



COMMENTARIES ON 'ROMANS'

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Chapter 7

Verse 1. *"Know ye not, brethren, for I speak to them that know the Law."*

Since then he had said, we are "dead to sin," he here shows that not sin only, but also the Law, hath no dominion over them. But if the Law hath none, much less hath sin: and to render his language palatable, he uses a human example to make this plain by. And he seems to be stating one point, but he sets down at once two arguments for his proposition. One, that when a husband is dead, the woman is no longer subject to her husband, and there is nothing to prevent her becoming the wife of another man: and the other, that in the present case it is not the husband only that is dead but the wife also. So that one may enjoy liberty in two ways. Now if when the husband is dead, she is freed from his power, when the woman is shown to be dead also, she is much more at liberty. For if the one event frees her from his power, much more does the concurrence of both. As he is about to proceed then to a proof of these points, he starts with an encomium of the hearers, in these words, "Know ye not, brethren, for I speak to them that know the Law, that is, I am saying a thing that is quite agreed upon, and clear, and to men too that know all these things accurately,

"How that the Law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?"

He does not say, husband or wife, but "man," which name is common to either creature; "For he that is dead," he says, "is freed (Gr. justified) from sin." The Law then is given for the living, but to the dead it ceaseth to be ordained (or to give commands). Do you observe how he sets forth a twofold freedom? Next, after hinting this at the commencement, he carries on what he has to say by way of proof, in the woman's case, in the following way.

Verse 2, 3. *"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. So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she is 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."*

He keeps continually upon this point, and that with great exactness, since he feels quite sure of the proof grounded on it: and in the husband's place he puts the Law, but in the woman's, all believers. Then he adds the conclusion in such way, that it does not tally with the premise; for what the context would require would be, "and so, my brethren, the Law doth not rule over you, for it is dead." But he does not say so, but only in the premise hinted it, and in the inference, afterwards, to prevent what he says. being distasteful, he brings the woman in as dead by saying,

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the Law.”

As then the one or the other event gives rise to the same freedom, what is there to prevent his showing favor to the Law without any harm being done to the cause? “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the Law to her husband as long as he liveth.” What is become now of those that speak evil of the Law? Let them hear, how even when forced upon it, he does not bereave it of its dignity, but speaks great things of its power; if while it is alive the Jew is bound, and they are to be called adulterers who transgress it, and leave it while it is alive. But if they let go of it after it has died, this is not to be wondered at. For in human affairs no one is found fault with for doing this: “but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.” You see how in the example he points out the Law as dead, but in the inference he does not do so. So then if it be while her husband liveth, the woman is called an adulteress. See how he dwells upon the accusations of those who transgress the Law, while it is yet living. But since he had put an end to it, he afterwards favors it with perfect security, without doing any harm hereby to the faith. “For if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she is called an adulteress.” Thus it would have been natural to say next, ye also, my brethren, now the Law is dead, will not be judged guilty of adultery, if ye become married to another husband. Yet he does not use these words, but what? “Ye are become dead to the Law;” if ye have been made dead, ye are no longer under the Law. For if, when the husband is dead, the woman is no longer liable to it, much more when herself is dead also she is freed from the former. Do you note the wisdom of Paul, how he points out that the Law itself designs that we should be divorced from it, and married to another? For there is nothing, he means, against your living with another husband, now the former is dead; for how should there be, since when the husband was alive it allowed this to her who had a writing of divorcement? But this he does not set down, as it was rather a charge against the woman; for although this had been granted, still it was not cleared of blame. (Matthew 19:7, 8.) For in cases where he has gained the victory by requisite and accredited proofs, he does not go into questions beyond the purpose; not being captious. The marvel then is this, that it is the Law itself that acquits us who are divorced from it of any charge, and so the mind of it was that we should become Christ’s. For it is dead itself, and we are dead; and the grounds of its power over us are removed in a twofold way. But he is not content with this alone, but also adds the reason of it. For he has not set down death without special purpose, but brings the cross in again, which had wrought these things, and in this way too he puts us under an engagement. For ye have not been freed merely, he means, but it was through the Lord’s death. For he says,

“Ye are become dead to the Law by the Body of Christ.”

Now it is not on this only he grounds his exhortation, but also on the superiority of this second husband. And so he proceeds: “that ye should be married to another, even to Him Who is raised from the dead.”

Then to prevent their saying, If we do not choose to live with another husband, what theft? For the Law does not indeed make an adulteress of the widow who lives in a second marriage, but for all that it does not force her to live in it. Now that they may not say this, he shows that from benefits already conferred, it is binding on us to choose it: and this he Days down more clearly in other passages, where he says, “Ye are not your own;” and, “Ye are bought with a price;” and, “Be not ye the servants of men” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 7:23); and again, “One died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them.” (2 Corinthians 5:15.) This is then what he here

alludes to in the words, "By the Body." And next he exhorts to better hopes, saying, "That we should bring forth fruit unto God." For then, he means, ye brought forth fruit unto death, but now unto God.

Verse 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."*

You see then the gain to be got from the former husband! And he does not say when we were in the Law, so in every passage shrinking from giving a handle to heretics; but "when we were in the flesh," that is, in evil deeds, in a carnal life. What he says then is, not that they were in the flesh before, but now they went about without any bodies; but by saying what he does, he neither says that the Law is the cause of sins, nor yet frees it from odium. For it held the rank of a bitter accuser, by making their sins bare: since that, which enjoins more to him who is not minded to obey at all, makes the offense greater. And this is why he does not say, the "motions of sins" which were produced by the Law, but which "were through the Law" (Romans 2:27), without adding any "produced," but simply "through the Law," that is to say, which through the Law were made apparent, were made known. Next that he might not accuse the flesh either; he does not say which the members wrought, but "which did work (or were wrought) in our members," to show that the origin of the mischief was elsewhere, from the thoughts which wrought in us, not from the members which had them working in them. For the soul ranks as a performer, and the fabric of the flesh as a lyre, sounding as the performer obliges it. So the discordant tune is to be ascribed not to the latter, but to the former sooner than to the latter.

Verse 6. *"But now," he says, "we are delivered from the Law."*

See how he again in this place spares the flesh and the Law. For he does not say that the Law was made of no effect, or that the flesh was made of no effect, but that we were made of no effect. And how were we delivered? Why by the old man, who was held down by sin, being dead and buried. For this is what he sets forth in the words, "being dead to that, wherein we were held." As if he had said, the chain by which we were held down was deadened and broken through, so that that which held down, namely sin, held down no more. But do not fall back or grow listless. For you have been freed with a view to being servants again, though not in the same way, but "in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Now what does he mean here? for it is necessary to disclose it here, that when we come upon the passage, we may not be perplexed with it. When then Adam sinned, and his body became liable to death and sufferings, it received also many physical losses, and the horse became less active and less obedient. But Christ, when He came, made it more nimble for us through baptism, rousing it with the wing of the Spirit. And for this reason the marks for the race, which they of old time had to run, are not the same as ours. Since then the race was not so easy as it is now. For this reason, He desires them to be clear not from murder only, as He did them of old time, but from anger also; nor is it adultery only that He bids them keep clear of, but even the unchaste look; and to be exempt not from false swearing only, but even from true. (Matthew 5:21, 27, 33.) And with their friends He orders them to love their enemies also. And in all other duties, He gives us a longer ground to run over, and if we do but obey, threatens us with hell, so showing that the things in question are not matters of free-will offering for the combatants, as celibacy and poverty are, but are binding upon us absolutely to fulfill. For they belong to necessary and urgent requisites, and the man who does not do them is to be punished to the utmost. This is why He said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20.) But he that does not see the kingdom, shall

certainly fall into hell. For this cause Paul too says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the Law, but under grace." And here again, "that ye should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." For it is not the letter that condemneth, that is the old Law, but the Spirit that helpeth. And for this reason among the ancients, if any were found practicing virginity, it was quite astonishing. But now the thing is scattered over every part of the world. And death in those times some few men did with difficulty despise, but now in villages and cities there are hosts of martyrs without number, consisting not of men only, but even of women. And next having done with this, he again meets an objection which is rising, and as he meets it, gives confirmation to his own object. And so he does not introduce the solution of it as main argument, but by way of opposing this; that by the exigency of meeting it, he may get a plea for saying what he wishes, and make his accusation not so unpalatable. Having then said, "in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," he proceeds.

Verse 7. *"What then? is the Law sin? God forbid."*

Even before this he had been saying, that "the motions of sins, which were by the Law did work in our members" (ver. 5): and, "sin shall have no dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law." (4:14.) And that "where no law is, there is no transgression." (4:15.) And, "but the Law came in, that the offense might abound" (v. 20); and, "the Law worketh wrath." (4:15.) Now as all these things seem to bring the Law into disrepute, in order to correct the suspicion arising from them, he supposes also an objection, and says, "What then, is the Law sin? God forbid." Before the proof he uses this adjuration to conciliate the hearer, and by way of soothing any who was troubled at it. For so, when he had heard this, and felt assured of the speaker's disposition, he would join with him in investigating the seeming perplexity, and feel no suspicions of him. Wherefore he has put the objection, associating the other with him. Hence, he does not say, What am I to say? but "What shall we say then?" As though a deliberation and a judgment were before them, and a general meeting called together, and the objection came forward not of himself, but in the course of discussion, and from real circumstances of the case. For that the letter killeth, he means, no one will deny, or that the Spirit giveth life (2 Corinthians 3:6); this is plain too, and nobody will dispute it. If then these are confessedly truths, what are we to say about the Law? that "it is sin? God forbid." Explain the difficulty then. Do you see how he supposes the opponent to be present, and having assumed the dignity of the teacher, he comes to the explaining of it. Now what is this? Sin, he says, the Law is not. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the Law." Notice the reach of his wisdom! What the Law is not, he has set down by way of objection, so that by removing this, and thereby doing the Jew a pleasure, he may persuade him to accept the less alternative. And what is this? Why that "I had not known sin, but by the Law. For I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Do you observe, how by degrees he shows it to be not an accuser of sin only, but in a measure its producer? Yet not from any fault of its own, but from that of the froward Jews, he proves it was, that this happened. For he has taken good heed to stop the mouths of the Manichees, that accuse the Law; and so after saying, "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the Law;" and, "I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet;" he adds,

Verse 8. *"But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence."*

Do you see how he has cleared it of all blame? For "sin," he says, "taking occasion by the commandment," it was, and not the Law, that increased the concupiscence, and the reverse of the Law's intent was brought about. This came of weakness, and not of any badness. For when we desire a thing, and then are hindered of it, the flame of the desire is but increased. Now this came not of the Law; for it hindered us of itself to keep us off from it; but sin, that is, thy own listlessness and bad disposition, used what was good for the reverse. But this is no fault in the physician, but in the patient who applies the medicine wrongly. For the reason of the Law being given was, not to inflame concupiscence, but to extinguish it, though the reverse came of it. Yet the blame attaches not to it, but to us. Since if a person had a fever, and wanted to take cold drink when it was not good for him, and one were not to let him take his fill of it, and so increase his lust after this ruinous pleasure, one could not deservedly be found fault with. For the physician's business is simply prohibiting it, but the restraining himself is the patient's. And what if sin did take occasion from it? Surely there are many bad men who by good precepts grow in their own wickedness. For this was the way in which the devil ruined Judas, by plunging him into avarice, and making him steal what belonged to the poor. However it was not the being entrusted with the bag that brought this to pass, but the wickedness of his own spirit. And Eve, by bringing Adam to eat from the tree, threw him out of Paradise. But neither in that case was the tree the cause, even if it was through it that the occasion took place. But if he treats the discussion about the Law with somewhat of vehemence, do not feel surprise. For Paul is making a stand against the present exigency, and suffers not his language to give a handle even to those that suspected otherwise, but takes great pains to make the present statement correct. Do not then sift what he is now going on to say by itself, but put beside it the purpose by which he is led on to speak of these things, and reckon for the madness of the Jews, and their vigorous spirit of contention, which as he desires earnestly to do away with, he seems to bear violently against the Law, not to find fault with it, but to unnerve their vigor. For if it is any reproach to the Law that sin taketh occasion by it, this will be found to be the case in the New Testament also. For in the New Testament there are thousands of laws, and about many more important matters. And one may see the same come to pass there also, not with regard to covetousness only, but to all wickedness generally. For He says, "if I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin," (John 15:22.) Here then sin finds a footing in this fact, and so the greater punishment. And again when Paul discourseth about grace, he says, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be counted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." (Hebrews 10:29.) Has not then the worse punishment its origin from hence, from the greater benefit? And the reason why he says the Greeks were without excuse was, because being honored with the gift of reason, and having gotten a knowledge of the beauty of the creation, and having been placed in a fair way for being led by it to the Creator, they did not so use the wisdom of God, as it was their duty. Seest thou that to the wicked in all cases occasions of greater punishment result from good things? But we shall not in this accuse the benefits of God, but rather upon this even admire them the more: but we shall throw the blame on the spirit of those who abuse the blessings to contrary purpose. Let this then be our line with regard to the Law also. But this is easy and feasible - the other is what is a difficulty. How is it that he says "I had not known lust except the Law had said, Thou shall not covet?" Now if man had not known lust, before he received the Law, what was the reason for the flood, or the burning of Sodom? What does he mean then? He means vehement lust: and this is why he did not say, lust, but "all manner of concupiscence," intimating, in that, its vehemency. And what, it will be said, is the good of the Law, if it adds to the disorder? None; but much mischief even. Yet the charge is not against the Law, but the listlessness of those who received it. For sin wrought it, though by the Law. But this was not the purpose of the Law, nay, the very opposite, Sin then became stronger, he says, and violent. But this again is no charge

against the Law but against their obstinacy. "For without the Law sin is dead." That is, was not so ascertainable. For even those before the Law knew that they had sinned, but they came to a more exact knowledge of it after the giving of the Law. And for this reason they were liable to a greater accusation: since it was not the same thing to have nature to accuse them, and besides nature the Law, which told them distinctly every charge.

Verse 9. *"For I was alive without the Law once."*

When, pray, was that? Before Moses. See how he sets himself to show that it, both by the things it did, and the things it did not do, weighed down human nature. For when "I was alive without the Law," he means, I was not so much condemned.

"But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

This seems indeed to be an accusing of the Law. But if any one will look closely at it, it will be seen to be even an encomium of it. For it did not give existence to sin that before was not, but only pointed out what had escaped notice. And this is even a praise of the Law, if at least before it they had been sinning without perceiving it. But when this came, if they gained nothing besides from it, at all events this they were distinctly made acquainted with, the fact that they had been sinning. And this is no small point, with a view to getting free from wickedness. Now if they did not get free, this has nothing to do with the Law; which framed everything with a view to this end, but the accusation lies wholly against their spirit, which was perverse beyond all supposition. For what took place was not the natural thing, - their being injured by things profitable. And this is why he says "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." He does not say, "it was made," or "it brought forth" death, but "was found," so explaining the novel and unusual kind of discrepancy, and making the whole fall upon their own pate. For if, he says, you would know the aim of it, it led to life, and was given with this view. But if death was the issue of this, the fault is with them that received the commandment, and not of this, which was leading them to life. And this is a point on which he has thrown fresh light by what follows.

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

You observe how he everywhere keeps to sin, and entirely clears the Law of accusation. And so he proceeds as follows.

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

But, if ye be so minded, we will bring before you the language of those who wrest these declarations. For this will make our own statements clearer. For there are some that say, that he is not here saying what he does of the Law of Moses, but some take it of the law of nature; some, of the commandment given in Paradise. Yet surely Paul's object everywhere is to annul this Law, but he has not any question with those. And with much reason; for it was through a fear and a horror of this that the Jews obstinately opposed grace. But it does not appear that he has ever called the commandment in Paradise "Law" at all; no, nor yet any other writer. Now to make this plainer from what he has really said, let us follow out his words, retracing the argument a little. Having then spoken to them about strictness of conversation, he goes on to say, "Know ye not, brethren, how that the Law hath dominion over a man as

long as he liveth? Wherefore ye are become dead to the Law." Therefore if these things are said about the natural law, we are found to be without the natural law. And if this be true, we are more senseless, than the creatures which are without reason. Yet this is not so, certainly. For with regard to the law in Paradise, there is no need to be contentious, test we should be taking up a superfluous trouble, by entering the lists against things men have made up their minds upon. In what sense then does he say, "I should not have known sin but by the Law?" He is speaking, not of absolute want of knowledge, but of the more accurate knowledge. For if this were said of the law of nature, how would what follows suit? "For I was alive," he says, "without the Law once." Now neither Adam, nor any body else, can be shown ever to have lived without the law of nature. For as soon as God formed him, He put into him that law of nature, making it to dwell by him as a security to the whole kind. And besides this, it does not appear that he has anywhere called the law of nature a commandment. But this he calls as well a commandment, and that "just and holy," as a "spiritual law." But the law of nature was not given to us by the Spirit. For barbarians, as well as Greeks and other men, have this law. Hence it is plain, that it is the Mosaic Law that he is speaking of above, as well as afterwards, and in all the passages. For this cause also he calls it holy, saying, "Wherefore the Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." For even though the Jews have been unclean since the Law, and unjust and covetous, this does not destroy the virtue of the Law, even as their unbelief doth not make the faith of God of none effect. So from all these things it is plain, that it is of the Law · of Moses that he here speaks.

Verse 13. *"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin that it might appear sin."*

That is, that it might be shown what great evil sin is, namely, a listless will, an inclinableness to the worse side, the actual doing, and the perverted judgment. For this is the cause of all the evils; but he amplifies it by pointing out the exceeding grace of Christ, and teaching them what an evil He freed the human race from, which, by the medicines used to cure it, had become worse, and was increased by the preventives. Wherefore he goes on to say: "That sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful." Do you see how these things are woven together everywhere? By the very means he uses to accuse sin, he again shows the excellency of the Law. Neither is it a small point which he has gained by showing what an evil sin is, and unfolding the whole of its poison, and bringing it to view. For this is what he shows, by saying, "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." That is, that it may be made clear what an evil sin is, what a ruinous thing. And this is what was shown by the commandment. Hereby he also shows the preeminence of grace above the Law, the preeminence above, not the conflict with, the Law. For do not look to this fact, that those who received it were the worse for it; but consider the other, that the Law had not only no design of drawing wickedness out to greater lengths, but even seriously aimed at hewing down what already existed. But if it had no strength, give to it indeed a crown for its intention, but adore more highly the power of Christ, which abolished, cut away: and plucked up the very roots an evil so manifold and so hard to be overthrown. But when you hear me speak of sin, do not think of it as a substantial power, but evil doing, as it comes upon men and goes from them continually, and which, before it takes place, has no being, and when it has taken place, vanishes again. This then was why the Law was given. Now no law is ever given to put an end to things natural, but in order to correct a way of acting purposely wicked. And this the lawgivers that are without too are aware of, and all mankind in general. For it is the evils from viciousness alone that they are for setting right, and they do not undertake to extirpate those allotted us along with our nature; since this

they cannot do. For things natural remain unalterable, as we have told you frequently in other discourses also.

And so let us leave these contests, and again practice ourselves in exhortation. Or rather, this last part belongs to those contests. For if we cast out wickedness, we should bring virtue in also: and by these means we shall clearly teach that wickedness is no natural evil, and shall be able easily to stop the mouths of them that enquire for the origin of evil, not by means of words only, but of actions also, since we share the same nature with them, but are freed from their wickedness. For let us not be looking at the laboriousness of virtue, but at the possibility of succeeding in it. But if we be in earnest, it will be at once light and palatable to us. But if you tell me of the pleasure of vice, tell out its end too. For it issueth in death, even as virtue leadeth us to life. Or if you think fit let us rather scrutinize them both even before their end; for we shall see that vice has a great deal of pain attached to it, and virtue great pleasure. For what pray is so painful as a bad conscience? or what more pleasing than a good hope? For there is nothing, assuredly there is nothing, which is used to cut us so deep, and press so hard on us, as the expectation of evil: nothing that so keeps us up, and all but gives us wings, as a good conscience. And this we may get a knowledge of even by what takes place before our eyes. For they that dwell in a prison, and are in expectation of sentence against them let them have the enjoyment of luxury repeated beyond count, live a more afflicting life than those that go a begging by the by-roads, yet with nothing upon their consciences to trouble them. For the expectation of a dreadful end will not let them perceive those pleasures which they have in their hands. And why do I speak of prisoners? Why, as for those that are living out of prison, and have a good fortune, yet have a bad conscience about them, handicraftsmen that work for their bread, and spend the whole day amid their labor, are in a far better plight than they. And for this reason too we say, How miserable the gladiators are (though seeing them as we do in taverns, drunken, luxurious, gormandizing), and call them the most miserable of men, because the calamity of the end which they must expect is too great to admit of comparison with that pleasure. Now if to them a life of this sort seems to be pleasing, remember what I am continually telling you, that it is no such marvel that a man who lives in vice should not flee from the misery and pain of vice. For see how a thing so detestable as that, yet seems to be delectable to those who practice it. Yet we do not on this account say, how happy they are, for this is just the very reason why we think them pitiable, because they have no notion of the evils they are amongst. And what would you say of adulterers, who for a little pleasure undergo at once a disgraceful slavery, and a loss of money, and a perpetual fear, and in fact the very life of a Cain, or rather one that is even much worse than his; filled with fears for the present, and trembling for the future, and suspecting alike friend and foe, and those that know about it, and those that know-nothing? Neither when they go to sleep are they quit of this struggle, their bad conscience shaping out for them dreams that abound with sundry terrors, and in this way horrifying them. Far otherwise is the chaste man, seeing he passes the present life unshackled and at full liberty. Weigh then against the little pleasure, the sundry fluctuations of these terrors, and with the short labor of continency, the calm of an entire life; and you will find the latter hath more of pleasantness than the former. But as for the man that is set upon plundering and laying hands upon other men's goods, tell me if he has not to undergo countless pains in the way of running about, fawning upon slaves, freemen, doorkeepers; alarming and threatening, acting shamelessly, watching, trembling, in agony, suspecting everything. Far otherwise is the man that holds riches in contempt, for he too enjoys pleasure in abundance, and lives with no fear, and in perfect security. And if any one were to go through the other instances of vice, he would find much trouble, and many rocks. But what is of greater importance is, that in the case of virtue the difficulties come first, and the pleasant part afterwards, so the trouble is even

thus alleviated. But in the case of vice, the reverse. After the pleasure, the pains and the punishments, so that by these besides the pleasure is done away. For as he who waits for the crown, perceives nothing of present annoyance, so he that has to expect the punishments after the pleasures has no power of gathering in a gladness that is unalloyed, since the fear puts everything in confusion. Or rather if any one were to scrutinize the thing with care, even before the punishment which follows upon these things, he would find that even at the very moment when vice is boldly entered upon, a great deal of pain is felt. And, if you think fit, let us just examine this in the case of those who plunder other men's goods. Or those who in any way get together money, and setting aside the fears, and dangers, and trembling, and agony, and care, and all these things, let us suppose the case of a man, who has got rich without any annoyance, and feels sure about maintaining his present fortune (which he has no means of doing, still for all that let it be assumed for argument's sake). What sort of pleasure then is he to gather in from having so much about him? On the contrary, it is just this very thing that will not let him be glad-hearted. For as long as ever he desires other things besides, he is still upon the rack. Because desire gives pleasure at the time it has come to a stand. If thirsty, for instance, we feel refreshed, when we have drunk as much as we wish; but so long as we keep thirsty, even if we were to have exhausted all the fountains in the world, our torment were but growing greater; even if we were to drink up ten thousand rivers, our state of punishment were more distressing. And thou also, if thou wert to receive the goods of the whole world, and still to covet, wouldest make thy punishment the greater, the more things thou hadst tasted of. Fancy not then that from having gathered a great sum together thou shall have aught of pleasure, but rather by declining to be rich. But if thou covetest to be rich thou wilt be always under the scourge. For this is a kind of love that does not reach its aim; and the longer journey thou hast gone, the further off thou keepest from the end. Is not this a paradox then, a derangement, a madness in the extreme? Let us then forsake this first of evils, or rather let us not even touch this covetousness at all. Yet, if we have touched it, let us spring away from its first motions (prooimivwn). For this is the advice the writer of the Proverbs gives us, when he speaks about the harlot: "Spring away," he says, "tarry not, neither go thou near to the door of her house" (Proverbs 5:8): this same thing I would say to you about the love of money. For if by entering gradually you fall into this ocean of madness, you will not be able to get up out of it with ease, and as if you were in whirlpools, struggle as often as ever you may, it will not be easy for you to get clear; so after falling into this far worse abyss of covetousness, you will destroy your own self, with all that belongs to you. (Acts 8:20.) And so my advice is that we be on our watch against the beginning, and avoid little evils, for the great ones are gendered by these. For he who gets into a way of saying at every sin, This matters nothing! will by little and little ruin himself entirely. At all events it is this which has introduced vice; which has opened the doors to the robber, which has thrown down the walls of cities, this saying at each sin, "This matters nothing!" Thus in the case of the body too, the greatest of diseases grow up, when trifling ones are made light of. If Esau had not first been a traitor to his birthright, he would not have become unworthy of the blessings. If he had not rendered himself unworthy of the blessings, he would not have had the desire of going on to fratricide. If Cain had not fallen in love with the first place, but had left that to God, he would not have had the second place. Again, when he had the second place, if he had listened to the advice, he would not have travailed with the murder. Again, if after doing the murder he had come to repentance, when God called him, and had not answered in an irreverent way, he would not have had to suffer the subsequent evils. But if those before the Law did owing to this listlessness come to the very bottom of misery, only consider what is to become of us, who are called to a greater contest, unless we take strict heed unto ourselves, and make speed to quench the sparks of evil deeds before the whole pile is kindled. Take an instance of my meaning. Are you in the habit of false swearing? do not stop at this only,

but away with all swearing, and you will have no further need of trouble. For it is far harder for a man that swears to keep from false swearing, than to abstain from swearing altogether. Are you an insulting and abusive person? a striker too? Lay down as a law for yourself not to be angry or brawl in the least, and with the root the fruit also will be gotten rid of. Are you lustful and dissipated? Make it your rule again not even to look at a woman (Job 31:1), or to go up into the theater, or to trouble yourself with the beauty of other people whom you see about. For it is far easier not even to look at a woman of good figure, than after looking and taking in the lust, to thrust out the perturbation that comes thereof, the struggle being easier in the preliminaries. Or rather we have no need of a struggle at all if we do not throw the gates open to the enemy, or take in the seeds of mischief. And this is why Christ chastised the man who looks unchastely upon a woman (Matthew 5:28), that He might free us from greater labor, before the adversary became strong, bidding us cast him out of the house while he may be cast out even with ease. For what need to have superfluous trouble, and to get entangled with the enemies, when without entanglement we may erect the trophy, and before the wrestling seize upon the prize? For it is not so great a trouble not to look upon beautiful women, as it is while looking to restrain one's self. Or rather the first would be no trouble at all, but immense toil and labor comes on after looking. Since then this trouble is less, or rather there is no labor at all, nor trouble, but the greater gain, why do we take pains to plunge into an ocean of countless evils? And farther, he who does not look upon a woman will overcome such lust not only with greater ease, but with a higher purity, as he on the other hand who does look, getteth free with more trouble, and not without a kind of stain, that is, if he does get free at all. For he that does not take a view of the beautiful figure, is pure also from the lust that might result. But he who lusteth to look, after first laying his reason low, and polluting it in countless ways, has then to cast out the stain that came of the lust, that is, if he do cast it out. This then is why Christ, to prevent our suffering in this way, did not prohibit murder only, but wrath; not adultery only, but an unchaste look even: not perjury only, but all swearing whatsoever. Nor does he make the measure of virtue stop here, but after having given these laws, He proceeds to a still greater degree. For after keeping us far away from murder, and bidding us to be clear of wrath, He bids us be ready even to suffer ill, and not to be prepared to suffer no more than what he who attacks us pleases, but even to go further, and to get the better of his utmost madness by the overflowingness of our own Christian spirit. For what He says is not, "If a man smite thee on thy right cheek, bear it nobly and hold thy peace;" but He adds to this the yielding to him the other too. For He says, "Turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5:39.) This then is the brilliant victory, to yield him even more than what he wishes, and to go beyond the bounds of his evil desire by the profuseness of one's own patient endurance. For in this way you will put a stop to his madness, and also receive from the second act again the reward of the first, besides putting a stop to wrath against him. See you, how in all cases it is we that have it in our power not to suffer ill, and not they that inflict it? Or rather it is not the not suffering ill alone, but even the having benefits done us that we have in our own power. And this is the truest wonder, that we are so far from being injured, if we be right-minded, that we are even benefited, and that too by the very things that we suffer unjustly at the hands of others. Reflect then; has such an one done you an affront? You have the power of making this affront redound to your honor. For if you do an affront in return, you only increase the disgrace. But if you bless him that did you the affront, you will see that all men give you victory, and proclaim your praise. Do you see how by the things wherein we are wronged, we get good done unto us if we be so minded? This one may see happening in the case of money matters, of blows, and the same in everything else. For if we requite them with the opposite, we are but twining a double crown about us, one for the ills we have suffered, as well as one for the good we are doing. Whenever then a person comes and tells you that "such an one has done you an affront, and keeps continually speaking ill of you

to everybody,” praise the man to those who tell you of him. For thus even if you wish to avenge yourself, you will have the power of inflicting punishment. For those who hear you, be they ever so foolish, will praise you, and hate him as fiercer than any brute beast, because he, without being at all wronged, caused you pain, but you, even when suffering wrong, requited him with the opposite. And so you will have it in your power to prove that all that he said was to no purpose. For he who feels the tooth of slander, gives by his vexation a proof that he is conscious of the truth of what is said. But he who smiles at it, by this very thing acquits himself of all suspicion with those who are present. Consider then how many good things you cull together from the affair. First, you rid yourself of all vexation and trouble. Secondly (rather this should come first), even “if you have sins, you put them off, as the Publican did by bearing the Pharisee’s accusation meekly. Besides, you will by this practice make your soul heroic (Gr. philosophic), and will enjoy endless praises from all men, and will divest yourself of any suspicion arising from what is said. But even if you are desirous of taking revenge upon the man, this too will follow in full measure, both by God’s punishing him for what he has said, and before that punishment by thy heroic conduct standing to him in the place of a mortal blow. For there is nothing that cuts those who affront us so much to the heart, as for us who are affronted to smile at the affront. As then from behaving with Christian heroism so many honors will accrue to us, so from being little-minded just the opposite will befall us in everything. For we disgrace ourselves, and also seem to those present to be guilty of the things mentioned, and fill our soul with perturbation, and give our enemy pleasure, and provoke God, and add to our former sins. Taking then all this into consideration, let us flee from the abyss of a little mind, and take refuge in the port of patient endurance, that here we may at once “find rest unto our souls” (Matthew 11:29), as Christ also set forth, and may attain to the good things to come, by the grace and love toward man, etc.

Verse 14. *“For we know that the Law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.”*

After having said that great evils had taken place, and that sin, taking occasion by the commandment, had grown stronger, and the opposite of what the Law mainly aimed at had been the result, and after having thrown the hearer into a great deal of perplexity, he goes on next to give the rationale of these events, after first clearing the Law of any ill suspicion. For lest - upon hearing that it was through the commandment that sin took that occasion, and that it was when it came that sin revived, and through it deceived and killed - any one should suppose the Law to be the source of these evils, he first sets forth its defense with considerable advantage, not clearing it from accusation only, but encircling it also with the utmost praise. And this he lays down, not as granting it for his own part, but as declaring a universal judgment. “For we know,” he says, “that the Law is spiritual.” As if he had said, This is an allowed thing, and self-evident, that it “is spiritual,” so far is it from being the cause of sin, or to blame for the evils that have happened. And observe, that he not only clears it of accusation, but bestows exceeding great praise upon it. For by calling it spiritual, he shows it to be a teacher of virtue and hostile to vice; for this is what being spiritual means, leading off from sin of every kind’ And this the Law did do, by frightening, admonishing, chastening, correcting, recommending every kind of virtue. Whence then, was sin produced, if the teacher was so admirable? It was from the listlessness of its disciples. Wherefore he went on to say, “but I am carnal;” giving us a sketch now of man, as comporting himself in the Law, and before the Law. “Sold under sin.” Because with death (he means) the throng of passions also came in. For when the body had become mortal, it was henceforth a necessary thing for it to receive concupiscence, and anger, and pain, and all the other passions, which required a great deal of wisdom to prevent their flooding us, and sinking reason in the depth of sin. For in themselves they were not sin,

but, when their extravagancy was unbridled, it wrought this effect. Thus (that I may take one of them and examine it as a specimen) desire is not sin: but when it has run into extravagance, being not minded to keep within the laws of marriage, but springing even upon other men's wives; then the thing henceforward becomes adultery, yet not by reason of the desire, but by reason of its exorbitancy. And observe the wisdom of Paul. For after praising the Law, he hastens immediately to the earlier period, that he may show the state of our race, both then and at the time it received the Law, and make it plain how necessary the presence of grace was, a thing he labored on every occasion to prove. For when he says, "sold under sin," he means it not of those who were under the Law only, but of those who had lived before the Law also, and of men from the very first. Next he mentions the way in which they were sold and made over.

Verse 15. *"For that which I do, I know not."*

What does the "I know not" mean? - I am ignorant. And when could this ever happen? For nobody ever sinned in ignorance. Seest thou, that if we do not receive his words with the proper caution, and keep looking to the object of the Apostle, countless incongruities will follow? For if they sinned through ignorance, then they did not deserve to be punished. As then he said above, "for without the Law sin is dead," not meaning that they did not know they were sinning, but that they knew indeed, but not so distinctly; wherefore they were punished, but not so severely: and again; "I should not have known lust;" not meaning an entire ignorance of it, but referring to the most distinct knowledge of it; and said, that it also "wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, not meaning to say that the commandment made the concupiscence, but that sin through the commandment introduces an intense degree of concupiscence; so here it is not absolute ignorance that he means by saying, "For what I do, I know not;" since how then would he have pleasure in the law of God in his inner man? What then is this, "I know not?" I get dizzy, he means, I feel carried away, I find a violence done to me, I get tripped up without knowing how. Just as we often say, Such an one came and carried me away with him, without my knowing how; when it is not ignorance we mean as an excuse, but to show a sort of deceit, and circumvention, and plot. "For what I would, that I do not: but what I hate, that I do." How then canst thou be said not to know what thou art doing? For if thou willest the good, and hatest the evil, this requires a perfect knowledge. Whence it appears that he says, "that I would not," not as denying free will, or as adducing any constrained necessity. For if it was not willingly, but by compulsion, that we sinned, then the punishments that took place before would not be justifiable. But as in saying "I know not," it was not ignorance he set before us, but what we have said; so in adding the "that I would not," it is no necessity he signifies, but the disapproval he felt of what was done. Since if this was not his meaning in saying, "That which I would not, that I do:" he would else have gone on, "But I do what I am compelled and enforced to." For this is what is opposed to willing and power. But now he does not say this, but in the place of it he has put the word, "that I hate," that you might learn how when he says, "that I would not," he does not deny the power. Now, what does the "that I would not" mean? It means, what I praise not, what I do not approve, what I love not. And in contradistinction to this, he adds what follows; "But what I hate, that I do."

Verse 16. *"If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law, that it is good."*

You see here, that the understanding is not yet perverted, but keeps up its own noble character even during the action. For even if it does pursue vice, still it hates it the while, which would be great

commendation, whether of the natural or the written Law. For that the Law is good, is (he says) plain, from the fact of my accusing myself, when I disobey the Law, and hate what has been done. And yet if the Law was to blame for the sin, how comes it that he felt a delight in it, yet hated what it orders to be done? For, "I consent," he says, "unto the Law, that it is good."

Verse 17, 18. *"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."*

On this text, those who find fault with the flesh, and contend it was no part of God's creation, attack us. What are we to say then? Just what we did before, when discussing the Law: that as there he makes sin answerable for everything so here also. For he does not say, that the flesh worketh it, but just the contrary, "it is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." But if he does say that "there dwelleth no good thing in it," still this is no charge against the flesh. For the fact that "no good thing dwelleth in it," does not show that it is evil itself. Now we admit, that the flesh is not so great as the soul, and is inferior to it, yet not contrary, or opposed to it, or evil; but that it is beneath the soul, as a harp beneath a harper, and as a ship under the pilot. And these are not contrary to those who guide and use them, but go with them entirely, yet are not of the same honor with the artist. As then a person who says, that the art resides not in the harp or the ship, but in the pilot or harper, is not finding fault with the instruments, but pointing out the great difference between them and the artist; so Paul in saying, that "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," is not finding fault with the body, but pointing out the soul's superiority.. For this it is that has the whole duty or pilotage put into its hands, and that of playing. And this Paul here points out, giving the governing power to the soul, and after dividing man into these two things, the soul and the body, he says, that the flesh has less of reason, and is destitute of discretion, and ranks among things to be led, not among things that lead. But the soul has more wisdom, and can see what is to be done and what not, yet is not equal to pulling in the horse as it wishes. And this would be a charge not against the flesh only, but against the soul also, which knows indeed what it ought to do, but still does not carry out in practice what seems best to it. "For to will," he says, "is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Here again in the words, "I find not," he does not speak of any ignorance or perplexity, but a kind of thwarting and crafty assault made by sin, which he therefore points more clearly out in the next words.

Verse 19, 20. *"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me."*

Do you see, how he acquits the essence of the soul, as well as the essence of the flesh, from accusation, and removes it entirely to sinful actions? For if the soul willeth not the evil, it is cleared: and if he does not work it himself, the body too is set free, and the whole may be charged upon the evil moral choice. Now the essence of the soul and body and of that choice are not the same, for the two first are God's works, and the other is a motion from ourselves, towards whatever we please to direct it For willing is indeed natural, and is from God, but willing on this wise is our own, and from our own mind.

Verse 21. *"I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me."*

What he says is not very clear. What then is it that is said? I praise the law, he says, in my conscience, and I find it pleads on my side so far as I am desirous of doing what is right, and that it invigorates this

wish For as I feel a pleasure in it, so does it yield praise to my decision. Do you see how he shows, that the knowledge of what is good and what is not such is an original and fundamental part of our nature, and that the Law of Moses praises it, and getteth praise from it? For above he did not say so much as I get taught by the Law, but "I consent to the Law;" nor further on that I get instructed by it, but "I delight in" it. Now what is "I delight?" It is, I agree with it as right, as it does with me when wishing to do what is good. And so the willing what is good and the not willing what is evil was made a fundamental part of us from the first. But the Law, when it came, was made at once a stronger accuser in what was bad, and a greater praiser in what was good. Do you observe that in every place be bears witness to its having a kind of insensitiveness and additional advantage, yet nothing further? For though it praises and I delight in it, and wish what is good the "evil is" still "present with me," and the agency of it has not been abolished. And thus the Law, with a man who determines upon doing anything good, only acts so far as auxiliary to him, as that it has the same wish as himself. Then since he had stated it indistinctly, as he goes on he gives a yet more distinct interpretation, by showing how the evil is present, how too the Law is a law to such a person only who has a mind to do what is good.

Verse 22. *"For I delight," he says, "in the law of God after the inward man."*

He means, for I knew even before this what was good, but when I find it set down in writing, I praise it.

Verse 23. *"But I see another law warring against the law of my mind."*

Here again he calls sin a law warring against the other, not in respect of good order, but from the strict obedience yielded to it by those who comply with it. As then it gives the name of master (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13) to Mammon, and of God (Philippians 3:19) to the belly, not because of their intrinsically deserving it, but because of the extreme obsequiousness of their subjects so here he calls sin a law, owing to those who are so obsequious to it, and are afraid to leave it, just as those who have received the Law dread leaving the Law. This then, he means, is opposed to the law of nature; for this is what is meant by "the law of my mind." And he next represents an array and battle, and refers the whole struggle to the law of nature. For that of Moses was subsequently added over and above: yet still both the one and the other, the one as teaching, the other as praising what was right, wrought no great effects in this battle; so great was the thralldom of sin, overcoming and getting the upper hand as it did. And this Paul setting, forth, and showing the decided victory it had, says, "I see another law warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity." He does not use the word conquering only, but "bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." He does not say the bent of the flesh, or the nature of the flesh, but "the law of sin." That is, the thrall, the power. In what sense then does he say, "Which is in my members?" Now what is this? Surely it does not make the members to be sin, but makes them as distinct from sin as possible. For that which is in a thing is diverse from that wherein it is. As then the commandment also is not evil, because by it sin took occasion, so neither is the nature of the flesh, even if sin subdues us by means of it. For in this way the soul will be evil, and much more so too, since it has authority in matters of action. But these things are not so, certainly they are not. Since neither if a tyrant and a robber were to take possession of a splendid mansion and a king's court, would the circumstance be any discredit to the house, inasmuch as the entire blame would come on those who contrived such an act. But the enemies of the truth, along with their impiety, fall unawares also into great unreasonableness. For they do not accuse the flesh only, but they also disparage the Law. And yet if the flesh were evil, the Law would be good. For it wars against the Law, and opposes it. If, however, the Law

be not good, then the flesh is good. For it wars and fights against it even by their own account. How come they then to assert that both belong to the devil, putting things opposed to each other before us? Do you see, along with their impiety, how great is their unreasonableness also? But such doctrines as these are not the Church's, for it is the sin only that she condemns; and both the Laws which God has given, both that of nature and that of Moses, she says are hostile to this, and not to the flesh; for the flesh she denies to be sin, for it is a work of God's, and one very useful too in order to virtue, if we live soberly.

Verse 24. *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

Do you notice what a great thralldom that of vice is, in that it overcomes even a mind that delighted in the Law? For no one can rejoin, he means, that I hate the Law and abhor it, and so sin overcomes me. For "I delight in it, and consent to it," and flee for refuge to it, yet still it had not the power of saving one who had fled to it. But Christ saved even one that fled from Him. See what a vast advantage grace has! Yet the Apostle has not stated it thus; but with a sigh only, and a great lamentation, as if devoid of any to help him, he points out by his perplexity the might of Christ, and says, "e wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The Law has not been able: conscience has proved unequal to it, though it praised what was good, and did not praise it only, but even fought against the contrary of it. For by the very words "warreth against" he shows that he was marshaled against it for his part. From what quarter then is one to hope for salvation?

Verse 25. *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Observe how he shows the necessity of having grace present with us, and that the well-doings herein belong alike to the Father and the Son. For if it is the Father Whom he thanketh, still the Son is the cause of this: thanksgiving. But when you hear him say, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" do not suppose him to be accusing the flesh. For he does not say "body of sin," but "body of death:" that is, the mortal body - that which hath been overcome by death, not that which gendered death. And this is no proof of the evil of the flesh, but of the marring it has undergone. As if any one who was taken captive by the savages were to be said to belong to the savages, not as being a savage, but as being detained by them: so the body is said to be of death, as being held down thereby, not as producing it. Wherefore also it is not the body that he himself wishes to be delivered from, but the mortal body, hinting, as I have often said, that from its becoming subject to suffering, it also became an easy prey to sin. Why then, it may be said, the thralldom of sin being so great before the times of grace, were men punished for sinning? Because they had such commands given them as might even under sin's dominion be accomplished. For he did not draw them to the highest kind of conversation, but allowed them to enjoy wealth, and did not forbid having several wives, and to gratify anger in a just cause, and to make use of luxury within bounds. (Matthew 5:38.) And so great was this condescension, that the written Law even required less than the law of nature. For the law of nature ordered one man to associate with one woman throughout. And this Christ shows in the words, "He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female." (ib. 19:4.) But the Law of Moses neither forbade the putting away of one and the taking in of another, nor prohibited the having of two at once! (ib. 5:31.) And besides this there are also many other ordinances of the Law, that one might see those who were before its day fully performing, being instructed by the law of nature. They therefore who lived under the old dispensation had no hardship done them by so moderate a system of laws being imposed upon them. But if they

were not, on these terms, able to get the upper hand, the charge is against their own listlessness. Wherefore Paul gives thanks, because Christ, without any rigorousness about these things, not only demanded no account of this moderate amount, but even made us able to have a greater race set before us. And therefore he says, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ." And letting the salvation which all agreed about pass, he goes from the points he had already made good, to another further point, in which he states that it was not our former sins only that we were freed from, but we were also made invincible for the future. For "there is," he says, "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh." Yet he did not say it before he had first recalled to mind our former condition again in the words, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."