

Romans 7

The Experience of the Born Again

Let's begin this study by reading Romans 7 verses 15-21. "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."

Paul understands that the law is good. "I consent unto the law that it is good." He lets us know that he desperately wants to keep the law, "For to will is present with me; what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" He says he is unable to keep it because of the "sin that dwelleth in him." "We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." vs 14 He is acknowledging that he is "carnal, sold under sin." Paul's experience is most miserable. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" vs. 24 These are not the words of a joyful, individual who is happy and peaceful in the Lord. These are the words of someone who is in despair and desperately wants deliverance from what he is experiencing. In Chapter 8 verse 6 Paul tells us "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." There is no life and peace in the description of the individual in chapter 7 verses 15-21, only frustration, despair and death, "For the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. If this is the experience of the born again why is Paul crying for deliverance from it? Are we not to desire the New Birth experience? Can we have eternal life without it? Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3. If Romans 7 is a description of the New Birth experience it is a miserable existence, even Paul says that it is leading him to death and he is desperate to be freed from it.

If we read Romans 7 carefully we will see that Paul has given us a critical clue as to who he is really talking about, for he says in verse 14 says For we know that the law is spiritual: **but I am carnal, sold under sin.** Does Paul really believe this about himself? He says in Romans 6:16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" If we are the servants of sin, and have the experience described in Romans 7:15-21, which Paul says leads to death, how can we expect Life? Is this to be the experience of a Born Again Christian? Is this what I have to look forward to when I become Born Again? Is this what Paul is telling us? Paul admonishes in Chapter 6 verse 11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Seeking Life, not death, the born again Christian is dead to sin and is alive unto God and righteousness. He is not to be carnal, sold under sin, but free from sin. Yet in Romans 7 we see a person who is enslaved to sin not free from it.

Pushing on, Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." (Sin, defined as transgressing God's law, cannot reign in the life of a born again Christian.) "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Romans 6:12-15 Immediately following Romans 7 he says in Romans 8:1-9 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 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. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. **For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.** Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Paul makes it clear that there is no salvation for the carnal minded person who is sold under sin, only condemnation and death.

Reading 1 John 2:3,4. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Remember the context now as John goes on to warn us in vs 7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

If we are born of God we are born again. And, if we are born again we don't commit sin. Why? Because His seed is in us. What is His seed? Peter says it this way: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.... Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Peter 1:22,23. So, it's the Holy Spirit that is abiding in the born again and as a result of this presence, he cannot sin.

Does this mean that he is not a sinner? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." 1 John 1:8-10 Yes, we are definitely sinners, and will be for all eternity. Anyone who has committed a sin is a sinner from that day forward. In fact, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalms 51:5. I am a sinner from conception.

But, just because we are sinners doesn't mean that we have to continue in sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Romans 6:1,2

The born again are dead to sin and thus are no longer living in it. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:" Romans 6:3-8. We are to "walk in newness of life." Paul says in 2. Corinthians 5:17. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

May I ask, what is new and joyful about the life being described in Romans 7:15-21? In fact it is worse than the life of a sinner who doesn't care about his future. It is obvious that Romans 7 is not describing an individual who is born again. Rather, it is the description of an individual who has come to an understanding that God is just, His law is just and good and he is convinced that it must be kept, but finds himself powerless to keep it.

This is the experience of a legalist. He knows what is right. He's doing his best to do what is right, but he is unable to do it, because he is doing it in his own power, which is an impossibility. He is convicted but not converted. He has not learned how to surrender his will to God and allow His seed (Holy Spirit) into his life, which would give him power to keep from falling. In Romans 7, Paul is writing about his own experience before his conversion so he can help to those who are experiencing the same difficulty. He said of himself: "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." Acts 26:5. The Pharisees were the elite of the religious leaders. They knew the requirements of the Law inside and out. After Paul's conversion he shares his frustration with his previous condition so that others could relate to it and realize their need for something more, as he did when he said: "Who shall deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God..." Our deliverance from the power of sin and death is found in dying to self and living for Christ.

So how do we live a sinless life? The Holy Spirit will never tempt or cause anyone to sin. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:" James 1:13 Only Satan tempts, and he can only tempt us if we listen to him. We can only sin if we take our eyes off of Christ and depend on our own strength to resist the Devil. We are told: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you..." James 4:7, 8. The only way we can resist the devil is by submitting to God first, then and only then will the devil flee from us.

The life of the born again is a joyful life, a life of victory, and not a life of defeat and despair. "Why is it so hard to lead a self-denying, humble life? Because professed Christians are not dead to the world. It is easy living after we are dead; but they have a disposition to act as much like the world as possible, and yet go to Heaven. Such seek to climb up some other way. They do not enter through the narrow way and straight gate." ST 1880-04-01 par. 4

"If it were not possible for human beings under the Abrahamic covenant to keep the commandments of God, every soul of us is lost. The Abrahamic covenant is the covenant of grace. "By grace ye are saved." [John 1:11, 12 quoted.] Disobedient children? No, obedient to all His commandments. If it were not possible for us to be commandment-keepers, then why does He make the obedience to His commandments the proof that we love Him?" (Letter 16, 1892). 1BC 1092 par.5

Friend, may I appeal to you to accept Christ as your personal Savior today. Don't waste your time trying to live the Christian life on your own. God wants to fight the battle for you. He wants to work the work of righteousness through you, but He waits for an invitation. Jesus encourages us in Matthew 11:29,30, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:

and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” This is the secret, letting Him have the reins. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Jude 1:24. “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” 1 John 1:4

So do we really need to understand this? Isn't a relationship with God good enough? No it isn't. We can only get into heaven if we have Christ's robe of righteousness on. Matthew 22:11-13 “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Isaiah 61:10 “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness...” 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Ezekiel 3:20 “Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die:... he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered;...” “The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven. The Desire of Ages p.555.

If we believe that Romans 7 is the condition of the Born Again believer we will have unconfessed and unforsaken sins in our lives, because we will believe that this is just the way it is. Due to this misconception we will not be covered by Christ's robe of righteousness and we will be lost.

If one would simply read Romans 7 in its true context, that is, Romans 6 through 8 it would become very clear what Paul is saying in Romans 7 and there would be no confusion. There would be even less confusion if it were taken in the context of 1 John and James as well as the rest of Paul's writings. But that would then give those who promote Romans 7 as the experience of the Born Again no excuse for sin and that would be totally unacceptable to them.

God Bless,

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