

Romans 7-8:17 • The Two Natures

Introduction

My Bible labels the closing verses of chapter 7 as “The Conflict of the Two Natures.” Actually, that’s wrong. There cannot be a conflict between the two natures because one of those natures no longer exists. According to chapter 6, the old nature is dead. So then, why do we still sin?

¹Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? ²For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ³So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.” ⁸But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

[Read 7:1-6]

Q: In verse 6 we read, “...we have been released from the Law.” Does that mean that we have been released from all law? (I.e., lawless, without law)

A: No, it does not mean that we are without law or that we may practice lawlessness. The definite article (“the”) in front of “law” points specifically to the OT Law; e.g., the Ten Commandments. Meaning, we are no longer bound to the OT law.

Q: Follow the logic of verses 1-4. In the example of the husband and wife, who are the two parties? Obviously, the husband and wife. Who are the “two parties” in the life of a believer?

A: The “husband” represents “the old man” (sinful nature) which has died. The new nature (“wife”) continues to live and is joined to the new husband, Christ. Because the old nature died, the law has no more effect. [Regarding death of the old nature (sinful nature), see Romans 6:6]

Q: What is the significance of 7:6?

A: We are no longer bound by the OT law. Therefore, we can serve in the new self through the Spirit and not to the old self through the Law.

[Read v.7-12]

Q: Because we were bound by the Law, was the Law bad? What was the purpose of the Law?

A: No, the Law was good and important. It was the Law that made us aware of our sin and, therefore, our need for Christ.

Q: What is the meaning of the phrases, “...apart from the Law sin is dead” and “I was once alive apart from the Law”?

A: It has to do with the knowledge of sin. If I don’t know that I’m sinning, I live without guilt and shame. But once I’m aware that my actions are sinful, I am immediately imparted guilt, and cannot escape it. I am also under judgment because now I’m aware of sin. And the terrible thing about it is that I will continue to sin, even with the Law present! Verse 9 is saying, “Now I’m dead and I **know** it!”

Q: Meaning of verse 10?

A: Instead of the commandment making me feel good about myself because now I know what to do to live rightly, I soon discover that I cannot keep from doing it (coveting). Therefore, instead of bringing life it brings death and judgment.

Q: Why do you suppose Paul chose the tenth commandment (coveting)?

A: Because it’s something we all do and cannot help but do it!

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¹³Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

¹⁴For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

¹⁵For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁶But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. ¹⁷So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

²¹I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²²For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

^{8:1}Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

[Read v.13]

Q: Did the Law therefore bring death? (v. 13).

A: No, it wasn't the Law that brought death; it was sin. The Law simply notified me that sin was present in me.

[Read v. 14-25]

Note: The point of these verses is that Paul is illustrating the point he made in verse 13.

Q: In verse 14, why does sin have such a hold on me?

A: Because of the flesh. It isn't the Law that's the culprit, it's the flesh. Therefore, verses 15 – 25 present the dilemma of living in the **flesh, NOT THE SIN NATURE!**

Q: In verses 17-18, where does the sin dwell?

A: In my flesh. [NOTE: THE NIV TRANSLATE FLESH AS SINFUL NATURE. THIS IS WRONG! The word in the Greek is *sarx*, meaning *flesh*.]

Q: In verse 21, what is the difference between "evil is present in me" and "I am evil."

A: There's a world of difference. If I have a splinter in my finger, I do not become a splinter. Just because I have sin and evil dwelling in my flesh does not make me evil.

Q: What's the struggle in verses 21-23?

A: Even with the old nature (old man, sinful nature) dead, the fact that it was once present has tainted the flesh. So the new nature (the mind here) wants to do good but still commits sin. In other words, it is impossible to be free from all sin, no matter how hard we try. If that were the final outcome, we'd be miserable.

[Read 8:1-4]

Q: What is the hope for the believer?

A: That even though we still sin, **WE ARE NOT CONDEMNED!** Therefore, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Q: Why are we no longer condemned?

A: Because we're under a **new law**, the law of the Spirit of life and **no longer** under the letter of the Law which only condemned us (sin and death).

Q: Why was the Law "weak"? (v. 3)

A: Because of the flesh. Because we dwell in the flesh, we cannot keep the Law perfectly. And to fail in one part of the Law is to fail in all parts

"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."—James 2:10

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⁵For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

¹²So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Q: So what did God do to help us out of this dilemma?

A: Verses 3 & 4. He sent His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to pay our penalty. Note: “*that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.*” If the requirement of the Law has been fulfilled in us, then all the requirements have been met. Therefore, we are free from the Law.

Q: According to the last part of verse 4, what does this fulfilling of the Law allow us to do?

A: To walk according to the Spirit and no longer according to the Law.

[Read v.5-13]

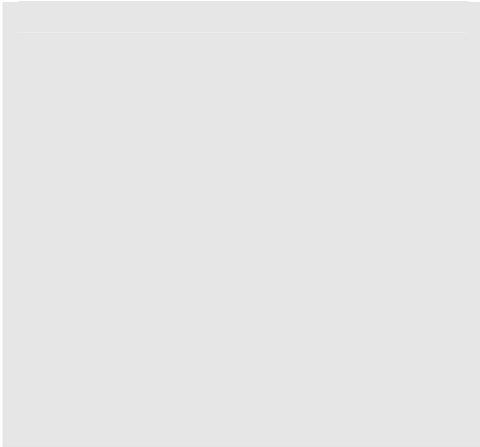
Q: Summarize verses 5-13.

A: If you still have a sinful nature, you do not have a choice—you will walk according to the flesh because that is all you know how to do. However, with the sinful nature gone, we have a choice. We are no longer under “an obligation” to sin. We can either walk according to the flesh (continue in our same old ways) or according to the Spirit. Before, we never had that choice. Now we do. One brings about death, the other, life and peace.

[Read v.14-17]

Q: By being “in Christ Jesus” and “of the Spirit,” how has our identity changed? That is, how has our core person changed from God’s perspective?

A: We are “*children of God.*” As a child of God, we are a co-heir with Christ.



There are a number of personal applications that can be made:

- *Do you see yourself as evil? as bad? as sinful? as no good? How does **God** see you?*
- *Why is it that we will never be entirely free from sin? (Because we're in the flesh.)*
- *Does that mean that sin must always control us? (No. We can have victory over certain sins, and we do not have to let sin reign in our bodies. Through the Spirit, we can overcome any sin.)*
- *What's your new identity? (You're a child of God, and that's a relationship that can never change!)*