

The Anatomy of a Church (17)

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[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 03/30/14)

PERSONAL HOLINESS

STRUGGLE AND CONFESSION: THE BELIEVER IS TO BE FREE FROM THE LAW, [Romans 7:1-25](#)

The Confessions of a Man's Struggling Soul, [Romans 7:14-25](#)

The spiritual believer is sensitive to sin because it causes good things from God to be withheld ([Jeremiah 5:25](#)), because it robs him of the joy of salvation ([Psalm 51:12](#)), because it inhibits spiritual growth ([1 Corinthians 3:1](#)), because it brings chastisement from the Lord ([Hebrews 12:17](#)), and because it prevents his being a fit vessel for the Lord to use ([2 Timothy 2:21](#)).

The spiritual believer is sensitive to sin because it pollutes Christian fellowship ([1 Corinthians 10:21](#)), because it prevents participating properly in the Lord's Supper ([1 Corinthians 11:28-29](#)), and because it can even endanger his physical life and health ([1 Corinthians 11:30](#); [1 John 5:16](#)).

As pointed out in previous teachings, Paul uses past tense verbs in [Romans 7:7-13](#), which doubtless indicates he was speaking of his pre-conversion life. Beginning in [verse 14](#), however, and continuing throughout the rest of the chapter, he uses the present tense exclusively in reference to himself. That abrupt, obvious, and consistent change of tenses strongly supports the idea that in [verses 14-25](#) Paul is describing his life as a Christian.

Beginning in [verse 14](#) there is also an obvious change in the subject's circumstances in relation to sin. In [verses 7-13](#) Paul speaks of sin as deceiving and slaying him. He gives the picture of being at sin's mercy and helpless to extricate himself from its deadly grasp. But in [verses 14-25](#) he speaks of a conscious and determined battle against sin, which is still a powerful enemy but is no longer his master. In this latter part of the chapter Paul also continues to defend the righteousness of God's law and rejoice in the benefits of His law which, although it cannot save from sin, can nevertheless continue to reveal and convict of sin in the believer's life, just as it did before salvation.

As long as a believer remains on earth in his mortal and corrupted body, the law will continue to be his spiritual ally. The obedient and Spirit-filled believer, therefore, greatly values and honors all the moral and spiritual commandments of God. He continues to declare with the psalmist, "Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee" ([Psalm 119:11](#)), and that Word is more than ever a lamp to his feet and a light to his path ([Psalm 119:105](#)).

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Series: The Anatomy of a Church

God's Word is more valuable for believers under the New Covenant than it was for those under the Old Covenant, not only because the Lord has revealed more of His truth to us in the New Testament, but also because believers now have the fullness of His indwelling Holy Spirit to illumine and apply His truth. Therefore, although the law cannot save or sanctify, it is still holy, righteous, and good ([Romans 7:12](#)), and obedience to it offers great benefits both to believers and unbelievers.

Paul is still teaching about the broader subject of justification by grace through faith. He has established that justification results in the believer's security ([chapter 5](#)), his holiness ([chapter 6](#)), and his freedom from bondage to the law ([Romans 7:1-6](#)). To that list of benefits the apostle now adds sensitivity to and hatred of sin.

In [Romans 7:14-25](#) Paul gives a series of laments about his spiritual predicament and difficulties. The first three laments ([vv. 14-17](#), [18-20](#), [21-23](#)) follow the same pattern. Paul first describes the spiritual condition he is lamenting, then gives proof of its reality, and finally reveals the source of the problem. The final lament ([vv. 24-25](#)) also includes a beautiful exultation of gratitude to God for His Son Jesus Christ, because of whose gracious sacrifice believers in Him are no longer under condemnation, in spite of the lingering power of sin ([Romans 8:1](#)).