

Christians and God's Law

Romans 7

August 2, 2015

Review: Romans 1: "Blue collar sin." **Romans 2:** "White collar sin." **Romans 3:** "No collar sin." **Romans 4:** If Abraham and David couldn't be saved by their deeds, who can? **Romans 5:** God's surprising remedy: we are justified by faith (not our deeds). **Romans 6:** The battle with sin is helped remembering two images: We've been brought from death to life, and out of slavery to freedom!

Day One: Our new relation to God's Law

1. In the OT, God's Law was meant to be a mirror for man, that we might see our sin and turn to Him. But now that we've become Christians, and are not under the Law but under grace, what is the role of the Law in our lives?

Romans 7:1 Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law-- that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?

2. Paul uses a simple illustration to drive home a point. As citizens our laws have authority over us. But when we die, does the law still have authority over us?

⁴ *Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, ...*

3. Christians have "died to the law." It's not that the Law died. Paul does not mean that we live lawless lives and can do what we want. It's that the motivation and dynamic of our lives comes from grace, not trying to measure up! The pressure to "get it right" is off!

4. What is the difference between trying to "measure up" by obeying the Law versus living to please Him and make Him known?

² *Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; ...But if her husband dies she is free from that law; ...if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. ⁴ Likewise, my brethren, you 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.*

6. As long as a married couple lives they are bound to one another. But if one of them dies, the obligation of marriage dies. The surviving partner is free to remarry. Paul says we have "died to the law," and now "belong to another."

⁶ *But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.*

7. The entire motivation of the Christian changes from "trying hard to measure up," to, we want to please God. Though we know we will sometimes fail, grace always wins! The days of pressure, trying to measure up are over! What strikes you from today's study?

Day Two: What the Law can do and not do--part 1

1. You may wonder, since we no longer are under pressure to "measure up," then what good is the Law?

Romans 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

2. How does knowing God's Law benefit us?

3. Mankind becomes aware of sin when the Law confronts him. We usually think of sin as things we do. Why is Paul's example of the sin of coveting striking?

4. Now we look at some of the limitations of the Law.

⁸ *But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.*

4. When you were growing up, when an authority told you not to do something, what surprising response did you find in yourself? If you saw a park bench that said, "Wet paint," what did you *want* to do? What does that tell you about sinful human nature?

5. When we are unaware of God's Law, sin is "dead," meaning, we have no clue we are sinning.

⁹ *Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.*

5. Paul gives another example of the limitation of the Law. Before we read God's Law we were "alive" apart from the Law (free to do what we wanted).

6. But once we became aware of God's Law:

a. What did my sinful nature do?

b. What was the effect?

7. The Law is helpful to make us aware of sin, but is powerless to change a sinful heart.

Day Three: What the Law can do and not do--part 2

1. Let's look at another limitation of the Law.

Romans 7:10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

2. God's Law is perfect, but when it runs into human nature, how does human nature respond? Are we humble? Teachable? Desirous to obey? Or does something else take over? What is the "something else?"

3. We get a deeper look into our unredeemed human nature.

¹¹ *For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, **deceived me**, and through the commandment put me to death.*

4. Three deceptions that sin uses to lead to our "death" (spiritual, temporal, eternal):

- a. That sin satisfies, that you will feel better if you commit this sin.
- b. That you will be excused for your sin.
- c. That you will escape the consequences of your sin.

But these deceptions lead to death.

- a. We are never really satisfied by our sins. The opposite is usually true, that we feel remorse, dissatisfaction or greater emptiness after we sin. (Heb. 11:25)
- b. We are without excuse for our sins (John 15:22; Rom. 1:20)
- c. There is no chance that our sin will be without consequences. (Numbers 32:23)

5. Talking about the "limitations of the Law" is not to disparage the bible. It is to emphasize just how rotten our sinful nature is!

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! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.*

6. It's one thing to admit "sin." It's quite another to see the sinfulness of sin! How does Paul drive home this point in 7:13?

Day Four: The battle with sin! Part 1

1. The work at changing our human nature is a fight to the death--literally. It will not only last all our lives, but the nature of the change is a real internal fight. Paul puts words to the internal struggle, and the stiff opposition our human nature puts up.

Romans 7:14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

2. Though we are no longer slaves of sin, it sometimes feels like we are slaves of 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.*

3. The battle against sin can get very confusing and discouraging! What strikes you about Paul's words in verse 15?

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 *I know that nothing good lives 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 what I do is not the good I want to do; no, 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.*

4. Underline the frustrations Paul highlight in verses 16-20.

5. Which of these frustrations frustrates you the most? Why?

6. Christ comes into our lives at conversion. He slowly goes to work on our sinful nature. Think of your old sinful nature as a large four-story mansion. Christ doesn't come in with a wrecking ball and bulldozer. While we're still living in the mansion He goes to work, spraying for termites, tearing out termite infested wood, re-plumbing, re-wiring, re-roofing, re-flooring, re-painting, etc.

7. What strikes you about this analogy, in light of Paul's frustrations of changing human nature? In what ways do you relate to this kind of change?

Day Five: The battle with sin! Part 2

1. Our sin nature is a formidable foe. I spent most of my adult life underestimating the depth of sin in me, the strength of my sin nature, and its stubbornness. Underestimating our sin leads to a lot of discouragement!

Rom. 7:21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

2. Paul uses the word "law" here to mean the "law" of sin inside him. How does this "law" work?

²² *For in my inner being I delight in God's law;*

3. Paul adds that all is not lost, because Christ now lives in us, giving us a new:

a. Inclination--to want to do what is right, even when it is costly or painful.

b. Power - to obey God

c. Purpose - to please the Father

4. Which of these means the most to you in your life, currently? Why?

²³ *but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.*

5. The battle lines are drawn! We are involved in an internal war. It's easy to get discouraged if you really think that change should not be all that difficult. How does the fact that it is the Apostle Paul who is writing this encourage you in your fight against sin?

²⁴ *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

6. Paul refers to himself as a "wretched man." The word is used for a person exhausted after a battle. The idea Paul is trying to get across is of putting forth all of your efforts in the battle of trying to be like Christ, and then realizing that you still fall short. Thankfully, Paul does not end with these discouraging words! Read on!

²⁵ *Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

7. Ah, yes! A solution! The solution is the person of Jesus Christ, One in whom we must continually humbly ask for His power and a new heart. The silver lining of sin is that it forces us to Christ, over and over and over again--for what we really need most!!!!