christ, till this deliverance comes
- Serve the law of God with my mind: My reason and conscience delight in the law of God
- But with my flesh the law of sin: But my corrupt passions and appetites still rebel
- The man is now utterly weary of his bondage



Conclusion

- How does our condition after dying to the law compare with the former condition of being under the power of the law?
- How did we get freed from the law and what do we have to do now that we are freed?
- How did the commandment, which was to bring life, end up bringing death instead?
- How did sin invade the human nature through the law?



Conclusion

- What factors contribute to the growth and spread of sin?
- Are we sinful by nature or is sin a foreign force? Why?
- Does the term “body of death” in verse 24 imply that the body is evil in nature? Why or why not?
- What did St. Paul mean in verse 23 by ‘the law of my members warring against the law of my mind’?