

Romans

Romans Chapter Seven

Romans 7: 9-11

July 18, 2010

This is lesson number **49** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: “Sin Deceived Me”

In Chapter Seven of Romans in verses 1-6, we saw that the believer in Jesus Christ is dead to the law. By that we understand that the believer is free from any system of obedience as a means to be justified before God. The principle before us is that we must be dead to the law in order that we may be married to another. Instead of being married to the law, the believer is married to Christ. Being married to Christ enables us to bear fruit to God.

In verses 7 and 8, the Apostle Paul defends against the idea that there is anything wrong with the law. In verse 5, he says that the passions of sins were aroused by the law. The law is not the problem, the problem is sin.

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.

Men have twisted and abused the law {moral code} in many ways.

Some deny its authority altogether and live as antinomians. They know what the law says about loving God and loving your neighbor, but have been deceived into thinking that under grace there are no moral prohibitions.

Some people become legalists and believe that by keeping a set of rules, that God will take notice of them and declare them “not guilty” on the basis of their deeds. These people are still “under law.”

Romans

Some teach that there is more than one way of being justified: an Old Testament way “under law,” and a New Testament way, “under grace.”

All of these ideas about the law are false.

If you hear only one thing that I say today or at any other time - hear this: The only way of Salvation is by grace through faith alone. Faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, which He shed on the cross, according to the Old Testament Scriptures, and explained in the New Testament, as the propitiation of the wrath of God against sin. The righteousness of Christ Jesus: PERIOD!

Cf Acts 4:5-12

5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 **Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**"

From Adam, to Enoch; from Noah, to Abraham; from David to John the Baptist: All who ever were saved or ever will be saved, until Jesus returns at the end of the age, are saved in only one way. **Jesus is the only Savior.** Jude called it our “common salvation.”

The Jesus who is the only Savior is not the ‘Jesus’ of the Mormans, whom they say is the offspring of Adam {who became a god} and Mary, through sexual intercourse. Neither is He the ‘Jesus’ of the Jehovah’s Witness, whom they say was created by God and therefore is not God to be worshipped. He is not the ‘Jesus’ of Islam, whom they say is not God incarnate, was not crucified, and did not resurrect from the grave and has been superseded by Mohammed as God’s prophet.

Salvation is found only in Jesus Christ as this Holy Book reveals Him.

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Romans

What has all this about who Jesus is to do with Romans Seven and the law? Just this. Paul shows us that while the law was never intended as a means to be saved, or to be justified, or to be sanctified, it does have a purpose.

The law when applied in the power of the Holy Spirit will convict a man of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the law will serve as a tutor, or childleader, to lead that man to trust only in the righteousness of Christ.

But the Christ you know had better be the Christ that knows you, or you will be found in the end to be an idolater, worshipping a god of your imagination.

In our study on verses 7 & 8, we saw that Sin is an **active force** that uses the law to take occasion, or opportunity, as a starting point, a base of operations, or a fulcrum to stir up all manner of evil desire.

Sin was always there in Paul. But the strength of sin was hidden from Paul.

And the same is true of us. We will not know sin and hate sin in the way that God hates sin unless the Holy Spirit uses the law to convince us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

For until the law stirred Paul's evil desires, he was not aware of condemning sin. He says, "For apart from the law sin was dead."

Now I am going to discuss a general principle of interpretation of the Bible.

We need to be very careful when we read the Bible, and especially a passage like the one we have before us.

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.

All of these statements have to be taken in a relative sense and not in a literal way. If you take one of these phrases out of context with the other things that Paul has written, you will not grasp what he is saying.

Romans

Unless you believe that God the Holy Spirit can contradict Himself; unless you deny the full {plenary} inspiration of the Scriptures, then we must be able to understand passages of Scripture that seemingly contradict one another in a way in which they both can be true.

A few years ago at the Beeson Pastors School, I heard one of the speakers make what I believe to be an intellectually dishonest explanation of Exodus 32: 7-14. Ninety-nine percent of what he had to say was very good. But he seemed to give support to “Openness Theology.” If you haven’t been exposed to that heresy it is just as well. Basically “Openness Theology” says that God cannot know something until it happens. In other words, they say God does not know the end from the beginning, which is a denial of the Scripture. In Exodus 32:

7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' " 9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."

11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' " 14 So the LORD **relented** from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

The speaker said, “You are going to have to deal with that. **God changed His mind.**” Well, if you take that phrase, “So the LORD **relented ...**” out of context with the entire Bible, it does say that God changed His mind. God intended to destroy those people and after Moses interceded He relented, He decided not to destroy them. God changed His mind!

Romans

What this speaker neglected to say, and this is where I say he is being intellectually dishonest, is that there are other Scriptures that clearly say that God cannot change His mind. Numbers 23:19

"God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

That's one quote from Exodus that says God changed His mind and one quote from Numbers where Balaam being controlled by God, says that "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent."

Now the Holy Spirit used Moses to write Exodus **and** Numbers.
Did the Holy Spirit forget what He gave to Moses in Exodus and contradict Himself in Numbers?

The same argument arises about Jonah. God said he would destroy Nineveh in forty days. But in Jonah 3:10

Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

But Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I do not change...."

How can we understand these passages of Scripture so that they are all true and are not in contradiction?

We must understand that God uses accommodating language and often the narrative is given to us from the way that men perceive it. From Moses' perspective God did relent. But God knew before He spoke to Moses that Moses would intercede for the people. God knew the end from the beginning. Moses did not!

Either that is the way to understand these passages that seemingly say opposite things, or God is indeed frivolous with the truth and He cannot be trusted. I prefer to accept an interpretation that preserves the integrity of God.

So back to what Paul is telling us about his encounter with the law.

Romans

9 I was alive once without the law, ...

There never was a time that Paul was 'without the law' in the absolute sense.

In fact, there never has been a time in the history of the world that men were 'without the law.' That is, a time when there was no law at all.

In the beginning of human history, when God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam one simple law. Do not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die. That doesn't seem like it would be too difficult to keep: only one law.

Then in Chapter Two of Romans we saw that there is a natural law in our innermost being that allows us to accuse or to excuse one another. Every man since Adam is born with a moral compass in his being. He may dull his conscience by sin but he knows some things are simply wrong.

In God's own purpose, the Law was given in written form to Moses. Paul, especially Paul the Pharisee, always had the law. But sin had Paul deceived into thinking that he was actually keeping the law to God's satisfaction. Paul was certainly satisfied with himself. Paul could pray like that Pharisee in the temple, "I thank God that I am not like that tax collector standing over there in the corner."

Paul was alive in the law, he lived in the law, but it was in the 'letter of the law.' He had no more of a correct understanding of the purpose of the law than a man who had never heard of Moses.

But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

This is what happened to Paul when the law came to him in the power of the Holy Spirit and said, "You shall not covet." This was not the first time Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, had heard or read, "You shall not covet." But it was the first time that the commandment reached into the depth of his soul and convicted him that he was a covetous man, and that his personal covetousness was condemning sin; that thinking sin was the same as committing sin.

Romans

How can you hear something many times and all of a sudden you really hear it with understanding? This kind of thing happens quite often. You can preach about a particular point of Scripture. Someone who has no doubt heard you say something before will say to you, “I never heard that before.”

Or when you are reading the Bible and you see something that has always been in the Bible and that you may have read many times but suddenly it comes to your understanding.

Take the example of Ron Dunn who when reading Job 42:10 saw for the first time, “God blessed Job... when he prayed for his friends.” Dunn said, “God must have put that in the Bible while I was asleep.”

So the Paul the Pharisee, who could quote the law from memory, could say about covetousness, “I never really understood covetousness before.”

Sin, which was already in Paul as an active force lay quietly as long as it could deceive him. But when the commandment came, **sin woke up!**

And he said, “**I died.**”

Now obviously Paul did not die physically any more than Adam died physically when he disobeyed God. But Paul died to his pride and self-righteousness.

There is a good illustration in 1 Samuel 25:36-38

36 Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. 37 So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and **he became like a stone.** 38 Then it came about, after about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

That is the way I felt when the Holy Spirit convicted me of sin. I agreed with God that I should be in hell. I was dead! I only needed to die physically to go to hell.

Brownlow North, I believe it was he, said, “Salvation is judgment come before its time.” When we agree with God’s judgment of us then we are ready to receive God’s righteousness in Christ Jesus.

Romans

And so, Saul of Tarsus, this proud Pharisee, who was persecuting the church, believing that he was serving God, was confronted with his sin by the law and he died. He died to pride and to self-righteousness and law.

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

Paul believed that by his obedience to the law he could attain eternal life.

Here again, we must see the basis of Paul's belief system. Did not the law promise life if you kept it? Ah, there is the problem. You can obtain eternal life if you can keep the law. And Paul really believed that he was keeping the law. But sin had deceived him.

Let's look at some of the promises God made concerning obedience to the law. Remember the principle that God the Holy Spirit cannot deny Himself.

Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Rom 10:5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."

Is this a contradiction, separated by a few chapters in the same letter?
Not likely.

In 10:5, Paul is quoting Leviticus 18:5 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which **if** a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

Also,

Ex 19:5 Now therefore, **if** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

And,

Deut 6:25 Then it will be righteousness for us, **if** we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.'

Romans

Did you hear the qualifying word in each passage? **If**

Gal 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For **if** there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

In Paul's understanding, and I dare say, this is true of many people today, he believed that he could attain life through keeping the law.

But when what he thought to bring life {the law} came to him, it slew him.

Our Lord Jesus summarized all of the law in Mark 12: 28-34

28 Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

So if law keeping could save you, all you have to do is obey this simple summary of the law.

Only a lost fool would imagine that law keeping would bring salvation.

Romans

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

Let's close with an observation on how sin uses the law to deceive us.

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

In the Garden of Eden there was only one commandment.
Do not eat of the fruit of one tree in the Garden!

Is it reasonable for God to restrict us in any way?
Is it unfair for God to tell us what to do and what not to do?

Does not that which is forbidden become attractive to us?

The very instant that Eve considered the question about God's verity, she had passed the point of no return. But she is not the representative of the human race is there still hope? No.

She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

The deceitfulness of sin will take that which is intended for good and make you want to disobey. **Which of God's commandments is bad for you?**

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

Paul has defended the law and told us about how sin uses that which is good to deceive us.

The believer in Jesus Christ is dead to sin; dead to the law; and married to Christ.
Christian, Be what you are.