

KINGDOM. LESSON 26

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God’s kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] PSALMS 101, 103, 104 and 107
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Take turns and **share (or read)** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Psalm 101, 103, 104 and 107). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [GOD’S GREATNESS] (2) 1 CHRONICLES 29:11
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Review two by two.

(2) God is all-glorious. 1 Chronicles 29:11. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS] ROMANS 7:1-13
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study Romans 7:1-13 together.

Liberation from bondage to the law is necessary for righteousness (justification) and holiness.

In Romans chapters 3 and 4 Paul shows that we need to be liberated from *the bondage to the law in order to be declared righteous* before God.

In Romans chapters 6 and Romans 7:1-6 Paul shows that we need to be freed from *the bondage of the law in order to live a holy life* before God.

In Romans 7:7-25 Paul shows us the benefit and effect of the law.

Release from bondage to the law is essential, not because something is wrong with the law, but because people have turned the law into *a means (an instrument)* of justification and sanctification before God. Release from the law is necessary, because the law cannot make a person righteous or holy! The law can only make people experience their depraved sinful nature and give them knowledge of sin and a deep realisation and conviction of their sinfulness.

The position of a Christians with regard to sin, to the law and to grace.

In Romans chapter 6 Paul describes the position of the Christian with regard to sin. He says that the Christian is free from *the bondage to the power of sin*. He says that the truth of God’s justification by God’s grace through the believer’s faith does not give the believer a license to continue to do sin or live in sin! The state of justification by grace through faith must and will lead to the state of holiness and consequently to the process of living a holy life (sanctification)!

In Romans chapter 7 Paul describes *the position of the Christian with regard to the law*. He says that the Christian is free from *the bondage to the law* (as a means of justification and as a means of sanctification). He illustrates and affirms the truth that the Christian is no longer “under law”, but “under grace” (Romans 6:14). He describes the consequences of this change from a relationship to the law to a relationship to Christ. Previously, the person under law bore fruit for death. Presently, the Christian under grace bears fruit to God.

The law in the Letter to the Romans.

In the letter to the Romans, the word “law” in absolute sense refers to the holy and righteous requirement of God that all people must be 100% righteous and holy in order to be saved and that all the sins of people must be 100% punished. The law is God’s whole rule of duty and God’s absolute condition for salvation (cf. Romans 10:5).

In a more general sense it refers to the absolute righteous and holy demands or requirements of God that are expressed in the moral laws, the ceremonial (ritual) laws and the civil laws of Israel, but especially as they are interpreted by the extended traditions of the Jewish teachers (rabbi’s) (613 human made laws).

- *The moral laws* (the Ten Commandments) taught the people during the Old Testament period how God demanded that they should live righteous and holy lives as God’s people towards God and their neighbours.

- *The ceremonial laws* (with regard to holy places, holy offices, holy times and holy actions) taught the people during the Old Testament period how they might approach, worship and serve God.
- *The civil laws* (with regard to the king and judges, the penal and compensation laws) taught people during the Old Testament period how they should function as God’s theocratic nation among the Gentile nations.

In Rome there were Jews still living *legally* “under the law”. And there were a minority of Christian converts from Jewish background (and some proselytes) who were still living *emotionally* “under the law”. They had grown up with the law of Moses (the moral, ceremonial and civil laws).

This situation caused tension between the Christians from Jewish background who had grown up with the law and Christians from Gentile background who had grown up without the law. There was also tension among the Christian Jews, because they realised that they could not keep the law even when they tried (cf. Romans 8:7-8)! Because they lived religiously and emotionally “under the law”, they remained as it were “slaves or prisoners of war of the law of Moses”, even though they had become Christians.

STEP 1. READ.

GOD’S WORD

LET US READ Romans 7:1-13 together.

Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.

STEP 2. DISCOVER.

OBSERVATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART?

Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share).

Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered.

(Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)

7:1-6

Discovery 1. Paul shows the insufficiency of the law for justification and sanctification.

Paul teaches the position of the Christian with regard to the law. This section is an illustration and confirmation of the position assumed in Romans 6:14, “We are not under law, but under grace”. Paul shows the consequences of the change in our relation to God when we were still “under law” and “now we are under grace”.

(1) In Romans 7:1, Paul argues

that the law has authority only as long as a person lives.

Jews, Jewish Christians and proselytes in Rome who wanted to live under law and actually still lived under law, were bound to obey the law perfectly for 100% (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10). As long as they lived “under law”, the law ruled uncompromisingly over them. However, the authority and dominion of the law was intended to be temporary, for as long as they lived “under law” (cf. Galatians 3:23 - 4:7).

(2) In Romans 7:2-4a, Paul argues

that when a person dies, the law no longer has authority.

The relationship of a person with the law is like a marriage relationship. As long as both marriage partners live, they are bound to the law of marriage. But when one marriage partner dies, the other is released from the law of marriage and may marry again.

Likewise, when a person terminates the relationship with the law, he or she is free to start a new relationship, namely with Jesus Christ. Out of respect for the Jews, Paul does not say that “the law died”, but that “the person died to the authority and domination of the law”. Paul applies this truth to the relationship of Christians to the law.

Through *the literal death* of Jesus Christ and *the spiritual death* of Christians with Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-4a), Christians have “died to sin” (Romans 6:2). That is, they have been set free from “the guilt, punishment and power of sin”. They have renounced their allegiance to their sinful natures and have said “no” to the allurements and enticements of the sinful world (cf. Colossians 3:3).

Through the *literal* death of Jesus Christ and the *spiritual* death of Christians with Jesus Christ, Christians have also “died to the law” (Romans 7:4a). That is, they have been set free from “the authority and dominion of the law as God’s requirement and of the law as expressed in the law of Moses” in order not to belong any longer to the law or to be ruled by the law, but rather to belong to Jesus Christ and to be ruled by Jesus Christ. They have renounced their attempts to be justified by keeping the (moral, ceremonial and civil) law, because Jesus Christ was punished for all their sins and Jesus Christ fulfilled the law *in their place*.

When Christians *begin* a new relationship with Jesus Christ, they *terminate* their former relationship to their sinful nature, to the law of God (his righteous requirement) and to the law of Moses (as a means to be justified).

- (3) In Romans 7:4b-5, Paul teaches
that people under law produce fruit for death,
but that people under grace (Christians) bear fruit for God.

People that are controlled by the sinful nature and sinful passions aroused by the law in them bear fruit for death. But people who have died to the law (the righteous requirement of God) and have been raised with Christ, bear fruit to God (cf. Galatians 5:22-23).

Christ lives his new (resurrected) life in Christians (Galatians 2:20). While before people could not live the life “under the law” they *now want to, can and will live the new (resurrected) life with Christ and for Christ* (Colossians 3:3: 1:16). Christians are no longer under the guardianship (authority and rule) of the law (God’s righteous requirement as expressed in the law of Moses), but now belong to Jesus Christ and are under the authority and kingship of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:23 - 4:7)

- (4) In Romans 7:6, Paul teaches
that Christians serve in the new way of the Spirit
and not in the old way of the written code.

As long as people (especially Jews) live “in the flesh”, that is, before their regeneration, they are bound by the law (God’s righteous requirement as expressed in the law of Moses) and live “under law”. Then they “serve in the old way of the letter (the written code)” and try to be justified and sanctified by keeping the law (of Moses).

But people that are released from the law (as God’s righteous requirement) “serve in the new way of the Spirit”. They are “under grace” (cf. Romans 6:14). They possess “the state of righteousness and the state of holiness” by God’s grace through their faith in Jesus Christ. They no longer have the written law as “a guardian” over them, but have the Spirit in them (the Spirit of Christ who rules as King over them) (cf. Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27).

7:7-13

Discovery 2. Paul shows from his own experience what the law can do. The moral law produces experience, knowledge and conviction of sin.

The moral law (for example, the Ten Commandments) can only excite the evil desires (arouse the sinful passions) (Romans 7:5) in the sinful nature and thus make a person aware of how depraved his sinful nature really is. The moral law cannot justify him before God and also cause him to live holy before God. Instead, the law can only give him knowledge, experience and conviction of his sin (that is, his lack of righteousness and his lack of holiness)!

Remember that the word “sin” means:

- “to miss God’s goal in your life” (cf. Proverbs 19:2)
- “to fall short of God’s perfect standard for life (the righteousness of Jesus Christ)” (Romans 3:23)
- “to transgress God’s righteous demands (to be 100% righteous and 100% holy)” (Romans 4:15)
- “to rebel against God and his way of life” (Isaiah 1:2-4)
- “to twist God’s truth and Word” (2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2)
- and finally “to not believe in Jesus Christ (who is the Only One who can be our righteousness, holiness and salvation)” (John 16:9; cf. Hebrews 4:2).

- (1) In Romans 7:7-8, Paul argues
that the law produces knowledge of sin.

People need to be delivered from depending on the law for righteousness or holiness, because the law cannot produce righteousness or holiness! Trying to keep the law only leads to realising that you sin and cannot keep the law. Thus the law can only produce knowledge of what sin is and a deep conviction of being sinful.

The moral law is not sin – it does not miss God’s purpose or intention! The moral law definitely has a purpose and benefit – it teaches people what “sin” (in God’s eyes) is. “Sin” is everything that misses God’s goal (intention), everything that transgresses God’s boundaries (moral laws) and everything that twists God’s truth (Word). Sin is to live a self-sufficient life independent from the God of the Bible! Sin is not to believe in Jesus Christ.

Paul would never have experienced (regarded) coveting as a sin apart from the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet (harbour evil desires)” (Romans 7:7). Apart from the moral law (the Ten Commandments) sin is “dead”, that is, apart from the moral law, sin in the sinful nature of man remains inactive. Knowledge of the moral law excites the sinful nature in man to life and rouses every kind of sinful passion (desire) in him (Romans 7:8).

- (2) In Romans 7:9-11, Paul argues
that the law produces death.

Without the law man thinks that he lives.

As long as people take little account of God’s law (written in the Bible or written in their heart), they do not realise what “sin” in God’s eyes is.

- They think that they “live” and they *live physically, psychologically, intellectually and socially*, but not spiritually.

- They live *only in relationship to the created world*, but apart from a personal relationship to the Creator (the God of the Bible)
- They live *only in accordance with what people think*, but not in accordance with what God has revealed.
- They live *as they themselves decide*, not as God wants.
- They live *undisturbed* in the delusion that they are quite “good, self-righteous and self-sufficient”.
- They live *independent* from the God of the Bible and think that they do not need anyone.
- They live *unaware* that they have a depraved nature.
- They live *unafraid* of God’s punishment for sin (cf. Romans 3:19-20)!
- They *do not know* how God wants that they must and can live (cf. Romans 13:8-10).
- They *do not know* how to curb sin in all its wicked forms on earth (cf. 1 Timothy 1:9-10)(Romans 7:9a).

With the law man dies.

However, after the moral law was revealed in God’s salvation history and added to God’s covenant (Galatians 3:17,19) and people started to take serious account of God’s law, their indwelling sinful nature became a terrible tyrant in their body and a frightening reality in their conscience. The more people try to keep the law, the more they experience their total moral and spiritual depravity (cf. Romans 7:14-15). When people begin to take account of God’s law, they “die” that is, their fancied state of “goodness, self-righteousness and self-sufficiency” comes to an end! Then their false security dies and they come into a state of misery and fear of eternal damnation (Romans 7:9b).

The law before the fall into sin.

Before the fall into sin God gave his law to Adam (Genesis 2:15-17): man had to take care of God’s creation and live within the God-given limitations of his free will. If Adam had kept God’s law (righteous and holy requirement), he would have remained righteous (in God’s eyes). But because he did not keep God’s law, he died. Both Leviticus 18:5 and Romans 10:5 refer to “life” as “maintaining eternal life” only as long as man kept God’s law, that is, as long as man remained perfectly righteous and holy! The purpose of God’s law to Adam was he would keep (and not lose) his state of righteousness and eternal life (Romans 7:10a)! But maintaining eternal life was only possible once in God’s salvation history, namely, before the fall of man into sin!

The law after the fall into sin.

After the fall into sin God’s law can no longer maintain (preserve, continue and certainly not give) the righteousness (in God’s eyes) and eternal life, because man has fallen into the state of unrighteousness and death (spiritual, physical and eternal death)! After the fall God’s law cannot make a single person righteous or give him eternal life!

After the fall into sin God first saved his people by grace from their slavery and misery and only thereafter gave them his law (the Ten Commandments) in order to teach his people how they could (should) live on earth as his saved people (cf. Exodus 20:1-2). After the fall into sin God established his (moral) law as the rule and standard how God wanted that his people should live as his saved people.

Nevertheless, there were always people (like the Pharisees) who believed that they would be justified and sanctified by keeping the law (as good as possible). The sinful nature in people misleads people to think that the law can still justify and sanctify them.

How can God’s law that demands 100% obedience at all times still justify anyone that has already disobeyed God’s law once (James 2:10; Galatians 3:10)?

After the fall into sin, it became clear that not only justification by the works of the law was completely impossible, but also living a holy (obedient) life according to the (moral) law was completely impossible! Instead, the law of God became God’s instrument to bring people to knowledge of what “sin in God’s eyes” is and to a deep conviction of the depravity of their sinful nature and condition of being “spiritually dead” (Romans 7:10b-11). The law became God’s means to show people that they are spiritually dead, that they will die physically and that they are doomed to eternal death (hell) (John 3:18,36) – in short: that they are completely lost and need a saviour outside themselves (and all their religious efforts)!

- (3) In Romans 7:12-13, Paul concludes that the law is “good”, but not an instrument that produces “good”.

Although the law (the moral law of God) in itself is “holy, righteous and good” (Romans 7:12), it cannot produce holiness, righteousness and goodness in people (cf. Romans 7:8). Instead of being an instrument that produces life, the law is an instrument that excites the sinful nature in a person to produce death. The law causes people to realise that they are spiritually and morally “dead”. The law causes their belief in their own righteousness and their false security to “die” (Romans 7:13a).

The law causes “sin to become excessively sinful” (Romans 7:13b). The law causes people to become painfully aware how great sinners they are and how unspiritual and immoral their human nature is. The law becomes “the mirror” in which people see and become aware of their total moral and spiritual depravity (cf. Romans 3:20). The moral law brings the utter sinfulness of their human nature into sharp focus. The moral and spiritual purity of God’s commandments make the moral and spiritual depravity of man’s sinful nature stand out all the more sharply (cf. Romans 5:20)! God’s purpose with the law is to show to people how unrighteous and how unholy they really are! Because the law is only an

instrument that reveals sin and incites the sinful nature to activity, it can never be the instrument (means) to justify people!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 1:1-17 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

7:7

Question 1. What is the sin of coveting (harbouring evil desires)?

Notes.

“Coveting” (Greek: *epithumia*) may mean “an intense desire or longing in a good sense” (1 Thessalonians 2:17), but is mostly used in a bad sense as “a forbidden desire”. In the Bible, forbidden desires are:

- *sexual desires* towards people outside one’s marriage (passionate lust)(1 Thessalonians 4:5)
- *foolish desires* (1 Timothy 6:9)
- *deceptive desires* (Ephesians 4:22)
- *worldly desires* (Titus 2:12)
- *corrupt desires* of people who commit vice and crime (2 Peter 2:7-10).

There is no difference between “sin” and “coveting”. God’s law exposes all such evil desires in the human heart (cf. Mark 7:20-23). Without the moral law (the Ten Commandments), people would not have known that such desires are “evil” and they would not have been aware of the hidden source of sin in their human nature. When people become conscious that they have such evil desires in their own heart, they become aware that human nature is depraved, that is, that man by nature misses God’s goal and resists God’s will. They become more and more convinced that their whole human nature is depraved.

Coveting is a sin against the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet!” (Exodus 20:17). There are several example of coveting in the Bible:

- Eve coveted the fruit of a tree, which was something *forbidden* by God (Genesis 3:6).
- The brothers of Joseph coveted his *position* in their family (Genesis 37:4).
- Achan coveted the *spoils or treasures* of Jericho (Joshua 7:21).
- Ahab coveted the vineyard of Naboth, that is, *the possession of another* (1 Kings 21:1).
- Amnon coveted *a woman not his own* (2 Samuel 13:1).
- Absalom coveted *the throne* of David (2 Samuel 15:1f).
- Ananias and Sapphira coveted *prestige* in the church (Acts 5:1f).
- Simon coveted *what was in his eyes the magical power* to bestow the Holy Spirit (by the laying on of hands)(Acts 8:18f).
- Demas coveted *the present world* (2 Timothy 4:10).
- Many people covet *things they see* in shops or in the possession of others (1 John 2:16).
- Diotrephes coveted *pre-eminence (the highest position)* in the church (3 John).

7:8

Question 2. What is the difference between the statements:

- “without law, there is no sin” (Romans 4:15),
- “without the law, sin is not taken into account” (Romans 5:13) and
- “without law, sin is dead” (Romans 7:8)?

Notes: In the letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul uses the word “law” in several different ways. The fundamental meaning of “the law” is that “the law” is God’s just requirement that all people must live complete and perfect righteous and holy lives from the beginning to the end of their lives and that all the sins (transgressions) of all people must be completely punished. It is God’s whole rule of duty and God’s condition for complete salvation, no matter whether it existed as the law written on the hearts of people or as the law written in the Bible. The law is God’s spiritual and moral standard, to which all his rational creatures are bound to be conformed. The law is God’s absolute standard for both justification (becoming righteous) and sanctification (becoming holy).

The law condemns all lack of conformity to its own inflexible standard of perfect obedience and a completely holy life. Galatians 3:10 says, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” And James 2:10 says, “Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”

By making a statement in the negative in all three the statements, Paul emphasises the positive. Paul emphasises that the law had always shown people that they have sin and that God condemned them for their sins. But because these three statements speak of different aspects of the law, they need to be interpreted separately.

(1) Romans 4:15. The relationship of the law to the condemnation of each individual.

- Negative: “Where there is no law, there is no transgression (sin)”
- Positive: “Where there is law, there is also transgression (sin)”
- “The law” is here God’s righteous requirement: namely, that all people must be perfectly righteous and holy and that all sin must be punished.

There is never and nowhere the case that there is no law and therefore no transgression!

Thus, always and everywhere where the law exists, transgression exists.

Paul speaks about “the law as God’s absolute requirement for justification”. The law is written on the heart of every human being (Romans 2:15) and is written black on white in the Bible (Romans 2:17-24). Because no human being in the history of humanity is without the law, the transgressions (sins) of every human being will be taken into account (Romans 2:6) and every human being will be judged according to the law he possesses (Romans 2:12). Wherever the law exists, there the law brings about the wrath of God (Romans 4:15a). The law demands absolute obedience. Because no human being (except Jesus Christ) has kept the law perfectly or can keep the law, every human being stands condemned (doomed) as a sinner. If there were a human being who could keep the law completely and perfectly, he would be justified by God and inherit eternal life. But that was only possible before the fall of man into sin (Genesis 2:15-17; cf. Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5).

But because all people possess the law and no man has kept the law (perfectly), “every mouth is silenced and the whole world is held accountable to God” (Romans 3:19). The law as God’s absolute requirement for justification and his absolute standard for condemnation brings only the wrath of God against people!

The emphasis in Romans 4:15 is on the individual responsibility.

(2) Romans 5:13. The relationship of the law to the condemnation of the whole human race.

- Negative: “When there is no law, sin is not taken into account”.
- Positive: “When there is law, sin is taken into account.”
- “The law” is here the written law of Moses (the moral law, ceremonial law and civil law) only in the period between Adam and Moses.

All the people living before the time of Moses did not have the written Law of Moses. Consequently they were not condemned for transgressing any of the written laws of Moses.

Nevertheless, all these people between Adam and Moses died. Because death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23), this proves that all people between Adam and Moses shared in some kind of sin. Because they did not possess the law of Moses they did not die for their transgressions of the law of Moses.

For whose transgression of the law were they then condemned and punished (with death)? The only possible conclusion is that they were condemned and punished (with death) for the one transgression of the law which God gave to Adam before the fall of man into sin (Genesis 2:15-17)! God regards Adam to be the representative and head of the whole human race. When Adam sinned and was punished with death, the whole human race was condemned (doomed) in solidarity with their representative (Adam) and punished (with death) (Romans 5:12,17a,18a, 19a; 1 Corinthians 15:22)

Although all people between Adam and Moses certainly committed personal sins, they were not punished for their personal sins against the written law of Moses, because they did not yet possess the written law of Moses. They were therefore condemned and punished for the one law which Adam transgressed (Genesis 2;15-17)!

The emphasis in Romans 5:13 is on Adam’s representative responsibility!

(3) Romans 7:8. The relationship of the law to activating sin and experiencing depravity.

- Negative: “Apart from law sin is dead.”
- Positive: “With the law, sin springs to life.”
- “The law” here is the moral law (the Ten Commandments).

Another way to say the same thing is, “The power of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56).

Paul does not speak about “the law as God’s absolute requirement for justification”, but about “the law as God’s absolute requirement for holiness (sanctification)”. He speaks about God’s moral law (the Ten Commandments) that reveals to people what is right and what is wrong in God’s eyes and shows God’s people how they must live as God’s saved (justified/righteous) people. Paul says that without the moral law (the Ten Commandments) the sin in the sinful

nature of man remains inactive (that is, “dead”). As long as a person disregards the moral law, the sin in the sinful nature of man lies dormant inactive.

But when a person begins to take notice of the moral law, then the sin that lies dormant in his sinful nature is activated (it springs to life)! The more a person tries to keep the moral law, the more:

- the law arouses the sinful nature to bear fruit for death (Romans 7:5)
- the law produces every kind of covetous desire in the body (Romans 7:8)
- makes the person a prisoner of “the law of sin” in their body (Romans 7:23)
- causes the person to realise how depraved his human nature in reality is (Romans 7:23-24).
- sins springs to life and he “dies” (Romans 7:9), that is, his imagined condition of being a good person, self-righteous and conceited is terminated. Then his false feelings of safety (security) dies and comes into a condition of misery and is threatened with eternal damnation.

In stead of being an instrument that brings “life”, the moral law has become an instrument that brings “death”. The moral law kills all self-righteousness, false security and imagined goodness of man (Romans 7:9) The moral law causes people to realise that they are spiritually dead due to their sins and transgressions (Ephesians 2:1).

The emphasis in Romans 7:8 is on the personal experience of sin and depravity of the human nature.

7:7-13

Question 3. What phase of Paul's personal experience is portrayed in this passage? Is this the experience of a unregenerate person or of a regenerate person?

Notes: It seems most likely that this passage describes Paul's personal experience just before, during and shortly after his conversion.

When Paul was still an unregenerate Pharisee (Acts 26:5), he was self-complacent and regarded himself as someone who was very religious and completely “righteous” by outwardly keeping the written law of Moses. “As for legalistic righteousness, faultless” (Philippians 3:6). For a long time in his life, he occupied himself intellectually with the law written in the Bible and tried as Pharisee to keep the 613 added traditional laws and interpretations of the law of Moses. But the moral law of God (the Ten Commandments) that demands 100% righteousness and 100% holiness simply did not function in his life. He “lived apart from the moral law” (Romans 7:9) in the religious self-righteousness and spiritual pride of a Pharisee.

Paul says, “Apart from the law, sin is dead (inactive)” in the sinful human nature (Romans 7:8). Paul does not tell us when in his life he began to take the moral law of God serious, when in his life he began to realise what “sin and covetousness” really was (Romans 7:7) and when the moral law activated the indwelling sin in his human nature to produce every kind of covetous desire in him (Romans 7:8). It must have started before his conversion when he was still not born again.

The experience of “sin springing to life and he died” (Romans 7:9b) should most probably be associated with either his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, or with his contact with Ananias in Damascus, or with the events during his three year stay in Arabia (Acts chapters 9, 22, 26; Galatians 1:13-18). It was then that this former persecutor of the Christian Church had time to reflect on the kind of person he had been before his conversion, to think about the testimonies of persecuted Christians he had helped to kill and to listen to the teachings of Christians during his early Christian life. It was then that he had time to meditate on the words of Jesus himself to him on the way to Damascus: “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 22:8) and to meditate on the passages in the Law and the Prophets that summarise the way of salvation (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 32:1-11; Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; Habakkuk 2:4).

It was then that Paul was aroused from his spiritual apathy, that he became painfully aware of how sinful he really was and that his sinful pride and vaunted self-sufficiency “died”, that is, came to an end (Romans 7:9b). It was then that he realised that the moral commandments, which were intended to guide God's saved people how to “live”, actually brought “death” to religious people like him who tried to be justified by keeping the law. By trying to keep the law, he realised that he could not keep the law and that he did not keep the law, but that his human nature (even now as a Christian) was totally depraved and that he had been spiritually “dead” before his conversion (cf. Romans 3:10-20; Ephesians 2:1-4).

It was not the moral law that had deceived him, because the moral law is “holy, righteous and good” (Romans 7:12). It was his own indwelling sinful nature that had deceived him to believe that he could be justified by keeping the law (among other as interpreted in the 613 traditional laws of the Pharisees). His indwelling sinful nature misused the knowledge of God's moral laws to actually do all kinds of forbidden things. Knowledge of the moral law caused him to realise how utterly depraved he was, how much he missed God's purpose for his life and how much he needed a Saviour! Knowledge of the moral law killed his self-righteousness, self-satisfaction and imagined assurance that he was “a righteous Pharisee” (Romans 7:10-11,13).

STEP 4. APPLY.**APPLICATIONS**

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Romans 7:1-13.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Romans 7:1-13.

- 7:1-4. No one can be bound to the law and to Jesus Christ at the same time! You cannot try to be justified by the works of the law and at the same time be justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ! You must first "die" to the law before you can "live" with Christ. You must first stop trying to be justified by keeping the law before you can be justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- 7:6. Only when you have "died" to the law, are you free to "live" and serve in the new way of the Holy Spirit.
- 7:7. Meditate on each one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17 and Matthew 5:21-48 and begin to realise that you have personally transgressed every single commandment in one or another way. Understand what sin is in God's eyes.
- 7:8. Realise that your sinful nature is a very powerful tyrant. It will use your knowledge of the moral commandments of God to produce every kind of evil desire in you.
- 7:9-11. Formulate in what way does the moral commandments of God put your previous self-righteousness, self-sufficiency and false securities to death.
- 7:12. Formulate your conviction why the moral law of God (the Ten Commandments) is holy, righteous and good.

2. Examples of personal applications from Romans 7:1-13.

I want to be more realistic about my sinful nature. I am not as good as I often think that I am. I realise that I have forbidden desires, like forbidden sexual desires, foolish desires, deceptive desires, worldly desires and morally corrupt desires. Sometimes, like Eve, I covet something forbidden by God. I acknowledge that forbidden desires are found in my sinful nature. I realise how depraved I am in my sinful nature, and I strongly desire to be set free more and more from the dominion of my sinful nature.

I want to make more use of God's moral law in my preaching and teaching. At every worship service I want to read the Ten Commandments and teach the meaning of one of the Ten Commandments shortly but clearly. Only when people in my church begin to give more attention to the Ten Commandments, they will become more aware of just how depraved their sinful nature is and they will desire to be set free from the dominion of their sinful nature.

STEP 5. PRAY.**RESPONSE**

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Romans 7:1-13. (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS

Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON

(**Group leader.** Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. **Preach, teach or study** Romans 7:1-13 with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of Psalm 115, 119:1-88, 119:89-176 and 139 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** (3) God is sovereign: Ephesians 1:11-12. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Teaching.** Prepare the parable of "the bridegroom, the patched garment and the wineskins" in Matthew 9:14-17. Make use of the six guidelines for interpreting parables.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on preaching God's kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.