

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series two teachers will do Bible study from ROMANS 1:1-17.

In Romans chapters 3 and 4 Paul shows that we need to be freed from the bondage to the law in order to be declared righteous before God. In Romans chapters 6 and 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.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Romans 7:1-13 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read Romans 7:1-13 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in Romans 7:1-13. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is from Romans 7:1-6. 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 from being "under law" to being "under grace".

First. Jews and some others in Rome, who wanted to live under the law and actually still lived under the law, were bound to obey the law perfectly for 100% (cf. Gal 3:10; Js 2:10). As long as they lived under the 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 and lived under the law (7:1; cf. Gal 3:23-25).

Second. 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 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 (7:2-3).

Third. Paul applies this truth to the relationship of Christians to the law. By the *literal* death of Jesus Christ and their *spiritual* death with Christ, Christians have "died to sin" (6:2). That is, they have renounced their allegiance to their sinful natures and have said "no" to the allurements and enticements of the sinful world (cf. Col 3:3). By the *literal* death of Jesus Christ and their *spiritual* death with Christ, Christians have also "died to the law" (7:4a). That is, they have been set free from "the law" as God's requirement that all people must live 100% perfect lives and that all sins must be punished. And they have renounced their attempts to be justified by keeping the law.

Paul reminds the Christians in Rome that when they believed in Jesus Christ, that is, when they started a new relationship with Jesus Christ, they had terminated their former relationship to the law. By dying with Christ (6:3-4a), they also died to the law, that is, they are free from the authority and domination of the law. And by being raised with Christ (6:4b-5), they started to live a completely new life under the authority and domination of Jesus Christ. Christ lives his new life in them (Gal 2:20), they want to, can and will live the new life (6:4) and they live with Christ and for Christ (Col 3:3; 1:16). Christians are no longer under the guardianship of the law, but now belong to Jesus Christ (Gal 3:23-4:5) and they bear fruit to God (cf. Gal 5:22-23)(7:4b).

Fourth. When people including Paul were still "in the flesh", that is, before their regeneration, they lived "under law" and tried to be justified and sanctified by keeping the law. But instead of being the means of justification and sanctification, the moral law became the means of arousing their sinful passions in their sinful nature, which produced fruit for death (cf. Gal 6:19-21)(7:5).

Fifth. But after their regeneration, Christians have died to the law (cf. 7:4a). They are released from the requirement to keep the law as a means of justification (salvation) or sanctification. They are "under grace" (cf. 6:14), that is, they have the state of righteousness and the state of holiness by God's grace through faith. The result is that the Holy Spirit in them produces a new and holy life in them and they live and serve in the new way. The new way is the way of Christ through *the Spirit in them* and no longer the way of *the written law above them* (7:6; cf. Jer 31:33; Ez 36:27).

(T) An important truth for me is from Romans 7:7-13. Paul shows from his own experience what the law can do. The moral law produces experience, knowledge and conviction of sin. The moral law can only excite the evil desires (arouse the sinful passions, 7:5) in his sinful nature and thus make him aware of how depraved his sinful nature is. The moral law cannot cause him to be justified before God and also not cause him to live a sanctified life before God. Instead, the law can only give him experience, knowledge and conviction of the unholiness of his life!

First. In Romans 7:7-8, Paul argues that people need to be delivered from depending on the law for righteousness or holiness, not because the law is evil (sin), but because the law cannot produce righteousness or holiness. It can only produce experience of sin and consequently knowledge of what is sin 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 us what sin is. “Sin” is everything that misses God’s goal, everything that transgresses God’s boundaries (moral laws), and everything that twists God’s truth. Sin is a self-sufficient life independent from God! Paul would not have experienced coveting as sin apart from the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet” (7:9). Apart from the moral law or the Ten Commandments sin is dead. That is, *apart from the moral law, sin in the sinful nature is inactive.* The moral law excites the sinful nature in a person to life and rouses every kind of sinful passion in him (7:8).

Second. In Romans 7:9-11, Paul amplifies this thought. As long as people take little account of God’s moral law, either written in Bible or written in the heart, they do not realise what sin in God’s eyes is. Then they “live” undisturbed in the delusion that they are quite good, self-righteous and self-sufficient (cf. 3:20). Then they “live” unaware of their depraved nature and unafraid of God’s punishment for sin (cf. 3:19)! Then they don’t really know how God wants them to live (cf. 13:8-10) and they don’t know how to curb sin in all its wicked forms on earth (cf. 1 Tim 1:9-10)(7:9a). However, after the moral law was revealed in history and added to God’s covenant (cf. Gal 3:17,19) and people start to take serious account of the law, their indwelling sinful nature becomes a powerful tyrant in their body and a terrible reality in their conscience. The more people try to keep the law, the more they experience their total moral and spiritual depravity (cf. 7:14-15). Then they “die”, that is, their fancied state of goodness and false security dies and they come into a state of misery and danger of eternal condemnation (7:9b).

Before the fall into sin, the law as God’s righteous requirement for justification (cf. Gen 2:15-17, to which Lev 18:5 and Rom 10:5 refer) intended to justify man and give him life (7:10a). However, after the fall into sin the law can no longer justify anyone. The law is then God’s rule or standard how God’s people should live as the people of God (cf. Ex 20:1-2). Nevertheless, there are always people, like the Pharisees, that still believe that they can be justified and sanctified by keeping the law. The sinful nature in people misleads people to think that the law can still justify and sanctify them. 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 and obedient life according to the law was completely impossible! Instead, the law became God’s instrument to bring people to a deep conviction of their sins, their depraved nature and their consequent status of spiritual death (7:10b-11). The law became God’s means to show people that they are completely lost and need a Saviour outside themselves and their religious efforts!

Third. In Romans 7:12-13, Paul concludes his argument. Although the law in itself is holy, righteous and good (7:12), it cannot produce holiness, righteousness and goodness in people (cf. 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 (7:13). The law causes people to realise their spiritual death and it causes their self-righteousness and false security to die. It causes them to become painfully aware of their unspiritual nature, that is, their total moral and spiritual depravity. The moral law brings the utter sinfulness of their sinful nature into the open. 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. 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 to justify or save people!

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 7:1-13 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (7:8). What is the difference between the statements “without law, there is no sin” (4:15), “without the law, sin is not taken into account” (5:13) and “without law, sin is dead” (7:8)?

(T) One. Romans 4:15. The relationship of the law to the condemnation of each individual. “Where there is no law, there is no transgression (sin)(4:15b)” This is nowhere the case! Thus, where there is law, there is transgression of the law. Every human being has the law, either written in his heart (2:15) or written in his Bible (2:17-24). Because no individual is without the law, the sins of every individual are taken into account and everyone is judged according to the law he possesses. “Where there is a law, it brings God’s wrath” (4:15a). The law requires absolute obedience. Because no individual has kept the law or can keep the law, every individual is condemned as a sinner. If there would have been

someone who could keep the whole law perfectly, he would have been justified, that is, he would have been judged as a righteous person and would have received eternal life. This was possible only before the fall into sin (Gen 2:15-17; cf. Lev 18:5; Rom 10:5). But because everyone has the law and no one has kept the law, every mouth is silenced and the whole world is held accountable to God (3:19). The law as God's absolute condition for justification and God's absolute standard for condemnation only brings God's wrath over every individual. *In this context, the emphasis is on the law that God gave to each individual (2:15; 2:17-24). The law is God's absolute condition for justification (salvation). Each individual breaks the law and suffers under God's wrath. The emphasis is on individual responsibility.*

Two. Romans 5:13. The relationship of the law to the condemnation of the whole human race. "When there is no law, sin is not taken into account". This was the case in the period between Adam and Moses. All the people living before the time of Moses did not have the written law of Moses and consequently they were not condemned for transgressing any of the written laws of Moses. Nevertheless, these people still died, because the wages of sin is death (6:23a). If they were *not* condemned and punished with death for their personal transgression of the law of Moses, for whose transgression of which law were they then condemned and punished with death? The only possible conclusion is that they were condemned and punished with death for the transgression of Adam of the one law that God gave to Adam (Genesis 2:15-17)! God regards Adam as *the representative head of the whole human race*. When Adam sinned and was punished with death, the whole human race was regarded as having sinned in solidarity with Adam and were condemned and punished to die in solidarity with Adam (5:17a, 18a, 19a; 1 Cor 15:22)! Although these people certainly committed personal sins by breaking the law written in their heart, they did not sin by breaking the one commandment that God gave to Adam alone. *In this context, the emphasis is on the one law that God gave only to Adam (Gen 2:15-17). This law is God's absolute condition for remaining justified. Adam alone broke this law with the consequence that all his descendants suffer death. The emphasis is on Adam's representative responsibility!*

Three. Romans 7:8. The relationship of the law to the activation of sin in each individual. "Apart from law, sin is dead". Another way of saying this is, "The power of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56). Paul is here not speaking of the law as "God's absolute condition for justification", but of the law as "God's absolute condition for sanctification." He is speaking of the law as God's moral law and especially of the Ten Commandments, which revealed what is right and what is wrong in God's eyes and showed how God's people should live the life of a believer. Paul says that *apart from the moral law, sin within the sinful nature is inactive*. When the moral law is not given any serious attention, the sin dwelling in the sinful nature of people remains inactive. However, when the moral law is given serious attention, then the sin dwelling in the sinful nature of people becomes very active! The more people try to keep the moral law, the more the moral law arouses the sinful passions in their sinful nature (7:5), incites every kind of evil desire in them (7:8) and causes them to experience how depraved they really are (7:23-24). Instead of being an instrument of life, the moral law is an instrument of death. It kills people's self-righteousness, false security and fancied state of goodness (7:9). It causes people to realise that they are spiritually dead. *In this context, the emphasis is on the moral law that God gave to each individual (2:15; 2:17-24). The moral law is God's absolute condition for holiness (sanctification). Each individual breaks the moral law and suffers under the realisation that he is completely depraved. The emphasis is on individual experience of depravity.*

2nd Question. (7:7-13). What phase of Paul's personal experience is portrayed in this passage? Is this the experience of a regenerate person or of an unregenerate person?

(S) *It seems most likely that this passage describes Paul's experience just before, during and shortly after his conversion.* When Paul was still an unregenerate Pharisee, he was self-complacent and regarded himself as someone who was completely righteous through keeping the law (Phil 3:6). For a long time, he occupied himself with the law of Moses, but the moral law of God simply did not function in his life. He "lived apart from the moral law" in the religious self-righteousness and spiritual pride of a Pharisee (7:9a).

One. Paul says that apart from the moral law, sin in the sinful nature is inactive (7:8). He 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 (7:7) and when the moral law caused his indwelling sin to become active and to produce every kind of covetous desire in him (7:8). It must have started when he was still unregenerate before his conversion. The experience of "sin springing to life and he died" (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 9, 22, 26; Gal 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 witness of Stephen and the other Christian martyrs, whom he helped to kill, and to listen to the teaching of Ananias and other Christians in 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 and to study the Bible passages that summarise the way of salvation (Gen 15:6; Ps 32:1-11; Isa 52:13 – 53:12; Hab 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 (7:9b). It was then that he realised that the moral commandments, which were intended to guide God's people how to live, actually brought death to religious people who

wanted 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 was totally depraved in his unregenerate nature, that is, that he was spiritually dead (cf. 3:10-20; Ephesians 2:1-4).

Two. It was not the moral law that had deceived him, because the moral law is holy, righteous and good (7:12). It was his own indwelling sinful nature that had deceived him to believe that he could be justified by keeping the law. His indwelling sinful nature used the knowledge of God's moral laws to actually do the things forbidden by the moral law. Knowledge of the moral law caused him to realise how utterly sinful he was, how depraved he was, how much he had missed God's purpose for his life, how spiritually dead he really was (7:10-11,13).

(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. Use "the five steps" Bible study method to prepare Romans 7:14-25.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".