

I DIED.

Romans 7:8-11

REVIEW

“Without the law sin was dead.” “I was alive.” “Sin revived, and I died.” “The commandment was ordained to life, but I found it to be death.” “Sin slew me.”

What in the world do these words mean? Do they matter to me? How did we get here?

As to their mattering: God does not waste our time. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.” Also, God does not state anything beyond the Holy Spirit's power to interpret for us.

As to how did we got here, let's review:

Chapter 1 – Paul says he wants to impart a “spiritual gift” (what we're unwrapping) so that the readers be “established” (to set fast, turned resolutely in a certain direction; in this instance, to be utterly convinced and committed to the truth that the gospel is THE power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes). He then provides a history of how mankind got to the point where he is: vain in his imagination, rejecting the call to honor God, confused about basic truths of life, indulging all sorts of reprehensible sin, bringing upon himself the judgment of God, and encouraging others to join with him.

Chapter 2 – Paul spreads the condemnation to everybody: “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest.”

Chapter 3 – Then where's the profit in favors that the Jews have been given – having the Word of God, knowledge of covenants, etc. – if everyone's still rotten, turned aside, and equally condemned?

Chapter 4 – The advantage occurs if exposure to truth leads to faith. In this our role model is Abraham. He believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Chapter 5 – So for all of us: we can be justified by faith, have peace with God and access to *grace*. With God's grace, sense can be made of everything that happens to us, including tribulations. Even where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!

Chapter 6 – Then perhaps we should continue to sin so that grace abounds? NO! In this chapter Paul explains why our continuance in sin would be illogical, unethical, and counterproductive.

Chapter 7 – But what if we can't stop? Paul answers: But we can. The power to live a victorious Christian life comes with understanding that we were bound to the Law but by death have been delivered from its power. Now we are bound to another, a better Spouse as it were.

You see, in Chapter 7 we have come to a most remarkable and insightful examination of the human heart. Here we find a description of the internal conflict between the old and new natures. Barnes says of this text: “Perhaps no where has Paul evinced more consummate knowledge of the human heart than here.” Paul ventures forward ever more deeply into the heart like the crew in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* heading up the Congo ever more deeply into the dark jungle of Africa.

I. What we learned in verse 7 – “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.”

- A. That the Law was never designed to make people good.
- B. That indeed it convinces people that they are not good.
- C. That it actually makes people worse in that by its prohibitions it incites more sin. See Prov. 9:17: “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”
- D. But that doesn't make the Law bad. It does better than anything else what it is designed to do: make us to *know* sin – as to its many features generally and as to its awfulness in us personally.
- E. You see, “There is nothing about which the natural man is more blind than about its original corruption.” (Matthew Henry)
- F. There is no way of coming to the knowledge of sin which is necessary to repentance, and consequently to peace and pardon, but by comparing our hearts and lives with the law.

II. What we now learn in verse 8 – “But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.”

- A. So the evil is not in the *Law* but in *man*. Sin in man “took occasion by the commandment.”
 - 1. The commandment excites the sin already present in man in the manner that sunshine warms the languid cold snake already in the earth.
 - a. The same sun that energizes the cool garden causes the cool manure to stink. Don't blame the sun. Blame the manure.
 - b. Sin is as a rabid dog in the basement whose provocation did not create it.
 - c. So the view of the Babylonian garment, 200 shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold excited the covetousness already slumbering in Achan.
 - d. Bathsheba's rooftop bathing inflamed the lust already lurking in the heart of David.
 - e. Ahab saw Naboth's vineyard, and his already present materialism engaged and arose.
 - f. See the power of exposure. “I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.” (John Milton)
 - g. Paul's point: No one can understand the full force of his sin inclinations and capabilities until something occurs to call them forth into action.
 - h. Til then one may think the rabid dog “dead” when indeed he only sleeps.
 - B. And note: sin “wrought all manner of concupiscence.”
 - 1. “wrought” – worked in a powerful and efficacious manner, produced, like sea waves banging away at a dike unto finally bursting through. See in II Cor. 7:10 – “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.”

2. “all manner of” – Every species. It was not confined to just this or that, but extended to everything which the Law declared to be wrong. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies....” (Matt. 15:19)
 3. “concupiscence” – (*con* → intensifier, *cupere* → desire) Unlawful or irregular desires. Lusts. Cravings. Manias. Passions. Urgings. Yearnings.
- C. “For without the law sin was dead” – without life, buried underground. Not thought of. Out of sight out of mind. Unprovoked and so unrisen from the dead as far as awareness to the person.
- D. So, in verse 8 Paul is explaining that capabilities and inclinations toward all manner of sin that, unbeknownst to us, were in our souls all along are stirred up by the commands and warnings and prohibitions and punishments of the Law.

III. What we learn in verse 9 – “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”

- A. There was a time, Paul says, when he thought himself a pretty good guy; then came the commandment; he saw how far short he fell and cried, “I am dead.”
1. What was accomplished in him was what Christ sought to accomplish in the rich young ruler. (See Mark 10:17-23.)
 2. It is also what the Lord seeks to accomplish in all of us here – Gal. 3:22-24.

IV. What we learn in verse 10 – “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.”

- A. “ordained to life” – Yes, if a person were to keep it, if man were pure, the Law would lead to peace and happiness, real living as designed by God. Compare Lev. 18:5.
1. The Law is good; it has no evil and is itself suited to produce no evil.
 2. Man is a sinner; he has not obeyed the Law; and in such a case the Law threatens woe.

V. What we learn in verse 11 – “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”

- A. “deceived me” – sin leads or seduces a person from the right way.
- B. The meaning here seems to be, that Paul's corrupt and rebellious propensities, excited by the Law, led him astray; caused him more and more to sin; practiced a species of deception on him by urging him on headlong, and without deliberation, into aggravated transgression, leading further and further from happiness and godliness. “No being in the universe is more deluded than a sinner in the indulgence of evil passions.” (Barnes)
- C. Compare Prov. 7:21-23.

So, when lost, Paul thought he was alive to God, but he was deceived. In reality he was dead in trespasses and sins. When he saw that he was dead, thanks to the instruction of the Law, he was prepared to cry out to God for mercy, based on faith in the Lord Jesus who died for his sins. Therefore, now he is not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation.

As one commentator puts it, "When Paul was instructed by the Law, then he saw in sin what he had never seen before; he then saw sin in its causes, the bitter root, the corrupt bias, the bent to backslide – sin in its colors, deforming, defiling, affronting an awful Majesty, profaning a sovereign crown by casting it to the ground – sin in its consequences, sin with death at the heels of it, sin and the curse entailed upon it. 'Thus sin revived, and then I died; I lost that good opinion which I had had of myself, and came to be of another mind. *Sin revived, and I died;* that is, the Spirit, by the commandment, convinced me that I was in a state of sin, and in a state of death because of sin.' Of this excellent use is the law; it is a lamp and a light; it converts the soul, opens the eyes, prepares the way of the Lord in the desert, rends the rocks, levels the mountains, makes ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Friends, there comes a day when we must die. So is the testimony of George Muller, who said: "There was a day when I died, utterly died" and, as he spoke, he bent lower and lower until he almost touched the floor. "Died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God."

DISCUSSION

1. If a Christian, you have come to know things about sin that lost people do not know. What have you come to know about sin?
 2. List lessons about the heart that Paul provides in our text today.
 3. Has the day come where you died? Explain.