

THE LAW, THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

GOLDEN TEXT

“Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin” (Romans 7:25).

USEFUL PRACTICE

The fight between the flesh and the spirit is a reality in the life of every believer, but the dependence on the grace of God will make us have a victorious life.

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 7:1-15

- 1 - Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?
- 2 - For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.
- 3 - So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.
- 4 - So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

5 - For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.

6 - But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

7- What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

8 - But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.

9 - Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.

10 - I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

11 - For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

12 - So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

13 - Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

14 - We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

15 - I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To show that the fight between flesh and spirit is a reality in the life of every believer.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

I. To explain the marriage analogy illustrated in the law;

II. To show the analogy of the solidarity of race illustrated in Adam;

III. To discourse on the analogy between flesh and spirit

INTRODUCTION

In today's lesson we are going to study the role of Christians in relation to the law, the flesh and the Spirit. Paul presents a study on these themes in chapter seven. He uses three analogies to discuss the issues: the marriage analogy, the analogy of Adam in paradise and the analogy of the flesh versus the spirit.

How must we behave before the law? How to explain why, even after we have received the grace of God, we go through inner spiritual conflicts? What does that mean? That is what we will try to answer in this study.

I – THE LAW ILLUSTRATED IN THE MARRIAGE ANALOGY (ROM 7:1-6)

1. The marriage metaphor. The apostle Paul shows that no man can be saved by the law, even those who keep it with zeal and devotion. Those who already have a new nature will not also be saved from sin by observing the law. Paul's insistence in extending from the sixth chapter with respect to the function of the Law leads now to use marriage as an analogy that contrasts living by the precepts of the Law and the new life in Christ (Rom 7:1). Paul used marriage to show our relationship with the law. The apostle points out that the marriage contract loses its validity when one spouse dies. According to the Bible Life Application Study Bible, "when we die with Christ, the law can no longer condemn us, we are united to Christ" (in a free translation).

2. The widow metaphor. Verses 2 and 3 of Chapter 7 complete the analogy by the apostle about marriage. Paul says that as long as the husband is alive, if the wife marries another man, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry again. The intention was to show that the death of Christ on the cross, and Christians together with Him (Ephesians 2:5,6), broke the vows of obedience to the legal precepts of the Mosaic law (Rom 7:4).

3. Dead to the law. The expression "dead to the law through the body of Christ" is understood by interpreters as a reference to the death of Christ and our identification with Him. The Bible writer C. Marvin Pate notes that "Paul uses the analogy of the death of a spouse in marriage to illustrate

the believer's death to the law, because he is united with Christ" (Rom 7:1-6 / in a free translation).

II - ADAM ILLUSTRATED IN THE ANALOGY OF THE SOLIDARITY OF RACE (ROMANS 7:6-13)

1. Back to paradise. Paul considered Adam as the head and the representative of mankind. His fall led all men to fall with him. Here the apostle's goal is to link Adam's disobedience to mankind. Adam sinned, then all have sinned. A careful reading of Paul's words in Romans 7 to 11 will show the close relationship they have with the events in Genesis chapter 3. For example, the term "you shall not covet" is an allusion to Genesis 3:1-6. On the other hand, Paul's words "Once I was apart from the law" (Rom 7:9), only make sense if applied to the life of Adam, because Paul, who was a Pharisee and a Jew, lived up to the law since childhood (2 Tm 3:15). Here Paul, as a human being, saw himself in Adam. The terms "I died" and "sin deceived me" run parallel to Genesis 2:17 and 3:13.

2. Sinai memories. In the understanding of many interpreters of the Bible, another reason that led the apostle to see himself in Adam lies in the Jewish belief that the first man lived the principles of the Torah (Law), despite having existed long before its putting into effect at Sinai. In fact, this is a very well-documented belief in rabbinic literature. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher, for example, said that coveting, sin committed by Adam in paradise, was the root of all evils.

3. The law given to Adam. The fact is that Adam was under the commandment, the ordinance not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). The apostle intended to draw a parallel between Paradise and the Sinai, between the law of Moses and the ordinance that was given to Adam. The commandment that was given Adam to bring life was changed into death through the action of the ancient serpent, a personification of the devil. Likewise, the Law of Moses was given to bring life, but sin, as the personification of evil, made it into an instrument of death.

III – THE CHRISTIAN ILLUSTRATED IN THE ANALOGY BETWEEN FLESH AND SPIRIT (ROM 7:14-25)

1. The sanctity of the law. An attentive interlocutor could argue that the apostle would be disqualifying the law, reducing it to something extremely

bad. Paul goes forward and answers, "So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Romans 7:12). There is nothing wrong with the law. The law is good and so does its purpose. The problem, therefore, was not with the law, but with those who were guided by it. As the apostle had already argued, the problem was within man, with the sin that lived in him, and not with the existence of an outside law (Romans 7:18).

2. The wickedness of the flesh. There is no doubt that every Christian understands these Paul's words in Romans 7:22,23. These words reveal the conflict between our new nature in Christ and the "old self" living in us. It is the war between the flesh and the spirit. To whom these words of Paul are intended? The context seems to leave no doubt that Paul had in mind the believers who, for being Christians, believed they could live victoriously without the Holy Spirit. Although Paul has dealt with the ministry of the Holy Spirit later in Romans 8, here he already calls attention to living "in newness of spirit" (Rom 7:6 - KJV) as a way to overcome the inclinations of the flesh.

3. The old nature. Our old nature is constantly trying to rebel against God. We cannot fight against sin by using our strength. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, helps us overcome the old nature.

CONCLUSION

Even living under grace the believer experiences the conflict between his old nature and his new life in Christ. How to live a new life, if the old life still wants to occupy its old space? The believer's answer lies in understanding that the solution to this conflict is to respond positively to the new spiritual life, depending entirely on the grace of God.