

XLV. Romans in Biblical Perspective  
*The Gospel of God*  
“The Law of God and the Gospel of God – Part 2”  
Romans 7:7-12  
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III  
October 2, 2022 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God, which is inspired, infallible, inerrant and eternal. Romans 7:1-12 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.*

[7] *What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” [8] But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. [9] I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. [10] The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. [11] For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. [12] So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

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.

We’re in this section of the Scripture, Romans 6, 7, and 8, that I believe is the most crucial section of Scripture to understand, be guided and how and why to live the Christian life once we have been given a new heart and a new record by being converted in Christ. It declares the foundation of the Christian life – union with Christ, and he goes to the theology of baptism to show you that when in baptism Christ died to sin and then He was raised to live unto God as our intercessor, our mediator, our substitute, and our vicarious substitutionary atonement. Christ died for our sins to save us from God’s wrath, in other words, God Himself saved us in Christ from Himself so that we might have everlasting life in Christ. When He died for our sins, we died with Him to sin. So how can we walk in what we have died to? Then Paul says that when He was raised to God, we were raised to the newness of life – union with Christ.

It is not our confidence in taking on the Christian life, which is impossible without the power of God and the presence of God in our life, for our foundational resting point is we’re in Christ and Christ is in us. That is the hope of glory. That is the mystery revealed that we are not only right with God in Christ, now God Himself resides within us because of Christ by His Spirit. The key is this foundation – know, be, do – know who you are in Christ and Christ in you. Be who you are in Christ, Christ in you. Now you’re ready to do not for salvation, but for your

Savior who is in you, who empowers you, who has saved you, who has loosed you from sins penalty and has broken sins power in your life. This One who has done this glorious work, now send you out.

He has now delivered you from three things. One is He has delivered us from the wrath of God and has given us His perfect righteousness. Two, He has also broken the power of sin so He has delivered us from the penalty of our sins and we have now been emancipated from the power of sin. We no longer live under the dominion of sin, for we are not under the law, but under grace. We still have sin living in us, remaining sin, but no longer do we live under the reign of sin. Thirdly, we have been delivered from the weight of the law. We are under grace which comes under us to lift us up because of what the One who was born under the law did for us. He took the curses of the law for you and now gives you the benefits of the ultimate purpose of the law, which is life when you come to Him, because of His perfect obedience and righteousness that is now ours.

This phrase – you're not under law but under grace – makes others think Paul is undoing the Old Testament. Paul goes from baptism to the marriage covenant to illustrate this. Paul says, we used to be married to God in Adam and the covenant of works. When Adam sinned, we sinned and we now come under what was meant to be life, the commandments of God, death, by the works of sin. That covenant exists until there is a death. Here's the death. Christ died for us and when He died for us, we died to the covenant of works and the law so now we're released from it. We're no longer under it for we're now under a new Adam, because of God's unmerited love, His grace. You are under Him. Now we walk in the life of the Spirit who now sets us free not only from the wrath of God, the dominion of sin, but now from the law of God.

It's like your salvation in that you're not set free to become autonomous to yourself. You're set free from the slavery of sin in order to be the servant of Christ. Now, you've been set free from the law, as you're not under the law, but under grace, in order that you might now use the law lawfully. Is the law sin which is the question Romans 7:7? The answer comes in the summation of the following verses but Paul answers it directly in Romans 7:11 where he says 'no, the law is not sin. The law is holy, righteous and it was meant for life. It's your sin that makes it an instrument of death in your life as you're under the judgment of God.'

Romans 6 was challenging but that was sandbox play compared to the classroom of Romans 7. In Romans 7 we not only have to deal with how we get out from under the law through the death and resurrection of Christ, but what it means to now love the law and use it lawfully for a holy purpose – its intent and sacredness. Paul gives us this amazing paradox in Romans 7 where until you get from out from under the law, you can't profitably use the law. In fact, the law will just keep weighing you down until you're set free from it to Christ and then in Christ now it can be used. In other words, you can't live to Christ guided by the law until you are dead for Christ to the law and out from under it. That's a challenging thing to work our way through and to understand, because the tendency is we either value the law that we love so much, that we attribute to it something it can't do – it can't save you or keep you saved it. The law has no power. So Romans 7 goes back to what it means to be in union with Christ. We were already introduced to union with Christ in Romans 6 through the theology of baptism.

In Romans 7 Paul now uses marriage to show us we've been set free from the covenant with Adam which is the covenant of works, and now we're in the covenant of grace so we're not under the law but under grace. What does that mean for us and what is the right use of the law? Now Paul has us in this situation to understand we do about the law. What does it mean to be under the law and what is the right use of the law that is holy, sacred and righteous? That's not

all Paul will do for he will instruct us and teach us that we who have been set free from the reign of sin, how we deal with remaining sin. In fact, the Bible tells me if a man says he does it sin, he's a liar, and the truth is not in it (1 John 4:20). I praised God when I was converted for the sins God just microwaved out of my life, but there have been those sins that have to be dealt with that are remaining sins. Sometimes they don't feel like remaining sins to do the cleanup job on them, for sometimes they feel like reigning sin because they keep coming back, finding a way to the heart. They almost seem they almost feel like they rejuvenate their roots in my life from time to time.

So, how do I deal with this remaining sin and what is the right use of the law of God in my life? At least to begin to unpack it, we won't get all of it in this study but let's take a look back at the text in Romans 7. When Paul wants to get to truth, he takes the error and makes it into a question and then he will give us the right answer. So here we are again. By the way, Paul has been accused of saying the law is sin back in Romans 3. Paul will reach again for that emotional response.

Romans 7:7 says *[7] What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." [8] But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. [9] I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. [10] The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. [11] For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. [12] So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

Paul reaches back into his own personal testimony as an illustration. The law showed me my sin and he picks out the 10th commandment – you shall not covet. There was a time in Paul's life where that law was all around him and he thought he was living yet actually, he was dead. It wasn't until the law came to his heart by the Spirit that he saw he was a sinner and dead.

People have often asked me what I think Romans 7 is and I think it's a very important issue for us. I have 16 commentaries that I've been using in this series, and in a number of them they all go back to John Newton. John Newton said "The most crucial thing in the Christian life, once you understand who you are in Christ, the Gospel use of the law is that you don't misuse it, or abuse it." I had the opportunity to share with the high school chapel a couple of weeks ago about this.

This is what I shared with them. I came from a very small junior high and I was going to a gigantic high school. Well, I'd played baseball, basketball and football in junior high and I wanted to do the same thing in high school, but the competition was going to get pretty fierce. My daddy kept telling me, 'Son, you're going to have to up your game here. I mean, you're not just going to walk out there and play and it's not just getting on the field on the day you're playing the game in the competition that's going to do it. You have to get ready for you are going to have to like the practice field as much as the playing field.' That year when my birthday came around, my dad brought something to me I certainly wasn't expecting and I actually had get some help to get it out of the car, into the house. It was Joe Weider's home gym for weight training. Everything there was in that box. My dad basically told me I had to use that if I was going to play baseball, basketball and football. Then he said, 'But don't touch those weights until you read this' and he handed me a pamphlet and then repeated, 'Do not repeat, do not touch the weights until you read this. The one thing worse than you not using these weights is if you misuse or abuse these weights. So read this pamphlet.'

That pamphlet had five essentials for effective weight training. Now, I went to that illustration because I believe that the law of God is not a curse. I believe it reveals the effects of the curse of sin, but I don't believe it's a curse unless we don't use it, misuse it or abuse it, then it can lead to death which cannot be remedied because it leads you away from the only One that can save you – that's Christ too itself, thinking the law can save you. The law cannot save you. It has no power to save you. You can't save yourself with the law. You don't have the power to use the law to save yourself. You can't misuse it. You can't abuse it.

Another reason why I did that is because actually the law like that pamphlet told me about those weights has five right uses – righteous uses, holy, sacred uses in our life as sinners, to be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This text outlines for you those five blessings of the sacred, righteous and holy use of God's law. Let's go back to the text one more time.

Romans 7:9-12 says [9] *I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. [10] The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. [11] For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. [12] So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

Paul is telling us at one point in his life he actually thought that in his obedience to the law, that he was alive. Now, how do we know that? When Paul gives his testimony in pre conversion in Philippians 3:5-6, he says 'As to the law, I was a Pharisee found blameless.' Was he blameless? No. But he with the law had fooled himself into thinking he was blameless. I'm indebted to Dr. Ferguson for pointing this out in his commentary when it came to why Paul went to covetousness and not murder since Paul clearly killed Christians before he was saved? Paul's use of "I" in this text gives us a testimonial dynamic here. I will acknowledge with the commentators that also acknowledge this, that this is somewhat speculation, but I believe that was one of the primary issues in Paul's pre-converted life. He was ambitious. He didn't want to be a Pharisee but he wanted to be Pharisee of the Pharisees. He would not just be a Jew, but from a tribe of Benjamin where the first king came from.

Paul coveted status; he coveted renown and I can almost see him holding the coats and yelling 'Stone him!' at the death of Stephen, who had been confronted by Pharisees, by numerous groups that were surrounding him, throwing accusations, throwing questions right at him and the text says they could not answer (Acts 7:54-58). Here was Stephen in the power of the Spirit, using the Old Testament to exalt Christ and render useless everything that was being brought against Him by those who were about to kill him. It so infuriated them that they were gnashing their teeth upon him and Paul watched Stephen in the power of the Spirit, and I believe he coveted that type, that status, but all he could do was hold coats. He was a coat checker for the murderers and participated with his presence. That's why I believe he was so susceptible to that glorious conversion just days later on the road to Damascus.

Now you're probably thinking 'Paul couldn't have fooled himself that way.' But he did and I believe that Paul becomes an illustration of an illustration of Jesus. You remember the rich, young ruler that comes to Jesus. He says to Jesus 'What must I do (works) to be saved?' (Mark 10:17-22). Jesus basically said, 'Oh, you want to do something to be saved, well, let Me tell you what was given so that if you could do it, you have life. Go and do the law.' The rich young ruler said 'I've already done all that. Tell me something more.' Jesus doesn't go to an 11<sup>th</sup> commandment, no, he just goes to the last of the Ten Commandments, which is Thou shalt not covet. Jesus exposes his covetous heart by telling him, 'All right, I, the law giver, now tell you,

go sell all that you possess and give to the poor.’ And he goes away sorrowful. Why? Because of his riches – all of his possessions stuck doing. He couldn’t let them go. Here, you see, covetousness for Jesus is just expounding covetousness in his life.

That’s where Paul was. Paul says, ‘when the Spirit of God brought covetousness, and I no longer was under the law, the Spirit of God set me free by pointing out that I was under the judgment of the law and I needed salvation for the law couldn’t save me. The law did its righteous work.’ Its work is not to save. It’s work is to show you your need of the Savior. So here are the five essentials right from this text we have just looked at.

Essential number one, the law reveals and defines sin. What is sin? According to our catechism, sin is the transgression of or the want of conformity to the law of God in thought, word or deed. There are sins of omission and sins of commission. There are three words in your Bible for sin. One is translated sin, one is translated iniquity, and one is translated transgression. Transgression means to step over the line. Iniquity means making crooked a straight line and sin means missing the mark. What is the mark? The mark is the law that tells you how to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind, and those made in the image of God as yourself. What straight line do we make crooked? It’s the law of God. What is the line we step over? It’s the law of God. The law defines and reveals sin.

Essential number two, the law reveals the sinfulness of sin. Is there anything wrong with the money in the account of the rich, young ruler? No, I do not want to know how much money, how much property, how much you own. What I, as a pastor want to ask you for your sake, how much of it owns you? It’s not how much God has put in your stewardship, but does it control and own you? I was given a call by a very good friend about a sermon that was railing on big houses. Can you have a big house and be in sin with a big house is an idle? Yes. Can you have a small house and be in sin with a small house as an idle? Yes, then I told the man it’s a sin to have a house too big go ask him to give you the square footage that’s holy. The issue is what are you doing with the house? Does it have you or does Jesus have it through you? It’s not the zeros in the bank account. It’s how much of that controls you? The law, when used rightly, exposes if you have covetousness.

My heart is a covet creating factory. I go after one thing, covet it; it doesn’t work. I mean, it may be good blue jeans, but it’s just terrible god. I go after another one and it doesn’t work. What do I do? Do I quit coveting? No. I go find something else to covet. So it shows me not only the sin but it shows me the sinfulness of sin.

Thirdly, it reveals my sin nature. As Calvin says, ‘I have an idle making heart.’ The heart of my problem is the problem with my heart. It exposes the origin of the sin is not the law, and the law is not sin. The law is revealing the sin, the sinfulness of sin, and where our sins are coming from – straight from our sin nature in our heart. I need a heart transplant. David says in Psalm 51:10 [10] *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

Fourthly, it reveals the deceitfulness of sin. Paul says in Romans 7:11 [11] *For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.* Do you remember somebody else that sinned and said that they were deceived in the Bible? The first time we hear of this in the Bible is in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:11b-13 says [11] *(God said to Adam) “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”* [12] *The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”* [13] *Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?”* *The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”* Adam isn’t really confessing just complaining about having a dysfunctional wife and a dysfunctional God that gave him that wife.

They fell back because of the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is always making promises and writing checks that can't be cashed.

You can just about hear Adam and Eve that the tree was good for food and a delight to the eyes for it was desirable. That should not have been a surprise because God was the One who made the tree and yes it was beautiful and good for all that. What it is not good for, is for you to put it ahead of God. It can do what God made it to do but it can't do what Satan deceives you and what sin deceives you into thinking it will do.

We actually believe that in our nation right now we have left early on which the law, a simple law was necessary and one of the things we needed to do is not have a lot of laws, just have a lot of religion, free practice of religion. That doesn't mean all the religion that is practiced is good, but we need to open the door because what this nation needed was not laws, it needed a law that protected what can change a nation and that is the proclamation of truth. Go look at what we've done for the last hundred years in making laws. We actually think if we make enough laws, we can make a nation worth living in and it doesn't work. What works is the power of God's grace that changes hearts and lives. What the law exposes is our sin, the sinfulness of sin, and the fact that the sin originates from within us, not outside of us, and the deceitfulness of sin where it promises what it can't deliver, but we keep buying it.

Fifthly and finally, the law reveals to us how to love our God and how to love those who are made in the image of our God. It can't give you the power to love God. It can't change your heart to love God, but it tells you how to love God – how I love thy law. Why? I don't love it because it can save me. It doesn't have the power. In fact, the law is powerless. I love the law because it is able to reveal my sin and send me to a Savior. The law shows me the sinfulness of my sin that I would repent of it. I love it because it shows me the origin of my sin and my sin nature that I might seek Christ to deliver me from it and I can see the deceitfulness of sin that I would no longer be carried away with its false promises. Now this law, by the grace of God, I'm under grace and free to use the law as that glorious guidepost of how to love Him with all of my heart, soul and mind – no other gods before Him, nor vain imagination, not dishonoring His name and love the day of the Lord. He is teaching me that with it. It doesn't save me, but it directs me how to live for Him who does save me and who sets me free.

So, here's the take away. By the Spirit of God, the Law of God sends us to the Son of God to be saved by the grace of God, then instructs us how to love God and those made in the image of God, increasingly to live all of life for the glory of God. The law has no power, but it is a glorious information giver. It's built on God's character, and it reveals to us our sins, the sinfulness of sin, the deceitfulness of sin, sin as it comes from our hearts and our lives and then sends us to Christ.

Here's your bumper sticker. The Law of God – you cannot be saved by it, but you cannot be saved without it. Jesus saves you from your sins. How can I know I'm a sinner without the law of God? I can't but once I am united to Christ from what the law shows me, it then can be used as my instructor – how to love the Lord with all my heart, soul and mind and how to love my neighbor those made in the image of God.

I'd like to close with this illustration from when I was in Charlotte and had the privilege to pastor a church there for 17 years. I want to tell you about a young man who was a good son. When it came time for him to graduate from his high school, his father went to him, said, "son, you graduated and you did a good job, got good grades. What would you like?" He said, "Dad, that's simple. It is something I've always wanted it. It is that classic car that you have – the 62 Corvette that's under the tarp in the garage." His dad said "You really want that?" He said,

“Yeah.” They ended the conversation. Graduation came. They sat down at the dinner table after the graduation exercises and gifts were given, and his dad said, “Son, this is what I’m giving to you and I have thought a lot about it. I believe this is what need to give to you.” The son was handed a package and in the package was a box. Inside the box was a study Bible. The young man was fully expecting the keys to that car, and he stood up, looked at his father, and left the Bible in the box in the package up on the shelf.

There was hardly a word spoken before the young man left for college. It continued. Then he got word in his college years that his father was dying. So he came home, made some amends, and his father died. When he returned from the cemetery plot, walking down to his old room, he passed the shelf and saw the gift his father had given him still sitting there. His dad had not moved it. He picked it up and he opened again the package. As he picked up the Bible, it fell open to John 3:16 and the reason it fell open is because the car keys were right there.

We have a gift from God and it’s the law of God. It's right there in the Word of God. Don't misuse it. Don't not use it and don't abuse it. It can't convert, but it can reveal. It can reveal our sin. It can reveal the sinfulness of our sin. It can reveal and does reveal the deceitfulness of say. It reveals the origin of our sins from our heart, and it sends us to Christ who alone can save us and when He does, that law He writes on our new heart that we might know how to love Him. It reveals the pathway of loving God with a Spirit given love with all of our heart, soul and mind, and those who are made in the image of God as ourselves. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. I pray that You would speak to our hearts by that Word even now. Take a moment of silence. Holy Spirit, do speak, I pray. Jesus, as You speak to hearts, would You use that glorious law as a teacher of our need of a Savior and a teacher that we cannot save ourselves? If to you this day Jesus has spoken to your heart, then here is how you can come to everlasting life. The law is sending you to Jesus who will set you free from sin’s judgment, sin’s power and bring you home to be with Himself. His law will be a glorious guidepost to Himself and into life for Jesus, but it's Jesus who saves. As the hymn says; Jesus saves, Jesus saves! Jesus, for those of us who are saved, thank You for Your law. We love it. We don't make it into an idol that promises salvation through our obedience. We love it to be brought to Jesus and to put our trust in Him alone. Then use Your law as we meditate in it as to how to love Jesus and if we love Him, then we will keep His commandments, not for life, but because of life in Christ, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.