

Romans 7

“Seldom did Paul write so difficult and so complicated a passage as this. When we are studying it, we should try to forget what Paul says and to find out what he means.” New Testament scholar C.H. Dodd

Read Romans 7: 1-6

1. The basic thought is based on the legal principal that “death cancels all contracts.” Thus, when your spouse dies, the marriage contract is, so to speak, cancelled, and the spouse is free to marry again. For us, by baptism, we share in the death of Christ. Thus, having died, we are discharged from all obligations of the law [and are free to “marry” again - this time we are married not to the law, but to Christ.]
2. Our obedience to Christ is not to a written code but an inner allegiance to the spirit of Jesus Christ.
3. The flesh is “human nature apart from and unaided by God.” (Barclay)
4. The law moved our passions to sin (through the law we knew what sin was - the very fact that a thing is forbidden lends it a certain attraction).

Read Romans 7: 7-13

One of the greatest of all NT passages - Paul giving us his own spiritual autobiography and laying bare his very heart and soul.

1. The torturing paradox of the law. In itself, it is a fine and splendid thing. It is holy - the very voice of God.
2. But it is thru the law that sin gains entry into an individual:
 - a. The law defines sin - like the rules of tennis, or a speed limit - the rules define what the fault is Or like a street that is declared one-way - the new regulation creates a new fault. The law, by making people aware of what it is, creates sin.
 - b. Forbidden things hold a fascination for us - when something becomes forbidden, it then can become desirable (Adam and the forbidden tree, the cookies in the cookie jar, etc).
From Augustine’s Confessions:
“The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing.” (Barclay, 113)
3. v. 11: For sin...”deceived me.” (seduced me)
4. There is always deception in sin:
 - a. We are deluded regarding the satisfaction to be found in sin - we think it will make us happy.
 - b. We are deluded regarding the excuse that can be made for it - we think we can defend it.
 - c. We are deluded regarding the probability of escaping the consequences of it - we think we can get away with it.
5. Sin took a thing - the law - which was holy and just and good - and twisted it to serve evil.
 - a. Sin takes the loveliness of love and turns it into lust.
 - b. Sin takes our desire for independence and turns it into an obsession for money & power.
 - c. Sin takes the beauty of friendship and seduces it for wrong things.

Read Romans 7: 14-25

1. We can know that is right and want to do it, and yet we don't - we can know what is wrong and not want to do it, and yet we do. Two competing natures inside us.
2. Seneca: people hate their sins and love them at the same time.
3. Ovid, the Roman poet: I see the better things and I approve them, but I follow the worse."
4. To resolve to do a thing is very far from doing it. In human nature there is an essential weakness of the will. Peter: "I will not deny you" and yet he failed badly.
5. Versus a doctor who can accurately diagnose a disease but is powerless to prescribe a cure, Jesus is the one person who not only knows what is wrong, but who can also put right that wrong. Jesus doesn't offer criticism, but real help.