

WHO IS THIS MAN?

Romans Seven Unveiled

The seventh chapter of Romans has been a bone of contention among theologians and a stumbling block to many honest inquirers. It has tragically become an antinomian stronghold, ostensibly justifying a sinning Christianity. In fact, Roman's seven has become to the antinomian what evolution is to the atheist. As Evolution is nothing more than scientific permission to reject God, Roman's seven has been wrested into theological permission to continue in sin.

Perhaps you have never truly looked into this passage with unbiased eyes apart from the traditionally accepted interpretation. My dear friend, in light of the supremely efficacious atonement of Jesus Christ, I sincerely ask you; Can this "*carnal wretch sold into captivity under the awful tyranny of sin*" be the portrait of God's so great salvation? Is this defeated experience a noble reflection of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ? And if not, what exactly is Paul seeking to communicate in Roman's seven?

Although I would concede that one could extricate snatches from this chapter which would aptly describe the warfare every Christian will experience in his battle against sin, this is clearly not the intention of this passage. No one dare deny the reality of the spiritual battle against sin. This battle is set forth in the Scriptures and plainly described in Galatians 5:17, "*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh...*" The essential distinction however, between Roman's seven and Galatians 5:17 is most significant indeed. In the passage from Galatians, we see a vital element which is poignantly absent in Roman's seven; **the Spirit of God**. That my friend makes all the difference in the world!

Dear reader, I urge you to honestly and soberly consider these thoughts as we examine this watershed passage and discover the great and terrible answer to the question at hand—"Who is this man?"

"The theory that this is the experience of all Christians has most pitifully and most shamefully not only lowered the standard of Christianity but destroyed its influence

and disgraced its character. If this were indeed the Christian experience it would do nothing but demonstrate the insufficiency of the gospel as well as the law.”¹

The church as a whole for the first three centuries unanimously applied this passage to an unregenerate man seeking to obey the law in his own strength apart from grace. No one held to the modern deviant view until Augustine, while debating Pelagius, capitulated and abandoned the correct traditional view which had been held by the Church for the first two centuries. Augustine tragically recoiled from the error of Pelagius, and swung to the opposite extreme. Augustine then affected Luther who in turn affected Calvin, who has affected Western theology possibly more than any other man.

There is perhaps no greater commentary on Roman's chapter seven than the first sixteen verses of Roman's Chapter eight. Consider this statement made by Paul...

Romans 8:7 ...*The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

The awful struggle of the man in Romans 7:14-24 is the express image of the above passage. In Roman's 7:14, Paul states that he is "*Carnal, sold under sin.*" Roman's seven is thus the experience of a "*Carnal*" man who is consequently not subject to God's law; NO MATTER HOW HARD HE TRIES! Likewise, Romans 7 is the defeated experience of every unregenerate man who attempts to obey God in his flesh. Until the flesh, *or 'body of sin'*, is crucified and the Spirit that raised up Christ reign as King in our hearts, we to will not be able to be subject to the law of God either.

Paul's Overarching Premise

Romans 7:1 ...*the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?*

According to verse one, the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives...***OR until he satisfies its demand, which is death.*** Contrary to modern theology, the death penalty upon sinners has never been waived. "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" Furthermore, *Jesus* did not die that WE may live, but that we may die and HE may live His perfect life through us. Therefore, until one submits to the judgment of the cross upon the the old man, '*he liveth*'.

¹ Adam Clarke.

Consequently, the evidence of the law's dominion will be manifest in the struggle of *Romans 7:14-24*. Moreover, if verse one truly is the overarching premise of the seventh chapter of Romans, then Romans seven is a Legal experience and not one of a man under grace.

Law or Grace?

How does one become free from the curse or pejorative dominion of the law? By embracing the death sentence of the law upon the flesh or old man. This is the meaning of Galatians 2:19... "*For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*" When one enters by faith into and abides in the reality of his inclusion with Christ in His death, the glorious dynamic of a victorious resurrection life is the result. This reality is beautifully expressed in the following verse...

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." –Galatians 2:20

Only then can Christ indwell and rule within the believer through His Spirit, which is what it truly means to be *under* grace. Simply stated, the difference between Romans chapter seven and eight is the difference between *Law* and *Grace*. As long as the flesh is alive, we are carnal and under the dominion of the law and thus held by the captivity of sin. However, once we are crucified with Christ and allow His Spirit to dwell and reign within our heart, we are under grace and experience its liberating benefits.

My dear friend, please consider the significance of these enlightening statistics.

- The word "*grace*" does not appear once in the seventh chapter of Roman's.
- In contrast, the word "*law*" appears 23 times (***more than in any other chapter in the NT, second only to Psalm 119 in the entire Bible***).
- There is no mention of the Spirit of God (which contrastingly is mentioned 15 times in the first sixteen verses of chapter eight) or Jesus in the midst of this awful and defeated struggle.
- In contradistinction to this revealing fact the Roman's 7 man instead uses the personal pronouns "*I, me and myself*" **52** times.

In light of these facts alone I ask you..." ***Can this experience be that of a Christian under the covenant of grace indwelt by God's Spirit?***" Absolutely not! This is clearly a civil war raging within the heart of "*Me, Myself and I*"

earnestly striving against sin apart from Jesus and His grace. I do not see how it could be any clearer!

The Governing Allegory

In verses 2-4 Paul sets forth what I see as the *Governing Allegory*. There are several characters involved in this significant allegory; *The Woman, the first Husband, the second Husband, the Law, and finally the Law of her Husband*. What meaneth this? The woman spoken of is a type of our immaterial self; the *Soul*. The soul has been traditionally divided into the *Mind, the Will and the Emotions*. Notice also that Jesus never calls for the crucifixion of *Self*; *Self* is to be *Denied*, not *Crucified*. In fact, there is no intrinsic evil in self, for Jesus personally testified, "*Of mine own SELF I can do nothing.*" Self is only evil when it is subject to the dominion of the flesh or sin nature, thus rendering one *selfish*. This typology is beautifully set forth in the struggle depicted in this chapter. Notice what this "*Woman*," a type of our soul, declares in the midst of her struggle...

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my *mind*..."
–Romans 7:23

"For to *will* is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." –Romans 7:18

"For I *delight* in the law of God after the inward man..." –Romans 7:22

Clearly, we see that the soul or self, typified by the Woman in the governing analogy, expresses perfectly each aspect of the immaterial soul of man; *Mind, Will and Emotions*.

In this allegory, the Woman or soul is married to the first husband "*Adam*", or the flesh. Furthermore, this woman is not only bound by law to her husband, but she is also subject to his oppressive law as well. Moreover, she can only be free from the law of this despotic husband through death. Sadly, many professing Christians are seeking to be married to Christ, the second husband, while they are still married to Adam, or the flesh. They are therefore experiencing the awful and unnecessary struggle of *Romans seven*. The glorious remedy of the Gospel is that by faith we can be identified with Jesus in His death, which in turn brings about the crucifixion of the flesh. The "*Woman*" or soul is then free to be united to her new husband, and the fruit of that union is grace enabled obedience. The *law of her old husband* which she has been emancipated from is the *law of sin and death*. However, the law of her new husband, Christ, is the *law of the Spirit of life*!

Romans 7:5 “For when we *were* in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”

This verse is a summary and introduction to *verses 14-24*, and notice that it speaks of a **PAST state** (*Paul's present state is described by the word "Now" in 6:22, 7:6, and 8:1*). This verse perfectly describes the struggle of Roman's seven. The law by commanding, forbidding, and threatening us in our unregenerate state, yet offering no grace for cure, stirs up the corruption of the carnal nature. Like the sun shining upon a dunghill draws up its filthy stench, so the law excites the rebellion and sin of an unregenerate heart.

Romans 7:6 “But now we are delivered from the law, *that* being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

What is the Apostle referring to here in 7:6 as “*That?*” “*That*” which held us under the dominion of the law is the *flesh*, and not the law as most erroneously suppose. The reason this must be is because the law never dies; rather it is we who die in Christ! The blood is for what Adam did, but the cross is for what Adam became and the flesh cannot be forgiven or justified; it must be crucified. Furthermore, one cannot be *Married* until they are first *Buried*. This flesh which Paul speaks of as holding him under the curse of the law and in bondage to sin is clearly the “*body of death*” from which he cries for deliverance, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (7:24) The flesh or “*body of death*” is clearly identified here by Paul as the thing which held him in bondage and thus the very thing which God judges through the cross. This is the subject of the entire sixth chapter of Romans. Moreover, the law is not the problem; for it is “*holy, and just and good,*” however, it is “*weak through the flesh*” in that it can only demand and not enable obedience. Notice also that this verse describes the **PRESENT** state of the Apostle. This is made clear by his use of the word “*now.*” Furthermore, this verse cannot be describing the experience of the man in *verses 14-25*. It rather perfectly describes the man in Roman's eight who because the flesh, or body of sin is dead, can now serve God in newness of spirit.

The Function of the Law

When this chapter is properly understood its beauty is stunningly divine. Roman's Seven wonderfully sets forth the dual function of God's law. In *verses 7-13*, Paul upholds the sanctity of the law and explains its dual purpose in “*bringing the*

knowledge of sin” to the careless sinner and then leading him as a “schoolmaster” to Christ the Deliverer. (v. 14-24) Glorious indeed!

Was Paul, “...carnal; sold under sin”?

Romans 7:14 ... I am carnal, sold under sin.

Absolutely not! *Paul* was not *carnal* but *spiritual*. The Bible clearly reveals that the great *Apostle* was not sold under the dominion of sin, but rather ransomed from its enslaving power. Could anything be more contrary to the testimony of a redeemed saint? Here *Paul* uses a literary device known as “hypotyposis” in which writers use the present tense to relate things past in order to make their narration livelier. *Paul* is merely using his past experience to describe the universal struggle of a man under the law. We see here the terrible struggle of an awakened sinner seeking to obey the law in his own strength. Consequently, all those who attempt to obey God's commandments without the saving grace of the indwelling Spirit will also find themselves unable to accomplish the good intentions of their heart. They too will find their own strength insufficient to be subject to God's eternal moral law.

In v. 17 this man states, “Now then it is no more I that do it, **but sin that dwelleth in me.**” Notice, the Roman’s seven man says, “not I but sin.” In contrast, *Paul’s* glorious testimony was “not I but **Christ**” (Gal 2:20). Consider also, the word “dwell” here speaks of a fixed and governing resident. According to Scripture, Christ and sin cannot both *dwell* or rule in this sense within a believer (*II Corinthians 6:14-16*). In contrast to this legal experience, one can see the difference in the regenerated experience set forth in Romans 8:9 where the Spirit and not the flesh is *dwelling* in the regenerated man.

This “Man” then goes on to expose himself as an utter stranger to grace, “For I know that in me dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; **but how to perform that which is good I find not**” (v. 18-20). Do you hear what he is saying? “I know what I should do, but I do not have the ability to do it.” This man has intellectual knowledge of the will of God but does not have the power or **grace** to do it. A man under grace would never make this statement. All who are regenerated, and thus under grace proclaim with Paul that, “God which worketh in you **both to will AND to do of his good pleasure**” (Phil 2:13). What could be clearer?

Many falsely believe that because they approve of what is right that they are regenerated. But the most depraved people will praise virtue and justice in the abstract (*Isa 58:2*). We must never confuse *noble desires* with *noble character* nor should we mistake *admiration* for *possession*.

Furthermore, Jesus did not suffer and shed His Blood to merely give us good intentions, but to give us power to please the Father through obedience. In *Romans Seven* we have a man convinced by the *Law* but not yet changed by the *Gospel*. In fact, he says that he is “*brought into captivity*” to the law of sin (*Note this man is a captive to sin and not stumbling on occasion*). However, *Paul* states in chapter eight that those who are subject to the Spirit are free from this law of sin (8:2). One cannot be a captive to the *law of sin* and at the same time be free from it! ***Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, not captivity!***

Paul then summarizes the awful condition of the awakened sinner in v. 25...” *So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*” In essence he is saying...” *I myself, alone on the plane of nature without the aid of Christ, can do no better than render dual service. With my mind serving the law of God by my admiration of its excellence, but with the flesh the law of sin.*”

Moreover, to make Roman's seven a Christian experience one would have to say that Paul was rejoicing that his spiritual state as a “*carnal wretch sold under sins captivity*” was what Jesus had wrought within him through His so great salvation. The dreadful experience of this man is no occasion for jubilation, but rather remorse and despair. At the close of this seventh chapter the Apostle is not glorying in this defeated condition, but rather he is celebrating his deliverance from the defeated experience described in Roman's seven. Furthermore, most who justify their sin by pleading Roman's seven are not truly in Roman's seven, but rather Roman's one; for unlike the modern antinomian who is smugly content with such a deplorable spiritual state, the man in Roman's seven desired with all of his being to be delivered from his captivity, and indeed he was!

Abraham knew the will of God, but tried to fulfill it through the flesh, bringing forth that which God would not accept. This is the story of the man in Romans Seven. However, this is not God's ultimate intention, for we too must cast out the bondwoman of the *carnal mind of the flesh* through crucifixion and enter into the glorious victory of the New Covenant described in chapter eight.

*“The Apostle is speaking here neither of the natural man in his state of ignorance nor of the child of God set free from sin by the blood and animated by the Spirit of God. But of a man whose conscience has been awakened by the law and has entered sincerely with fear and trembling, but still in his own strength, into a desperate and futile struggle against sin.”*²

² Adam Clarke.

When God created *Adam* in his innocence, the Holy Spirit resided in the royal residence of *Adam's* spirit and imparted to him the life of God. The Spirit of God had exclusive access to *Adam's* soul, the “*music room*,” and He alone had the right to sit at the keyboard of human personality, the soul. Instructing the mind, controlling the emotions, and directing the will, the *Spirit of Truth* struck every chord in perfect harmony with the heart of God. Thus, the beautiful melody, which rang out, was evidence that God was reigning in his heart. God, however, had given to man the key to the music room, which was his free will. The Holy Spirit would stay only as long as He was given complete access to this room. One day the deceiver came and persuaded *Adam* that he could play the song of God himself. *Adam* tragically believed his lie and locked the door to the music room. Lo and behold, to *Adam's* horror, the flesh then broke into the music room and began pounding away at the piano.

For the most part, the flesh pounds away furiously in the hearts of unregenerate men. However, there are some who still attempt to play God's song, the moral law, in their own feeble strength. This friend is the case of the man in Roman's Seven. Regardless of natural endowment or will-power, no matter how refined or determined, man will never be able to play the song of God's law apart from the indwelling of God's Spirit. Hence, the struggle of *Romans seven* is man's best and futile attempt to play that heavenly song in his own natural strength.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” –Romans 8:3-4

Indeed, as *Peter* has so eloquently declared...

“As also in all his [Paul] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” –2 Peter 3:16-17

My dear friend read the first sixteen verses of the Eighth chapter of Romans with these thoughts in mind. Notice the contrast between the man in chapter eight who has and is walking in the Spirit and the man in chapter seven who has not the Spirit of Christ, and thus walks in the flesh.

If what I have set forth is indeed true, then Paul's inspired words, "***Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.***" (Romans 8:9) drives the final nail into the coffin of this legal, and defeated experience. And just as the evolutionary frauds such as *Nebraska Man* and *Pilt Down Man* have been exposed to be the hoaxes that they are, I would likewise declare to you that "*Roman's Seven Man*" is no true specimen of Christianity, but rather an antinomian impostor masquerading as a portrait of grace.

–Charlie Kennon, Jr.

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