

ROMANS 7
Message 4
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INTRO: We'll do a little review to get back on track. In these messages our goal is to understand Romans 7. In the first message we skimmed over Romans 1-3. The major point of these three chapters is to prove that all are sinners. There are no exceptions, even among God's chosen people, the Jews. We saw that most of mankind is religious and all of mankind has a faith of some kind, even the atheist. But by far the majority of mankind is religious, that is, they believe there is a Higher Power of some kind.

All those who are religious but don't believe the Bible is the Word of God have some kind of faith that makes good works a requirement to enter a better life after death. All those who use the Bible believe in a big G God. And of all those who claim the God the Bible is the Word of God, by far the vast majority also depend on good works to get to heaven.

But salvation is not by good works. There are two major doctrines that are most important to understand. There is first, justification. In an earlier message we saw that justification, which is to be declared righteous before God, is by grace through faith. No amount of good works will ever justify a sinner.

The second doctrine that is important to understand is sanctification. To be sanctified is to be made actually righteous. Justification takes but a short time. Sanctification takes a life-time. So, in the previous message we looked at a chart showing how sanctification is achieved by grace through faith. It is not achieved by good works.

In the book of Romans we have now come to chapter 7. Israel's journey from Egypt to when they arrived at the other side of the Red Sea pictures the process of when an unbeliever comes out of sin and is saved. When he is truly saved, that is pictured by Israel's arrival at the other side of the Red Sea. This is what Romans 1-6 speaks of. But between the place where they had crossed the Red Sea and Canaan lies the wilderness. Romans 1-6 has taken us from Egypt to the other side of the Red Sea.

Israel's goal is to enter the promised land of Canaan. As I see it, entering Canaan is what Romans 8 pictures. But between Romans 6 and 8 is Romans 7. Romans 7 is pictured by Israel's wilderness wanderings. We'll read verses 10-24.

So look at the painful description of this journey in Romans 7:7-24:

7 *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."*

8 *But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.*

9 *I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*

10 *And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.*

11 *For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.*

12 *Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*

13 *Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.*

14 *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

15 *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*

16 *If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.*

17 *But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

18 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.

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

23 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.

24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

That is a description of the misery of the wilderness. But take a brief look now at the entrance into the promised land, the land of perfect rest (Once it was the blessing.. Land of perfect rest.) We find this in 7:25-8:1 like this:

25 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.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

So we want to now begin to make our way through Romans 7 to Romans 8.

II. THE PATH THROUGH ROMANS 7

A. The Believer's Release from the Law (7:1-6)

1. The Illustrated (1-3)

So let us begin by reading Romans 7:1-6:

1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

5 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.

6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

-The conjunction "or"

Consider now first in verse 1 the conjunction that begins this verse, the word "or". The KJV misses this word but it should be there. Most dictionaries deal with this word simply as a conjunction, but the Mirriam-Webster Dictionary is most helpful here in pointing out some specific uses of this conjunction. One of the uses this dictionary gives is, and I quote: "... (it is) used in logic as a sentential connective that forms a complex sentence which is true when at least one of its constituent sentences is true" end quote. So it gives some

argument like, if this is true, this is true as well.

For example, you might instruct someone who is careless with making sure their gun is empty after using it. You might say, "You must always check to make sure your gun is empty before you put it away. OR didn't you know that it is usually an empty gun that shoots someone?" Or is the logical connector here. The logic of always making sure the gun is empty when you put it away is because it is often a gun one thinks is empty that shoots someone. If you make very sure it is empty it will never accidentally shoot someone.

I loaned out my 12 gauge shotgun one time. You expect that when it is returned it will be empty. I was taking our Patrick lumber loader to my dad's sawmill one day and put the shotgun in for some reason. I had my little brother with me. Now the Patrick loader had an arm in the fender well where I had set the gun. When you turn the steering wheel on this loader that arm goes up and down. So when I turned the steering wheel that arm came up and hit the hammer on the shotgun and it exploded and an overcharged 3 inch magnum shell went off and the lead went right between our heads. Always make sure the gun is empty when you put it away, OR did you now know that it is usually an empty gun that kills someone?

So, Paul, having given a lengthy lesson on the teaching that the one who gives his life to Christ is no longer under the law, uses this logic:

1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

He is saying, "If this law that you know is true, then what I told you earlier is also true."

-Law

We note as well that Paul is speaking to the brethren, that is fellow Christians. What he will now say has meaning only to Christians. He will now show in verses 1-3 that the Christian has been delivered from the law. Before we look at the believer's release from the law we need to define what the word "law" means. In the book of Romans Paul deals a lot with the law. There are various kinds of laws, and we will note some of those differences. It was the error of the Jews to seek salvation by keeping the law. In Romans Paul refutes the idea that a person is saved by keeping the law. A works salvation, which is what seeking salvation by keeping the law is, is the major flaw of mankind. The true way of salvation is only revealed in the Bible. There is no other way than through the Word of God to learn the true way of salvation. And I think it would be true to say that even for the majority of those who use the Bible, also seek salvation by works. Paul will demonstrate how the Christian is free from the law, which means he is not following a works based salvation.

So we ask, just what does the word "law" mean? In brief, *a law is a rule set out by some authority that governs the actions of people, and which has consequences if it is disobeyed.* There are various kinds of law. For example, in our country we have written laws to govern the country. These laws are rules written to govern the conduct or regulate the actions of the people under the government of Canada's jurisdiction. The Canadian government has the authority to enforce its laws by imposing penalties for violation. A law that has no penalties if it is disobeyed is useless.

Then there also scientific laws. For example, there is a law we call the law of gravity. It is not a written law but it is a rule or principle set out by God that has consequences if it is disobeyed. When my brothers and I were younger we found out we could not violate this law without consequences. We

made cardboard wings and tried to fly by jumping off a roof. The law of gravity said you need a little more than cardboard wings to overcome me. Now such scientific laws are principles God put in place at creation and they exist whether they are discovered or put into words or not. The law of gravity was not known by description to man until 1687. Sir Isaac Newton discovered it. It is explained like this by Wikipedia:

"Newton's law of universal gravitation is usually stated as that every particle attracts every other particle in the universe with a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between their centers" end quote. Now, such laws are laws of nature God put in place and there are many of those.

Then there are laws that govern all of mathematics, or language, or mechanics and so on. These are principles that always hold true. While I was working on this message I was sent a link by a pastor friend on "God and Mathematics." It shows how the whole universe runs by the laws of Mathematics.

I have spent quite a lot of time on grammar. I learned English grammar, then some Greek grammar and a little Hebrew grammar. A few years ago I set out to learn the laws that govern Plautdietsch, the language I grew up with. I have almost completed a basic grammar book in our dialect. Since I was going to preach in our dialect of German and didn't know of any other such work, I set out to learn the rules. We say many things and we might recognize the right way to say something, but we do not know the rules why it must be said like that.

For example, in Plautdietsch we might say, "Hee es en de Koa." "He is in the car." The word *Car* in Plautdietsch is feminine. The article for feminine and neuter nouns remains the same whether they are

in the nominative or objective case. But when a masculine noun is used it changes the article when it is used in the objective case. We might say, "De Trok es groot." "The truck is big." The article is "De" when it stands before a nominative case noun. But if we say, "Hee es en dem Trok," "He is in the truck," now the article "de" has to be changed to "dem." And so if I say to you, "Hee es en de Trok," if you know our language well, you will say, "That does not sound right." But you would also say, "But I don't know what is wrong with that." Well, a grammatical rule has been broken. So there are laws that govern language. We have JW's who have tried to learn Plautdietsch, and when they speak to us in our language they bear the consequences of a silent chuckle for breaking the rules of our language.

Then there are spiritual laws. Let me give you an example. Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The consequences of not obeying that law are eternal hell fire. That is a spiritual law. No new birth, no entrance into God's kingdom.

T. Austin Sparks, writing of laws that have to do with the Christian life defines a spiritual law like this:

"A law is a fixed and established principle. It has potentialities. It means that, if you are adjusted to it and governed by it, certain results are inevitable; that the potentialities which it contains will most surely find expression when that law is established." We might add that it also has certain consequences if it is disobeyed.

(Austin-Sparks, T.. The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus (Kindle Locations 37-41). Austin Sparks.Net. Kindle Edition.)

We will come across more than one use of the word "law" in Romans 7 and I will refer back to some of these later.

Let me mention further that the word "law" is a most significant word in Romans. In the NT the word for "law" is *nomos*. We have English words like "antinomian." The "nomian" part comes from this word *nomos* and it means *anti law*, or against law. Now, the word "law" occurs 158 times in the NT. And it is used 52 times in Romans. One third of all the times it is used in the NT it is used in the book of Romans.

Consider this: The books of Matthew through Acts have 114,000 words. The word "law" occurs 54 times. Romans has over 100,000 less words than those books combined, and the word "law" occurs 52 times. The book of Matthew is written to the Jews. The word "law" as referring to the Mosaic law occurs 7 times. But in Romans chapter 7 alone, it occurs more than twice as many times as in all of Matthew. So, the law is a crucial subject in this chapter.

The 52 uses of the word "law" in Romans are almost a third of the times it is used in all of the NT. That is a very high number. And of those 52 uses, 45 occur in chapters 1-8. These chapters are where Paul deals with salvation, and particularly that salvation is by grace, not by keeping the law, or by works.

So Paul says in Romans 7:1 that he is speaking to those who know the law. We ask now, what kind of law is he speaking about? Well, in general, he is referring to the law written by Moses. That refers to the first five books of the Bible. But in particular, he is speaking about the law of Moses regulating marriage as we will see in the next few verses.

In Romans 2-3 where Paul shows all are lost it is used 17 times. In Romans 4-6, where Paul deals with justification, it is used 8 times. In Romans 7 it is used 15 times. In Romans 8 it is used 4 times.

So consider Romans 3:19-21 says:

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Every Gentile has failed the law that is written on their hearts, the law of conscience. Every Jew who has the written law has failed it. And if a Jew or a Gentile is repentant and starts to live right, if he lives right for the rest of his life, he is still condemned by past sins. The Jew, who, if he could keep the whole law after he has a change of heart, is still lost because of past sins. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Neither Jew nor Gentile can be saved by keeping the law.

But God's way to save man is not by keeping the law but by justifying him of his past sins and then making him righteous in every day life, and all of this is by grace through faith. So Romans 6:14-15 says:

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

The Christian is not under the law. What does that mean? That means he is not saved by keeping the law. That means a way of salvation has been provided by which the law has had to let him go. The law said, "If you do this or this," or "If you don't do this or this, you will die." We have all failed in not doing what we should and in doing what we should not. So, we must die.

But, when Christ came He died in our place. If we repent of our sins He forgives us of our past sins and positionally we die with Him. Because He took

our place in death the law has to let us go. It has no hold over us. And someone will automatically say to that, "Yahoo! We can freely sin now!" But to that kind of thinking verse 15 immediately says: "Shall we continue in sin because we are not under law but under grace?" What is the answer? It is, "Perish the thought!" We are saved precisely for this reason that we should not sin any more. Verse 14 has just said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." When it says sin shall not have dominion over us, the meaning is that sin shall not lord it over us. If we continue in sin, sin has dominion, or is lording it over us.

So God first justifies us from our past sins. Once that takes place by repentance from sin and placing our faith in Christ, He then begins to seek to make us holy in life by delivering us from the power of sin. This is sanctification. And sanctification is by grace through faith too. We are not justified by faith and then saved by keeping the law. We are taught to live by faith and in this way, we are delivered from the power of sin.

So, the conjunction "or" says, "if you know this is true, what I told you up to here is true to." And that is that the believer is no longer under the law. So, we go on now to the last part of verse 1 which says:

1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

The law has dominion over a man as long as he is alive. God's laws have dominion over man as long as he lives. If one fails of God's law, one must meet the consequences, and the consequence is physical death. That is the penalty for violating God's laws. Only death satisfies a violation of God's law.

Let me just say a brief word about the death sentence. It should be practiced for certain

violations. The OT says that whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood should be shed. The death sentence was practiced in our country until two minutes after midnight, December 11, 1962. Today we are reaping the consequences of dropping this law. I have read that in Canada, 710 people have been executed. They were mostly males and they were usually hung.

But even today, when death happens, the law is satisfied. Take as an example, the two teens from Vancouver Island, who killed Leonard Dyck, a University of British Columbia botany lecturer, and an American woman and her Australian boyfriend. The law went after them and tracked them across four provinces in Canada. They were found dead in northeastern Manitoba. They had taken their own lives. The law was after them as long as they lived. When they were found dead, the law was satisfied. Their penalty for what they did, as far as Canadian law is concerned, had been more than paid for, since it does not require death. After their death, the law did not further pursue parents or relatives or school. The law was now at rest. It had dominion over them as long as they lived, but once they were dead, it had no more dominion.

Paul's illustration is that when one has died, the law has no more dominion over a person. But, here is the dilemma for man spiritually. When one is physically dead one also has no more opportunity to make things right. So, in order for God to bring about that which He wants from man, His law has to be satisfied while one remains alive.

And that raises this question: how could the law's requirement of death be satisfied while man remains alive? A person who sins has to die physically. But if the person is dead, it is too late to fix things and live right. After death things can't be made right, and now one must go to hell. The two boys who murdered several people we spoke of have met the consequences of their sin, but they can never make things right. All of mankind is under the law that says, "If you sin, you must die physically." That means after death one also will go to hell.

And here is the question: How could God's wrath for sin be satisfied through our death, while at the same time we remain alive? If only death satisfies God's wrath, this is the difficulty. Well, it is for this very reason that God sent His only begotten Son into the world. Christ came to earth in a human body, that which must die, and He took the sinner's place in physical death. When the sinner repents of his sins and puts his faith in Jesus Christ, God's wrath for that sinner is satisfied, and at the same time the sinner remains alive.

Furthermore, how can God call a sinner righteous, when he is a sinner? He could do so by imputing Christ's righteousness to the sinner. And now the sinner is left alive to bring forth fruit to God. When a sinner repents and puts his faith in Jesus Christ, God can now justly say, "You are a righteous person." And when the sinner dies, the Lord can say, "Come you blessed of the Lord, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." All of this is possible only through the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf.

Well, Paul has shown all that in chapters 4-6. And so in 7:1 he says, "Or don't you understand this? You know the law. Once a person has died, he is free from the law." So, Paul illustrates this great truth from the law itself. We find that in verses 2-3. We'll read verses 1-3:

1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

In verses 2-3, we have the illustration of what Paul has taught up to chapter 7. This great truth has to do with law. For God to save man He has to remain just, and justice has to do with law. So Paul illustrates this great truth, using the law of Moses as set out regarding marriage. Here is the law: Marriage is a bond for life. Only death can annul the marriage. That is God's law. The penalty for violating this law was the death of the guilty party. So only death could dissolve this bond.

But if one partner died, the law relinquished its hold on the living partner, and the living partner was now free to remarry. If a woman married another while the first husband was alive, she would be called an adulteress. But the death of a marriage partner puts an end to the claims of the law over the living partner.

Take as an example of that the two teens from Vancouver Island. The law was after them to execute justice as long as they were alive. When they were found dead, the law was satisfied. Their penalty for what they did, by Canadian law, was more than paid and the law was at rest. The law had dominion over them as long as they lived, but once they were dead, it had no more dominion over them. Death does away with any further claims of the law.

Now Romans 7:1-3 is not meant to deal with divorce and remarriage, but let me just say in passing that you will hardly find a stronger passage against divorce and remarriage than this one. Evangelicals who allow for divorce and remarriage have a difficult time with this passage. If the passage holds true as it is written, there is no allowance for remarriage unless one partner dies. For those interested in this subject, we have a number of messages on divorce and remarriage at sermonaudio.com. Let me just mention that I have just received an e-mail from a woman who listened to our messages on divorce and who was living with a third man. She has left this man now and is working through what she is to do now.

How do those who allow for divorce and remarriage answer this text? Listen to Maxwell, whom I quote a lot in Romans. He says, "...we should note Paul is not here discussing the much disputed question about the Scriptural ground for divorce. It would not suit his purpose to bring in for discussion the case of divorce due to infidelity" (261). What Maxwell is saying is that infidelity gives Scriptural ground for divorce. But if that is true, it also ruins Paul's illustration. Paul says this law has dominion over a man, not until infidelity happens, but until death.

The commentator Gill says regarding the words, "As long as he lives:" "... except in the cases of adultery, #Mt 19:9, and desertion, #1Co 7:15, by which the bond of marriage is loosed, and for which a divorce or separation may be made, which are equal to death:"

He is saying that adultery or desertion loose the bond of this law. But if these arguments are correct, in my view, Paul's illustration is not valid. The Mosaic law knew no exceptions except death. Being cleared of our sins knows no exceptions except death.

So far Paul's illustration is clear. But the illustration Paul uses is not easy to understand or explain, as anyone who has tried will know. Those who ponder these verses will find themselves in an extremely difficult passage. William Barclay says, "Seldom did Paul write so difficult and so complicated a passage as this" (pg. 92).

The great difficulty of these verses in the context is this: whom or what does the woman represent and whom or what does the husband represent, and whom or what does the law represent in this illustration? Who or what died? Did the law die? Did the sinner die? Who remained alive and was allowed to marry another partner?

Here is how I understand this passage. The woman represents the self; me, or you, the real person. The husband represents the flesh. The flesh is not the person. The flesh belongs to the person just

like a husband belongs to the wife and vice versa. It is the flesh that must die. I believe the sin nature resides in the flesh and we will see more of that in this chapter. So it is the body that must die if a person commits sin. It is the death of the body that satisfies the law. It is the desires generated in the flesh or body that give impulse to sin. And again, we will see more of that in Romans 7.

In my understanding, what is called 'the old man' in Romans 6:6 is self under the dominion of the flesh. When self agrees with the flesh and consents to sin, the self is married, so to speak, to the flesh by that consent. When a person is truly saved, the old man dies and the new man comes into being. The new man is self under new management, which is the management or control of the Spirit. We will see more of this later as well. When a person repents from sin and receives Christ as Saviour, self, the real person, consents to the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit.

So, the woman represents the true self. The flesh, under whose dominion self existed prior to salvation represents the husband. When Christ died, it was His flesh, or His body that died. It was His body for our body. It is the death of the body that satisfies God for sin. So we died in Christ because He took our place.

We were married to the flesh by personal consent by sinning. When the flesh died in Christ, we were released from the law of our marriage to the flesh, and when that happens the believer is now free to remarry. We will be looking further at that in the next message.

CONCL: So, to conclude, let me summarize this far. Romans 3:19 says:

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Who is under the law? Everybody. What does that mean? It means that if they sin they must die physically and the ultimate

consequences are that they must go to hell. The law says everybody has failed and everybody must meet the consequences. But the person who becomes a Christian is freed from the law. So Romans 6:14-15 says:

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

What does it mean that the Christian is not under the law? How is it that the Christian is not under the law? Well, the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. But once he dies it no longer has dominion over him. So how has the believer died so that the law no longer has dominion over him? Well, he died in Christ because Christ died in the sinner's place.

And Paul says: Are you still in the dark? Let me explain:

1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Let me put it like this: The law has dominion or lordship over a person as long as a person is alive. For example, a woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, she is no longer bound to him. She is now free from that law. The law no longer has dominion over him. But if her husband is alive and she marries another, she will be called an adulteress.

The lost person was bound by the law to the flesh. The law said the person who sins must die. Through sin, the person was united to the flesh and therefore physical death must take place. But Christ took the sinner's place in death. So when a sinner repents and places his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ's death, burial, and resurrection counts for them. Now

the sinner is free from the law of sin and death. The believer is now free to marry another without being called an adulterer, or adulteress. We will pick up from there in the next message.