

**7-13** The Apostle, all the way along is expecting, from Pharisaical pride and carnal reasoning, continual objections to those precious truths; and therefore stops to answer all, that such men may bring. You will say perhaps, (saith he,) that under such views, is it not making GOD's holy law the foundation for sin, when you charge it as exciting *motions of sin in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death?* If the law of GOD stirs up in me, a disposition to offend; is not this charging the law as the cause of sin? To which *Paul* answers, with an holy warmth of indignation, GOD forbid! The law, by acting as a bridle to restrain, when it gives out its commands and threatening, can never surely be charged as the cause to evil, because our corruptions are thereby more provoked to offend. When a man throws up a fence, to check the torrent of waters; his wisdom is not impeachable, because those waters swell, and rage the more by the opposition. The sun is not chargeable with improperly shedding its warmth and sweet influences, because reptiles take advantage thereof, to bring their spawn into life, under its incubation. In like

manner, the holy law of GOD loseth nothing of its holiness, because our ruined, undone, and unholy nature finds occasion, from the purity of its precepts, to manifest the greater opposition to it, by our impurities.—Reader! pause a moment to observe, and to observe with great solemnness, to what an awful state our whole nature is reduced by the fall! To such an extent indeed, that the very means the LORD hath adopted to shew to man his misery, the sinner perverts into a greater occasion of testifying the desperately wicked state of his heart! Oh! who knows, who can calculate, or fathom the depth of human depravity? What man hath ever arrived at the bottom of it, so as to have equal apprehensions to what it really is, of *the plague of his own heart?* Reader! If you and I ever make any progress, under divine teachings, in this first, and most important of all sciences; we must not wait to learn our lessons from discoveries of common sins, and transgressions. These, through grace, may be learnt daily, and alas! too often there is occasion afforded to learn them hourly in the events of

life. *For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.* [Prov. 24:16](#). But, when the LORD layeth judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, in our most holy things; who shall calculate the iniquity found there? [Isaiah 28:17](#). Sir! It is a solemn thought, but as certain as it is solemn, that were it not for our Almighty High Priest (as Aaron represented him of old,) bearing away the iniquity of our offerings to the LORD; the best services, and the best prayers, presented by any of the Adam-nature in our fallen state, would call forth everlasting condemnation! [Exod. 28:38](#). JEHOVAH hath said: *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.* Sanctified by them in CHRIST, or sanctified upon them in their destruction, as Nadab and Abihu were, when offering strange fire. [Levit. 10:1, 2, 3](#). Oh! the unspeakable mercy of Heaven, that sin-bearing Lamb of GOD to bear away the iniquity of our most holy things into a land not inhabited! [Levit. 16:21, 22](#). Oh! the grace, and to the praise of the glory of that grace, which hath made us accepted in the Beloved! [Ephes. 1:6](#).

The Apostle prosecutes the sub-

ject yet further, under the same view, of the holiness of GOD'S law condemning the sinner; and to take off all possible objections in the illustration of the doctrine, he brings forth the argument as if against himself. *I had not known sin (saith he) but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.* Paul here speaks in his own person, and of himself, looking back to the days of his Pharisaical righteousness. The time when he had a very high opinion of himself; and as he saith, *he was alive without the law once.* Not that he was ignorant of the law of GOD from his youth: for he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers; and was zealous towards GOD. [Acts 22:3](#). But the meaning is, that he had not, in those days, the least knowledge of the spirituality of GOD'S law. He was alive, in a cheerful confidence of his good estate before GOD; and by an outward attention to things, as they appeared before men, he considered himself very praise-worthy, and within a few steps of Heaven. Reader! if there be a delusion upon

earth, one more common than another, this is the one! How little do such men know of *the plague of their own heart!*

But *Paul* goes on. *When the commandment came, (saith he,) sin revived, and I died.* What doth he mean? When the commandment came! Why the commandment was in the world ages before *Paul* was born. He could not mean, therefore, that he had never heard the commandment before! But the sense is, that the law was never brought home to his conscience by the powerful hand of GOD the HOLY GHOST until his memorable conversion. Then the LORD, for the first time, opened his eyes to the right apprehension of the law, and to the right knowledge of himself, as a sinner before GOD: and the consequence was, that all those high towering thoughts which he had conceived of his own goodness, fell to the ground, and he himself fell with them a self-condemned sinner before GOD. Reader! what know you personally of these things? Hath the same LORD which taught *Paul*, taught you? Hath GOD the HOLY GHOST brought you acquainted with the anatomy of your own heart, and

dissected to your view all its foldings? Hath the LORD laid open the workings of it, and made you out of love with it, as he did *Paul*? If so, you will find cause to bless the LORD for such a portrait as he hath caused the Apostle here to draw of himself; in which every man, taught by the same Almighty Master, and brought up in the same school, may discover his own features. *For, (as the wise man saith,) as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.* [Prov. 27:19.](#)