

XLIV. Romans in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of God
“The Law of God and the Gospel of God”
Romans 7:1-6
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September 25, 2022 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God, which is inspired, infallible, in errant and eternal. Romans 7:1-6 says [1] *Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? [2] For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. [3] Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.*

[4] *Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. [5] For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. [6] But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you. This is the Word of God for the people of God by the grace of God and to the glory of God.

In Romans 7 we're going to another whole depth of what it means to be united with Christ and the implications for it in our Christian life. I have about 16 commentaries on my desk dealing with Romans and almost every one of them acknowledges one of the biggest challenges in the Christian life is as a believer is what our relationship is to God's law. We also are in a text that deals with something that is being said and affirmed again which is that reigning sin has been broken. As a Christian, you are no longer under the dominion of sin. Why? It is because you are no longer under the law, but under grace. Although it acknowledges that on this side of eternity, we are not yet perfect. In fact, the Bible says if any man says he has not sinned, then he is he is not a believer (I John 1:8). Every believer knows that they have sinned and they do sin but we don't live in sin yet we still have sin living in us.

In other words, reigning sin has been broken so we don't have to sin, but remaining sin is ever present and I think most of you, if you had a moment of freedom, might even say 'amen' to this one. There are times that remaining sin feels like reigning sin in our lives. We just keep killing it and here it comes again. It seems a never-ending cycle. Sometimes it almost feels like reigning sin is still there and that's what we're dealing with in Romans 7.

There is a great blessing in the Bible for after the Bible was written in a series of events, we ended up with a Bible that has chapter divisions and verses. Now, on the one hand, that's a great blessing because then we can navigate more easily because we have an address to find things in the Bible, but where it hurts us is particularly with Paul. Paul is so intricate, so connected in what he is writing. He is linear. He is working off of connecting points. He has connecting tissues and then comes a chapter division where you almost feel like you are starting something separate but actually he is adding to something he has already said which is what we

see in how Romans 7 starts. It starts with the word 'Or' which is a connecting word which in this case brings us to this whole issue of dealing with sin in our life.

In Romans 1 he has already said because he can't get to them in person he is going to write them and that he is eager to preach the Gospel to them and is unashamed of it, but he will come to them when God allows him. and what does it mean to be. And you see, what he's working off of is back that he's already said to us, remember, he's so in Romans 116, he says that I'm like, I can't be with you. Paul says three things about the Gospel we shouldn't miss from Romans 1:16-17 which says *[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God (1) for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God (2) is revealed from faith for faith, (3) as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith.* It is a dynamic gospel that leads you now in your new life.

After this Paul will then say 'The wrath of God is revealed against all in godliness and unrighteousness of men' (Romans 1:18). And guess what? We're all ungodly and unrighteous. We're all sinners for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). More than that, we're dead in our sins. Praise God there is Good News. We who are spiritually impotent, there is the power of God to raise us from a spiritual cemetery because we are dead in our sins He raises us and we can be born again by the power of God and get a new heart. Not only that, we have sin and the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). Praise God, we not only have the power of God to bring us from death unto life, we have the righteousness of God that in Christ, He has erased our unrighteousness and ungodliness by paying the penalty for us on the cross. And He has now given us His righteousness. So we're cleansed, forgiven, clothed in His righteousness and we're accepted in the righteousness of Christ.

Because of the power of God we have a new heart. Because of the righteousness of God, we have a new record. How does that show up? It shows up from faith to faith. We who are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone now have a life of growing in faith – hearing the Word. Faith comes from hearing the Word (Romans 10:17) and as we hear the Word, we now have a new life. It is not yet a perfect life for it won't be a perfect life until the last step – when I go to be with Jesus, but on the way, I have a new life in which sin is being killed and Christ is being loved and when you love Him, you keep His commandments.

We are given descriptions of this glorious new record and glorious new heart in Romans chapters 3 through 5. Paul communicates to us these marvelous truths that we're saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In Romans 5 Paul says to us that having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. We have access to God. We are suffering for God. We're rejoicing for God, and we're sealed by God. We have all of these wonderful blessings in this new heart and new record that we have in Christ and praise God that we can't out sin God's grace. Where sin abounds God's grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20).

Paul knows there are going to be some people that are now going to live this life and they may twist the scriptures. Paul then goes on to explain this faith to faith life, this new life that's based upon this new heart and record. He starts using these questions that he knows where people may be twisting this. Paul knows we still have sin living in us for he will confess his own in Romans 7, but are we going to continue in sin under its reign and under its dominion that grace might increase it? Then he brings this anathema on it as he says 'God forbid!' Then he gives us the pattern of the Christian life.

Romans 6, 7, and 8 are the primer of the Gospel based, saturated Christian life. Romans 6 is absolutely essential and that's why Martin Lloyd-Jones said, 'When I understand Romans 6

then I'll preach on Romans' because it presents the foundation of the Christian life – the Gospel. The Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the Christian life. The foundation is that we have to know who we are in Christ. The formation is we have to be and consider who we are in Christ, then we're ready to do for Christ. Our doing does not make the foundation for our doing is the superstructure that comes from the foundation. Our doing is the fruit not the root. That's why Paul says, 'Do you not know?' And then he illustrated in baptism (Romans 6). In your baptism, in the name of Christ, you changed names. All of your names by creation are now modified by the fact that you belong to Christ. All of the names that named you in sin have now been declared null and void through what He has done in our life. So now you are in Christ and Christ is in you and the death He died, you died. When He died to sin you died with Him to sin. So how can we live in what we have died to? When He was raised to God, then you were raised to the praise of God for the newness of life. So when Paul asked 'do you not know that' the obvious answer is no for if they did know that, they wouldn't be asking this question of 'Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?' What they would be asking is 'amazing love, how can it be that Thou my God should die for me?'

So how do we start in and live the Christian life? We start with the foundation, the Gospel, truth in which we know our union with Christ – we're united to Him in His death and in His Resurrection. Then Paul says, 'consider that you're dead to sin' and be what you know. Now, you're ready to do and he gives the first command that he gives in all of Romans from Romans 6:12 which says *[12] Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.* Why? It is because you are no longer under sin – the rule, dominion, or master ship of sin. You are now by grace under Christ.

Then Paul says this very interesting, powerful, insightful statement in Romans 6:14 which says *[14] For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.* Paul then asks this next question anticipating again those who want to twist the Scriptures; shall we sin because we're not under law but under grace? In essence Paul's answer is 'no, you can't sin because you have now exchanged masters. Jesus is your master, the One who died for your sin.' You don't want to go sin but you want to kill sin and go to Christ. Romans 7 is continuing that issue of us no longer under the law, but under grace. Can I make peace treaties with sin in my life? No. You're at war against sin because of your love to Christ whom you have become His bond servant. We once were slaves to sin, now united to Christ for we have made ourselves the servants and slaves of Christ to follow Him. Paul is also not through with what it means to be united to Christ.

Now, as we go to Romans 7, the question becomes, how do you deal with remaining sin, particularly those embedded, entangling, ones that feel like reigning sin? Romans 6 may have been challenging but I would say Romans 7 is beyond challenging. We are going to try to handle this Biblically, faithfully and understanding what Paul is saying to us about this life that is not under law but under grace. I want you to think for a moment about that word 'under.'

I knew this guy named John who was an upstart professional soccer player who showed up in Christ Covenant and loved Jesus and soccer. We were able to get him into a youth internship, into seminary and God led him into ministry. Then he gets a job as a youth pastor at another church and we continue our relationship. Then I find out he's working on his doctorate in Edinburgh. Briarwood calls me to be senior pastor in May of 1999 and but I wasn't to report to the job September. So in that summer I had a number of obligations and one of those was a missions trip where I was at a seminary in Scotland.

So John was doing there in Scotland getting his doctorate and he was a legal resident alien in Scotland, but he was under an American passport. We are no longer under the dominion of Satan, darkness, death and sin nor the law. We are under Christ and His grace. We still reside in the kingdom of darkness, even though our heart and life has been transferred into the Kingdom of life. We are now who we are in Christ, but not yet in fullness and we still are resident aliens here. Peter calls us exiles and while we function in the context of this world, we are under King Jesus by grace, not law, by grace to Him who came *under* the law to set us free from its weight, its burden, its penalties, its power, its condemnation.

You might be thinking, is there any use for the law for a Christian? Oh, yes. I will go more into this in our next study but is the law sin? No, but I'm not under the law. I am under grace. To get it across to us in this text, he gives us a Biblical declaration, Biblical illustration, and then a Biblical application. The Biblical declaration is in Romans 7:1 and it's something that we know.

Romans 7:1 says [1] *Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?* God gave His law to us as we live. That law does not begin with Moses. That law began all the way back in the Garden – the law of the Sabbath, the law of being fruitful and multiply, the law of do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That law from God goes all the way back to the creation. In fact, God makes us with His law upon our hearts. That's why when Adam sinned, death reigned, and what does death come from? It came from Sin and death reigned from Adam until Moses. Why? It is because they were disobeying God's law revealed in creation that He had given and affirmed in our consciences. Then unto Moses, God as a gift of grace, as He gives us His law. He codifies the law and we get this civil law, ceremonial law, and the moral law – the Ten Commandments.

He gives us that law to show us our sinful situation, condition and expectation. That law affirms that God gave to Moses, found in the Pentateuch, the creation law and it comes to us in our situation and condition to affirm and confirm it to us. The law can't change us, but it can transform us. It does inform us that we are sinners, that we have a sin nature, that we are dead in our sins and that we cannot save ourselves, but it doesn't come from us or from our situation. God's law, from creation to the codification with Moses comes from God Himself. It is based on His character, who He is, and it tells us how to love Him, but it can't make us love Him. It can't stop us from loving ourselves instead of Him. It has no power to convert and change. It informs and reveals. It exposes, and it tells us how to love those who are made in His image.

There is the right use of the law and what we're dealing with now is the sinful use of the law to think that we have the power with the law or that the law has the power to save us. That's what we're dealing with here. I'm trying to get you from Paul's word to see where Paul is pointing you, not to the dominion of law, but to the dominion of grace in Christ. So he gives us this basic declaration that is pretty easy. He tells us the law is no longer valid when we die so when we die we are free from the law. This is seen in Romans 7:1b.

Now Paul wants to give us an illustration on this as he goes to the law and pulls out one very important law, not serendipitously or arbitrarily but he is selecting one law for a very clear reason and it is the law of marriage. The law of marriage isn't first established in Moses for it goes all the way back to creation – one man, one woman for one life. If the life ends, then marriage ends. Paul illustrates this for us by going to a law on the covenant of marriage. When two people are united in a covenant of marriage, God says they become one and they are one as long as they live. Let's look at the next verse in Romans 7 as Paul gives the illustration.

Romans 7:2-3 says [2] *For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. [3] Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.*

Why doesn't Paul also say for a married man is bound to his wife as long as she lives? Why doesn't he flip it? But he goes right to the woman and he says the woman is bound to her husband and it doesn't mean the man's not bound to his wife as long as she lives for certainly it applies to him as well. I don't think this should be missed. Paul goes onto say the wife is no longer married to him if and when he dies. We also see in the next verse if her husband is living and she goes and marries another man, she's an adulterous. If her husband dies, she goes and does the same thing – she marries another man, but now it's honorable. What happened? The husband died, and with the death came the dissolving of that marriage, which means the dissolving of that covenant relationship, which means the dissolving of what their union. She now has another union with another husband.

Now Paul is going to the application of it, but here is where we start finding some difficulties here in the text itself. Paul is talking to professing believers with the use of 'my brothers.' Romans 7:4 says [4] *Likewise, my brothers, **you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.***

Paul is now looking at us who are represented by the woman and he doesn't say the husband dies but he 'you died,' not the husband. The woman represents us and he said earlier that she is free when her husband dies. It doesn't say the husband dies directly, but it says here she dies or you die whom she represents. In other words, the law does not die, we die and the dissolution takes place. We are right back to Romans 6 when it says 'How can we live in sin? Why? Because you're baptism – the theology of baptism teaches you, you are named by Christ, you are in Christ, Christ is in you and when Christ died to sin, we died to sin. When Christ rose from the grave unto the newness of life to the glory of God, we rose from the spiritual cemetery of sin, to live to the glory of God and the newness of life. Now here in Romans 7 we're right back to union with Christ, but now not using baptism but the covenant of marriage.

Please get this. Marriage is a great blessing for us. God has given it as a gift to humanity. What we are now doing in our culture, in treason against the Almighty by redefining it, will utterly destroy a nation. It is God's gift as a foundational institution, but that's not the primary reason He put marriage into this creation. The primary reason He put it there was so that you could see what it means to have a redemptive relationship with God. What was it in the Old Covenant that Israel was called in their relationship to God? They were called a bride and God was their husband. Now, all of that was to bring forth the Messiah in that relationship and that Seed, that Messiah, would do a work of redemption to bring the covenant blessings of God from one nation to go to all the nations and bring His covenant people from every tribe and nation. We now have Christ and in Christ, we have this glorious bride/Bridegroom relationship. He is the Husband of His people who has ransomed them with His death and resurrection and we have everlasting life in Him. That's the primary purpose of marriage. Your marriage is a visual aid to point people to the redemptive relationship God has with His people.

That's why in Ephesians 5 is says, for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one, but I am speaking directly to Christ and His Church. We are one with Him, in Him and He is in us. We are united to Him. We are married to Him, but we don't start off married to Him. We start off married to the first Adam and

it is a marriage of death. The abuse in that marriage is beyond comprehension as the law brings guilt, shame, as death and sin have dominion. The law keeps showing you the sin, the dominion, the guilt, the shame and fear rules and reigns. There has to be a death to dissolve that marriage. Christ comes to take your place and goes to the cross.

Romans 7:4-6 says [4] *Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. [5] For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. [6] But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*

The law didn't die but you died, when Christ took your place and in His atoning death, the death that through the body of Christ there you died so that you may what belong to another, who is our new Husband now that that marriage has been dissolved, and our new Husband is one who set us free by His death. He is the One in whom we died and in His death we died to the law and to sin because of His victory. Now this resurrected Christ is now our Husband. We are united to Him. We belong to Him. Many times when people have had a Godly good marriage they tend to pray they will leave this life together. My wife and I have prayed that. I don't know what it would be like without her. Listen, I know this is one thing, you know, when I pastor people and they've had a godly good marriage. My guess is she would be a lot better off without me, but she just thankfully doesn't realize it yet. Very seldom does that happen.

Then when you've had that marriage over all those years and the person dies, you know how many times someone has said to me, 'Yeah, but I'm still married to her.' Pastorally, carefully, and lovingly I need to tell you something, 'No, you're not. According to the Bible, you're not still married to her.' Then they tend to say 'Harry, what's it going to be like in heaven?' That is another whole study I did that you can go back when I die and check that one, but we're not still married. I know the affection; I know the emotion and I applaud all of that. I'm hugging you with all of that, but the reality is death dissolves the marriage, for that's the law of God. So when Jesus put to death our enmity in His atoning death, He dissolved our marriage and our covenantal union with Adam in the covenant of works, when He took away all the cursing of Adam and in that marriage is the constant abuse of law, death, fear, vanity, false promises. Christ has now taken us out from under all of that and now we are in Christ and we are married to Him who dissolved that marriage and brought us into a marriage with Him. We are one with Him by grace. We're not under law. We're now under grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Before I get to the takeaway, I had a proposal that I'll never forget this. Cindy knew it was coming. It was the second week of October, 1968. I was trying to figure out a way to make it surprising, but I don't have time to go into all the details right now. I will tell you it was the dumbest thing I've ever done in my life and she has not let me forget it to this day. I was trying to make a meaningful proposal and I see people do it together all the time. I love that but I want to tell you what makes the proposal meaningful to the bride. It is the one that makes it. It's not the novelty, not the uniqueness, for it's the one that makes it. I love to do marriages. I don't love to do funerals, but I love to minister to people in funerals and I love what I can tell them about the victory of Christ in funerals. The main reason I don't like to do funerals is because I just want to take the pain and grief away from people but I know I can't.

Praise the Lord for weddings and there are three moments in a wedding I just love like crazy. One is when I'm up front about to officiate the ceremony, everybody attending has come in, the wedding party is all up front and then the music starts as that door opens and the bride

steps out, what a moment. All kinds of eschatological truths start running through my mind at that moment, but what I really love about that moment is when I turn and look at the groom. I did this one wedding and talk about a man's man. The groom actually was in his uniform. I think he's a colonel or something in the Air Force. He was standing there, she came through that door as it opened this Air Force Academy man's man, said "Oh no!" He pulled out his handkerchief, started wiping his eyes for he was undone. I thought he was going to dissolve right there. I thought, we're going to have to have a marriage with him speaking from the floor. I just loved to watch the groom at that moment.

The second thing I love to do is after the promises, I say, 'who gives this woman to be joined to this man?' and look in the eyes of the father who knows things are about to change, but it's going to be for the better. That's a great moment.

Thirdly, the moment I love more than anything is we leave down here and we come up the steps up here and they turn and they face each other. Here's your take away and here is my proposal. I will then say, having heard his pledges, his vows and his promises, I say to the bride 'will you take this man to be your husband?' And I watch her and she looks not at the ring. She looks at him. That's my invitation proposal; will you continue in the sin festered abuse with Adam or the One who went to the cross to die to dissolve that relationship that you might united to Him? Please get this. The answer to dealing with the penalty of sin, the power of sin and in life the practices of sin, are found in the face of the Groom – it's in Christ.

It is in Christ who says, "I will bring you home, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." You don't have to look to me as you have in the past. Is there any mercy? I am not a perfect bride. Is there any mercy? "Oh, yes, I am full of grace and mercy." No longer is it the dominion of death. Now it's life. No longer is it the dominion of fear. Now it's love for perfect love casts out all fear (I John 4:18). No longer is it the dominion of false promises. It's God's Word is true in Christ. No longer is it vanity. It is the overflowing fullness of the joy in Christ. No longer is it the law. It is now the Spirit of God who brings you to the law of liberty that's found in Jesus Christ. Is there any grace and mercy in this marriage? Yes, it is under the dominion of grace, and He will rule and reign. Unlike the marriages that surround us, there is no expiration date. It is forever in a new heavens and a new earth. On the way, fix your eyes on the One who loves you and looses you from your sins for He will never forsake you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be in Your Word. Speak to our hearts in this moment. On behalf of Christ, I give you this proposal; will you come to the One whose death dissolves your covenantal marriage with Adam and its abusiveness of sin, death and the sinful use of the law that you might be under grace, with the One who delivers you from the dominion of Satan, sin, death, hell, the grave, and the weight of the law? He is ready to receive you. You can't be married to both for spiritual adultery is never embraced, but when we die in Christ, that marriage was dissolved and will be dissolved and you can be united to Him. Please, I beg you this day, come to Christ. Perhaps you have come to Christ already so thank you for the clarity from this text today and how that affects my new life in Christ. But remember in that covenant of marriage with Christ, you are united to Him from now into all eternity for you are One in Christ – you are in Christ, Christ is in you. Therefore, as a bride and Groom, leave a marriage triumphantly and joyfully, you now walk into life with Him who gives the victory. He is your great and glorious Savior who loves His bride and does not abuse her, but gives Himself for her. Jesus, I pray that You will speak this to our hearts and I make this prayer in Your Name, Amen.