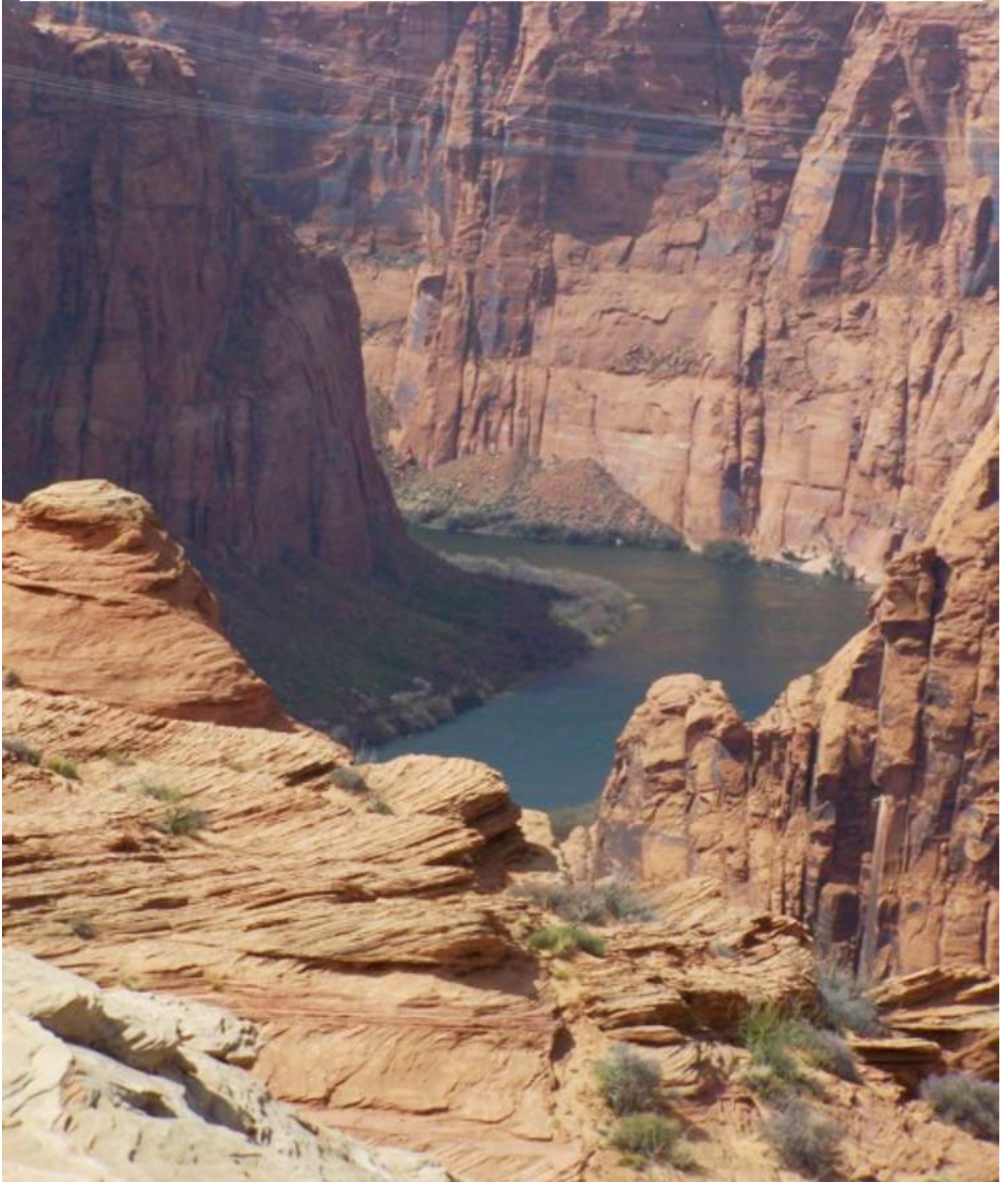


# THE PENTECOST

ISSUE #80 JANUARY 2014



# THE PENTECOST



In this January, 2014 issue, we will navigate through some deep Scripture. Romans, Chapters 6 & 7, have long been explored and taught about by Christian teachers, theologians and others. I also have some thoughts to share on Christian marriage. God bless you.

**Shawn Stevens**

We are continuing our study of the Book of Romans and I pray that you will find revelation in it. We will also look at one of the key foundations of society, marriage between one man and one woman. God bless you as you read.

**Ramona Stevens**

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# ROMANS CHAPTER 6

## OUTLINE :

I Dead To Sin / Alive To God 6.1-14

II Shall We Sin? 6.15-23

## I Dead To Sin / Alive To God

Once the famous preacher and theologian, Martin Lloyd Jones, was asked when he was going to preach a series of messages on the Book of Romans. He said that he would when he came to understand chapter six.<sup>1</sup> I think I know how he felt when he said that.

*1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

*2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

*3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

*4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

*Romans 6.1-4*

The Apostle Paul begins this chapter with a question, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (vs 1). His answer is, "God forbid. ... " (vs 2 ). He is

essentially asking if we should sin, more and more, to magnify the grace we receive and the pardon that we are shown since God's grace forgives sin. Paul is simply recalling this question that he had addressed in Romans 3.5-8. Some would ask, "Who would even ask such a thing?" Actually, this doctrine has been around for a long time even though it has been directly refuted by Scripture. It is called antinomianism. Antinomianism teaches that it doesn't matter what sin you commit after you are saved, and you can sin extraordinarily lustfully if you like; and you are safe. Rasputin, an infamous late 19th and early 20th century spiritual advisor to the Romanov ruling family of Russia openly taught this; he taught that we should sin extraordinarily to magnify God's grace. It was probably taught in Paul's day, also. Paul lived and worked in a very philosophical culture that loved to rationalize sin. We have died to sin Paul says, that is, we have forsaken the path of sin to follow Christ. (See vs 2-4). Does this mean that a Christian will never sin after his conversion? No, I believe that it means that a Christian's sinning does not grow out of his spiritual life but, rather, is at odds with his spiritual life and is to be brought to the Lord to be repented of and to be forgiven.

Paul refers to those who were baptized into Jesus Christ. (See vs 3). Evangelical scholars generally do not equate this baptism to water baptism but, rather, to the spiritual experience of conversion in which we are baptized into Christ in a spiritual way.

We have been baptized into Jesus' death that

we should be in the likeness of His resurrection. Jesus did not stay dead; He rose from death. As well as this being a literal truth, His resurrection also symbolizes the transformation that takes place in us after we are converted. What transformation takes place in us? One day we will be resurrected too but, in this life, we are empowered to “... walk in newness of life.” (vs 4). Newness, here, is “kairos” in the Greek and means “newness of quality and character, not 'neos' which refers merely to newness in point of time.”<sup>2</sup>

We read; “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (vs 11). It is one of the hardest things for a Christian, who wrestles with the attacks of the enemy and who is aware of his or her own personal sins, to consider themselves dead to sin. Christians have God's Spirit within them but their bodies are still tempted to sin and, as a result of sin, experience death. We are still called to “... reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, ...”. (vs 11).

The New Covenant puts God's people in a new place of victory. Reckoning ourselves dead to sin is an important admonition from Paul.

## **II Shall We Sin?**

*What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. (vs 15).*

Paul, again, emphatically answers, “... God

forbid.” Sin enslaves you if you obey it and leads to death. The Christian was a slave to sin but has been made free. (See vs 18).

We read:

*17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

*18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

*Romans 6.17-18*

Christian, be who you are, a servant of righteousness.

Sin has wages to it – death. However, God has a gift of eternal life, through Christ Jesus, for us; “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (vs 23).

This is the gospel in nugget form.

In Chapter 6, Paul boldly refutes the argument that continuing in sin is good because it causes God's grace to abound. He reminds us that we believers were baptized into Christ's death. Being united with Christ in His death also means being united with Him in His resurrection. This behooves us to walk in newness of life, to regard ourselves as being dead to sin and to be slaves of righteousness.

**Shawn Stevens**

ENDNOTES :

1. Taken from *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 6 : The New Man* by D. Martin Lloyd Jones.

Copyright © 1972 by Zondervan Publishing House. Use by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) D. Martin Lloyd Jones, *Romans : The New Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House).

2. Ralph Earle, Th.D., *Word Meanings in The New Testament, Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), 113, 114.

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Scripture taken from the King James Version.

# ROMANS CHAPTER 7

## OUTLINE :

I Dead To The Law - Through Christ 7.1-11

II The Purpose Of The Law 7.7-12

III Paul's Struggle With Sin 7.13-25

## I Dead To The Law – Through Christ

*1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?*

*2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.*

*3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

*4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

*Romans 7.1-4*

The Apostle Paul uses the illustration of marriage to show the relationship between men and the law of God. In this illustration, the law has dominion over a man as a husband has dominion over his wife. Do you see the picture that Paul is painting? The person that we are reading about is first married to the law. However, this is not a good marriage. Why? Because the couple is not suited for each other. The law is specific, exacting and concrete. The wife, here, cannot live within its boundaries. The fault is not in the law, for Paul goes on to say; “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Romans 7.12). The law is good, however, the wife in this illustration cannot live up to it and, therefore, they are not suited for each other. She would be better suited for having Christ as her husband. This is not because Christ is flawed like she is but, rather, that Christ is merciful and gracious. How can this woman, who is married to the law, be free from her marriage to marry Christ instead? Paul tells us; “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.” (vs 2). If the husband dies, then the woman is free to marry again. Paul is saying that Christians have become dead to the law and married to Christ.

Again, we read:

*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised*

*from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Romans 7.4*

What does this mean? Salvation has never been earned by anyone in any dispensation. Paul also teaches; “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3.20). The law only condemns, as we read; “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6.23). Because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid for our redemption, we are dead to the law and, therefore, dead to its penalties. We read further; “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” (Romans 7.4). It was Jesus' death which freed us from the law and joined us to Him. Jesus is the bridegroom. The result of dieing to the law and being married to Christ is that of bearing fruit to God. (See also Galatians 5.22, John 15.1-2 and Philippians 1.11).

*“For when we were in the flesh, ...” (vs 5)*

“Flesh” has different meanings throughout the Bible. It can mean skin or body. Here, it apparently means unredeemed humanness. It is obvious that Paul does not mean merely the physical body in this verse. For, while still in the body, he writes, “ ... when we were in the flesh, ... ” Clearly, he refers to the time when he was under the rule or control of the carnal nature. This implies that he was no longer in such a state.

## **II The Purpose Of The Law**

Without the Law we would not know sin. (See Romans 3.20 and 4.15). We read:

*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

*Romans 7.7*

## **III Paul's Struggle With Sin**

*14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

*15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

*16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

*17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

*18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

*19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

*20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth*

*in me.*

*21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

*22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*

*23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

*24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

*25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

*Romans 7.14-25*

The above passage of scripture has been hotly debated over by learned theologians for centuries. Fine men of God, on either side of the theological fence, have interpreted this passage quite differently. This should provoke some humility in us before approaching an understanding of the passage. There are three main interpretations. These verses reflect, either:

- 1) Paul before his conversion or an unregenerate man
- 2) Paul as a strong Christian or a Christian at his best

3) Paul as a weak Christian or a Christian who is immature

Is Paul saying these words in reference to his life before his conversion? Most early Church Fathers (first 300 yrs) seem to hold this as applying to the unregenerate and to Paul before his conversion. Patristic fathers do, also, but with some exceptions. Augustine originally took this view. Arminians usually take this view, as do the Wesleyans.

Why would some believe that these verses spoke of Paul before his conversion? They hold this view because of what Paul says:

1. "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." (vs 14)
2. Nothing good dwells in him, that is, in his flesh. (See verse 18).

How can this be applied to a Christian when the Christian has died to sin?

Is Paul saying these words as a strong, mature Christian who wrestles with sin? Augustine switched to this position. Reformers and Puritans took this position as well. Why would one believe that these verses speak of Paul as a mature Christian who wrestles with sin? Firstly, this person desires to obey God's law and hates doing evil. (See vss 15, 19, 21). It can be understood that nothing good dwells in his humanness. Thanks to Jesus, his Lord, he serves the law of God with his mind. (See vs 25). This sounds like something a Christian would claim. Would an unbeliever claim to serve God's law?



Is Paul saying these words as a weak Christian or as a Christian who is immature? Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, and others, takes this position. Why? They do so because it is a middle-road position. It can acknowledge the positive points as evidence of faith, while acknowledging Paul's weaker points as evidence of immaturity of faith. I respect those who disagree and I am open to having my mind changed on this, however, to my own understanding position #2 seems most correct. I have a hard time imagining Paul as being an immature Christian at the time of his writing of Romans. After all, he is functioning as an apostle. He is humble in admitting to an inner battle with sin. Would a non-Christian call Jesus “... our Lord. ...”? (vs 25). Would a non-Christian say; “... So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; ...”? (vs 25). I believe that this is what a Christian would say. Also, the verses expressing weakness are written in the present tense and Paul was a believer when he wrote this epistle. I believe that this is Paul making a humble admission of an inner war. Despite a Christians's conversion, his or her body is still tempted, influenced by, and, in some ways, bent towards committing sin. The Christian has a civil war going on inside him. Such an inner civil war is not comfortable. To convey the thought, Paul uses a very graphic image. He says; “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (vs 24). The Romans had a terrible punishment that they sometimes applied to murderers. In some cases, if a man was found guilty of murder he was attached to a body of death.

What does this mean? The corpse of the person who was murdered was permanently bound to the murderer. The murderer was made to live with the awful discomfort of being attached to his victim. Paul uses this imagery to communicate the discomfort that the Christian feels for the Christian's spirit is cleansed and sanctified before God and yet, in this life, is attached to the fallen flesh of the believer. Hence, the Christian has a civil war waging inside of him. Again, we read; “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” (vs 25).

In Chapter 7, we learn that we, as Christians, are dead to the law; we learn that we may be married to another, that is, to Christ. The law does not justify us but, instead, brings us the knowledge of sin. We also read of Paul's wrestling with weakness and sin and have sought to understand the context of these words.

**Shawn Stevens**

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## **A BRIEF COMMENT ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**

One of the truly beautiful gifts that God has given to mankind is Christian marriage. It is the formal and official union of two Christian members of the opposite sex in holy matrimony. It is a spiritual and natural union which is sanctioned by God and meant to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church. It is meant to be a testimony to the love of God and to holiness. Marriage is the only union in which human sexual activity is permitted. In this union, love is experienced and nurtured in a very special way. I believe that it is not to be dissolved by divorce except under specific conditions which the Bible seems to graciously allow.

Marriage is a commitment and an experience which flourishes when God is at the centre of it, directing it. Conversely, it is an experience which is shallow and often falls apart when God is not brought into its middle. Marriage was created by God, for spiritual reasons, and it was never meant to be an experience that He would be excluded from.

Marriage flourishes when it involves the direction of God, mutual respect, sincere commitment and good communication. God bless you.

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