

He Breaks the Power of Cancelled Sin – The Redemptive Achievements of Christ as the Source of True Transformation

Introduction

WHY and HOW the church is called to “care for one another” is a terrific and foundational truth for every local church.

It is far too common to find a church in America, and most of the Western world, where we are generally financially, and socially, and practically stable, to sort of ***plateau spiritually***—to have perhaps less zeal, or intentionality, or purposeful pursuit of holiness and devotion.

As counseling has become more and more a part of my ministry, I have noticed a pattern in many professing Christians, struggling with sin, who have developed a kind of “passive defeatist” attitude. Growth is stunted, zeal is waxing cold, and they feel like giving up.

Even if they don’t say, the ongoing sin has made you ask sometimes, “Is it really worth it?”

- “I’ve asked God to take away this desire/sin, and He hasn’t done it!”
 - “Deliver us from temptation” is different than this misguided belief that somehow sinful desires are just swept away instantly.
 - God “makes a way of escape” in temptation, and He can “deliver us from the evil one.” But temptation and sin won’t be fully eradicated until glory.
- “Even my best efforts are tainted by sin” ... Sometimes they quote Isaiah 64:6, “All our righteous deeds are like filthy rags.”
 - But that passage is not about people striving to please God and overcome sin. It is about unsaved, self-righteous Israelites, living in iniquity, but continuing to offer sacrifices and “so-called worship” in the temple.
 - It isn’t some general reference to indwelling sin, and we shouldn’t quote it for that purpose.

I believe the biblical perspective on why we sin, and how to battle indwelling sin, is much more triumphant, victorious, and glorious than the kind of “passive defeatism” that I often hear.

To help us “gird up our minds” for action and victory over sin, we are going to take a little survey and deep dive into the truths of the gospel outlined by Paul in the book of Romans.

The Context

Just over 158 years ago, (April 9, 1865), the Civil War effectively ended when Robert E. Lee surrendered along with his troops to the Union’s Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia.

The Texans kept fighting, some of you might know, but they like guns down there, and that's beyond the scope of my discussion and illustration today.

With the end of the Civil War, of course, also came the abolishing of slavery. Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation (two years earlier, in 1863), and made every slave in the United States a free man.

Those were great and life-changing events in our nation's history. But for many of the older slaves in this country, it came as such a stark contrast to the life they had known for so long, that many found it very difficult to leave the Southern plantations. Many actually stayed on the plantations, continued to work, and continued to live like slaves, though they had been declared free.

Understandably, many of these former slaves even lived out their lives trembling in fear whenever they would see their old master approaching. They would continue to experience the emotional trauma of being afraid to be beaten or sold.

Those experiences of emancipated slaves provide an unfortunate illustration of a very real spiritual fact.

It is possible to live like a slave to the past experientially, even though you are not a slave legally. You can be a slave in your *feelings* and *responses*, when actually, in respect to your *status* and *position*, you have been completely emancipated and set free.

That is an apt illustration that should help you to understand the message of Romans 6. To help us understand it even better, let me set the context for Romans 6.

In one sense you could say that the context for Romans 6 is the gospel message. But if I said it that way, it would imply that knowing and living out the truth of Romans 6 and what follows is somehow separate from the gospel—and that isn't the case.

Paul begins this letter by stating the gospel in its simplest form.

Read Rom. 1:16-17.

That little phrase, "The righteous man shall live by faith," is as good a summary of the gospel as there is. It says basically that, "A man who is right with God, is right with God only by faith, only by believing that God can and has made him right with Himself, on the merits of Christ's work."

The justified man receives eternal life only by believing and trusting in the finished work of Christ on his behalf—"the righteous shall live by faith."

Notice Paul says that the gospel reveals—not the righteousness of man, but—the righteousness of God.

How does it do that?

Well, it does it by revealing the way that sinful men can be redeemed and joined to a Holy God and His Son Jesus Christ, without compromising the righteousness and justice of God.

The rest of chapter 1, and all the way through chapter 3, Paul proves from Scripture the universal sinfulness of man, and our absolute inability to make ourselves right with God through our own effort or good works—including obedience to the Law of God.

No man could ever keep the Law of God anyway, so the only way for us to be right with Him is for God Himself make a way for us to be right with Him without compromising His own justice, righteousness, and holiness.

He did that by laying our sins upon His perfect Son and pouring out His justice and wrath against sin on His Son, instead of us. That’s what Paul describes in Romans 3.

Romans 3:23–26 — **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. **26** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, **so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**

We are justified by faith, and faith alone. Not by good works, not by keeping the Ten Commandments, not by going to church, or reading the Bible, or serving in the church, or trying to be a good person.

Read Rom. 3:28.

This has always been the standard, as Paul goes on to say, starting with Abraham.

Read Rom. 4:3.

That is—and always has been—the answer to how one is made right with God ... you must *BELIEVE* God (and His provision for the forgiveness of sin) and He will reckon Christ’s work, and Christ’s righteousness to you ... He will credit it to your account, as though it were your own.

What about works? Don’t I need to do something? He must require some work?

NO!

Romans 4:4–5 — **4** Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift [favor, grace] but as his due [if you “work” for it, then God “owes” it to you]. **5** And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

There is the essence of the gospel. The forgiveness of sins—a completely free salvation—offered to all who will believe.

And somewhere along the line, someone will always object: *“Certainly there can’t be a free salvation offered to everyone? What about mass murderers, or the pedophile, or people who steal the life savings of an elderly woman?”*

Now, it’s often the case those hearts and minds have been “given over” and they rarely repent and believe. But the gospel still says in principle, **“There is no limit to what God can and will forgive in Christ!”**

And that is nowhere more evident than in the amazing statement near the very end of this section.

Romans 5:20 — ~~20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but~~ *where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,*

That is the beauty, and richness, and fullness of the gospel. The more a man sins, the more they may be forgiven; and the more they are forgiven, the more God is able to put His grace on display through the gospel.

AND NO MAN CAN EVER EXHAUST THE GRACE OF GOD!

And that is the introduction, the lead-up, to Romans 6 and 7.

The amazing and abounding grace of the gospel!

And it's no wonder then that Paul would foresee someone's objection to his preaching and teaching this kind of message. And so, he asks the obvious question that anyone who had just heard this message would ask.

Romans 6:1 — **1** What shall we say then [*that is his way of saying, "I know what you're going to ask next"*]? **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?**

And it is this gospel message, and the answer to that question (are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?), that sets the context for Romans chapter 6.

And it sets the context in which Paul, in this passage, answers *OUR* question, "WHAT IS THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP TO SIN?"

And as we think about "Why Change Matters!" and "How Change Happens!" And, how to minister care and counsel to others, there really is no more important question.

The simple answer is right there in verse 2 – THE BELIEVER IS DEAD TO SIN.

Romans 6:2 — **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

So, let's dig into these two chapters, and lay the theological foundation for why change for the Christian is not just **possible!** Change is INEVITABLE!

Union with Christ, and Emancipation from Sin – Romans 6

There are three emphases to be considered as we meander our way through this chapter.

Paul emphasizes that there are certain things we need to KNOW. Then, knowing these things we need to "CONSIDER" or "RECKON" those things to be true for us personally. And then third, knowing and considering these spiritual realities to be true, there is a response—a way that we must "PRESENT" ourselves to God for the purpose of

The Christian Must "KNOW" ("consider" and "present")

As Paul answers this question and unfolds the theological realities that are important to this topic of gospel change, he uses this word “KNOW” ...

... In verse 3 ... in verse 6 ... in verse 9 ... and again in verse 16.

What are the various things Paul is telling us we must “know” and “remember” and apply?

In the context, remember, Paul is answering the question, “Should a believer continue in sin, so that grace might increase?”

Paul responds, with a little flare and even a touch of outrage, in his voice, “Most certainly not, a believer should not ever continue in sin—the believer is dead to sin!” [*This is the strongest way to say no in the Greek language*].

How shall we who died to sin still live in it (6:2b)?

Here is the one thing I want you to grasp tonight—if you remember nothing else, please remember this.

As a result of your salvation, you **ARE** dead to sin. You are **ALREADY** dead to sin, *right now!*

This passage does not teach that your being dead to sin is a **future** reality. Nor does it teach that you are in the **process** of dying to sin.

Paul says, “we died to sin...how then, shall we still live in it?”

This opening section of chapter six is meant to help us understand this truth. But Paul doesn’t just state that fact and leave us wondering how and why it is true. He gives us the theological and doctrinal reason why it is true. And it can be summed up in this simple phrase...

...BECAUSE OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST!

Read Romans 6:3.

Paul is here referring to what our physical baptism symbolizes—union with Christ. And because we have been joined and immersed into relationship with Christ, and we have also been joined and immersed into His death—a death **to** sin, and **for** its consequences.

And, not only joined and immersed into the reality and benefits of His death, we have also been joined and immersed into the realities and benefits of His resurrection.

Read Romans 6:4-5.

So, the apostle Paul reminds us that a Christian, in the mind and eye of God, sees us as having been crucified, buried, and resurrected again to walk in newness of life—not only in the future, but in the here and now.

And why does he expect that?

Well, he says we should **KNOW** that already. The way he goes on to address the reason why we should be walking in newness of life, implies that he believes it should be common knowledge to us.

Read Romans 6:6-7.

KNOWING THIS...

We should know this...the correct question is, “Do you know this?” Is this truth one that you have learned and embraced and live by?

Who is the Old Man here?

- The Old Man is who we were apart from Christ.
- It is the real person we were, when still dead in our trespasses and sins.
- It is the person we were when we were in Adam—BUT, we are a new man in Christ.
- It is the person we were when we were still taken captive to do the will of the devil.

That man has been crucified. He is dead. He is not simply in the process of dying, because the text tells us that he has also been buried in Christ—it would not be appropriate, even in a God-given metaphor, to bury someone who was only in the process of dying.

The “Old Man” that we were is dead—completely dead!

OUR OLD MAN WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, THAT OUR BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH [ESV, “brought to nothing”].

What is our body of sin?

Our body of sin is that part of us where sin still dwells. The phrase “body of sin” in this context is used almost synonymously with the term “flesh.”

The old man is dead, the flesh has no authority over you—you are now a new man in Christ, and are no longer under the authority of the flesh, your sin, your old man.

BUT ...

Despite our flesh having its authority completely nullified, yet it remains, and we still hear the urgings, and the invitations of sin. And this part of us still remembers the pleasures and the promptings of sin, which is what makes it to resist sin.

But that place is not the real you if you are a Christian. It is only a part of your human, earthly existence, and has already been defeated, and abolished through the new birth.

That is the meaning of the rest of verse 6.

...THAT OUR BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH [destroyed, ESV-“brought to nothing,” rendered inoperative, to make idle or inactive, to abrogate or incapacitate, to abolish, to nullify by removing its power and control over us].

- Our OLD MAN is dead – it was crucified.
- Our BODY OF SIN is useless against us.
- We are FREED FROM SIN.
- We are NO LONGER SLAVES TO SIN.

Before we were united with Christ, we were slaves to sin.

In our union with Him that slavery is abolished—we do not have to sin anymore. We don't have to obey the commands of our old master—the flesh, our body of sin.

[last phrase of 6:9, “death no longer is master over Him,” is significant].

Remember our opening illustration about slaves after the Civil War?

Christians that live with that defeatist attitude [“I can't do right,” “sin is too hard to resist”] are like those slaves that were free, but just kept serving the interests, and meeting the demands, of a master who had no authority over them.

In this context, we aren't told to crucify the old man. God has already done that when He saved us, caused us to be born again, and united us to Christ at salvation. **We are told here that the old man is dead, and we are told to believe it.**

...YOU ARE DEAD TO SIN, YOU ARE FREED FROM SIN, AND ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS!

And now we are told to “consider” or “reckon” or “appropriate” this REALITY into your perspective and approach to battling sin.

The Christian Must “CONSIDER”

Let's do just that. How are we told to give proper “consideration” to this truth?

Read Romans 6:11.

Even so,...

... in the same way you know Christ has died, risen, and lives again, to the same degree that you are certain that Christ has **died to sin**, has been **raised from the dead**, and **lives to God**...*as sure as you are about those things, be sure about this as well...*

That is what that word, “consider” means. It simply means to conclude that it is true, accept it, embrace it, and reckon it (recognize it) as a fact.

And this is a fact that we are simply told to believe.

DO YOU FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE? If God did not tell us here that we have been united to Christ in His death and resurrection, and if the Scripture did not tell us we were dead to sin, that the old man has been crucified, and that we were alive to God in Christ ...

... most of us would have trouble concluding that based on our practical experience with sin.

But God tells us to believe those things—if you are a Christian, you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

But despite those wonderful truths, we still know all too well the disgusting effects of sin. **WHY**, if the old man is dead, and the body of sin—the flesh—has been rendered inoperative, done away with, why do we still find ourselves sinning so much?

I would liken the whole struggle of the Christian to living in a new kingdom, a new country, with a fence between them and their old land. On one side of the fence is the kingdom of darkness (where you used to live; and where you were once ruled over).

And now, Christian, you have moved to the other side of the fence, into the kingdom of God.

When we are saved [*to use the language of Col. 1:13*] we are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son. It is a completed transfer. We are not in the process of being transferred. It is done. And that old man, that old MASTER, as it were, is slain and buried on the other side of the road. He is dead.

Now that body of sin, the flesh, had become quite chummy with you over the years.

In fact, he wasn't JUST CHUMMY, he was actually your old "slave master," he was the BOSS of you. You were obligated to listen and obey every order and desire of that old man. It was your old taskmaster. You were his slave, and had no choice but to obey the flesh.

The sad reality of sin is that even though you are no longer under that authority, ...

... even though you are not obligated to obey it any longer ...

... it is a familiar voice; a voice you've grown accustomed to; a voice who's will and wishes has brought you much pleasure in the past.

AND SO YOU LISTEN ... and sometimes, sadly, you even listen longingly.

When we sin, we are giving in to the orders of a voice that has no power or authority to tell us what to do. But the voice is familiar, and the response is habitual, and our hearts can be clouded and confused (and tempted and enticed).

Maybe the illustration of the road with the fence isn't as good as it could be, because there is so little distance between the flesh and the new man.

That old man is called our body of sin, or the flesh, because it dwells ***IN*** that part of us. Even though we are a new man, with a new heart, and a new mind ... the body of sin, or the flesh is connected to our fallen physical existence, that is beset with the tastes, the desires, and the habits for sin, and our habitual weaknesses that call out to us to give in to them.

We don't even have the fence to separate us.

And yet, the Scripture makes a clear distinction between the real you—who has been recreated in Christ, and is under no obligation to the flesh—and our body of sin, the old man.

Why is it so difficult to understand that?

Why is it so difficult to understand and comprehend that our real self, recreated in Christ, granted a new nature, given the mind of Christ, participating in the divine nature, having a completely new disposition in regard to sin—why is it so difficult to believe that we are ***completely free from sin's bondage—that we are dead to sin?***

- Some people don't grasp it because they have never been shown that this is what the Bible teaches.

- It might be hard to grasp simply because the devil doesn't want you to believe it. The accuser of the brethren can make us think that sin so dominates our life, that we can't be good enough, that he weakens our resolve to live in light of what is true. He makes it appear hopeless, and fosters an attitude that tempts us to just give up.
- We may find it difficult to grasp simply because we cannot verify it. It is not possible to physically verify our spiritual dying and rising again with Christ, and our union with Him.
- But the most obvious reason why it is hard to believe that we are totally freed from sin's tyranny and bondage is because our constant battle with sin seems to almost contradict it. You might be asking, "If I have a totally new disposition, and sin's control has truly been broken, why I am still so strongly tempted, and why do I so often give in to the temptation?"

It is important to understand so that we will **KNOW** that the power of sin in our life has been broken, but then to take that extra step and "consider," "recognize," and "reckon" it to be true **to a degree and depth that it GLORIOUSLY AND POWERFULLY ENABLES US TO FIGHT SIN!**

David C. Needham – "What could be more frustrating than being a Christian who thinks himself primarily a self-centered sinner, yet whose purpose in life is to produce God-centered holiness."

John MacArthur – "Until a believer accepts the truth that Christ has broken the power of sin over his life, he cannot live victoriously, because in his innermost being he does not think it possible."

But it is this very truth—our real and genuine deliverance from the tyranny of sin's power in our life—that makes this promise true.

1 Corinthians 10:13 – No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

We can overcome, we can endure, every temptation that sin, the devil, and the body, could possibly throw at us—because we are dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

And Paul commands us to believe that in verse 11.

Read Romans 6:11.

And he doesn't just command us to believe it. He says that it should have some practical implications in our lives as well.

Verses 12 and 13 says there is a "THEREFORE," an implication, a necessary response, a divine obligation...

Romans 6:12–13 — **12** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. **13** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

The Christian Must “PRESENT”

Because we know, we consider, and we recognize that we are dead to sin and alive to God, Paul says, ***“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”***

I want to point out two things about this statement.

First, Paul says we are not to let sin reign in our mortal body. Paul would not be exhorting us along those lines if it were impossible for sin to exercise some degree of rule in our mortal body. In other words, it is possible for Christians to know, at least for a time, the experience of sin reigning over their mortal bodies.

If that becomes your character, your habitual pursuit, your unhindered practice, than perhaps it betrays a false profession. So being engaged in the fight to NOT “let sin reign” is the sign of genuine faith, and of new life in Christ.

But ***secondly***, and more importantly, notice that Paul does not say, “Do not let sin reign in YOU.” He could not have said that. It would have run contrary to everything he has been saying. He has just been telling us we are dead to sin. The REAL YOU, the person you are in your heart of hearts, the person you are as a product of being born again—that person is legitimately free from sin’s tyranny, and is the part of you that is fighting the battle.

It is a subtle distinction but one that is very important. If and when sin dominates us as Christians, it does not dominate our person completely. It dominates only our mortal bodies, it is an outworking of our flesh, it is our heart yielding to sin and to that voice that has no authority.

But the REAL YOU, the redeemed you, the renewed you—WANTS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Listen how Paul goes on and stays consistent with this point.

Romans 7:17 – So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

Romans 7:20 –But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

Romans 7:23 – I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Paul repeatedly makes reference to the members of his body, or his flesh, or the body of sin, or to sin which dwells in him.

At the same time, listen to how he refers to himself, and to all Christians; to himself and us as redeemed men, to himself and us as men alive unto God.

Remember, he started by telling us in chapter 6, verse 5, that we have become united with Christ in the likeness of his resurrection so that we might walk in newness of life. But listen to the other ways he refers to himself and to us—to Christians.

Romans 6:17 – But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became ***obedient from the heart*** to that form of teaching to which you were committed.

Romans 7:15 – For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am ***doing the very thing I hate***.

Romans 7:18 – For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for ***the wishing is present in me***, but the doing of the good *is* not.

Romans 7:22 – For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man.

As you read those passages it is impossible to conclude that our changed position, our being united with Christ, happens without some kind of a change in our practice, BECAUSE of that profound spiritual change/renewal in our inner man.

You can also see clearly the change in disposition, the change in attitude toward sin itself, and toward God's righteous standard.

The connection is never any clearer than Romans 6:22.

Romans 6:22 – But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive [are having] your benefit [fruit], resulting in sanctification [holiness, without which none shall see the Lord, Heb. 12:14], and the outcome, eternal life.

So, we have a responsibility to PRESENT ourselves to God.

For the Christian Paul says in **Romans 6:13**, "Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you."

We have the power--we have been freed from sin.

We have the desire--our whole attitude toward sin should have changed at our salvation.

Now we must do it. We must fight that fight. We must win those battles.

This is a presentation of our mind, heart, will, and desires to God. It is a battle against sin, the world, and the devil that necessarily involves effort and spiritual sweat on our part. It is an effort that God empowers, but it is effort on our part, nonetheless. It is a ...

Philippians 2:12b-13 – ... work[ing] out [of] your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 ~~for~~ [because] it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Yielding ourselves to God, not presenting the members of our body as instruments of sin, and working out our salvation with fear and trembling is not a passive endeavor.

One other aspect of this battle I want to discuss here.

We are told to yield ourselves to God, and to *not go on presenting the members* of our body as instruments of unrighteousness.

Well, who here today is doing that perfectly?

Of course we aren't overcoming sin perfectly, because that old taskmaster, the flesh, the body of sin, that "sin that dwells in us" is not going to give up the fight easily.

The flesh is shifty, deceitful, loud, familiar to us, and it knows our past habits and how to appeal to us. But there is a reality that we've hinted at already that should give us hope ...

Your Sin Doesn't Change Who You Are – Romans 7

In Romans 7 the Apostle Paul outlines the operations of the law, of guilt, and of sin in the life of believers. He ends, of course, with an glorious exclamation of joy that one day this entire struggle against sin will be over.

Romans 7:24–25 — **24** Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25** Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

I don't want to get bogged down in the details and miss what is my main point: ***"Your sin doesn't change who you are!"***

You Are Released from the Law Through Union with Christ

In the opening half of Romans 7 Paul talks about "dying" to the Law, and being "released" from the Law.

The Law condemns us, because it imposes a standard we prove is unable to keep.

MacArthur – Why, one wonders, did God give His chosen people a law that was impossible for them to keep? His purpose was not only to reveal the standard of righteousness by which the saved are to live but also to show the depth of their sinfulness when honestly measured against the law. The law was not given to show men how good they could be but how good they could not be.

There is also a peculiar quality to the Law in that, by declaring a standard of righteousness, it sets and incites every heart to the task of disobeying it. It actually defines sin, and it stirs up sin in the process.

Romans 7:7b–8a — **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.~~

If you don't believe me, just think of how many times you've seen a fishtank in a public place that says, "Please don't touch/tap on the glass," and consider the number of times you see someone (children or adults) doing that very thing (who are we kidding? ***How many times have YOU DONE IT?***).

But gloriously, we have been freed from the Law that was given to expose, incite, and condemn.

The Christian is no longer condemned, because their failure to keep the Law has been taken on by Christ, and Christ's success in keeping the Law has been reckoned to our account. And so, we are released from the Law as a means of justification, and as a means of condemnation.

Now none of that means that the righteous standard of the Law is irrelevant, or that God has not called His children to understand, pursue, and obey the righteous requirements of the Law.

The standard and the obligation remain—it is simply covered and overshadowed by the person and work of Christ.

And the reality that we ALL experience in this life, the life we are still living on this sin-cursed world, the life we are still living with all the baggage and weakness of our sinful human existence ...

... the reality we all experience is one of sin, of battling to follow God's Law, because of the weakness of our sinful flesh, what remains of sin in us—what remains of sin in even us, whose hearts have been radically changed spiritually, and whose Spirits have been positionally and legally joined to Christ.

But that reality is exactly ***“Why Change Matters!”***

That reality is also exactly why we are all called to be agents of CARE and COUNSEL in the lives of our fellow Christians.

Your Resistance to the Law Exposes “Why Change Matters” – Your Heart and Habits

Our resistance, our struggle, our failures and sins ...

... as Paul describes the inner-workings of this sin and, and moral conflict that we experience every day, he also illustrates why we must take the hard work of growth and change so serious.

Now, the dynamic he describes is in perfect harmony with the truth he has outlined already in chapter 6.

In your heart of hearts, in your renewed spirit, you are a newly born again man! You desire what is good, right, holy, and glorifying to God.

Though, in our flesh sin remains!

Romans 7:18–19 — 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. **19** For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

He is expressing the “FELT REALITY” of the sinner here. Not the “SPIRITUAL POSITION.”

The positional spiritual reality is so true, that Paul can't even speak to this dynamic of sin, without it sounding like “it's not really me doing the sinning here!”

Romans 7:17 — 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me ...

The “felt reality” of sin is horrible, but it is only horrible because of the desires and will that is created by our new spiritual position—as one who “wills to do good,” and “delights in the law of God” (Rom 7:21-22).

And here is where we are going to land the plane.

Notice that Paul locates workings of sin as an internal principle that operates in and through the members of his body.

Romans 7:21–23 — 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. **22** For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, **23** but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Sin is a powerful and relentless foe.

Remember the illustration of an old taskmaster, barking out orders, and it sounding familiar and even appealing?

I believe this is why Paul uses the word “LAW” to describe the operations of sin in his otherwise redeemed existence.

We are compelled to obey anything and anyone that possesses and asserts the qualitative nature and operations of a “law.”

***ILLUSTRATION:** We always slow down when we see the police!*

The “law of sin” is similar.

- When we hear its voice, it is a familiar voice, and we feel compelled to obey it.
- It deceives us to, and tells us, “if you don’t obey me, then I will punish you.”
- Or, “if you don’t obey me, you will miss out on something good.”

The “law of sin” compels us to obey.

This is why what the world calls “addiction” seems so uncontrollable, but so irrational at the same time! The influence of the flesh, of indwelling sin, hijacks our capacity for habit for the purposes of controlling and destroying us.

And this law of sin uses the operations of the “members of our body” to accomplish its deceitful and destructive purposes in our lives.

And there are so many ways:

- Anger, welling up, the physical outburst
- The temptation to eat, drink, drug, self-medicate

There is a God-given capacity we have for habits. These habits can be mental, they can be emotional, they can be physical ... they can also be sinful or righteous.

... they become “natural” whether those habits are by nature good or bad.

2 Peter 2:14 — 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have **hearts trained in greed**. Accursed children!

And we can train our hearts in indulgence, in laziness, in anger, in fear, ... we can even train our hearts into habits of despair and anxiety.

Or we can train our hearts in generosity, gentleness, kindness, being servant hearted, being trusting of the Lord in trials.

That is the beauty of redemption and of this divinely granted capacity for habit. If you can be trained in sin, you can also be UN-TRAINED and the RE-TRAINED in righteousness.

If we can be trained in greed, then we can be “re-trained” in hard work and generosity. How do I know?

Ephesians 4:28 — 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

One of the reasons Christians fail to grow and be transformed is the try to STOP sinning, without RE-TRAINING their hearts in righteousness, in virtue, in godly character.

Session four tomorrow is going to walk through practically what that process of “how to change” must look like from a biblical perspective.

Conclusions

These concepts maybe should have taken up two seminars. It is a lot to take in. ***Can I summarize it like this?***

Our capacity for sin is a product of the flesh, the unredeemed aspect of our being that compels us from within to live independent of God and His will.

But because of redemption, because we are ‘BORN AGAIN,’ we have been spiritually, and positionally, so united to Christ that we have the spiritual power to resist.

In fact, we have been freed from its power and authority completely.

While the position of being freed from sin is real and complete, our experience of that freedom is hijacked, and sin deceitfully calls us and compels us to live inconsistent with that freedom, and to give in to it—though we are not a slave to it any longer.

As Christians, we have a duty to battle against it, and to put off old sinful habits, to be renewed and transformed in the spirit of our minds, and to put on virtue, godly character, and righteous habits.

And, we have a duty to care for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and help them see and fight that old “manner of life” as well.