

“Free from the Law”
(Romans 7:1-4)
(Preached at Trinity, October 5, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This morning we enter **Chapter 7** of the Book of Romans. It is an amazing chapter but a very difficult one, especially the second half. In the second half of this chapter Paul will speak of a great struggle to which he will finally cry out,
Romans 7:24 – “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”
2. Interpreting this great chapter has not always resulted in unity in the Christian church; in fact it has often caused great controversy. I pray that as we go through it God will grant me accuracy in exegesis and grant you ears to hear these great truths.
3. It has been said that **Chapters 6-7** are a parenthesis between the end of **Chapter 5** and **Chapter 8**. Paul is dealing with the issue he raised in **Chapter 5:20-21**. These chapters deal with the issue of the Law and Grace.
4. In **Chapter 6** Paul has delivered the great truths of our union with Christ. We are united to the death and resurrection of Christ.
 - A. Our salvation has been described as an “already” and “not yet”
 1. We have died to sin and have been raised to newness of life. This isn’t just some future reality. It is a present reality. In Christ we have been granted victory over the tyranny of sin. Sin no longer has dominion over us. This has “already” taken place.
 2. We have not, however, reached the place of perfection. We have “not yet” been glorified. So Christian life is both the “already” and the “not yet.”
 - B. In **Chapter 6** Paul describes the “already.” We *have* been crucified with Christ. The Old Man *is* dead. We have died to the realm of sin. It no longer rules us. In **Chapter 7** Paul describes the “not yet.” He describes the struggle that Christians have with sin. There are still setbacks and failures in the Christian’s life.
John Murray clarifies this state in his *Principles of Conduct*:
“The believer is a new man, a new creation, but he is a new man not yet made perfect. Sin dwells in him still, and he still commits sin. He is necessarily the subject of progressive renewal; he needs to be transfigured into the image of the Lord from glory to glory.”
 - C. Paul isn’t describing backsliding nor is he purporting some carnal Christian theory. He is simply describing the struggles and warfare of Christianity.
 - E. The Christians is at the same time living in the “already” of **Chapter 6** and the “not yet” of **Chapter 7**. We are living in both.
In **Chapter 8** Paul reminds us that the ultimate victory is assured.
5. Paul begins where he left off in the previous chapter. In **Verse 14** of **Chapter 6** Paul makes the bold statement,
Romans 6:14 – “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

- A. As we looked at this verse we saw that Paul was in no way abrogating the Law but rather stating that in terms of our relationship to the Law things have forever changed.
 - B. The Law offered us no means of righteousness to justification. The Law also provided us no power for obedience unto sanctification.
 - C. As Christians we do not look to the Law as a means to justification. We also do not look to the Law as the means to sanctification. Only grace can make us right before God.
6. Someone might respond to Paul's teaching, "If we are not under the Law, it really doesn't matter how we live." Paul's answer:
Romans 6:15 – "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."
 He then spends the remainder of **Chapter 6** expounding on this statement. Why doesn't freedom from the Law result in more sin? Because God has freed us from slavery to sin.
7. As **Chapter 7** opens Paul is still maintaining a focus on the place of the Law. It may seem repetitious but this is of infinite importance. I may sound repetitious but only because this is where the Bible is taking us.
- A. **Verse 1** begins with the Greek word translated "or" which connects it to the preceding. The KJV and NIV omit the word.
 In other words, Paul is still talking about the Law.
 - B. This was one of Paul's constant battles in his ministry. Although the Law could not be used as a way of salvation this in no way implies that the Law has no place in the life of a believer. But this means the Law has to be used properly.
1 Timothy 1:8 – "But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully;"
Romans 7:12 – "Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."
8. As I stated before, this is a most difficult chapter. We no sooner begin the chapter that we begin to see the difficulties.
- A. Paul opens with an illustration: A wife is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. This is a universal axiom.
Romans 7:3 – "So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress"
Matthew 5:32 – "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."
 1. This demonstrates how corrupt our society has become. To lose the value of marriage is to loosen the strings that hold society together.
 2. In our age where adultery and fornication is approved God's standard continues unchanged. To disregard it is to come under His condemnation.
 - B. Paul states that when the husband dies the wife is no longer bound to him and is free to marry another. Paul is using this to illustrate that Christian has died to the Law and is now bound to Christ.
 - C. This raises a problem for some. In this illustration it isn't the wife who has died but the husband.
 1. Is Paul teaching that the Law has died? This would be a monstrous misinterpretation. It would be absolutely inconsistent with other passages.

2. Paul is using a simple illustration. It isn't an allegory where we try to dissect each point: what does the wife represent? What does the husband represent?
 3. Paul's point is simply that death; the death of either party dissolves the marriage and ends the relationship. In Christ we have died to the Law.
9. We saw in the previous chapter that we are not under the Law but under grace.
- A. The Law makes demands but offers no power for fulfillment. It was a terrible burden. The Jews called it a yoke
Under the Law we were condemned and had no ability to escape our bondage.
 - B. The Law is impotent. It can neither save us nor sanctify us.
The Law can only condemn us.
 - C. Sin and the Law are partners working together for our ruin.
 - a. When sin has dominion over us, then the Law has dominion over us and visa versa.
1 Corinthians 15:56-57 – “The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b. Again, Paul is not stating that the Law is evil
Romans 7:7 – “What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid.”
Romans 7:12 – “Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”
 - D. Under grace we find the power for obedience and the change in heart to desire Christ. We find freedom to love and obey Christ.
Acts 15:10-11 – “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”
Matthew 11:29-30 – “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”
10. Paul's point in **Verses 1-4** is that the Christian has died to the Law. This is essential. You must die to the one before you are free to marry another.
Without conducting needless repetition, what does Paul mean when he says we have died to the Law? We must understand this. If you are still bound to the Law you cannot be bound to Christ. If you don't understand this basic truth about the Law there is no way you can understand **Romans 7**.
- I. It means the Law cannot be a means of gaining God's approval – we have died to the Law
- A. The Law can never bring life—none can keep it.
 1. The problem is not with the law but with fallen man.
 2. The Law serves to show us our sin and guilt before God
Romans 7:7-9 – “What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”

3. In other words, the Law can only increase sin. The Law does this in two ways.
 - a. One, the Law reveals our guilt before God. Before a man comes face to face with the Law he doesn't see himself as a guilty sinner.
 - b. Two, men by nature rebel against the Law – In this way by the Law transgressions are actually increased.
- B. The Law is holy, but no man can obtain righteousness by it.

Romans 3:20 – "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin."

 1. Those that seek the Law for righteousness find only death. It is a false righteousness

Romans 10:2-3 – "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 2. The legalist is left with only the letter of the Law which demands perfection
 3. The legalist is left to serve the Law with all its rigor but finds neither the strength nor grace to fulfill it.
 4. The man under grace looks to Christ as his source of righteousness, not the Law

Christian warfare is waged on the basis of Christ's victory and not on the basis of our attainments. We can stand in the battle because the war has already been won and the enemy has already been defeated!

II. We have died to the condemnation of the Law. The Law cannot condemn us.

- A. God demands perfect obedience to His Law
 1. A single infraction brings us under the wrath of God
 2. Human beings are universally under God's condemnation.
 3. There is nothing we can do about it
- B. Under the Gospel Christ cleanses the sinner from his sin – the Law no longer condemns us.

Romans 8:1-4 – "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
- C. We are freed from both the condemnation and the power of sin
 1. This is the promise of the New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:34 – "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
 2. Under the New Covenant we have the power to obey

- a. Nothing shall be too hard for that man who has the strength of Christ to enable him, and the Spirit of Christ to work in him.”
 - b. The Spirit of God has created within us a heart for Christ
 - c. This is also the promise of the New Covenant
Jeremiah 31:33 – “But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
 - 4. The Law is no longer external but internal
 - 5. Obedience comes from a motivation of love – Christ has captivated our hearts.
 - D. We’ll also see in **Verse 6** that we have been freed from the letter of the Law
 - 1. The Law is a cruel taskmaster. It makes demands but offers no aid.
 - 2. In Christ we find a gracious Master.
- III. We must be clear, dying to the Law does not mean the Law has been abrogated.
- A. The law is an expression of God’s holy character
Romans 7:12 – “Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”
 - 1. This is why the Law as God’s standard of righteousness can never be abolished
Samuel Bolton – “The Law, as it is considered as a rule, can no more be abolished or changed than the nature of good and evil can be abolished and changed. The substance of the law is the sum of doctrine concerning piety towards God, charity towards our neighbors, temperance and sobriety towards ourselves. And for the substance of it, it is moral and eternal, and cannot be abrogated.”
 - 2. Jesus declared that the Law would not be abolished
Matthew 5:17-19 – “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
 - B. For the Christian the Law serves as a rule of measure – of God’s standard
Piper is correct in his analysis of the Law: “What then shall we, as Christians, do with the holy, just and good law of God? Answer: we will look into this law for two purposes.”
 - 1. We will look into the law to see Christ so that we can know him and trust him and love him more.
 - 2. We will look into this law to test ourselves to see if we do know and trust and love Christ as we ought. God’s law reveals Christ in many ways, and we may use it to know him and stir up our love for him. And the law is a litmus paper to test the genuineness of our love to Christ. Christ is the key to unlocking the meaning of the law; and then the law displays Christ for our heart’s satisfaction – and transformation

C. Instead of the Law being abolished we have been given a heart to love it because we love God.

1 John 5:3 – “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”

1. We love the commands of God – we do not struggle against them

2. Listen to the Psalmist in **Psalm 119**

Psalm 119:18 – “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

Psalm 119:97 – “O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.”

Psalm 119:165 – “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”

3. The only ultimate motivation for obedience is Christ

Conclusion:

1. The Law could never produce righteousness because no man has ever been able to perfectly obey it. But we have died to the Law. We have a new Master.
2. Where the Law failed to provide the strength for obedience the Gospel has entered to satisfy God’s demand for perfection.
3. Under the Gospel we look to Christ, desire Christ, love Christ.