

Romans, Part 14

Paul begins Romans 7 with a comparison of marriage and the Law. To illustrate our new life of freedom in Christ, he says a woman was bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives, but if he dies, she is free. God has made a life and walk in victory and in the power of the Holy Spirit available to all of us. As we live in this new life, we become more aware of the Holy Spirit inside. To achieve mastery over the flesh, we must be led by the Spirit of God and deal with any tendency to live according to the flesh. God has provided and prepared a vast field of new life, victory, peace and joy in Christ. At the same time, we must realize what we are contending against. In Romans 7, Paul is addressing the power of sin and the weakness of the flesh.

Romans 7:5 NKJV For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the Law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

Before conversion (salvation, being born again) we were living according to the flesh. While we were living *“in the flesh,”* our lives were guided and directed by the passions that were awakened or aroused by what the Law calls sin. Before the Law, we did not know how sinful we were. When the Law entered, we realized that we were indeed very sinful. Our life in the flesh was dominated by our sinful nature and passions. When the Law told us what we should and should not do, our sinful passions were stirred up with a strong desire to do them. The result of following the passion of our flesh was death.

Romans 7:7 NKJV What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the Law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the Law had said, “You shall not covet.”

This argument can be made in reference to every kind of sin.

We would not know sin except through the Law.

There was a county road that did not have a speed limit and everyone traveled at whatever speed they desired. Some would go 30 mph and others would speed along over 100 mph.

So many accidents happened because of this that the county decided to put a speed limit of 45 mph. When that happened, many people who had traveled at 30 mph started driving 50 mph and those who traveled at 100 mph continued to speed. Everyone argued, *“There ain’t no sheriff gonna tell me how fast I can*

drive.”

Why do we do that?

Romans 7:8 NKJV But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the Law sin was dead.

This is the power of sin and the weakness of the flesh. Do you remember when your mother made a cake and said, “*Don’t touch the icing?*” Something inside made you want to stick your finger in the icing. When we walk according to the flesh, our sinful passions are stirred by temptations that produced death. This principle was demonstrated in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve had been given access to every tree and plant but one. The temptation to do the forbidden was their downfall.

Romans 7:11 NKJV For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

The Law is not sinful, but it reveals sin in us.

God’s Law shows us what is wrong in us. Have you ever heard someone say, “But, I’m not as bad as some people.” As long as we compare ourselves with other people, we feel that we are decent and respectable. When the Law enters, it shows and convicts us of our sin.

Romans 7:12 NKJV Therefore the Law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

Romans 7:14 NKJV For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Why did God give the Law?

God gave the Law so that we could live.

Leviticus 18:5 NKJV You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.

If we obey the Law (commandment, statutes), we will live.

At the zoo is a sign, “*Do not pet the lion.*” The child who disobeys, reaches past the bars and faces the consequences of pain and death. If the child does not

obey the law, the parents cannot blame the sign or the law. The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. The problem is not the Law, but the weakness of the flesh.

Romans 7:18 NKJV For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

This goes beyond sin. It relates to the matter of living or walking in such a way as to please God. We all must deal with our own flesh and carnal desires in this regard.

Romans 8:6-8 NKJV For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

When we are truly saved, we still contend with the desires and works of the flesh. The flesh (our carnal nature) is weak and hampered from full obedience to the will of God. The carnal mind is at odds with God, His law and mind. If we are directed and controlled by the flesh and the carnal mind, we will not have peace.

Christ died to not only cleanse us from sins, but to also include us in the victory of His death.

We have been crucified with Christ and have been made free in Him. We have not only been crucified with Him, we have been raised with Christ. God has claimed us and is rightfully the Lord of our lives.

Galatians 2:20 NKJV I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

From this new position in Christ Jesus, we are enabled to live a new life of victory and overcoming joy. As we realize what Christ has done for us, we begin taking steps of consecration to God. We want to please Him and do His will.

This is where the Apostle Paul talks about the inner battle between the flesh and the Spirit of God.

While we want to do what pleases God, we don't always do it. We have a vicious battle that seems unending.

Romans 7:18-19 NIV I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

Many believers live in Romans 7.

We know that Christ died for our sins, and we have reckoned it to be true. We believe it with all of our hearts. We have pursued and claimed it and even put into practice the victory that Christ has attained. As a result, we talk about that victory and have become fully aware of it and have enjoyed the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Yet, we contend with the weakness of our flesh and carnal lusts. This is the paradox of Romans 7.

Romans 7 is given to help us understand Romans 6:14.

Romans 6:14 NKJV For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under Law but under grace.

Romans 6:14 AMP For sin shall not [any longer] exert dominion over you, since now you are not under Law [as slaves], but under grace [as subjects of God's favor and mercy].

This verse takes us out of the demands of the Law and places us under the dispensation of God's grace.

The Law requires us to have a certain performance in order to please God. Through grace, God has done something amazing for us. The Law always demonstrates the weakness and sinfulness of our flesh. In the flesh and by performance oriented living we cannot please God. God has done something through grace that supersedes the obedience of the Law. We need to understand that if we try to please God through the obedience of the Law, we will always fail because our flesh is weak. Since our flesh is weak, we are thrown over onto the mercy, grace and goodness of God that is in Christ Jesus. We are constantly looking to Christ Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Romans 7:12 NKJV The Law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

There is nothing wrong with the Law, because it was given to draw us to God. There is something wrong with us.

The demands of the Law are righteous, but we are unrighteous. Due to the weakness of the flesh, we are unable to meet the demands of the Law. Our weakness comes to light when we try to meet the just demands of God's Law.

When I was a child my sisters washed the dishes. They had trouble washing dishes without breaking something. I remember hearing mom and dad say, "Girls, be careful and don't break anything." The only way to keep from having broken dishes was for them to not wash the dishes.

That is the way with each of us. As long as we do nothing, we will not break anything. We can set idle and cause no trouble. As soon as we start doing anything, trouble begins. Yet, if we do nothing, we are unprofitable. If we do something, we fall into trouble.

What are we to do?

The Law of God makes demands on us. The Law of God does not JUST tell us what we should not do, it requires us to do things. Every time we become active, we are faced with the weaknesses of the flesh. Our weakness and sinfulness is shown when God's holy and good Law is applied to our lives. God knows who we are. He knows our frame and our weaknesses.

Romans 7:1-4 gives an analogy of a woman and two husbands.

As long as her first husband lives she is bound by the law to him.

Her first husband is a good man.

The Law is her first husband and fulfills its function of guiding us to know God's standards. In the analogy, the first husband is a perfectionist who wanted everything done just right. He is very particular and accurate, and exactly her opposite. Her husband was strict and constantly made demands on her. There was nothing wrong with the man or his demands. She was the wrong kind of wife to carry out his demands. The woman was in great distress because she knew she made so many mistakes. Everything she said and did was wrong.

If she were married to the other man, everything would be great.

He was just as demanding, but he helped her. She was bound by the Law to her first husband and unless he dies she cannot marry the other man.

The first husband is the Law and the second husband is Christ.

The Law requires much and offers no help to fulfill its requirements. Christ Jesus requires just as much and even more, but He fulfills in us every demand He makes. The only hope for the woman is that she is freed from the Law by death.

Matthew 5:18 NIV I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Since every period, comma, and defining mark of the Law will be accomplished or fulfilled, how can we be freed from the condemnation of the Law?

If the Law cannot pass away until it is all fulfilled, our only hope is to die. God's righteous demands on us will remain forever. As long as we live, those demands of the Law are in effect and have a claim on us. The only way out of the marriage is by death. Death is God's method of deliverance from the Law. When we die, the Law still makes the same demands, but its power to enforce them has ended.

How do we die to the Law?

Romans 7:4 NIV So, my brothers, you also died to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

When Christ died, we were included in Him.

Galatians 2:20 NKJV I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Christ made us acceptable to God. He made us pure and holy, and purchased our freedom. When Christ Jesus was crucified and died, we died with Him. In God's sight, we were included in His death on Calvary. Through the body of Christ, we are not only dead to the Law, we are also alive to God.

Death has dissolved the demands of the Law.

Jesus Christ has made us acceptable, pure and holy to God. The life of the risen Lord within us empowers us to fulfill all the claims of God's holiness.

Philippians 2:12-13 NKJV Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your**

own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

It is God who works in us.

Since we are not lawless, we must be obedient. We must “*work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.*” Keep on pressing toward the mark for the heavenly prize. Strive for spiritual maturity, but understand that we cannot please God from the flesh. We must constantly and consistently put all of our trust in the Lord. By the power of the Holy Spirit we can manifest Christ’s resurrection life in us.

Romans 8:11 NIV And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

Our only hope to fulfill God’s righteous demands is by trusting Jesus Christ to please the Father. He is our peace, righteousness and joy.

Have you ever tried to pick up something that was too heavy for you?

You said: “I know I can do this.” You found out you could not do it. You cannot fulfill the righteousness of the Law. The only way to do it is in Christ Jesus. If you persist in doing it yourself, God will let you try. You will never be able to please God on your own.

We have to trust Jesus Christ to do it for us.

As long as you trust what you can do, you will always fail. Put all of your trust in Jesus Christ. He is our righteousness, peace, joy and goodness.