

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

In The Grip of God's Grace

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Romans 7 - "Who Shall Deliver Me? - The Struggle of a Saved Soul"

Romans 7:24, *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

Two Extremes - There's something about human nature that makes us want to go to extremes. As Christians we are no immune from the dangers of in-balance.

1. Since we are saved by grace, some would say, we are free to live as we please!

This is *the extreme of license*

2. But then others say, we are saved by grace, but we must keep the law, if we are to please God.

This is *the extreme of legalism*

In chapter 6, Paul dwelt with the problem of license. He told us how to stop doing bad things.

In chapter 7, he now dwells with the problem of legalism. He tells us how not to do good things.

Chapter 7 is how not to be sanctified.

Paul makes it clear the Christian is not sanctified by the keeping of the law.

We are not to be libertines, or legalists, but rather, law-fulfilling free people preserving the balance of rejoicing in our freedom from the law for justification and sanctification, and in our freedom to fulfill it.

We are to delight in the law as the revelation of God's will (7:22). But, we must recognize that the power to fulfill it is not in the law, but in the Spirit.

John R.W. Stott –

- Legalist's - fear the law and are in bondage to it.
- Libertine's – hate the law and repudiate it.
- Law-fulfilling free people – love the law and fulfill it through the power of the Holy Spirit.

To free us from legalism, Paul shows us what the believer's relationship is to the law:

The law cannot make us holy!

Our Relationship to the Law:

I. We are released from the Law (vs. 1-6)

Romans 7:1-6, "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 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 shall be 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. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, [even] to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 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. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not [in] the oldness of the letter."

A. The first thing Paul does is lay down the principle (vs. 1)

B. Paul uses a marriage metaphor (vs. 2-3)

C. Paul makes the application (vs. 4-6)

Romans 6:4-6 (NLT), "(So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.) When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit."

- we died to the law (vs. 4)
- we are delivered from the law (vs. 6)

R. Kent Hughes – The result of the dissolution of our marriage to the Law is "that we serve in the new way of the Spirit." Instead of despair, there is joy! Instead of bondage, there is freedom! Instead of death, there is life! We no longer belong to the Law, but to Christ.

Lyrics: "...free from the law O happy condition,
Jesus has died and there is remission."

II. Paul defends the Law's purpose (vs. 7-13)

Romans 7:7-13, *"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."*

Paul uses his past experience to show us the Law's purpose.

1. The Law reveals sin (vs. 7)

At what time in Paul's life did this happen?

At his Bar Mitzvah? – "son of the law"

Paul began to seriously reflect on the ten commandments. He was doing pretty well until he came to the tenth commandment.

Exodus 20:17, *"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."*

You shall not covet...

He saw it's not action, but attitude.

Like Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, "...but I say unto you..."

The law like a mirror – James 1

Illustration – the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23)

2. The Law arouses sin (vs. 8-9)

An expanded paraphrase of this statement may be helpful: *"But sin, setting up a base of operations through the commandment not to covet, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead or dormant. And I was alive, blissfully indifferent, to the searching demands of the Law; but when the commandment not to covet came, sin sprang to life, and I felt the sentence of death."*

Remember Romans 3:20? - *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

1 Corinthians 15:56, *“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.”*

Romans 7:9, *“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”*

Illustration – the law to sin; like gas on an open fire.

3. The Law kills (vs. 10-11)

Galatians 3:21, *“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.”*

Illustration – the danger of a church that practices legalism – it leads to death – no life of joy!

4. The Law shows the sinfulness of sin (vs. 12-13)

The problem is not with the Law, the problem is my sinful nature.

As we grow as Christians we become more and more painfully aware of the sinfulness of sin.

There is a danger to have too much of a morbid introspection.

III. The Weakness of the Law (vs. 14-25)

Romans 7:14-25, *“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 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: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 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. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”*

Paul, having explained what the Law is supposed to do, now explains what the Law cannot do.

The Law is holy, just, and good (vs. 12) but it cannot make you holy, just or good.

1. The Law cannot change you (vs. 4)

The big debate here is: was Paul saved or unsaved?

The answer: Saved – that’s the reason for the strength.

Chapters 7 and 8 are lived simultaneous.

The picture here is a Christian who loves and wants to please God, but is struggling because he’s trying to do it in his own strength.

The problem “the Law is spiritual”, but I am carnal!

Living under Law only activates the old nature, it will not eradicate it.

Only the Spirit of God can change you.

2. The Law cannot enable you (vs. 15-21)

The problem: “I” (used 27 times) “first person singular”

No Spirit

The Battle – The Christian life will always be a struggle.

Romans 8:3-4, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

The “I” is me!

3. The Law cannot set you free (vs. 22-25)

Romans 6 – Grace does not encourage us to sin

Romans 7 – The Law does not create sin and death, it’s our own fallen sinful nature.

We will never fully move out of Romans 7, but there is hope (vs. 25) Through Jesus Christ.