

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, March 27, 2011 – 11:00 AM
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What Condition Is Your Condition In? - Romans 7:7-13

Introduction: As one studies the book of Romans, one would get the idea that Paul writes much like an attorney who develops an argument over 3 or 4 chapters. Sometimes it can be confusing, unless you keep it in its context. In chapter 7 he's talking about the law the Old Testament. He uses the word law 28 times.

In the first part of chapter 7, Paul relates non-Christians to being "*married to the law.*" But that marriage is a bad relationship because "*Mr. Law*" is a husband who demands perfection—he never forgives. But then Paul points out that Christians have been released from the law and now we have a new relationship with Jesus that is like a new marriage.

Today we are going to talk about a person who is still dominated by the law and controlled by sin. This whole chapter is how we relate to the law. **Read Romans 7:7-13**

The problem we have is not with God's law - it's perfect—the problem is that we can't live up to it. The problem is with us, because this Bible is like a mirror, and whenever we look into this mirror of God's law, we see our flaws, and we realize we can't live up to God's standards. That's what Paul is talking about here.

From this passage, I want to point out 3 spiritual conditions people can find themselves in. My title comes from an old song by Kenny Rogers who sang, "*I just dropped in to see what condition my condition was in.*" Well, everybody here is in one of three spiritual conditions. So let's drop in and see what condition your condition is in, shall we? First, there's the condition of being:

1. SAFE - A child is safe and innocent until they recognize the law, meaning the difference between right and wrong. We commonly call this reaching the "*age of accountability.*" It comes from what Paul says in **vs. 9**
READ.

We Baptists generally believe that a child who dies who has never come to understand the difference between right and wrong is safe in the arms of Jesus. We believe that the soul and spirit of those children immediately goes to be with Jesus because they've not reached that age when they are accountable for their sin.

I have a brother who was stillborn. I don't remember him because he never got to experience life here on earth. But he is experiencing the eternal life in Heaven, and I'm going to see him someday because Jesus has Him in His arms and never let's go.

There are a couple of things you need to know about this innocent stage in a person's life. First:

A. Our Sin Nature. To be "*innocent,*" doesn't mean being without sin. We are all born with a sin nature. Ps. 58:3 says that "*Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.*" So, children do sin. I know grandparents think their grandkids can do no wrong, but the fact is, they are sinners by birth. We all are—it's part of our nature.

You know you don't have to teach a child to lie, or be selfish, or to hit and bite. No, you have to teach them not to do those things because they are born with a sinful nature. We all are!

The University of Chicago conducted an experiment a few years ago where they painted all of the benches in Lincoln Park with fresh paint and put up signs that read, "*Wet Paint. Do not touch.*" They put those benches under surveillance and 82% of the people walked up, read the sign, and touched the bench. Nobody can totally go by the rules because we are all sinners by nature. But little children, when they sin by nature, are innocent before God because they don't know it's wrong yet. This leads us to the second thing we need to know about being safe in Jesus:

B. Our Accountability. When we know that something is either right or wrong, that's when the law has come alive, and we are held accountable. Vs. 9 says, "*Sin sprang to life and I died (spiritually).*"

A big question is always, "*What age is the age of accountability?*" I can't answer that because children develop at different stages, emotionally and spiritually. But suffice it to say that it's when the child knows what the rules are, but then they knowingly and willfully choose to break the rules. You see, the Bible teaches we are sinners by nature from birth, but we're also become accountable sinners when we choose to break the rules.

Let me explain it this way. When I first started to play golf, I didn't know the rules. I'd shank a shot off the

tee and into the woods. If I couldn't find it, I'd throw another one out in the fairway where I figured my lost ball went in, and hit it from there and just kept on playing. I figured, "*Okay, one in the woods, two here, I'm hitting number three!*" Well, that sounds good, but I was actually breaking the rules of golf.

But I didn't know that until I read the rules of golf. And the rules say if you hit a ball and it's lost, or you hit it out of bounds, you can't bring one in and just drop it right there! You are penalized what's called "*stroke and distance,*" and you have to go back to the tee and you have to re-tee another ball.

Now, here's the point: For those years when I didn't know I was breaking the rules, I was still guilty. I was just as guilty even though I didn't know the rulebook. If I had been playing in a sanctioned tournament I would've been disqualified because I broke the rules. But now, after I'd read the rules, I'm faced with a totally different dilemma. I've read the rules now, I hit the ball and it's lost in the woods. Now, I'm tempted to do what I'd always done—take a ball, drop it from there, and keep on playing. But here's the thing - now I'm even more guilty because I know the rules, and willfully break them. That's the difference.

A child may sin, and they don't know the rules, but there comes a time when they will know the difference between right and wrong. That's when they say, "*I know this is wrong, but I still am choosing to do it.*" Second, there's the condition of being:

2. LOST - The biblical definition of being lost is: A person who is controlled by sin is spiritually dead. **READ verse 9.**

There are three things that sin does. First:

a. Sin Deceives (READ vs. 11). Think of it like Halloween when kids with masks on come knocking on your door saying, "*Trick or treat.*" You may not recognize who they are. Well, that's exactly what sin does. Sin disguises itself. It puts on a mask and presents itself as something else. It tries to make itself look beautiful. In fact, we've almost stopped calling sin "*sin.*" We don't call it abortion; we call it "*a choice.*" We don't call it drunkenness; we call it "*alcoholism.*" We don't call it fornication; we call it "*having a weak moment.*" We don't call it adultery; we call it "*an affair.*" We don't call it lying; we call it "*stretching the truth.*" We don't call it gossip, we call it a "*prayer request.*"

Do you see how good we've become at disguising sin by calling it different names? We try to make it sound not quite as bad as it is, and that's what sin does: it deceives you, and it lies to you. And it's not just the lost being deceived, it's Christians too!

Sin almost always makes itself look beautiful. Whether it comes to a married person in the shape of an attractive man or woman, or to a business person in the shape of tax evasion; sin is the great deceiver. It looks good. It seems innocent, but it's deceitful! But sin also does something else:

B. Sin Defiles - Sin always defiles you and makes you dirty before God. In Ps. 51, David had to pray, "*Create in me a clean heart, oh God!*" You know what it is to have your hands dirty, don't you. My grandson Griffin can't stand to have his hands dirty. He can't wait to wash off the dirt! When your hands are dirty, you have a sense that "*something's just not right. I've got to clean my hands.*" The Bible says what dirt is to your hands, sin does to your heart; it stains your soul and you have a sense of being defiled.

We as Christians ought to hate sin not only because of what it does to us, but because it is a violation against God.

Did you know the greater the person against whom the crime is committed, the greater the negative consequences? Let me illustrate. What if Ron did something I didn't like, and I hauled off and popped him in the mouth? What would happen? Well, he'd probably beat me up and you as a church would probably fire me and look for another pastor.

But see, Ron's just an average guy. What if a deputy sheriff stopped me for speeding, and handed me a ticket, and I jumped out of my car and popped him in the mouth? The consequences are going to be a little bit more severe, aren't they?

Now, what if I'm down at the state capitol, listening to our Governor give a speech, and he says something I don't like and I make my way up to the governor and pop him one in the mouth? The consequences are going to be even *more* severe.

And what if the President said something I didn't like and I tried to get to him and pop him in the mouth? I'd be in a heap of trouble then. Why? Because the more important the person is you violate, the more the

consequences are going to be negative.

Listen, there is no one more important than God Almighty. And when we lie, lust, and use bad language, it's against God.

When King David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had then had her husband sent to the front lines so he would be killed, then he tried to cover it all up, he was confronted by the OT, Prophet Nathan who exposed his sin. When David became convicted, he prayed: "*Against you, God, and you only have I sinned and done this evil thing in your sight.*" All sin is against God and defiles us in God's sight.

In the New Testament, when the prodigal son came to his senses, he said, "*I'm going to go back to my father and I'm going to say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.'*" All sin is against God and it defiles us and deceives us. But also:

C. Sin Destroys (READ vs. 11 & 13). It's easy to think that one little ole sin won't hurt. But sin always has an asking price that's more than we really want to pay. Whether it's drinking, taking drugs, smoking, or sleeping around; what starts out as one little drink or one marijuana joint, or one smoke, or a one-night stand, it never stops there.

You might start out thinking its cool, but what you don't see is what this cool habit is going to do to you 10 - 20 - 30 - 50 years from now. That's the way sin operates. Up front, all you see is the bait—you never see the hook. Up front, all you hear is the smooth talking serpent—you never see the fangs. Up front, all you see is the sparkle of the fuse—you never think about the explosion that's soon to follow. Sin always destroys.

Paul is saying here, "*Listen, the reason God gave us the law is so we can know what is right and wrong.*" Think of it as natural gas. Now natural gas has no smell or color, but how many of you have ever smelled natural gas? The reason why you can smell it is because on March 18, 1937, in New London, Texas, deadly gas leaked out in the local school. No one knew there was deadly gas in the air. Suddenly, there was a spark and a huge explosion—and 293 students and teachers died.

Since that time, our government said gas is too deadly to remain odorless, so now it is a federal law that an artificial odorant is added to natural gas. That's why natural gas (which is now not "*natural*") now smells like rotten eggs. Our government said that gas is too deadly to remain undetectable!

That's exactly what God is doing in His Word. He is saying, "*Sin is so deadly and I love you so much that I'm not going let you go through life without letting you know that this is sin!*" e gave us His law so we could know what sin is.

If you find yourself in this state of lostness, and controlled by sin, there is good news. The good news is that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. And that leads me to the third spiritual condition we might find ourselves in. You are either safe, you are lost, or you're:

3. SAVED - If you are saved, that means that you have made a conscious decision to turn away from the deadly deceit of sin, and turn toward Jesus to find everlasting life. Now you don't save yourself; that is something only the power of God can do.

Now this condition of salvation is not actually in this passage but that's where Paul is leading. Look at 8:1. Here's the good news, "*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" But how do you get from that lost condition without Christ to the saved condition of being in Christ? It's as easy as "ABC." You can be saved if you will:

A. Admit you are a sinner. Before you can ever be saved, you have to realize and admit you are lost. I've had some people try to tell me that they've always been a Christian. But that is just not very probable. There was a time they were safe, but unless they were converted the very instant after they reached the age of accountability, there had to be a time when they were lost!

I was raised in a Christian home and drug to church every Sunday, Wednesday, and most every night during the summer to a revival meeting somewhere. But I'm here to tell you, for some of that time, until I was 10 years, 5 months, and 13 days old, I was lost! I didn't do a lot of bad things. I remember saying a few cuss words, and stealing some candy from my uncle's house once. But outside of that, I can't remember much I did wrong. But I'm sure I had some traits other people noticed. My brother can probably tell you many, many things about me. I'm sure I was a self-centered, disobedient, and even defiant child at times, but I wasn't a terrible sinner. But even if I'd just committed one sin, I was a sinner and I deserved Hell. I was as lost as I could be. But on Aug. 14, 1964,

I admitted that I was a sinner, I turned to Christ to save me, and He did. Secondly, you must:

B. Believe that Jesus accepted your penalty. The Philippian jailer asked, “*What must I do to be saved?*” Paul told him, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

But believe in what about Jesus? Believe that Jesus is holy, righteous, and sinless, and deserves to live, and that I am, sinful, unholy, disobedient and deserve to die. Believe that when Jesus died on the cross He took all my sins upon Himself. Believe that God made Him who knew no sin to *be* sin for me. If we believe that about Jesus, then God promises that He will save us. Third:

C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. This means that you choose to allow Jesus to run your life. You do that by relinquishing control of your life, and by throwing all your weight upon Him. You trust Jesus to change you and take you to heaven when you die. You can do that by making a public profession of a private confession.

Conclusion: There’s a story of a group of people gathered around a lake in China. None of them could swim, but one man tried, but soon panicked and started drowning. The crowd started calling for help. A Chinese farmer nearby heard their calls and rushed to the lake. The crowd asked, “*Can you swim?*” The farmer said, “*Yes.*” Then the crowd said, “*Well then, rescue this man, he’s drowning!*” The farmer just stood watching. The people said, “*Hey, this man is drowning, please jump in and rescue him!*” But the farmer just stood there watching. Finally when the man went down for the third time, the farmer jumped in, and pulled him to shore. The man survived, but the crowd had no praise for the farmer. Instead, they said, “*You are the biggest coward we have ever known! Why didn’t you go out sooner and rescue that man?*” He replied, “*I can’t swim that well. If I had gone out and tried to save him when he was still trying to save himself he would have drowned both of us. I had to wait until he gave up trying to save himself, and only then could I save him.*”

Maybe you’re here, and your condition is that you’ve been trying to save yourself. You’re trying to “*Be good enough and do enough good things to gain God’s approval.*” If that’s your condition, I invite you to stop struggling with trying to save yourself, and let Jesus do the saving. It’s time you allowed Jesus to save by reaching down from Heaven and rescuing you from drowning in the sea of sin.