

Romans 7 April 23, 2012

Last time we discussed Romans chapter 6 and there Paul talked about our slavery to sin, the bondage of being owned by our own sinful nature. Those who will not be controlled by God though the power of the Holy Spirit will be controlled by sin. Even if they believe they are free and doing their own thing; Jesus said there are only two Masters; Him and sin/Satan, we have our choice. We cannot serve both He said.

Today we begin with Romans 6:23 and then on to

Romans 7:1

Paul has been talking about the meaning of dying with the Messiah in chapter 6 and also the concept of human enslavement to sin, which we talked about last time. Now in relating these ideas to the law he will talk about how contracts are binding as long as both parties of the contract are living. When one dies, then the contract ends. To illustrate this he introduces an analogy, marriage. When one of the partners of marriage dies, the contract between them is voided, the marriage is over. We must be keep in mind that Paul is not speaking against the law as some suppose no, he had a high view of the law or Torah. Also let me remind you he was an expert in the law, he had been a Pharisee, extremely well educated and very smart. Probably no one was better prepared to explain the law and help us understand our relationship to it.

Since he constantly goes back to the law, we can assume the recipients were comprised of Jews and Gentiles.

Paul is emphasizing, first of all, that the Law can only apply to a person who is alive; a dead body cannot be expected to follow laws nor be responsible for sin.

Romans 7:2- 3

Paul is using marriage as it kind of illustration to explain how the law governs living persons. Marriage lasts as long as the 2 partners last, then when one dies the marriage is ended.

Romans 7:4

Just as death breaks the bond between a husband and wife and so a believer's death to sin in Christ breaks the power of the law of death and sin. Remember Paul has told us that when you are converted, when you begin to believe in Jesus by faith you trust him for salvation you die to sin. Another way of saying this is that the power of the law has been broken when you die to yourself. The old contract, that is your contract with death and sin, had to be completely severed before the new one could begin. Just as death brings a marriage to an end, after which the living marriage partner is free to remarry; the believer has to die to sin to be made alive in Christ. This is sounding complicated but think of it this way; because of Christ's death on the cross and the believer being united with Him and His death, the believer has died to sin. Then the resurrection of Christ has as its result our resurrection to new life. This new union in Christ will bear Spiritual fruit, just as the human marriage union bears its fruit, children.

Romans 7:5 here Paul reminds his readers that the law can do little more for them than fuel evil desires. Paul did not mean the physical body alone, but all of the thoughts, emotions and physical urges that comprise unregenerate human nature.

Remember 2 Corinthians 5:17 "if anyone is united with Christ, there is a new creation". That is, a second new human nature controlled by the Holy Spirit comes to birth. The old nature died with Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit it will stay dead – we owe nothing to it, we do not have to obey it's corrupting misguided passions, instead, as a result of being united with Jesus we can obey God.

Romans 7:6

This is the spiritual solution to the problems Paul will address in this chapter. He is simply saying that we are to serve Christ by focusing on His desires for us and not on a list of commands. We have been released so that we can serve in the new way by the Spirit living within us guiding us showing us how to please God were called to serve. Our master is gracious and we're no longer trapped by the cycle of self-effort, failure and guilt

Now we have to find out where the law fits in all of this and so in the next few verses Paul shows us again that the law is powerless to save sinners. And even a person with a new nature experiences continuous evidence of

the law's inability to motivate them to do good. The law condemns the sinner; the Law keeper can't live up to it; and the person with the new nature finds that the effects of the old nature sabotage his or her obedience to the law. Paul is telling us over and over and salvation cannot be found by obeying the law no matter who we are, only Jesus Christ can set us free. Yet the law, because it is God's law, is not been cast aside as useless.

Romans 7:7-8

Paul is asking the question is the law of God evil? Paul answers his own question with this double negative, which he has used before. He answers his own question of course the law is not evil. The question is how could the law, which is wholly, just, and good stir up sin.

Paul uses the last commandment as an illustration; "you shall not covet or desire what belongs to others". This commandment is different from the others because it talks about intentions and our inward nature. We can break this law without any specific act. Looking out the window at your neighbor's new car and wanting it or one just like it is coveting. You don't have to go over and steal it, just deciding you are not contented with what you have and wanting something new instead is coveting. Its how our entire advertising business works, the purpose is to create coveting and get people to buy something they do not need. Paul is saying that as soon as he knew the command "thou shall not covet", he was immediately introduced to the idea of coveting and then he began to covet. Coveting comes so naturally we don't know that it's wrong until the law tells us it is sin.

Romans 7:9- 10

Before men really knew about the seriousness of the sin, as described by the law, we believed that we were just fine. It doesn't come natural to admit we are wrong. When we understand the law we realize that we have broken the law and we are sinners, we are to blame. Paul says the commands given to show people how to live and are not obeyed prove that all people deserve the penalty of death.

Romans 7:11

Sin fooled us by misusing the law.

Sin promises we can hide our actions and no one will know.

Sin tells us we don't have to worry about the consequences

Sin fools us by making us think sinful behavior is sophisticated

Sin makes promises that cannot keep, it tells us that can make us powerful, rich, happy, beautiful, acceptable.

Sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go, keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay and will cost you more than you ever wanted to pay.

Romans 7:12

Paul said law gave him the death penalty and yet he said it was good. Why is the law good and holy? It is holy and good because God gave it and it reflects the character of God.

The law was given to show us right from wrong. The law gives guidelines and shows sin for what it is. No wonder people do not want the 10 Commandments to be displayed publicly anymore, the appearance of God's law or the 10 Commandments shows that it's a lie to say there are no absolutes. Even though many people freely state that there are no absolutes they will be judged ultimately by the absolute right and wrong stated in God's law. The law serves another purpose it; first, teaches us about sin; secondly, it is a revelation of God's character; third, it ends self-righteousness. And that is such a gift to us because God can prove to us that we are not righteous and that we are sinners and then we understand we need a Savior.

Romans 7:14

Paul said he is flesh; another way of saying this is he is carnal. He is speaking of the conflict between grace and corruption in our human body. Here is the question we all wonder how can we be free from sin and yet continue to sin.

How do we know we still have a sin or fleshly nature? Here's a question; which is easier, giving in to "what I want", pampering myself, or self discipline? How about this; hatred is our default mode; we have to choose to love. Do you see where this is going?

In Christ we have been freed from the penalty of sin, which is judgment we have also been set free from the power of sin, which is hopelessness. We are not free from the presence of sin and temptation. We always have the possibility of sin in our lives as long as we live. The problem lies not with the law but with me. As long as we

are in the flesh and living in the fallen world, we will be in the presence of sin and we will continue to be tempted therefore, we must depend on Christ every minute of the day. We are not hopeless we have the Holy Spirit living in us to guide us and direct us if we will listen to Him. Remember Jesus instructed us to ask to be "delivered from temptation", God will help you, He is able.

Romans 7:15

By the law we can see how terrible sin is. Paul said he had learned three lessons about the law and sinful desires;

- First of all knowing the law is not the answer to dealing with sin in your life
- Secondly being determined or wanting to do right sometimes fails
- Thirdly Paul said becoming a Christian does not get rid of all sin and temptation from a person's life

Being born again through faith in the finished work of Christ happens in an instant however being conformed to the image of Christ is the work of a lifetime.

Romans 7:16-17

Paul is saying there is constant conflict within him his flesh is warring against the Holy Spirit he's constantly being tempted to sin. Have you noticed that your desire to be good is often in conflict with temptation to sin? Isn't it frustrating and humiliating to not be able to live up to your own standard? Jesus said the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. If you have tried to overcome some temptation in your life and failed you recognize the power of sin even after you've been saved.

Romans 7:18 – 20

Here's the bottom line we want to do the right thing but sometimes we just cannot. Although we belong to Christ and we have died to sin, we still live in a sinful world and we still have a sinful nature. Paul is not avoiding responsibility for his sin. Paul is showing us the difference between our new nature having been born again and our old sin nature that is still with us. Without the Holy Spirit I cannot say no to sin; with the Holy Spirit indwelling me I can choose to say no to sin, I have a choice.

Romans 7:21

The reality is that evil is still with me even when I want to do what is right. It is very frustrating to find yourself obeying your old nature, it's humiliating.

Romans 7:22 – 23

Sin is not going to give up on us just because we have trusted Christ for salvation. The law of sin that Paul mentions is constantly at war because it will not give up control over us. Sin fights against our mind because that is where decisions are made, we cannot resist our sin nature in our own power; the Holy Spirit gives us the power to do this. We must remember however we are no longer in bondage to sin we have the choice we can say no. Sin has no power over us we are free. The power of sin is not equal to the power of the Holy Spirit if we look to the Holy Spirit for help he will give us a victory.

Romans 7:24

Our bodies are mortal bodies of death. Can you hear Paul's frustration? I have certainly felt wretched myself. As long as we live in mortal bodies in this fallen world we will struggle with sin and we will occasionally be defeated. Those defeats should be fewer and fewer. However, a sinful lifestyle cannot be tolerated for one who is born again.

Romans 7:25

Paul was a genuine mature believer when he wrote this letter to the Romans and Paul still struggled with his own sin and imperfection. If this is true for Paul what about us? Here he gives us the answer to the problem our great rescuer our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus has given us hope and a future. Jesus has set us free He is the answer. Yes Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death but as long as we are living here on this earth we will struggle because we are flesh living in a fallen world. Always remember Jesus has set us free from the penalty of sin he is setting us free from the power of sin he will set us free from the presence of soon when we are with him in our heavenly home.

It seems like Paul has been repetitious in Romans 7 but friends, the struggle he describes of wanting to be good and do the right thing is something all Christians face as long as they live. Here Paul, the great Apostle, is sharing his heart, saying, don't get discouraged. We fall down, we get up. We don't have to do this in our own power; the Holy Spirit living in us is there for the purpose of helping us fall less and less. Don't forget how much you are loved.

Now Paul in chapter 7 has explained to us that all believers are tempted and all believers have the power to overcome sin. We will experience tension between the old nature and then the nature for his long as we live on this earth because our flesh is still in bondage to sin according to Romans 7:25. Here comes the encouragement we have all been looking for chapter 8 tells us about how we can have victory in Jesus over our sinful flesh while we live on this earth.

Romans 8:1

This is certainly one of my very favorite verses in the Bible

Remember I said some time ago if you see the word "therefore" you had better find out what is there for. In this verse Romans 8:1 therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus sums up the entire first seven chapters of Romans.

Another way of translating this would be; because of Jesus there's no longer any condemnation waiting for those who are in union with Christ.

Do you ever feel guilty and condemned because of your failure to have victory over some temptation or sin? It is not your heavenly Father who is condemning you. There is no condemnation. Know when you hear the words of condemnation in your spirit that is your enemy not your loving father. Jesus said in John 5:24 "I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God, have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sin but they have already passed from death into life".