

**(7:14)** - *“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin”* - As stated in the last lesson, the apostle has been dealing with the relationship of God’s chosen people with the law before and during their conversion **(7:7-13)**, and now begins to show a believer’s relationship to the law after conversion. In our lives as believers (sinners saved by grace) on this earth in our present state, the Holy Spirit uses the law continually to convict us of our inward sinfulness and continually drive us to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. This is one of God’s means by which He keeps us clinging to Christ and persevering in the faith of God’s elect. Again, consider how the same man who described believers as being *“freed from sin”* **(Rom. 6:7)**, *“dead indeed unto sin”* **(Rom. 6:11)**, not being under the dominion of sin **(Rom. 6:14)**, and being *“free from sin”* **(Rom. 6:18)**, now describes believers as being *“carnal, sold under sin.”* *“Carnal”* means *“fleshly”* or having the nature of sinful flesh. *“Sold under sin”* means to be enslaved to sin and not being able to rise above it.

As we have already seen, to understand the meaning of all these phrases and see that there is no contradiction in applying all them to the same persons (sinners saved by grace), we must understand the distinction between a believer’s LEGAL STANDING BEFORE GOD and his PRESENT STATE IN THE WORLD. LEGALLY, he is justified (forgiven of all his sins, not charged with or condemned for sins, perfectly righteous in God’s sight) based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to him. He is legally free from and dead to sin which cannot be imputed to him **(Rom. 8:33-34; 2 Cor. 5:21)**. PRESENTLY, even though he is spiritual (born again by the Spirit and brought to faith in Christ) and not carnal as to his state, he still retains the remaining carnality of sinful flesh that keeps him from attaining in himself the perfection of righteousness found only in Christ. Sin still contaminates everything he thinks, says, and does. He is still a slave to sin within himself in that he cannot do anything without sin’s contamination. Paul goes on in the next verses to expound upon this fact and what it means to a believer.

**(7:15)** - *“For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I”* - Paul speaks of something he does of which he does not approve. Is he speaking of some specific sin that plagued him? NO. He is speaking of the fact that in his character and conduct he desires to be perfectly conformed to Christ, perfectly good and righteous. But he does not and cannot attain this state while in this life **(Php. 3:12-14; 1 Tim. 1:15)**. So then, he does the very thing he hates, which is sin.

**(7:16)** - *“If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good”* - Paul states emphatically again that in all of this sinful existence in which he cannot attain to the perfection of righteousness required by God’s law, the law is not to be blamed or counted as evil. The law is *“good.”* The law is of God, and God is only good. The law is not unfair or unjust. It does not require too much. But the problem in our inability to attain the perfection of the law is in ourselves. It is our own sinfulness and our own selfishness.

**(7:17)** - *“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me”* - Paul is not, as some imply, “passing the buck” here as if to say that he himself is not responsible for the sin he does. He is also not claiming that sin is some sort of entity within him that acts according to its own desires apart from him. He is simply tracing the problem to its source - sin that dwells within him. He is speaking of the sinful corruptions of the flesh (fallen, sinful human nature) which exists as sinful thoughts, desires, motives, and goals, and which contaminates him in everything he does. I believe Paul is also claiming that even though he is a sinner, sin

does not really define who he is - the real Paul, the real “I.” The real Paul is a sinner, but one who is saved by God’s grace in Christ. And even though he is a sinner, the reality of who he was (and is) can only be rightly defined as he stands in Christ based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to him and evidenced by faith in Christ and true repentance.

**(7:18) - “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:”** - Paul expresses that in his flesh, carnal self, there dwelt “**no good thing.**” Paul is speaking of what was in him naturally and that which could not measure up to the righteousness of the law. Otherwise, there were many good things that dwelt in him, such as the work of God’s grace in the new heart, the good word of God and even Christ Who dwelt in Paul by His Spirit and His Word. But Paul is speaking here of himself in relationship to the perfection of righteousness required by the law that can only be found in Christ and not within himself or attained by his works, not even what the Spirit motivates and energizes him to do. This is proven by the following statement - “**for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not.**” Paul had a God-given “**will**” (desire) to do good, but he did not know how to do good without the influence and contamination of sin that constantly plagued him while in this flesh and in this world. We must understand that to do good is not simply doing the best we can do. It is doing good as found in the obedience of Christ. In salvation, the Lord God shows us what good really is in His sight as He reveals the perfection of Christ to us. In salvation the Lord God gives us a desire to be like Christ. But for His purposes God has not given us the ability to attain righteousness by our efforts to obey Him. Why? It is because this is one of God’s main means to glorify Himself and exalt Christ by keeping us looking and clinging to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life and glory.

**(7:19) - “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do”** - Paul admits that he does NOT do the good that he wants to do, but that he actually does the evil that he does not want to do. What is Paul’s problem? Is there some particular sin with which Paul had a problem of which he refused to repent? NO. Again, Paul is speaking of the fact that as long as we are in these vile bodies and on this earth, in this state we cannot be totally free from the remaining power, influence, and contamination of sin in all that we think, say, and do. In this present state, even though legally we are perfectly righteous in Christ, we cannot attain within ourselves and in our obedience the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ.

**(7:20) - “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me”** - Again this is not Paul “passing the buck” and claiming that he himself is not responsible for the sin he does. He is not personifying sin as if to say it is some other entity or person inside of him doing the sin and not Paul himself. As stated in the above commentary on **7:17**, he is simply tracing this state to its source which is the presence of sin within himself. And, as stated, he is also showing that this sinful state does not define the reality of who he is - a sinner saved by the grace of God in Christ, one who desires to be like Christ. This is every believer’s state while in this world and will be so until the Lord calls us home to be with Him. It is true that even now, as believers in Christ, we can know that legally we are totally free from and dead to sin in that sin cannot be imputed to us, cannot condemn us, and that we are perfectly righteous in God’s sight based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to us. But as to our present state in this world, we are still slaves to sin and will be until we leave this present world and this body of flesh. Then and only then will we be totally free from the remaining power, presence, influence, and corruption of sin within ourselves.