

DEFEATED LIFE OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

BIBLE TEXT : Romans 7:1-25.

LESSON 386 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Romans 7:1-25

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.

⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

⁶ But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

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.

⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead.

⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but when the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Good Works

Many people in the world want to live good lives. Rich men will sometimes give much of their money to try to make life easier for others. Some people are very unselfish with their time and strength, and will work hard, without pay, to help someone in need. Some are zealous in church work, and think they are serving God. But all this is not enough to prepare one for Heaven, if the heart has not been changed.

When a child is born, the nature of sin is in him. Traits of anger and stubbornness will appear when he is yet very small. The wrong nature is spoken of in the Bible as the carnal nature, and came upon all mankind when Adam sinned in the Garden. No matter how much a person may try to control himself when he grows older, that nature of sin is still on the inside.

During the first few years of a child's life, he is not accountable for the wrong things he does. Maybe he has not been told the laws of God; or even if he has been told, he may not have felt conviction for sin. This describes in a personal way what the giving of the Law of God did to all mankind.

Knowledge of Sin

The Apostle Paul said that when there was no law to say, "Thou shalt not covet," he did not feel bad about coveting. But when he learned what the law was, and then broke it, he felt condemned. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

The Ten Commandments that God gave on Mount Sinai clearly stated to the Israelites what was wrong. They were told, "Thou shalt not . . ." But there was no power in that Law to keep the people from doing the wrong things.

An unsaved person may fly into a fit of rage, and then be so much ashamed of himself that he will make a resolution never to be angry again. He knows it is wrong; and as he wants to do the right thing, he determines that he will never again lose his temper. But the next time something goes wrong, the anger comes up again. He cannot help himself. His heart is sinful.

There have been many thieves who have wanted to quit stealing; but when they had an easy chance to take something again, they could not resist. The desire to do evil was always present. Other people have the same trouble with telling lies.

There are even people who try to be a Christian while they have a sinful heart. They may never do any sin outwardly that would condemn them in the sight of other people, but the evil is still in the heart. Both the good and the evil in them want to rule. Such people are miserable.

Those "good" people, who try to overcome sin without Jesus in their heart, are defeated again and again. They ask God to forgive their sin, and then do the same thing again. When they want to do good, evil is present. They study the Word of God, but the more they learn of the will of God, the more miserable they become because they cannot live up to what the Bible teaches. They must say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am!"

No Condemnation

Some people tell us that the Apostle was describing himself as

commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death.

¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*.

¹² Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

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

a saved man when he wrote Romans 7. But how could there be such misery and condemnation in the life of a man who has been born again? And how different is his statement in the next chapter, after he has been born again! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). Now he is happy. Now he can overcome evil. No more is he condemned for sin — because he does not commit sin. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (I John 5:18).

The law that told him what was wrong carried a death penalty: "Do or die." But what if a person could not "do"? Paul said: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Corinthians 3:6). When Jesus forgives our sins, He gives us power to do His will. We are free from the curse of eternal death.

Jesus said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:6, 7). That new birth changes the heart. Then we have peace within. The Spirit witnesses that we are the sons of God. We begin a new life. The Apostle John also said: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (I John 4:13).

Dead to the Law

The Apostle Paul made a great distinction between the life of trying to keep the Law without being saved, and the overcoming Christian life. He compared it with the marriage state. According to the teachings of the Bible, marriage must be for life. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:5, 6). If God sees man and wife as "one flesh," they cannot be legally separated in His sight. But if one dies, there is nothing to hold them together any longer. The one who remains is free from his marriage vows.

The Pharisees (the religious Jews of Paul's day) tried hard to keep all the old forms and ceremonies of the Law. Even after they became Christians, some would sometimes feel duty bound to keep some ceremony. Paul said that when they were born again they were dead to the Law, so no longer bound to keep the rules; just as a husband or wife was free from his marriage vows when his companion died.

Object Lessons

This subject of the Law came up again and again. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he told them that the Law was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. The forms and ceremonies had been object lessons, telling them of Jesus. The many sacrifices that were slain day after day had pictured Jesus who would someday die as the Lamb of God. All the ceremonies of purification — much washing of clothes and dishes, bathing, keeping themselves from unclean things — were object lessons to teach them to keep away from sin, and to purify their hearts.

The Blood of Jesus must purify our hearts -- not through the forms of sacrificing animals. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13, 14).

New Creatures

The Christian religion is a religion of the heart. The heart must be changed, the sins washed away, if we are to be

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.

acceptable to Jesus. No amount of religious ceremony will gain favour with God if there is not the Spirit of God in it, which makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

The Apostle John compared the new life with the old by saying: "We know that we have passed from death unto life" (I John 3:14). He also said: "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (I John 5:18). There is no more struggle such as Paul mentioned when he said: "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19). That is the old life. In the new life we live as John wrote: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

QUESTIONS

1. Why does a small child show anger and stubbornness?
2. Why was the Law given?
3. How do people feel who try to be Christians without a change of heart?
4. What did Paul say about condemnation, after he was saved?
5. How do we know when we are saved?
6. For how long is marriage?
7. Name some of the Old Testament ceremonies that are object lessons for us.
8. By what are our hearts purged?
9. What name does Paul apply to the person who is "in Christ"? (II Corinthians 5:17).
10. How can we overcome the world?