

Romans 8:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Analysis

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God (to phronēma tēs sarkos echthra eis theon)—Echthra means active hostility, not mere indifference. The flesh-oriented mind is God's enemy, in a state of war against His character and claims. This echoes James 4:4: "friendship with the world is enmity with God." The present tense "is" indicates an abiding state, not occasional opposition.

For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (oude gar dunatai)—The double negative intensifies: not subject and cannot be subject. This is total inability apart from regeneration. The carnal mind lacks capacity for submission to divine authority—not won't submit but can't submit. This demonstrates the necessity of new birth (John 3:3); moral reformation is insufficient. Only the Spirit's regenerating work can reverse this fundamental hostility.

Historical Context

Paul's doctrine of total inability contradicted both Jewish confidence in law-keeping ability and Greek philosophical optimism about human reason. This verse became foundational in Augustine's debates with Pelagius (early 5th century) over whether humans possess natural capacity to obey God apart from grace.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding the carnal mind as "enmity" rather than mere weakness change your view of sin?
2. What are the implications of "neither indeed can be" for evangelism and apologetics?
3. How does this verse relate to Jesus' statement "no man can come to me, except the Father draw him" (John 6:44)?

Interlinear Text

διότι	τὸ	φρόνημα	τῆς	σαρκὸς	ἔχθρα	εἰς	θεοῦ	τῷ
Because	G3588	mind	G3588	the carnal	is enmity	against	God	G3588
G1360		G5427		G4561	G2189	G1519	G2316	
γὰρ	νόμῳ	τοῦ	θεοῦ	οὐχ	ὑποτάσσεται	οὐδὲ	γὰρ	
for	to the law	G3588	God	not	it is	neither	for	
G1063	G3551		G2316	G3756	G5293	G3761	G1063	
δύναται·								
can be								
G1410								

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:14 (References God): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

James 4:4 (References God): Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Hebrews 8:10 (Word): For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

Romans 7:22 (Word): For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

2 Timothy 3:4 (References God): Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Colossians 1:21 (Parallel theme): And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

Romans 8:4 (Word): That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 1:28 (References God): And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Romans 5:10 (References God): For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

John 7:7 (Parallel theme): The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.