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Romans 7:7-11

7. “What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.”

8. But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

9. I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;

10. and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;

11. for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.”

In this passage Paul is defining the purpose and place of the Law for mankind now that the Messiah has come. In verse 7 of Romans chapter 7, Paul writes: “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law.” Paul obviously had a weakness in the area of covetousness, for he goes on to write: “For I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COVET.’ But sin, taking the opportunity through the

commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind.” (As Paul relates later in verse 13: “Through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.”) Paul then makes this conclusion in verse 8: “For apart from the Law sin is dead.” In other words, without the Law, sin remains undefined and unknown to man.

Then in verse 9 of Romans chapter 7, Paul makes the following statement: “I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died.” Now this is a curious statement indeed if you think about it. The Mosaic Law was in effect during Paul’s lifetime, having been given by God to the nation of Israel some 1,500 years earlier at Mt. Sinai. But Paul states at one point he was “alive apart from the Law”/ then when the commandment came to him, the sin of coveting became alive and produced in Paul coveting of every kind. He concludes by saying, “Sin became alive and I died.”

The only way Paul’s statement in verse 9 can make any sense is by understanding the concepts of life and death in the spiritual sense. To be spiritually alive is to be in fellowship with God, spiritual death comes when one is separated from God because of sin.

So Paul is saying that as a child he was alive; that is, he had fellowship with God. In those early years he was “apart from”--that is, not under,--the Law. But at some point in his youth, “the commandment came”, and he became accountable to the Law. At this point sin became

alive and active in Paul's life, and he died spiritually--that is his fellowship with God was severed. At that point he stood in need of the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And so it is with all men this side of the cross. From our conception and subsequent birth, through infancy and into childhood we exist alive to God, apart from the Law. But when the Law comes to us, we will each individually and deliberately sin against God. And so die; that is become separated from God. Given enough time, all do sin and fall short of the glory of God.

But by God's perfect design, the babies and small children exist in harmony and fellowship with God. Jesus would even have cause to say to His adult followers: "Unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 18:3

"Praise God for His gracious design."