

A Study in Romans

Chapter 7

This chapter is based upon Paul's fundamental statement, "for you are not under law but under grace" (6:14). He steadily moves from the theoretical to the practical working of God's grace in a person's life.

Dead to the Law

Paul has already referred to baptism and the relationship between slaves and their masters. He now moves to the illustration of law in marriage.

(Romans 7:1–4)¹ Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? ² For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. ³ So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. ⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

(1) "I speak to those who know the law"

The article "the" before "law" was added by translators. This suggests that in this instance, Paul is referring to the principle of law in general not a specific law. He is stating the obvious, that law has authority over someone only while they are alive. This is why he forms the question, "law has dominion over a man as long as he lives."

Remember, law merely reveals the standard of right. It cannot remove the guilt that comes from breaking it. It demands complete obedience but offers the sinner no power to obey. Any effort to keep the law to repair the past sin that results from breaking it is nonsensical.

(4) "you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ"

Verse four includes the modifier "the" before "law." This means that Paul has a specific law in mind beginning with this verse. Paul is likely referring to the "law of sin" in contrast to the "law of the Spirit of life," which he is about to elaborate on in chapter eight.

We have already read in 6:14 that being under law is associated with being under sin. Therefore, dying to law is the equivalent of dying to sin. The only way to die to the "law of sin" is by the grace of Christ.

(4) “that you may be married to another”

When we die to the flesh of the “old man” (6:6), the “law of sin,” we are married to Christ who brings us under the “law of the Spirit of life” (8:2).

(4) “that we should bear fruit to God”

Paul has already introduced the illustration of “fruit” with a question: “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death” (Romans 6:21). He now describes bearing a positive kind of fruit, “fruit to God.” This is made possible only once we have been delivered from the “law of sin” by God’s grace.

“In the flesh” vs. “in the Spirit”

(Romans 7:5–6)⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.⁶ But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

(5) “we were in the flesh”

The word *sarx* is translated “flesh” (NKJV) or “sinful nature” (NIV). It means in subjection to the impulses of the lower nature, the base passions of the unregenerate life. This sinful nature is a constant propensity or inclination to do what is unrighteous.

In a broader sense, living “in the flesh” is to live in a world bound by its temporary wants and concerns, our thoughts and actions without any regard for God or the spiritual realm.

(5) “sinful passions which were aroused by the law”

Paul is describing how law tends to stimulate rebellion in our sinful nature. Human beings tend to want freedom from law rather than being required to keep law. We must be released from slavery to these “passions” before we can receive the grace necessary for the transformation of our desires so that we enjoy the things of God.

(6) “now we have been delivered from the law”

Being “delivered” is the same word used in 7:2 to describe how a wife is released from the law of her husband upon his death. Therefore, “delivered from the law” is the equivalent of not being “under the law.” And in this case “the law” is what our sinful nature rebels against.

Furthermore, when we were “delivered,” our mindset toward God’s law moved from an anti-law stance to a pro-law posture. God’s grace has changed the heart from wanting to disobey the will of God to wanting to obey it.

(Manuscript Releases 10, p. 329) The moral law was bondage and death to those who remained under its condemnation. The law was ordained to life, that those who were obedient, walking in harmony with its claims, should have the reward of the faithful—eternal life.

(Faith and Works, p. 95) While we are to be in harmony with God's law, we are not saved by the works of the law, yet we cannot be saved without obedience. The law is the standard by which character is measured. But we cannot possibly keep the commandments of God without the regenerating grace of Christ. Jesus alone can cleanse us from all sin. He does not save us by law, neither will He save us in disobedience to law.

(6) “so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit”

Paul is again reminding us that when we die to the “old man”—the sinful nature—we are freed to serve God in the Spirit. This “new creation” conversion experience.

(2 Corinthians 5:17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

(6) “newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter”

Paul contrasts between the Spirit and the letter. The letter is legalistic obedience to secure salvation by keeping the law. More than that, it is obedience to every letter without the Spirit of grace to obey from the heart. This is what Christ accused the Pharisees of doing with their strict adherence to law without faith.

(Matthew 23:23–24)²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

The Spirit does not cause disobedience to the law, but obedience that is motivated by love and empowered by the grace of God. Our new life in Christ causes us to see the law differently because the same Spirit that gave the law has written it upon our mind and heart. In effect, God has implanted within us a new nature inclined to obey God’s will. This new nature is the new covenant experience.

(Hebrews 8:10–12)¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

The Law and Sin

(Romans 7:7–12)⁷ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “*You shall not covet.*”⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Paul transitions to yet another perspective in his teaching on the Law of God. Anticipating objections to his presentation of law and grace, he seeks to address any misunderstandings of his teaching about the relationship between the law and sin. Having said that we have been “delivered from the law” (v6) so that we can “serve in the newness of the Spirit” (v6), he now is clarifying his meaning to avoid any notion that the law itself is sinful.

(7) “*Is the law sin?*”

It’s important to begin with the biblical definition of sin:

(1 John 3:4) Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness (“transgression of the law,” KJV).

If the Law of God was no longer in effect, there would be no sin. That we know. But is the law sin itself? Paul’s emphatic answer is, No!

(7) “*I would not have known sin except through the law*”

God’s law has a purpose. For sinners, it has no power to justify. Instead, it exposes sin by revealing the righteousness of God. As a spot on a garment is seen clearly when a bright light shines on it, so is the stain of sin exposed when God’s character is revealed.

“Since sin is ‘lawlessness,’ or ‘disobedience to law,’ it is only logical that the effect of law in a man’s experience should be to reveal his sin to him in its true nature. The illogical attitude

toward law is to regard it as an enemy for having made this truthful exposure. A mirror is not an enemy to a homely person because it reveals to him his homeliness. Nor is a physician an enemy to someone who is sick because he discloses to him his sickness. The doctor is not the cause of the sickness, nor is the mirror the cause of the homeliness. Likewise God is not the cause of the sickness and ugliness of our sin because He shows it to us in the mirror of His holy law and by the divine Physician, who came to reveal and to heal our sinfulness.” (SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, Francis D. Nichol)

(7) “would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”

This is not a random selection from the commandments of God. Covetousness speaks to the nature of the unregenerate heart. Coveting is “desiring” or lusting. When a person yields to wrong desires, it naturally leads to lying, stealing, killing, etc. The sin Paul is describing is less about the object our heart craves than the craving itself. Paul is addressing the sinful nature.

Note how David describes his sinful nature and how God wants him to know its depth and then act on his need for change:

(Psalm 51:5–6)⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.⁶ Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.

The world says that people are naturally good and just need to tap into their inner self to let it come out. The Bible says exactly the opposite.

(8) “but sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire”

Sin is personified by Paul as a principle and power that is antagonistic to the law of God. It does not sit dormant, but is active. Yet once we see sin for what it is (the commandments reveal it to us), we begin to realize that our desire is wicked.

How does God’s law “produce” evil desire? Because we are born with a sinful nature, and we are wired to rebel against anything of God. Paul’s previous statement that “sinful passions...were aroused by the law” (v5) is connected, but not the same. Our “sinful passions” stem from “evil desires” that dwell within our fallen nature.

(1 John 2:16) For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

Obedience to God’s commandments is not mere outward conformity to the letter of law but inward renewal of the mind and heart. But before spiritual transformation can happen, the

law produces a profound resistance to righteousness that is a natural product of our corrupt nature.

(8) “apart from the law sin was dead”

If a person is not aware of the law’s demands, neither is the knowledge of his/her sin. The word “dead” is relative, i.e. dormant; inactive. The statement is a broad principle. The verb “was” is not in the original language, but seems more accurate than the word “is,” as some translations have it. Likely, the reader is already experiencing the gospel, and along with it, an awareness of his/her evil desire.

(9–11) “when the commandment came...”

In these verses, Paul is giving the practical application of his statement in verse eight, that sin was dead apart from the law. Using personal experience, Paul described himself as being “dead in his sins” (not “to his sins,” as a result of personal choice). Being “dead in his sins” was the result of the commandments appearing from an altogether different perspective. This was a paradigm shift for Paul, as it is for all of us. He is describing his point of conviction; not yet a converted state.

Paul explains that the commandment “was intended to bring life” (v10). Its original ideal was to promote observance that would bring about divine blessing resulting in consequent human happiness.

(Deuteronomy 11:26–28)²⁶ “Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

We can draw from the experience of Adam and Eve to help us understand what Paul is saying. They were the only human beings that were truly alive, but then became dead “when the commandment came.” When they disobeyed God, they passed from spiritual life to spiritual death. They had no practical experience in sin until God’s law brought them condemnation and death.

(11) “sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me”

Paul concludes his thought in verse 11 that “sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.” Sin used the law to deceive and kill what is good.

Sin is more than something that we fail to do or not do and will be held to account. Sin is external to human beings. It seeks the demise of all that is good. While the law is good, sin

made it an instrument of condemnation for fallen human beings. The law in the hands of sin, so to speak, lost any life-enhancing properties that it may have naturally possessed.

(12) “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”

There are two references to the law here separated by “and.” Paul first asserted that the whole law is holy. We know that the law he was talking about is the Decalogue because of his direct reference to the tenth, “You shall not covet.” It is possible to understand the reference to “the commandment” as describing every single precept of the law, but the singular form makes it likely that Paul is referring again to the tenth commandment. Still, what Paul ascribes to that commandment refers equally to all of the commandments.

Paul’s description of the law as “holy and just and good,” speaks to the very nature of God. But for the sinner it is something altogether different. The character of God is the antithesis to the sinner’s nature with all its corrupted desires. When we see the glory of God, as revealed in His law, we realize that we deserve only condemnation and death. Our only hope is Christ, our righteousness.

God’s law reveals what we will be like when we trust God to transform us by His grace into His image.

(2 Corinthians 3:17–18)¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Law is Death

(Romans 7:13) Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

This passage begins one of the most controversial sections of the entire book. Scholars and laypeople alike have debated for centuries the kind of experience that Paul was referring to. Is this a converted or unconverted Paul? The question is an important one because our conclusion will influence our understanding and practice of the Christian life.

(13) “Has then what is good become death to me”

This question continues the flow of thought concluded in verse 12 that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” As mentioned earlier, the specific commandment described here is the tenth, “you shall not covet,” speaking to our sinful nature; desires.

IMPORTANT: To the sinner, God's law is the "law of sin and death." To those who have been transformed by the grace of God, the law is the "law of the Spirit of life" (8:2). Not that the law gives life, but that the Spirit gives us power to keep the law of God; it brings us in harmony with its precepts.

NOTE: The law is diagnostic, not therapeutic. The law is not the problem. Sin is the thing from which we all need to be delivered.

(13) "Certainly not!"

The answer is another emphatic, No! Inasmuch as the law is a reflection of God's holiness, righteousness, goodness, Paul declares that it serves the purpose of revealing our sinfulness saying that "sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful." One of the law's purposes is to wake us up to our inherited sinful condition so that we can be drawn to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Christian's Struggle

(Romans 7:14–20) ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. ¹⁷ But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

In the former section, Paul has shown that the problem is not the law of God but with sin. Now he maintains that the responsible party for our inability to measure up is not we ourselves, but the sin that dwells within us.

The sanctified life involves a constant battle of the will. Our struggle is between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit at any given moment. It's important to remember that we are God's children from beginning to end. Jesus' disciples belonged to Him, even before their conversion and reception of the Spirit. They often walked in the flesh before His crucifixion and resurrection, trusting in their own strength and wisdom to discern God's purposes. God does not give up on us suddenly when we fail to walk in the Spirit. He loves us and continually teaches us to walk in the Spirit and not trust in the flesh. In this we grow from grace to grace until we reach maturity. Spiritual maturity consistently trusts in the Spirit to lead in all we do.

KEY POINT: Paul describes the difference between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit. The debate is often over whether this is a converted Paul or not. But this is a moot point. A

believer can go back and forth between the flesh and the Spirit as they grow in their faith, finally learning to continually submit to the Spirit's leading throughout all of life's challenges.

(14) "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin"

This verse describes the contrast between God's law and mortal mankind. The law is *spiritual* in that it emanates from God Himself. He is holy, just, and good, and so is His law. On the other hand, we are carnal (flesh), meaning that we are *unspiritual*.

Seeing the law for what it is we conclude that we are "carnal, sold under sin." We have no hope for redemption within ourselves because we are "sold," a reference to slavery, "under sin." We have a master over us that keeps us from a life of holiness.

(15) "For what I will to do, I do not practice"

When we are living in the flesh, we do not practice what we want to do. We want to live a pure and holy life, but the flesh is incapable of doing it because of sin. We must give our will over to the Spirit who brings us victory over the flesh by the grace of God through the power of the living Christ.

IMPORTANT: Paul was writing about his own experience. He is relaying the process of personal transformation from a life in the flesh to a life dependent upon Christ. We find in other letters that Paul wrote to believers who were still living in the flesh. These he referred to as "carnal" Christians.

(1 Corinthians 3:1–3)¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able;³ for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

When we continue to practice the things we did before we were Christian, we are carnal, depending upon our own willpower to follow the Lord. This is the number one barrier to spiritual growth. Living in the flesh makes us incapable of true obedience to Christ with our will captive to His own, fully dependent upon the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

(2 Corinthians 10:4–5)⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

(16) "If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good"

Not the qualifying word “if” in the statement. “If” we do what we don’t want to do, then it establishes the truth that the law is good and that it exposes the sin that dwells within our flesh (see Paul’s conclusion that “it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me,” v17). It is sin, not the law, that causes us to fail in doing the good that we desire to do.

(18) “to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find”

Upon receiving Christ as our Savior, we are instilled with a desire to do what is good. But while the law has brought conviction, the power “to perform what is good” is not present within us because of sin. In other words, transformation has begun, but we do not possess the innate ability to live a righteous life. We need a power outside of ourselves if we are going to overcome sin.

Sometimes people read this section of the Romans and conclude that we must resign to the fact that we will commit sin this side of receiving our immortal incorruptible body. But this is not Paul’s point. He emphasis is less about the evil we commit as sinners and more about finding the power to live how God wants us to live. Even the good things we think we do are nothing without the righteousness of Christ working in and through us by His divine grace.

(20) “it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”

The evil things we do are not because we want to do them, but because of the sin that dwells within us. While this appears to be a hopeless situation, we will soon see that Paul discovered a way to rise above it.

Our Sinful Condition

(Romans 7:21–25) ²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

As a summation, Paul concludes that he subsists in a hopeless condition when left to himself. But this is not the end of the story. Victory is available to all by the grace of God.

(21) “I find then a law, that evil is present with me”

Paul describes the sin that dwells in us as a “law” or “principle” that has power over us. We want to be free of this power, but it is ever-present within our fallen nature.

Within every Christian exists a state of war (v23) that we cannot escape (hence the slavery metaphor in chapter six). We are constantly affected by the domineering operation of sin. We desire deliverance now but cannot escape this inner warfare.

(21) “who wills to do good”

It is our will that we give to God for spiritual regeneration. It is with the will that we make decisions; to keep to our commitments. It is the will that drives the “inward man.” In the Christian walk, we need to keep giving our will to Christ, moment by moment, which is simply the decision to let His grace provide the strength to lead us in the path of righteousness.

By giving our will to Christ, we are cooperating with His sanctifying work in us. With every decision, we say, “not my will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

(Messages to Young People, p. 147) To make God’s grace our own, we must act our part. The Lord does not propose to perform for us either the willing or the doing. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort. Our souls are to be aroused to cooperate.

(22) “I delight in the law of God according to the inward man”

Paul is echoing the psalmist’s words:

(Psalm 1:1–2)¹ Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ² but his delight *is* in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

We can delight in the Law of God because it is a reflection of His character and a promise of what we will become. We may not be sinless, but we can delight in how God has justified us and is now preparing us to live with Him forever.

(1 John 3:1–3)¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

It’s important to address sin as transgression of God’s law. Sin is more than wrongs we do (commissions); it includes things we fail to do (omissions). And in this passage, Paul goes even further to describe sin as inherited moral depravity. If sin is understood as only volitional acts where improper motives are in operation, then a person could strive to obtain sinlessness.

Jesus said, "be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48). He was not describing perfection as abstaining from sinful acts, but freedom from rebellious motives. Christian perfection considers motive, as in David who was "a man after [God's] own heart" (Acts 13:22). When the wrongs we commit are done unconsciously, or without premeditation, and without improper motive, we are considered perfect in our commitment to love, obey, and serve God.

Here are a few paragraphs from Ellen White on the topic of perfection and sinlessness:

(Steps to Christ, p. 57) While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.

(Christ's Object Lessons, p. 65) As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.

(Signs of the Times, November 5, 1896) As God is perfect in his high sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere.

(Testimonies 2, p. 549) We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it, and, according to the ability God has given, resemble it.

(The Review and Herald, May 23, 1899) Christ imputes His perfection and righteousness to the believing sinner when he does not continue in sin, but turns from transgression to obedience of the commandments.

(The Review and Herald, March 18, 1890) When we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall have no relish for sin; for Christ will be working with us. We may make mistakes, but we will hate the sin that caused the sufferings of the Son of God.

(The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4, p. 302) Those who are truly seeking to perfect Christian character will never indulge the thought that they are sinless. The more their minds dwell upon the character of Christ, and the nearer they approach to his divine image, the more clearly will they discern its spotless perfection, and the more deeply will they feel their own weakness and defects. Those who claim to be without sin, give evidence that they are far from holy. It is because they have no true knowledge of Christ that they can look upon themselves

as reflecting his image. The greater the distance between them and their Saviour, the more righteous they appear in their own eyes.

(23) “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind”

This other law, a different one, stands in contrast to the law that Paul approves of. This law naturally exists in our “members,” meaning our flesh. It’s an indwelling *nomos* (law; principle) that causes our propensity to sin.

NOTE: This is Paul’s introduction to what he concludes is the “law of sin” that dwells “in [our] members.”

Our flesh has a voracious appetite. Appetite underlies most temptations. It was Jesus’ first temptation in the wilderness.

(Luke 4:3–4)³ And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”⁴ But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*’”

Jesus overcame the temptations that we experience. All sinful flesh (His being a “likeness” of) has an appetite to please self. It’s an appetite we cannot resist without a power beyond ourselves to put enmity (a barrier) between us and the enemy of our soul.

(Genesis 3:15) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed...

(24) “Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

After crying out over his wretchedness, Paul asks the question that we all must reach the point of asking: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” This is deep conviction about our sinful condition—a realization that we cannot escape the power of sin without divine intervention.

This was Isaiah’s conclusion after seeing the Lord:

(Isaiah 6:5) So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.”

Through the “law of sin,” the Law of God became a sentence against Paul. There is nothing we can do to avoid being convicted as sinners. We have all “fallen short of the glory of God”

(3:23). The answer to our hopelessness lies outside of ourselves, not in “what,” but “Who.” We don’t need a new law, but the Savior, Jesus Christ, who alone can make us a new creation.

(2 Corinthians 5:17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

No amount of earnest striving to obey will achieve victory over the law of sin. Our only hope is a full surrender to Christ. This does not eliminate the need for obedience, but connects us with the divine power to obey God’s law and overcome the sin of the flesh.

Peter echoes this sentiment:

(2 Peter 1:2–4)² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

(Ministry of Healing, p. 130) Apart from divine power, no genuine reform can be effected. Human barriers against natural and cultivated tendencies are but as the sandbank against the torrent. Not until the life of Christ becomes a vitalizing power in our lives can we resist the temptations that assail us from within and from without. ...

When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood.

(25) “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

We can all thank the Lord that we have a Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 15:57) But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus becomes “our Lord” when we place our life in His hands, trusting Him to give us the grace we need to live a godly life. He delivered us not only by His death on the cross for our justification, but by His life that He now imparts to us through the power of His resurrection and intercession in heaven.

Paul declared his deliverance in Christ to the church in Philippi:

(Philippians 3:8–10)⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as

rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

(Hebrews 4:15–16) ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(25) “with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin”

These are our two choices. While we have a mind that is ready to serve the “law of God,” God leaves it to us to exercise the will by surrendering to Him.

(Acts of the Apostles, p. 51) Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love.

In the next chapter, Paul describes the way to overcome in the struggle between the mind renewed by Christ and the flesh with its sinful appetite.