

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## *The Greatest Hindrance to the Law*

### INTRODUCTION

**Galatians 3:1-3** You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup> I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

**Galatians 1:6** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

**Romans 7:18, 22, 23** I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

In that passage from Romans Seven, did you hear Paul speak of three Laws? First, he mentioned the Law of the Mind, that is, God's Law, the Moral Law, the 10 Commandments. Then he talked about Law of Sin, that is the permeability of sin. Sin has seeped into every area of life. John Calvin called this "total depravity"; but that is only *Two Laws* that are present and active in the lives of believers. Before we look for the *Third Law*, let's consider some elements of the Law of Sin.

#### **The Power of Sin**

Sin is so much more powerful than we have given it credit for, so much so that the good we do before Salvation is called evil! Jesus said, "If the light in us is darkness, how great is the darkness." (Matthew 6:23)

#### **The Penalty of Sin**

This is where modern believers focus much of their attention and understanding. Such scriptures as "For the wages of sin is death" and "The soul that sins it shall die" become the focal point of our beliefs. In other words, we focus more on what we have been saved *from* than what we have been saved *for*. Testimonies expound the initial salvation experience and rarely move beyond that. One of the reasons for that is found in our lack of understanding about this *Third Law*.

But there is a Third Law too often overlooked, because of the importance and impact of the other two! Who is the God of the Law of the Mind? Jehovah, Jesus! Who is the god of the Law of

Sin? Satan, the Devil, that old Serpent.

Why do I say that there is a Third Law? Because Paul says in verse 23, "But I see a *different* Law in the members of my body". Do you see it? *What* is that Law? Paul calls it "a *different* Law". That word *different* is translated as "*another*" in the King James Version. There are two Greek words translated by our English word "another", one expresses a *numerical* difference and denotes "another of the same sort"; the other, our word here, expresses a *qualitative* difference and denotes "another of a different sort."

Note: "The distinction comes out in the compounds of heteros, viz., heterodidaskaleo, "to teach a different doctrine," 1 Timothy 1:3; 6:3; heterozugo, "to be unequally yoked" (ie., with those of a different character), 2 Corinthians 6:14."

What are we saying? Romans, Chapter Six, dwells on the fact of the Law of Sin; what happened to sin and what happened to us! The control factor used to be *sin*. Romans, Chapter Eight, dwells on the fact of the Law of the Spirit; how He operates and what we can expect as a result of His work. The Control factor here is the *Holy Spirit*. Romans, Chapter Seven, on the other hand, dwells on the conflict between these two Laws. But it is a conflict that is out of bounds; it is a conflict that refuses to fight by the rules of warfare! The rules of warfare stated that Sin's power was "kaput"! "For sin shall not have dominion over you..." (Romans 6:14 -KJV).

How many times have we experienced being trapped in sin *after* we were saved? Did Paul lie? What happened? According to Romans 7:9 "...Sin revived, and I died". We've been *bewitched!* What fooled us? Paul tells us in Verse Eleven "...Sin deceived me". Sin turned the tables on me. How could it do that? I thought it was dead or at least void of dominion. We allowed it to happen. How? By completely ignoring the role of this *different* Law.

Are you aware that Paul never defines this *different* Law? Do you know why? Because this Law operates *differently* in every one of us! This *difference* is not just a difference from the *type* of Law we are dealing with but is also different in *how* this Law operates. Do you know what this Law is? It is the Law of the *Flesh!* There is a lot of controversy over Romans Seven: Is Paul saved or not? In my opinion, Romans 7:9 settles *that!* "For I was alive without (apart) from the Law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

How does Sin revive? When we are drawn away from the Law by the lusts of the flesh.

**James 1:14-16** But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. <sup>16</sup> Do not err, my beloved brethren."

How are we supposed to deal with this Law of the *flesh*? We surrender to God by saying "no" to the flesh! We find then, that there are actually *four* Laws actively working in the lives of Christians. There is the *Law of the Spirit* working with the *Law of the mind*: seeking to lead us into fullness of life. There is the *Law of the flesh*: At war with the Spirit, working with and seeking to revive the *Law of Sin*. And there is the *Law of Sin*: seeking to lead us into death, by luring us through our *fleshly* desires. We have then, two control factors, *Flesh and Spirit*, working through four Laws. One seeks to bring us into *Life* as God intended for it to be, while the other seeks to

bring us into *Death*. Which factor wins is what choice is all about!

We read in Romans 8:8, “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (KJV). That fact of spiritual life must become foundational in our understanding. We also must come to the conclusion uttered by Paul, in Romans 7:18, “In me, that is in my *flesh*, dwells no good thing.” We *must* also come to the realization of Romans 8:2-4 (KJV)

For the *law of the Spirit of life* in Christ Jesus has made me free from the *law of sin and death*.<sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:<sup>4</sup> In order that the *righteousness of the law* might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ~Emphasis added.

Until we become completely convinced that there is *nothing* in our flesh worth saving, and that there is *nothing* in our flesh worth living for, and that there is *nothing* in our flesh that pleases God, we are doomed to continue our existence dominated by the struggle depicted in Romans Seven!

In the *physical* realm, we have the *flesh*, which promotes a life of sin and leads to death. In the *spiritual* realm, we have *faith*, which promotes a life of obedience in the Spirit and leads to life! Hebrews 11:6 reads, “For without faith it is impossible to please God.”

In our Christian walk, the flesh and the Spirit are at war with each other! Romans 7:23 says,

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.

Paul says much the same to the Christians at Galatia,

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are *contrary the one to the other*: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:17 -KJV) ~Emphasis added.

The word *contrary*, literally means, "to lie opposite to, to be set over against." It signifies "to withstand."<sup>1</sup> This is the same word that was used to describe those who opposed Jesus. “And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.” (Luke 13:17 -KJV).

The flesh and the Spirit were never intended to live in harmony. They are sworn enemies. Yet, many Christians still try their whole lives to get these two to live in peace. There are only two possible outcomes in this “warfare”: either the *Flesh* is crucified (Galatians 5:24), put to death (Colossians 3:5), or the *Spirit* is quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19), or grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

**Do you see the contrast?  
Do you understand the conflict?**

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid

### God's Goal

God's goal for humanity is twofold. First, His goal is that we experience the Righteousness that is by faith; secondly, that we exemplify, as a result of the first, The Righteousness of the Law! That cannot happen if we are living in and for our flesh; it will only happen as we live by the Spirit! Herein lies much of the confusion among Christians. Those goals *cannot* be fulfilled *apart* from the Law; and they *cannot* be fulfilled *by* the Law (see Romans 8:3).

Are you aware that the purpose of God in the Cross was to fit us for His presence and to make the righteousness of the Law reality? I cannot stress enough that if *our goal* is to establish *our own* righteousness and we use the Law as the means to that end, we will fail, and fail miserably! The reason is that the flesh *cannot produce* Righteousness! The flesh can *obey* the Law *physically*, but the flesh cannot *produce* Righteousness because it is a *spiritual* requirement. Read again Romans 8:3.

I am reminded of a young man who was soon to be inducted into the Armed Forces. His parents were greatly concerned because they had heard of the wild lifestyles of soldiers. They expressed their concern to their Pastor, and that man of God assured them that the Service would not change their son; but it *would* bring out what was already there. In the same way, the Law brings out what is inside – if *Flesh*, then *sin* is revealed; if *Faith*, then the *Spirit* is manifested in Righteousness.

Our study of the Law has been for the purpose of gaining deeper insight into our dilemma, and for a better understanding of the results of our salvation!

Men through the centuries have inscribed on stone, the history, teachings, and revelations that have been considered significant to their lives. The Babylonians devised the Code of Hammurabi, a stone monolith of royal history. The Egyptians created the expansive hieroglyphics. The Americans and French placed the lone inscription, July 4, 1776 on the tablet held by the Statue of Liberty. But the most significant inscriptions ever placed on stone or parchment are found in Exodus 20....<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Parson's Technology; Ibid.