

Alive Without the Law (Rom 7:9)

Pastor Chad Wagner

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- I. The purpose of this study is to provide a proper Biblical understanding of **Rom 7:7-13** and to answer the following questions:
 1. Was Paul referring to being spiritually alive (in possession of eternal life) when he said that he was "alive without the law once"?
 2. Was Paul referring to living in sinless innocence prior to the law coming to him when he wrote "without the law sin was dead"?
 3. Did Paul die spiritually when the commandment came and sin revived and slew him?
 4. If not, then what kind of death was he referring to?
 5. Does Rom 7:9 disprove the Biblical doctrine which teaches that mankind are conceived and born in sin which was passed to them by Adam?

- II. Spiritual death: the natural state of man.
 1. The first man Adam was created in sinless innocence and placed in the garden of Eden (**Gen 1:27, 31**).
 2. He was given a law from God, which, if broken, would result in Adam's death the day he broke it (**Gen 2:17**).
 3. Adam rebelled and broke God's law, and he died that day spiritually, not physically (**Gen 3:6-7**).
 - A. When Adam sinned, sin entered the world and death by sin, and death was passed upon all men (**Rom 5:12**).
 - B. The death that was passed to all men because of Adam's sin was not only physical death, but it was also spiritual death of judgment and condemnation (**Rom 5:18**).
 - C. By Adam's sin, his posterity were *made* sinners (**Rom 5:19**).
 - D. This spiritual death reigned even over those who did not sin after the similitude of Adam's sin (**Rom 5:14**).
 4. So far reaching was the effect of Adam's sin, that it reached to man in his:
 - A. Youth (**Gen 8:21; Pro 22:15**).
 - B. Birth (**Psa 58:3**).
 - C. Conception (**Psa 51:5**).
 5. This is why the Bible says that men are sinners *by nature* (**Eph 2:3**).
 6. Nature - I. 1. a. The essential qualities or properties of a thing; the inherent and inseparable combination of properties essentially pertaining to anything and giving it its fundamental character.

- III. "Without the law sin was dead" (**Rom 7:8**)
 1. Sin is the transgression of the law (**1Jo 3:4**).
 2. Where there is no law, there is no sin (**Rom 4:15**).

3. The law doesn't cause sin, it brings knowledge of it (**Rom 7:7 c/w Rom 3:20**).
4. Sin is not *imputed* when there is no law (**Rom 5:13**).
 - A. Imputed - 1. Charged (as a fault); attributed or ascribed.
 - B. Attributed - 1. Given as an attribute or appropriate possession; ascribed as proper to.
 - C. Ascribe - v. II. To enter into an account, to reckon, count. 5. *trans.* To enter (a thing) to in an account, to set it to the credit of; to assign, attribute, impute, refer as due or owing to.
 - D. Impute v. - 1. a. *trans.* To bring (a fault or the like) into the reckoning against; to lay to the charge of; to attribute or assign as due or owing to
 - E. Sin was not *imputed* (counted, accounted, reckoned) in the days between Adam and Moses before the law of Moses came, but it was still *imparted*, in that nevertheless death reigned during that time.
 - F. Impart v. - 1. *trans.* To give a part or share of; to make another a partaker of; to bestow, give, communicate.
 - i. Adam, not God, *imparted* sin to us (**Rom 5:19**).
 - ii. Christ *imparted* righteousness to us (**Rom 5:19**).
 - iii. When we believe, righteousness is *imputed* to us (**Jam 2:23**).
 - iv. When we break the law and sin, sin is *imputed* to us (**Rom 5:13**).
5. Thus was the case with Paul who was "without the law" (**Rom 7:9**).
 - A. Without the understanding and conviction of the law which brought the knowledge of sin (**Rom 7:7 c/w Rom 3:20 c/w 1Co 15:56**), sin was "dead".
 - i. Paul's sin was not imputed to him (charged as a fault), but he was most definitely a sinner under condemnation at that time due to both Adam's and his own sin (**Rom 5:12; Rom 3:23; Ecc 7:20**).
 - 1) Ignorance of sin doesn't pardon or extinguish it; it's still sin (**Lev 5:15, 17; 1Pe 1:14-16**).
 - 2) The wages of sin is still death, regardless of a man's knowledge of it (**Rom 6:23**).
 - ii. Sin was dead to Paul in the sense of not being active in condemning him through his conscience.
 - iii. Dead - III. Without animation, vigour, or activity; inactive, quiet, dull. 16. a. Without vigour or animation, lifeless.
 - iv. It is in this sense that this death of sin (sin being dead) is to be understood because the sin that was dead later *revived* (**Rom 7:9**).
 - v. Revive - 1. To return to consciousness; to recover from a swoon or faint.
 - vi. Paul's sin was not dead in the sense of "*that has ceased to live; deprived of life; in that state in which the vital functions and powers have come to an end, and are incapable of being restored*" (OED I.1 definition), but rather it was unconscious without animation.
 - vii. Job gave an illustration of this from nature (**Job 14:8-9**).

IV. "Alive without the law" (**Rom 7:9**)

1. It was before proved that Paul was not spiritually alive from the time of his birth until he consciously sinned, because he inherited Adam's sin (**Rom 5:12**).
 - A. Paul was a sinner *by nature* who was born dead in his sins (**Eph 2:1-3**).

- B. Nature *n.* - I. 1. a. The essential qualities or properties of a thing; the inherent and inseparable combination of properties essentially pertaining to anything and giving it its fundamental character.
- 2. Paul's being "alive" without the law CANNOT refer to *eternal* life (spiritual life) because in the same verse he said "...but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (**Rom 7:9**).
 - A. Eternal life is just that: *eternal*.
 - B. Eternal - 1. a. Infinite in past and future duration; without beginning or end; that always has existed and always will exist: esp. of the Divine Being. 3. a. **Infinite in future duration**; that always will exist; everlasting, endless. ¶The New Testament expressions eternal life, death, punishment, etc. are here referred to sense 3, this being the sense in which the adj. in such contexts is ordinarily taken. (OED)
 - C. Jesus said of His sheep, "And I give unto them eternal life; AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (**Joh 10:28**).
 - D. Never - 1. At no time, on no occasion.
 - E. Temporary eternal life is an oxymoron!
 - F. Therefore, since Paul "died" after being "alive," the being "alive" that Paul wrote of had to be life that was something other than eternal life (spiritual life).
- 3. Paul's being "alive" without the law CANNOT refer to *physical* life because, once again, in the same verse he said "...but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (**Rom 7:9**).
 - A. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of Paul being physically resurrected, and since he was alive when writing of his "death" in the past, it stands to reason that he was not speaking of physical death.
 - B. This point is so obvious that it is unnecessary to make.
- 4. Therefore, this being "alive without the law" must refer to something other than physical or spiritual life, as will be shown in the next section.

V. When was Paul ever "without the law"?

- 1. Paul was born a Jew (**Php 3:5; Act 22:3**).
- 2. He was *brought up* and taught at the feet of Gamaliel (**Act 22:3**).
 - A. Paul was educated in the law from his childhood.
 - B. Bring - 27. **bring up**. a. To bring into a higher position; to elevate, raise, rear, build up; to raise to a point or amount, etc. See senses of up. b. To rear from childhood; to educate, breed.
 - C. Gamaliel was a reputable doctor of the law and a wise man (**Act 5:34-39**).
- 3. Paul was a Pharisee after the most straitest sect of the Jewish religion (**Act 26:5**).
- 4. He was the cream of the crop, more zealous than most (**Php 3:4-6**).
- 5. He advanced, progressed, and grew in the Jews' religion more than many of his peers (**Gal 1:14**).
 - A. Profit *v.* I. 1. *intr.* To make progress; to advance, go forward; to improve, prosper, grow, increase (in some respect).
 - B. Prosper - 1. a. *intr.* Of a person, community, etc.: To be prosperous, fortunate, or successful; to flourish, thrive, succeed, do well.

6. Paul kept the law blamelessly (**Php 3:6**).
7. He had lived in all good conscience (**Act 23:1; Act 24:16; 2Ti 1:3**), even when persecuting the church (**Act 26:9**).
8. He was confident in his flesh (**Php 3:4**).
9. Paul was never without the law in the sense of not being in possession of it and knowing it, but he was without it in the sense of being without the understanding of how it condemned his sin and convicted him.
10. It was in this sense that he was "alive without the law."
 - A. He was confident in his own righteousness, unaware of his sin, and his conscience was not condemning him. He was *living!*
 - B. Alive - 1. a. In life; in the living state; living.

VI. "Sin...slew me" (Rom 7:11) and "I died" (Rom 7:9) — What was this death?

1. Sin had been lying dormant in Paul, deceiving him (**Rom 7:11**).
 - A. Deceive - v. 1. *trans.* To ensnare; to take unawares by craft or guile; to overcome, overreach, or get the better of by trickery; to beguile or betray into mischief or sin; to mislead.
 - B. Sin had deceived Paul by making him think he was alive and righteous.
 - C. Like the people of Laish who dwelt carelessly, quiet and secure, because there was no magistrate in the land to put them to shame (**Jdg 18:7**), so it was with Paul.
 - D. Paul was blameless when it came to keeping the letter of the law (**Php 3:6**).
 - E. Until this point in his life, Paul had not known sin (**Rom 7:7**).
 - F. Paul apparently had never been found guilty of breaking the outward parts of the law (murder, adultery, theft, idolatry, blasphemy, etc.).
 - G. He was one of the Pharisees who were known for their outward show of piety (**Mat 23:23-28**).
 - H. Paul was deceived like the Pharisee in the parable which Jesus told who thought he was righteous because of his works (**Luk 18:9-14**).
 - I. The first nine of the 10 commandments condemned *outward* sins, which Paul thought he was innocent of.
 - J. Jesus taught that outward sins come from the heart (**Mat 15:19**) and can be committed in the heart.
 - i. If you lust after a woman in your heart, you have committed adultery (**Mat 5:27-28**).
 - ii. Jesus likened being angry with your brother without a cause to murder (**Mat 5:21-22**).
 - iii. If you hate your brother in your heart, you are a murderer (**1Jo 3:15**).
 - K. It apparently had not occurred to Paul that the 10th commandment which said "Thou shalt not covet" condemned the lust that was *inside* Paul (**Rom 7:7**).
 - L. Lusts are deceitful (**Eph 4:22**).
 - M. When the commandment came to Paul, and he for the first time realized that he was a filthy sinner full of lust, sin took the occasion and slew him (**Rom 7:11**).
 - N. Occasion - I. 1. a. A falling together or juncture of circumstances favourable or suitable to an end or purpose, or admitting of something being done or effected; an opportunity. †In early use esp. in pregnant sense, Opportunity of

- attacking, of fault-finding, or of giving or taking offence; a 'handle' against a person. to take occasion, to take advantage of an opportunity (to do something).
- O. Sin took its golden opportunity to accuse and find fault with Paul for his lust and wrought in him all manner of concupiscence (**Rom 7:8**).
- i. Wrought - past tense and pple. of work v. I. †1. a. Created; shaped, moulded.
 - ii. Concupiscence - 1. Eager or vehement desire; in Theol. use (transl. Zpihtl-a of N.T.) the coveting of 'carnal things', desire for the 'things of the world'. 2. esp. Libidinous desire, sexual appetite, lust.
- P. Once that door was opened by the commandment which showed what was really in Paul's heart, sin appeared for what it really was and became exceedingly sinful (**Rom 7:13**).
- i. You could say that Pandora's box was opened in Paul's heart.
 - ii. Pandora's box - The gift of Jupiter to Pandora, a box enclosing the whole multitude of human ills, which flew forth when the box was foolishly opened by Epimetheus.
- Q. When lust conceives it brings forth sin, and when sin is finished, it brings forth death (**Jam 1:15**).
- R. Paul was dead.
2. As was before proved, Paul did not die physically when the commandment came.
 3. Nor did he die spiritually at that time, as was already proved.
 4. Along with physical and spiritual death, the Bible also speaks of death to fellowship with God (**Luk 15:24; Eph 5:14; Rev 3:1**).
 - A. This "death" that Paul experienced was not a death to fellowship with God because Paul did not have fellowship with God, being without the law.
 - B. In order to have fellowship with God, one must have fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ through the word of God which declares Him (**1Jo 1:1-3**).
 - C. Paul was far from being in fellowship with God before his conversion, being confident in his own righteousness and persecuting Jesus Christ and His followers (**Act 9:4**). 5. The "death" that Paul experienced when the commandment of the law came and revealed his sin to him was the death of his life of self-righteousness and self-confidence which was described in Section V above.
 6. Paul's "death" was likely similar to that of Nabal's whose "heart died within him, and he became as a stone" (**1Sa 25:37**) when he heard of the events that had transpired between Abigail and David.
 7. Isaiah experienced a similar "death" when confronted with the holiness of God and his own sinfulness (**Isa 6:1-5**).
 - A. He was *undone*.
 - B. Undone - *ppl.* 1. Brought to decay or ruin; ruined, destroyed.
 - C. "I am undone" translates the Hebrew word "damah" which is translated as:
 - i. "perish" - (**Psa 49:12, 20**)
 - ii. "cut off" - (**Jer 47:5; Hos 10:7, 15; Oba 1:5**)
 - iii. "destroy" - (**Hos 4:5, 6**)
 - iv. "cut down" - (**Zep 1:11**)

8. Paul was *undone* when confronted with his own exceeding sinfulness.

VII. When did this happen to Paul?

1. Paul's being "alive without the law" could have *begun* before he was regenerated and called by God's grace, as this type of life before described doesn't require the grace of God to possess.
 - A. Many or most of the Pharisees who outwardly appeared righteous (**Mat 23:27-28**) were not God's children.
 - B. John the Baptist called them a generation of vipers (**Mat 3:7**).
 - C. Jesus asked them rhetorically "how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (**Mat 23:33**).
 - D. Jesus said that they were of their father the devil (**Joh 8:44**).
 - E. Jesus said they made their converts twofold more the children of hell than themselves (**Mat 23:15**).
2. It is very unlikely that Paul's "death" which came about by the commandment of God coming and revealing his sin to him, which in turn slew him, happened before Jesus appeared to him and arrested him on the road to Damascus (**Act 9:3-6**).
 - A. Prior to that time Paul was certainly not convicted of his sin, as he was persecuting God's people (**Act 9:1-2**) and Jesus Himself (**Act 9:4**).
 - B. It is evident that at some point in Paul's life BEFORE Jesus was revealed IN him, that God had called him by His grace, thereby giving him eternal life (**Gal 1:15-16 c/w Act 22:14 c/w Rom 8:28-30**).
 - C. It was because of this calling by God's grace that Paul was able to be slain by his sin when the commandment came (**Rom 7:9**) because he then was subject to the law of God, which he would not have been when he was a reprobate with a carnal mind (**Rom 8:7**).
 - D. Subject - I. 1. That is under the dominion or rule of a sovereign, or a conquering or ruling power; owing allegiance or obedience to a sovereign ruler or state, a temporal or spiritual lord, or other superior.
3. This experience of "death" could have happened when Paul was physically blind for three days in Damascus (**Act 9:9**).
4. It could also have happened when Paul was in Arabia before returning to Damascus and then going to Jerusalem (**Gal 1:17-18**).

VIII. Dead to the law and dead to sin.

1. Paul was smitten by his sin, which was empowered by the law, and died to himself and became converted unto the gospel of Christ.
2. Once this happened, Paul then had the knowledge and assurance that he was:
 - A. Dead to the law (**Rom 7:4-6**).
 - B. Dead to sin (**Rom 6:11**)
3. Instead of being "alive without the law," Paul could now reckon himself "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (**Rom 6:11**)