Exodus, Part 22

In our study of the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites are in the second year of the Exodus and have just observed the second Passover. The Tabernacle has been constructed and everything has been consecrated for service with one last article of worship to be produced before the Israelites set out toward Canaan.

The Silver Trumpets

> **Numbers 10:1** The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Make two silver trumpets. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for breaking camp. 3 And when both are blown, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 4 But if they blow only one, then the chiefs, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall gather themselves to you. 5 When you blow an alarm, the camps that are on the east side shall set out. 6 And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out. 7 But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow a long blast, but you shall not sound an alarm. 8 And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets. The trumpets shall be to you for a perpetual statute throughout your generations. 9 And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. 10 On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the Lord your God.”

The trumpets were made from hammered silver. Josephus describes them as a narrow tube about 18 inches long, bell-shaped at the end. They were different from the common ram’s horn shofar and could give a clearer note. Different trumpet notes (alarm) called out different assemblies. They were blown in warfare, at the start of great feasts, and called the Israelites to assembly order when they were to march. The trumpets were committed to

the priests who had the authority to lead. The NT draws a second powerful image: as the trumpet summoned Israel to the feasts, so will the trumpet call the dead to life (Mt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 8–9).

> **1 Thessalonians 4:16** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven
> with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the
> sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then
> we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in
> the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the
> Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

This image conveys the joy of the resurrection to eternal life and the table prepared in Christ's Kingdom.

Israel Leaves Sinai

> **Numbers 10:11** In the second year, in the second month, on the
> twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of
> the testimony, 12 and the people of Israel set out by stages from the
> wilderness of Sinai. And the cloud settled down in the wilderness of
> Paran.

On the 20th day of the second month of the second year after the Exodus, the Lord lifted the cloud of His glory from above the tabernacle. They had been at Sinai for almost a year. This appearance of God's glory coincided with the end of the Passover celebration. The immediate destination was the Desert of Paran, a vast stretch of barren land that crossed the whole north-central part of the Sinai Peninsula.

> **Numbers 10:13** They set out for the first time at the command of the
> Lord by Moses. 14 The standard of the camp of the people of Judah set
> out first by their companies, and over their company was Nahshon the
> son of Amminadab. 15 And over the company of the tribe of the people of
> Issachar was Nethanel the son of Zuar. 16 And over the company of the
> tribe of the people of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon.
> 17 And when the tabernacle was taken down, the sons of Gershon and
> the sons of Merari, who carried the tabernacle, set out. 18 And the
> standard of the camp of Reuben set out by their companies, and over

their company was Elizur the son of Shedeur. 19 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Simeon was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 20 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Gad was Eliasaph the son of Deuel.
21 Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things, and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival. 22 And the standard of the camp of the people of Ephraim set out by their companies, and over their company was Elishama the son of Ammihud. 23 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 24 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideoni.
25 Then the standard of the camp of the people of Dan, acting as the rear guard of all the camps, set out by their companies, and over their company was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 26 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ochran. 27 And over the company of the tribe of the people of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan. 28 This was the order of march of the people of Israel by their companies, when they set out.

The word translated as “standard” is one describing the banner or flag representing and identifying each tribe and served as a rally-point for the respective tribes. The order of march had been prescribed earlier by the Lord (2:3–31). The Judah division led the way. Following their departure, the Gershonite and Merarite Levites dismantled the Tabernacle and set out after Judah. Next the Reuben division proceeded, followed by the Kohathite Levites, who carried the ark and the other sacred furnishings of the tabernacle. They departed later so that the Gershonites and Merarites would have enough time to erect the tabernacle in its new location before the Kohathites arrived. The division of Ephraim followed the Kohathites, and finally the division of Dan brought up the rear. This was the unvarying pattern of their journeyings from then on.

Numbers 10:29 And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, ‘I will give it to you.’ Come with us, and we will do good to you, for the Lord has promised good to Israel.” 30 But he said to him, “I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred.” 31 And he said, “Please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in

the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. 32 And if you do go with us, whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same will we do to you."

Meanwhile, before the trek to Paran commenced, Moses invited his brother-in-law Hobab to accompany him to the land of promise. The identity of Hobab is debated since his name seems to be an alias for Reuel, Moses' father-in-law. To complicate matters Reuel is also known as Jethro (Ex. 2:18; 3:1). To address the second matter first, no particular problem exists in Moses' father-in-law being known as both Reuel and Jethro. Jacob, for example, was also called Israel, and Joshua was otherwise known as Hoshea (Num. 13:16). As for the identity of Hobab, he was clearly a son of Reuel and therefore Moses' brother-in-law.

Moses' interest in taking Hobab was not merely to enable Hobab to participate in the blessings of the Promised Land. Moses was also interested in benefiting from Hobab's familiarity with the desert routes ahead of them.

Numbers 10:33 So they set out from the mount of the Lord three days' journey. And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them. 34 And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp. 35 And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you." 36 And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

The first leg of the journey from Mount Sinai lasted three days. The travel was undertaken only in the daylight hours; at night the cloud and the ark rested along with the people. As an indication of the warlike nature of the journey, a foretaste of the military conquest that lay ahead, Moses would lead the people in a battle cry in which the presence and conquering power of the Lord were invoked. When the day's march was over he would entreat the Lord to abide among His people through the night.

The People Complain

> **Numbers 11:1** And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. 2 Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire died down. 3 So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

After the three-day journey, the people began to complain in the hearing of the Lord. The reference to His hearing them is anthropomorphic language used to suggest that their complaining was not inward and quiet but reached the very heavens. The Lord, in His anger, consumed many of the rebels with fire. The Hebrew word for “the camp” suggests people who were encamped, not merely a place of encampment. Therefore people were consumed by the fire. This fire is a metaphor to describe the fiery anger and judgment of God in whatever form it might take, though it probably was a literal fire. So impressive was the Lord’s punishment that the people named that part of the campsite Taberah (“burning”). This did not become a normal place name and is not indicated in later itinerary lists (Num 33:16–17).

> **Numbers 11:4** Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”
> 7 Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium. 8 The people went about and gathered it and ground it in handmills or beat it in mortars and boiled it in pots and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil. 9 When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell with it.

No sooner had the wrath of God diminished than the rabble among the people began to crave other food, particularly what they had become used to in Egypt. All they had now, they said, was manna. The Hebrew word

translated as “rabble” means “collection,” occurring only here in the OT. Commentators suggest this “rabble” or “mixed multitude” was mostly the non-Israelites who left Egypt with Israel in the Exodus. However, the text, especially Moses' complaint in the passage below, suggests it includes more than just this small portion of the Israelites.

The manna is here described as like coriander seed. Moses added that it was prepared for consumption by being ground or crushed and then cooked in a pot or made into cakes. Apparently, the people differed in their feelings about its taste. According to Exodus 16:31, it tasted like wafers made with honey, whereas here it is said to have the flavor of something made with olive oil. In any event, the manna compared with the spicy food of Egypt prompted a wholesale rebellion against Moses and the Lord.

> **Numbers 11:10** Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the Lord blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased. 11 Moses said to the Lord, “Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? 12 Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,’ to the land that you swore to give their fathers? 13 Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’ 14 I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. 15 If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.”

In his frustration, Moses’ reaction was to ask the Lord why He was bringing this trouble on him. The Lord, not Moses, had created Israel as a people and had brought them into the wilderness. Since this was so, Moses could not and should not bear the responsibility for them. As he said in verse 14, “I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me.” If the Lord would not relieve him, Moses asked God if he could be put to death.

The 70 elders in Exodus 24:1 are probably not the same ones we see chosen in Numbers 11. In Exodus 24, it appears that the people chose the 70 while in Numbers 11, Moses chose the 70 elders. A major difference is that these 70 Elders were to be given the Spirit to assist Moses.

> **Numbers 11:16** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. 17 And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone. 18 And say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, “Who will give us meat to eat? For it was better for us in Egypt.” Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat. 19 You shall not eat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, 20 but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before him, saying, “Why did we come out of Egypt?” ’ ”

The Lord’s response was neither to allow Moses to die nor to take the leadership of Israel from him. Instead, God created a structure of sub-leadership to enable Moses to delegate responsibility. God told Moses to select 70 elders of Israel, men of good reputation, on whom would be placed the same Spirit who rested on and empowered Moses (cf. Ex. 18:21–26; Acts 6:3).

Then the Lord commanded the people to prepare for the next day when He would give them so much meat they would get sick of it. For a month, they would gorge themselves till the meat would come out of their nostrils. This is probably hyperbolic language, but it effectively communicates the truth that those who reject the perfect purposes of God find the alternatives nauseous and undesirable.

> **Numbers 11:21** But Moses said, “The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!’ 22 Shall flocks and herds

be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?” 23 And the Lord said to Moses, “Is the Lord’s hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.”

Moses found the Lord’s promise to send meat in such quantities to be incredible. Moses thought that even all the flocks and herds of Israel and all the fish of the sea would be inadequate for the 600,000 men of Israel and their families for a month. But the Lord replied that He was more than able to do as He said and Moses would see the results with his own eyes.

Numbers 11:24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. 25 Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.
26 Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” 28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.”
29 But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!” 30 And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

Moses selected 70 elders and gathered them about the Tabernacle. Then the Lord appeared in the cloud, took of the Spirit that was on Moses and placed that Spirit on the 70. As a result, they began to prophesy, but only this one time (lit., “and they did not add”). All that was necessary was for their ministry to be publicly authenticated so the whole community could see that they possessed the same spiritual qualifications and authority as Moses himself.

Prophesying here does not refer to prediction or even to proclamation but to giving (in song or speech) praise and similar expressions without prior training. Not only is the word translated as “prophesying” but also as “under

the influence of divine spirit." This prophesying could be done only in response to the special visitation of the Spirit and was designed to be evidence that the Spirit indeed had come upon these men.

To show that the bestowal of the Spirit was an act of God unrelated to Moses' presence, the Lord placed the Spirit on two men Eldad and Medad, who had not joined the others at the Tabernacle. They began to prophesy which so surprised the assembly in the camp that the people sent a messenger to Moses to inform him of it. Joshua, when he heard, became greatly disturbed and asked Moses to forbid this "unofficial" prophesying. Moses correctly interpreted Joshua's concern as one for Moses' unique character as a mediator of God's blessing, but chided Joshua with the fervent wish that all God's people might share such a measure of God's Spirit with him.

Quail and a Plague

> **Numbers 11:31** Then a wind from the Lord sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, around the camp, and about two cubits above the ground. **32** And the people rose all that day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail. Those who gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. **33** While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague. **34** Therefore the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had the craving. **35** From Kibroth-hattaavah the people journeyed to Hazeroth, and they remained at Hazeroth.

After the 70 had been selected and properly validated, the Lord sent a strong wind from the sea that blew uncounted numbers of quail across the camp. This is the second time the Lord provided quail for his complaining children.

Quail usually fly low and near the ground so the people could easily capture them or club them to the ground. This seems much better than the

commonly held impression that the quail were piled up in a layer three feet thick a day's walk in every direction from the camp. The problems in such a scenario are obvious. For two days and a night, the overflight continued till every gatherer had accumulated at least 10 homers (about 60 bushels) of quail.

Soon after the people began their orgy of lustful gluttony the Lord unleashed His wrath against them and sent a severe plague that killed many of them. The reason for this is clear in the statement that the place where this happened was named Kibroth Hattaavah ("graves of craving") because there they buried the people who had craved other food. Their sin was a rejection of the Lord and His bountiful provision in favor of an unbridled appetite. As Paul later said of the enemies of Christ, "Their god is their stomach" (Phil. 3:19).

No doubt terrified by their experience there, the people moved on to Hazeroth (possibly present-day 'Ain Khadra), just south of the Desert of Paran.

Housekeeping

"Overfamiliarity"

The word is not found in the passages we were using. It was part of my comments on Numbers 1:47-54 listing the very rigid instructions for the taking down and setting up the Tabernacle and how the Israelites would pitch their tents, and especially the warning for any but the Levites to approach the Tabernacle under penalty of death. Sin had not then been judged, and God required separation from sinful man.

> **Numbers 1:47** But the Levites were not listed along with them by their ancestral tribe. **48** For the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **49** "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not list, and you shall not take a census of them among the people of Israel. **50** But appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings, and over all that belongs to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it and shall camp around the tabernacle. **51** When the

tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down, and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death. 52 The people of Israel shall pitch their tents by their companies, each man in his own camp and each man by his own standard. 53 But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the people of Israel. And the Levites shall keep guard over the tabernacle of the testimony." 54 Thus did the people of Israel; they did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses.

However, unlike the Israelites before the Cross, now that sin has been judged, in this Church Age, the author of Hebrews tells us we can "with confidence draw near to the Throne of Grace" without the need for a priest acting as an intermediary.

Hebrews 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

"Confidence" is *parrhesia,* which means free and fearless confidence. However, that does not suggest that we should not be courteous in how we approach Him. We should always observe proper decorum and respect His person.

The Stones

Unfortunately, there is not much known about the stones on the breastplate of the high priest. We don't even know what some of the stones actually were, what their modern equivalent is, or what they looked like. Some have speculated about this, thus, we have several modern lists of the stones that do not agree.

What we do know is that they represented the 12 tribes of Israel and picture the 12 apostles. They are also seen at the 12 gates to the New Jerusalem. According to Josephus but unsupported by Scripture, they were in order of birth of the tribal heads on the breastplate, beginning with

the firstborn in the upper right corner with four rows of three stones each. Thus, we have the modern tradition of “birthstones” representing one’s birth month.

Introspection

The question of “introspection” arose, and Romans 7 was cited. Without reviewing the passage and in our brief discussion, we considered introspection as dwelling on one’s past sin failures and how it can be dangerous. We are called to confess our sins and move on, not dwell on the past. But that isn’t the subject of Romans 7.

Though off-topic from our Exodus study it is worth considering. Understanding what Paul is saying in Romans 7 is a little tricky because he sometimes speaks of the Law of Moses, especially in the preceding chapters, and then in Chapter 7, he uses the same word (*nomos)* more as a principle or standard, which is what the word means. A principle is defined as a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior, a basic idea or rule that explains or controls how something happens or works.

From Romans 5:12 through Chapter 8, Paul considers the subject of sin from its origins through to its solution and, more importantly, its everyday impact on him personally in Chapter 7.

Understanding the conflict in personal (experiential) sanctification involves seeing the relationship between a believer and his indwelling sin nature. In verse 7:14 “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin,” Paul made a transition from the previous subject concerning the Law and even though it was righteous—“The Law is spiritual” (cf. v. 12), it served mainly to demonstrate the reality of sin (vv. 7–13). The Law comes from God who is Spirit (John 4:24) and expresses God’s will for human living. Paul, using himself as the example, said the problem is that I am “unspiritual” (*sarkinos*, “fleshy, made of flesh”). In addition, he was “sold as a slave to sin” (perf. tense, “had been sold and remained in that state”).

In relating his personal experience in 7:14–25 Paul consistently used the present tense. He was describing his present conflict as a Christian with the indwelling sin nature and its continuing efforts to control his daily life. The clause, “sold under sin,” describes an unregenerate person; but the

sin nature also resides in a believer. As a result, that indwelling sin nature continues to seek to claim what it considers its property even after one has become a Christian.

> **Romans 7:15** For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. **16** Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. **17** So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. **18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. **19** For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. **20** Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

At the start, Paul confessed in verse 15, "I do not understand my own actions" (lit., "what I am producing I do not know"). He was like a little boy whose honest answer to why he did something wrong was, "I don't know." A person's actions are at the dictate of someone or something besides himself that he really does not understand and cannot explain.

Paul continued to present this quandary he faced: "For I do not do what I want" (lit., "For what I am wishing, that I am not doing," *prassō*) and conversely, "But I do the very thing I hate" (lit., "What I am hating that I am doing," *poiō*). This statement can be made by an unregenerate person in his highest moral and ethical moments, but it can also be said by a regenerate person. There is no reason to conclude that Paul was not describing his experience as a believer at that time. Paul said, "I agree that the Law is good." Here the Greek word for "good" is *kalos*, "beautiful, noble, excellent". In verse 12 it is *agathē*, "useful, upright." Because of this evidence, Paul concluded, "It is no longer I who do it" (lit., "no longer am I myself producing it") "but it is sin that dwells in me" (lit., "but the dwelling-in-me sin"). This does not mean Paul was avoiding personal responsibility for his actions; he was speaking of the conflict between his desires and the sin nature within him.

Paul's experience convinced him that "the Law is good" (v. 16). But he also concluded, "I know that nothing good dwells in me." Then he hastened to explain that by the phrase "in me" he meant "in my sinful nature" (*sarki*, "flesh"). This is not literal physical or material flesh, but the principle of sin that expresses itself through one's mind and body.

As support for this conclusion, Paul explained, “For I have the desire to do what is right” (“For to wish is present with me” or “is lying beside me”), “but not the ability to carry it out” (lit., “but to produce the good is not”).

Paul recognized that even as a believer he had an indwelling principle of sin that once owned him as a slave and that still expressed itself through him to do things he did not want to do and not to do things he desired to do. This is a problem common to all believers.

Paul was a person who tried to learn from his experiences. He concluded that there are two principles here translated as “laws” (*nomos* principles) that operate in the life of the believer: (1) the law (principle) of sin and death, and (2) the law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ (see 8:2). He is dealing, then, with the presence of two natures in the child of God.

Salvation does not mean that God changes the old nature, cleanses it, or reforms it. The believer’s old nature is still there and just as wicked and opposed to the Spirit today as before the person was saved! Salvation means that God gives the believer a new nature. The Christian still has the ability to sin, but he now has an appetite for holiness—“the desire to do what is right” (v.18).

The law (principle) of sin and death is simply the operation of the old sin nature so that when the believer wants to do good, evil is present. Even the “good things” we do are tainted with evil! Literally, “Evil lies close at hand” (v.21). It is here that you see the difference between the victory of chapter 6 and that of chapter 7. In Chapter 6, the believer gains victory over the evil things of the flesh, that is, he ceases to do evil deliberately, but in Chapter 7 he triumphs over the “good things” the flesh would do. But God will not accept the flesh, for in our flesh there is no good thing. “The flesh profits nothing!” (John 6:63). Yet how many Christians seek to discipline the flesh into obedience, when God plainly says, “The carnal mind [old nature] is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (8:7).

The law (principle) of sin and death is counteracted by the law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It is not by submitting to outward laws that we grow in holiness and serve God acceptably, but **by surrendering to the indwelling Spirit of God.** This law (or principle) is elaborated in chapter 8, especially in the first seventeen verses. We cannot fulfill the

righteousness of the Law (Mosaic) by our own strength; the Spirit fulfills it in us by His power through faith.

> **Romans 8:3** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

What is the practical application of all this? Simply this: In our new position before God, as dead to the Law, we are not expected to obey God in our **own** strength. Unlike Israel under the Mosaic Law, God has not enslaved us under a "new Christian Law" that we must obey *in order to be holy*. Rather, He has given us **His Holy Spirit who enables us to fulfill the demands of God's holiness.**

Christians may have the victory of Chapter 6 and no longer be enslaved to the body of flesh, but Chapter 7 says there is more to the Christian life. Shouldn't we produce fruit for God? Certainly! But the minute we start doing works in our own strength, we discover that we are failures; and, sad to say, many well-meaning Christians stop right there and become spiritual casualties in the angelic conflict. Rather, we should accept the truths of Romans 7—that we are indeed failures in ourselves, that the Law is good but we are carnal, and then through faith allow the Spirit to work out God's will in our life. May God enable us to reckon ourselves dead to sin (chap. 6), and dead to the Law (chap. 7) that we might, through the Spirit, enjoy the blessed liberty of God's children and glorify God in holy living. We must remember that the Law did not consist only of "thou shalt *not*" but it also included "thou shalt."

> **Romans 8:5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

In other words, we want to do right. Of course, we want to manage sin in our lives, but we also want to produce "good" for God. But the moment

we attempt to do that of our own initiative and under our own power, we are doomed to failure. “For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out” (v.7:18). The solution is always found in faith in God and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.