THE LAW IS GOOD, THE FLESH IS WEAK, AND SIN IS BAD  
(Romans 7:1-12)

INTRODUCTION

A man is driving with his wife at his side and his mother-in-law in the back seat. The women just won’t leave him alone. His mother-in-law says, “You’re driving too fast!” His wife says, “Stay more to the left.” After ten mixed orders, the man turns to his wife and asks, “Who’s driving this car— you or your mother?”

Our passage this morning could ask us, “Who’s driving your life— the law, the flesh, or sin.” If any of these are, you may be as frustrated as this man!

In chapter 7 Paul is going to talk about the law, the flesh, and sin. How do these things work together to lead us down the wrong path to a bad end? Also, Paul will talk about what God has done for us to deliver us from this wrong path. This is the good news for believers.

What is the law which Paul is speaking of? It is God’s moral law as expressed in what we call the Mosaic law.

What is the flesh that Paul is talking about? It is our old nature, our spiritual orientation before we were born again. It is our nature we received from Adam. Sometimes it is called our sinful nature, our earthly nature, or just the flesh.

What is the sin which plays such a dominate role in this march down the wrong road? It is that evil principle that indwells in our old nature. It is that principle that was let loose when Adam fell. As Paul says in Romans 5:12 NKJV Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

The law, the flesh, and sin—how do they operate in our lives today to keep us from a life of peace and righteousness? And what has God done to deliver us from the law, the flesh, and sin? What God has done for us in Christ Jesus to overcome sin and the flesh is the Good News for Saints.

Let’s jump right into this section and listen for God to speak to us today.

THE LAW IS GOOD

First, let’s talk about God’s law. Although the law plays a big part of our problem with sin, Paul wants us to know that the law is good. The problem is within us. Paul concludes this discussion on the law in verse 12 by saying:
Rom 7:12 NKJV  Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

God’s moral law is holy in that it reflects God’s character. God is holy, the law is holy. God is righteous, the law is righteousness. God is love, the law is love. God is pure, the law is pure. God is eternal, the law is eternal, etc.

The law reflects the character of God. No wonder the Psalmist declared over and over his love for the law. In Psalm 119:97 NKJV Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. To love the law is to love God.

The law is good also because its basic purpose is to make a way for God and man to have communion with one another. This is especially seen in the ceremonial aspects of the law of Moses. God gave the sacrificial system and function of the tabernacle in order for Him to dwell among his people, that His people may come to know Him. God wants to have communion with His people. The law provided the channel for this.

The law is good in that it gives us the way to relate to one another. This is seen in the social or civil aspects of the Mosaic law. These laws were given for God’s people to know how to relate to one another in love and respect. It is summed up in the command, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The law is good in that it points us to Christ and shows us our need for Christ. In Galatians:

(Gal 3:24 NKJV) Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

We should love God’s law and embrace its positive functions. But we must be aware that sin uses the law for its nefarious purposes. Sin uses the law to lead us down the path to death. How – because of the weakness of our flesh.

THE FLESH IS WEAK

Now let’s consider the flesh as Paul speaks of it here in Romans 7. We will see that the flesh is weak. As I said the flesh is our old sinful nature we inherited from Adam. We all have a corrupt flesh and that is what gets us in trouble spiritually. Paul tells us in 8:7 that the flesh is not subject to the law of God, in other words the flesh is hostile to the law of God.

Rom 8:7 NIV The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

The basic orientation of the flesh is that it always rebels against God. This rebellion started in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve rebelled against God by
listening to Satan and choosing to determine for themselves what is good and evil. Our flesh wants to do the same thing. It doesn’t want any authority over it. Now we may have refined flesh, but refined flesh is still in opposition to God.

When we are converted or regenerated, we have a change in our spiritual nature. We are born again. We become new creations in Christ. We have a new orientation in our life. We have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. But we still have the residual effects of our old nature with us and we can still succumb to its desires, Every Christian still has the flesh to deal with.

So, we need to realize that sin will use the weakness of our flesh and its hostility towards God to cause our flesh to fulfill its evil desire. Jeremiah tells us not trust in the flesh.” Jer 17:5 NKJV Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD.

SIN IS BAD

Now let’s consider how sin uses the law and the flesh to bring about these evil desires and ultimately to spiritual death. Look at verses 8-10

Rom 7:8-10 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. (9) I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. (10) And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. (11) For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

How does sin use the law to do destroy me, or kill me? It uses the law to do two things:

1. To provoke my fleshly desires as verse 9 states: “But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire”

2. To deceive me to think I am ok, but really using it to kill me. Verse 11, “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.”

How does sin provoke my fleshly desires? Let me try to illustrate it:

I was reading about a hotel in Galveston, Texas, that overlooks the Gulf of Mexico. It faced a potential problem. The edge of the hotel hangs over the water. Before the hotel opened, someone thought, "What if someone decides to fish out of the windows?" This person then erected signs saying
not to fish from the hotel windows. Guess at the result? People fished out of the windows. Rather than preventing a problem, the signs had the opposite effect and simply exposed humankind's rebellious nature.

When it comes to the law, we are like those people at the hotel, if you tell us not to do something that’s exactly what we are going to do. The sign at the hotel was good; people’s rebellious nature was bad. The law is good, but we have a fallen nature that naturally rebels against God’s authority over us. Sin knows this and exploits this weakness of ours. It brings God’s law to our mind, knowing that our natural response will be to find ways to disobey. It produces in me “all manner of evil desires.” The law shows me what sin is and sin working through my flesh starts me seeing all kinds o ways to break this law. The is how sin uses the law to provoke me to sin,

How does sin kill me? It kills me by deceiving me of the true purpose of the law. The true purpose of the law is to provide guidelines for my communion with God and how to relate to others. Sin wants us to think that the true purpose of the law is for me to establish me own self-righteousness. Sin knows that out of my pride I naturally want to earn my salvation so that I can boast about it. So, sin deceives me to try to fulfill my pride in keeping the law and thinking that I will save myself. This was the way most Jews thought about the law and they missed Christ.

Rom 9:31-32 NKJV but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. (32) Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

This is how sin uses the law to lead us to death. It is by deceiving us to think that we don’t really need Christ to save us. We can do it ourselves.

The law is good. The flesh is weak. Sin is bad.

What is the good news in this passage? It is what God has done for us to deliver us from sin, the flesh, and death.

**KNOW THAT GOD HAS FREED US FROM THE LAW, FLESH, AND SIN**

God has freed us from the law through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When God frees us from the dominion of the law, He takes the power or strength of sin away and He gives me a new spirit to overcome the desires of our old man. In verses 1-6 Paul uses an illustration from married life of his day to get his point across. The essence of the illustration is in verse 2:
(2) For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

Now this illustration is not giving us guidelines on marriage and remarriage. The is simply saying that when a marriage partner died the marriage is over. We are free from the law of marriage.

Paul is using this illustration to show us that we have died to the law by dying in Christ and therefore we are free from the negative effects of the law, i.e. condemnation and judgment, and the wrong use of the law by trying to establish our own righteousness. Verse 4 is the point.

4) Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another

In our new spiritual status we have a new master, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our new husband. The results of this new relationship with Christ stated in verse 6.

(6) But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter

We now can serve in the Spirit, not just try to keep the letter of the law in our own strength. This is the first time Paul mentions living in the Spirit. He will have much more to say about living by the Spirit in chapter 8.

This is the way of deneuting the strength of sin’s use of the law. Consider I Corinthians 15:56-57:

1Co 15:56-57 NKJV  The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.  (57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

This is part of the Good News for believers. We are free from the law. As the song we sang expresses it.

Free from the law, O happy condition,  
Jesus has bled, and there is remission;  
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,  
Grace has redeemed us once for all.
Understanding how sin uses the law to provoke our flesh to disobey the law or to misuse the law as a way of producing self-righteousness is to forewarn us of sin’s tactics and to forewarn us to overcome sin in our lives. We are free from the law in that we have died to the law in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the strength of sin, which is the law, has been neutered. Now we can live by the Spirit, not by our fleshy attempt to keep the law or to disobey the law. This is Good News.

As we began with a question, let’s end. “Who’s driving your life? Law, flesh, or sin.” Let the Spirit drive your life, because in Christ you have been set free from the law, the flesh, and sin.”

Amen? Amen!