

It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.

Weekly Edition – March 20, 2015

Paul's Letter to the Romans

⁷ Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? ² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. ³ So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

⁴ So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵ For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Outline of Romans

1. **Paul's credentials**
(1:1-1:18)
2. **Justification by Faith (1:18-11:36)**
 - a. **Sin – the "need" for Salvation**
 - 1) of Gentiles (1:18-2:16)
 - 2) of Jews (2:17-3:8)
 - 3) universal need for Salvation (3:9-20)
 - b. **Justification by Faith - the "Provision" made for Salvation**
 - 1) God's Righteousness through Faith (3:21-31)
 - 2) Abraham as an Example (4:1-25)
 - c. **Freedom - the "Result" of Salvation**
 - 1) Freedom from Wrath (5:1-21)
 - 2) Freedom from Sin (6:1-23)
 - 3) Freedom from The Law (7:1-25)
 - 4) Freedom from Death (8:1-39)
 - d. **Jew and Gentile - The "Scope" of Salvation**
 - 1) God chooses to save Believers (9:1-33)
 - 2) Israel trusted their own Righteousness (10:1-21)
 - 3) Jew and Gentile can have Salvation through Faith (11:1-36)
3. **The Transformed Life (12:1-15:13)**
 - a. In relation to overall conduct (12:1-21)
 - b. In relation to civil authority (13:1-7)
 - c. In relation to fellow man (13:8-14)
 - d. In relation to weak brethren in the Body of Christ (14:1-15:13)
4. **Concluding remarks, instructions and benediction (15:14-16:27)**

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Freedom from (the) Law – a third “Result” of Salvation

- 1) We are continuing our study of the “Gospel” or “euaggelion” in Greek – literally “good news.” In Romans Paul sets forth this Good News, such as would be expected from God – it was God-like Good News.
- 2) Paul has defined what he means by God’s Good News back in chapter one.
- 3) Paul has convinced us that the only way of salvation is to be justified by grace, through faith. Now over the course of the next few chapters, he is showing us the practical benefits of standing justified before God. The scope of these benefits is simply amazing. Over the past few weeks we examined what God’s Good News means in the life of a believer:
- 4) **Freedom from Wrath** - Since we now stand justified (the penalty for sin is removed) we are no longer under God’s wrath and we may live in peace with God; (Romans 5)
- 5) **Freedom from Sin** – Yes, the penalty of sin is removed, but the reign of sin is still a reality in my life. Paul shows that we can be free not only of the *penalty* (justified: that part is done) but also from the *reign* of sin our lives (sanctified: still a work in progress) – yes, little by little through sanctification we can become so Christ-like that sin no longer reigns in our life. We can be as *selfless* in Christ as easily as we were *selfish* in Adam. (Romans 6)
- 6) Now in this present Chapter 7, we will explore the third “result” of our justification in Jesus:
- 7) **Freedom from the Law** – No longer bound by the law, we live under a newfound freedom in Jesus Christ.

The Law is Nullified Upon Death

- 1) Paul asserts that the Law, or any law, only has dominion over a person who is alive. Death cancels the applicability of the law – it ends all contracts and obligations. This is not Paul’s idea – it is contained in Holy Scripture.
- 2) He cites the example of marriage and adultery; how when a spouse dies the law of marriage no longer applies and the surviving spouse is able to legally take on a new partner in matrimony.

The Believer’s Identification in the Death of Christ Frees Him from the Law

- 1) In Romans 6:3-8, Paul carefully explained that we died with Jesus and we also rose with Him, although Paul there only spoke of our death to *sin*. Now he explains that we also died to the law.
- 2) Some might think, "Yes, we were saved by grace, but we must *live by law* to please God." Some think we must follow the rules to earn our way into God’s grace. Here Paul makes it plain that believers are dead to the law as far as it represents a *principle of living* or a *place of right standing* before God.
 - a) In Christ we are dead to the law – we no longer have to prove our worth or merit our standing in Christ. Grace comes as a gift. We don’t have to do certain things as prescribed by law to win God’s approval.
- 3) Believers are through with the law. It is not for us an option as a way of salvation. We do not seek to be right with God by obeying some form of law, as the adherents of almost all religions have done.
- 4) Since we are dead to the law, we may also be “married” again – this time to Christ! We are not free from the law so we can live unto ourselves; we are free so that we can be "married" to Jesus and so that we can bear fruit to God.
 - a) The Song of Songs is a powerful example of the love song between the believer under grace and Heaven’s Great Lover.

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The Law Arouses Sinful Passions

- 1) As soon as you tell a child he/she cannot have something, instantly it is the thing they most want.
- 2) So is this the manner in which the law worked. Under the law, we did not *bear fruit to God*. Instead we bore fruit to death, because the law aroused the passions of sins within us.
- 3) Paul will explain this problem of the law more fully in Romans 7:7-14. First, he wants us to see that we only come fully to the place of *bearing fruit for God* when we are free from the law.

Delivered from the Law

- 1) Because we died with Jesus through our Baptism, we are dead to the law and delivered from its dominion over us as a principle of justification or of sanctification.
 - a) The law does not justify us; it does not make us right with God.
 - b) The law does not sanctify us; it does not take us deeper with God and make us more holy before Him.
- 2) Our freedom is given not so we can stop serving God; but so that we can serve Him better, under the newness of the Spirit and not in the "oldness of the law."

Is the Law Equivalent then with Sin?

- 1) Paul asks: Is the law equal to sin?
 - a) As we follow Paul's line of reasoning we can understand how someone could infer this. Paul insisted that we must die to the law if we will bear fruit to God. Someone must think, "Surely there is something wrong then with the law!"
 - b) Paul answers, "Certainly not!" No. Rather, the law is good because it reveals sin to us. 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."
 - i) The law is like an x-ray machine; it reveals plainly what might have always been there, but was hidden from view. You can't blame an x-ray for what it exposes.
 - ii) The law sets the "speed limit" so we know exactly if we are going too fast. We might never know that we are sinning in many areas (such as covetousness) if the law did not specifically spell this out for us.

Sin Corrupts the Commandment (law)

- 1) Paul describes the dynamic where the warning "don't do that" may become a call to action because of our sinful, rebellious hearts. It isn't the fault of the commandment, but it is our fault.
 - a) In American history the Prohibition Act didn't stop drinking. In many ways it made drinking more attractive to people, because of our desire to break boundaries set by the "commandment."

NO FISHING FROM THE BALCONY

A waterfront hotel in Florida was concerned that people might try to fish from the balconies, so they put up signs saying, "NO FISHING FROM THE BALCONY." They had constant problems with people fishing from the balconies, with lines and sinker weights breaking windows and bothering people in rooms below. They finally solved the problem by simply taking down the signs - and no one thought to fish from the balconies.

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- b) Once God draws a boundary for us, we are immediately enticed to cross that boundary - which is no fault of God or His boundary, but the fault of our sinful hearts.
- 2) The weakness of the law isn't in the law - it is in us. Our hearts are so wicked that they can find opportunity for all manner of evil desire from something good like the law of God.
- 3) Children can be innocent before they know or understand what law requires. This is what Paul refers to when he says, "I was alive once without the law."
 - a) He is not alive with the life that the New Testament writers so often speak about. He is alive in the sense that he has never been put to death as a result of confrontation with the law.
 - b) He was quite secure amid all his sin and sinfulness. He lived in the sense that the deathblow had not yet killed him. He sat secure in the house of his ignorance like a man living on a ready-to-erupt volcano who thinks all is well.
- 4) Sin corrupts the law and defeats its purpose of giving life; once law is corrupted by sin, it brings death. How?
 - a) Sin does this by deception. Sin deceives us:
 - i) Because sin falsely promises satisfaction
 - ii) Because sin falsely claims an adequate excuse
 - iii) Because sin falsely promises an escape from punishment
 - b) It isn't the law that deceives us, but it is sin that uses the law as an occasion for rebellion. This is why Jesus said "*you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" (John 8:32) The truth makes us free from the deceptions of sin.
 - c) Sin, when followed, leads to death - not life. One of Satan's greatest deceptions is to get us to think of sin as something *good* that an overbearing God wants to deprive us of.
 - i) When God warns us away from sin, He warns us away from something that will kill us.

Therefore the Law is Holy

- 1) Paul understands how some might take him as saying that he is against the law - but he isn't at all.
 - a) It is true that we must die to sin (Romans 6:2) and we must die to the law (Romans 7:4).
 - b) But that should not be taken to say that Paul believes that sin and law are in the same basket. The problem is in us, not in the law. Nevertheless, sin corrupts the work or effect of the law, so we must die to both.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What does it mean to be "dead to the law?"
- 2) How does my identification with Jesus by faith make me dead to the law?
- 3) If I am dead to the law, where does the line of thinking come from that suggests that I must somehow earn my way into God's good favor by obeying the law?