

CHAP. 7

THE Apostle, in this chapter, discourses concerning the freedom of justified and regenerated persons from the law, and concerning the nature, use, and excellency of it; in which he removes several objections to it, and gives an account from his own experience of the struggle and combat there is between flesh and spirit in a regenerate person; and which shews, that though believers are justified from sin, yet still sin remains in them, and is the complaint of their souls. Whereas he had in ver. 14 of the preceding chapter, asserted that believers are not under the law, but under grace: he knew that this would be matter of offence to the believing Jews, who still retained an high opinion of the law; wherefore he takes it up in the beginning of this chapter, and explains his meaning, and shews in what sense justified ones are delivered from it; and first observes a known maxim, which every one, especially such as know any thing of the nature of laws, must allow of; that the law has power over a man as long as he lives, and no longer,

ver. 1 and then particularly instances in the law of marriage, ver. 2 which is in force as long as both parties live and no longer: during the husband's life the wife is bound, but when dead she is loosed, and which is further explained, ver. 3 that should she marry another while her husband is alive, she would be an adulteress; but he being dead, should she marry, she is liable to no such imputation: this the apostle accommodates, ver 4 to the case of the law, and the saints' deliverance from it, in which he asserts that they are dead to the law, and that to them, as in ver. 6 by the body of Christ; and therefore the law could have no dominion over them, as is the case of all laws when men are dead; and so they might be lawfully married to another, to bring forth fruit to God, according to the particular law of marriage. This is illustrated by the different state and condition of God's elect, before and after conversion; whilst in an unconverted state the law irritates in-dwelling sin, and the lusts of it, and by the members of the body operates to the bringing forth the deadly fruit of sin, ver. 5 but when delivered from the irritating

power of the law, that being dead in consequence of the sufferings and death of Christ, they are both in a capacity, and under an obligation to serve the Lord, in a new and spiritual manner, ver. 6 and whereas he had said that the motions of sin are stirred up by the law, ver. 5 he saw that an objection might be raised against the law, as if that was sinful; this he removes by expressing his abhorrence of such a thought, by pointing out the law as that which makes known sin, and by the experience he himself had of it, making known in-dwelling sin to him, ver. 7 when he goes on to give an account of the workings of corrupt nature in him, under the prohibition of the law; how it was with him before it entered into his conscience, and how it was with him afterwards; that before he thought himself alive, and in a fair way to eternal life; but afterwards, as sin appeared to him more vigorous than ever, he found himself a dead man, and dead to all hope of life by the law, being killed by it, or rather by sin which worked by it, ver. 8, 9, 10, 11 and therefore he vindicates the law as holy, just, and good, ver. 12 and

answers an objection that might be formed from what he had said concerning the effect the law had upon him, as if it was made death unto him; whereas the office it did was to shew him the exceeding sinfulness of sin, which, and not the law, was the cause of death, ver. 13 for to it with other saints he bears this testimony, that it is spiritual, though in comparison of it he was carnal and sold under sin, ver. 14 and from henceforward to the end of the chapter, he gives an account of the force and power of in-dwelling sin in him, and the conflict there was in him between grace and corruption: he had knowledge of that which is good, approved of it, and yet did it not, hated sin and yet committed it, ver. 15 but however, his desire after that which was good, and his approbation of it, shewed that he agreed to this, that the law was good, ver. 16 nor was his commission of sin to be imputed to his renewed self, but to in-dwelling corruption, ver. 17 the fleshly part in him, in which was no good thing, ver. 18 he found he had a will to that which is good, but not power to perform it; which was abundantly evident by his practice,

seeing what he would he did not, and what he would not he did. ver. 19 from whence he concludes again, ver. 20 as in ver. 17 that the evil he did was to be reckoned not to his spiritual, or renewed self, but to his corrupt nature; which he found, as a law that had power to command and to cause to obey, always at hand, close by him when he was desirous of doing good, ver. 21 and yet amidst all these workings of sin in him, he found a real delight and pleasure in the holy law of God, as he was renewed in the spirit of his mind, ver. 22 upon the whole he perceived there were two contrary principles in him, which militated one against the other, and sometimes so it was, that through the strength of corrupt nature in him, he was made a captive to the law of sin and death, ver. 23 which fetched from him a doleful lamentation and complaint, as if his case was desperate, and there was no deliverance for him, ver. 24 and yet upon a view of his great Redeemer and Saviour, Jesus Christ, he takes heart, and thanks God that there was, and would be a deliverance for him through Christ, ver. 25 and then

closes the account which stood thus in his experience, and does in the experience of every regenerate man; that with his renewed mind he served the holy law of God from a principle of grace, and with his fleshly and carnal part the law of sin.