

Exegetical Notes - Romans 7:1-14

“LAW”

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Romans 7:1-14

Verses 1-3

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.

- In this section of Romans, Paul begins his discussion of the practice of Sanctification. Salvation, his previous concern, is the process by which an individual enters into a saving relation with God through Jesus Christ. Salvation is by the grace of God and is received by believing in Jesus. It is an event that occurs once in time. When we believe that God saved us through the sacrifice of Jesus, we are saved. After salvation occurs, we begin the process of Sanctification. This is the process by which we slowly conform to the image of God. Through this process we are made holy. It is a process which takes a lifetime.
- Paul begins by identifying his audience. He is speaking to “those who know the law”. He does not mean the Law of Moses, but the law in general. Therefore, his audience is universal. All of us know the law for we are all living under law.
- Paul claims that when a person dies, he is no longer controlled by the law under which he lived. He gives a practical example to illustrate his point. If a person is married under the law, they are married “until death do us part.” When one spouse dies, the marriage laws no longer apply. The remaining spouse is no longer considered married. That person is free to marry again if they choose to. The law only applies to the living.

Verses 4-6

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.

- Since Christians have died with Christ (Romans 6:1-14), we have died to the law. Since Christians are raised with Christ from death (See Romans 6:15-23), we are set free to “bear fruit for God.”
- Righteousness is no longer determined by a written code of men. It is determined by a new way which Paul calls, “the way of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit becomes the guide of the Redeemed and teaches us to obey God as we learn to listen more clearly to the voice of the Spirit.

Verses 7-12

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.

- Paul then asks the third great rhetorical question (See Romans 6:1 and 6:15): “Is the law sinful?” As with the other two questions, the response to this question is a resounding “No.”
- The purpose of the law is good because it defines what is right and what is wrong. We know when we are breaking the law, so we know the difference between right and wrong.
- However, in defining the differences between right and wrong, we find that we are tempted to violate the law. Though the speed limit is 55, we know

we go 65. So, we break the law knowing that we are breaking the law. We are then condemned to death by the law.

Verses 13-14

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.

- The law shows us that we are “powerless over sin.” Even though it is good and we know it is good, through it we see that we cannot save ourselves. It shows us the difference between right and wrong and how helpless we are to do the right over the wrong.
- In defining the difference between right and wrong, the law shows us the difference between right and wrong clearly. It makes sin “utterly sinful.”
- Knowing the difference between right and wrong we see that we are unspiritual creatures who serve sin. Christ is our only hope to be freed from sin.

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