



Topic: Broken Chains
(Overcoming Those Things That Have Me Bound)
~Romans Chapter 7~

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.
~Romans 8:2 (KJV)~

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INTRODUCTION

As we continue our study of the book of Romans, we now move on to chapter 7. As we walk away from chapter 6, we walk away with knowing that through the shed blood of Jesus the Christ and our acceptance of His resurrected power in our life we have come to the place in our life that we can rightly say is the “end of the reign of sin and death”. We have come away from our study in chapter 6 embracing the new life in Christ Jesus that has freed us from the chains or bonds attached to our former life of sin.

In Romans chapter 7, the apostle sets out to share with his readers the weakness of the law. Note, the apostle is in no wise attempting to void out or nullify the purpose of the law; he is only shedding light on the fact that the law, in itself is incapable of delivery or freeing one from the chains or the hold of sin in one’s life. This is the same message the apostle Paul shares in Romans chapter 8, verses 3 & 4.

Romans 8:3 & 4 (NKJV)

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, 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 summary, what the apostle Paul is simply saying is that the law, though it has its place, does not have the power to break the chains that hold us bound. It takes us walking in the newness of the Spirit of Christ, which gives us the power to be set free from the strong hold of the law of sin and death.

FOCUS OF OUR STUDY (Romans Chapters 7)

Verses 1-12 (A New View of the Law)

Here in these first twelve verses of Romans chapter 7, the apostle Paul sets out to bring his readers into a greater understanding or view of the law. Paul is not in any wise attempting to label the law as a bad thing given to man by God, on the contrary. The apostle Paul is simply sharing how the law only has dominion as long a man is alive to sin. Once a man is dead in sin and trespasses, the law no longer has dominion. Since we have been freed from the law of sin and death by being made alive in Christ Jesus, we are now under the dominion of the law of the Spirit that gives us new life in Christ Jesus.

Verse 1. Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? Here in this opening verse, the apostle Paul explains that, in our union with Jesus Christ, we also died to the law. When we die to the law, we also die to sin. The law can no longer prosecute us, because in the eyes of the law, we are dead. Sin can no longer reign over us because through our new life with Christ, we are dead to sin. Those who have died to the life of sin and death have been made alive to new life of righteousness in Christ.

In its deeper spiritual meaning, righteousness is the quality of being right in the eyes of God, including character (nature), conscience (attitude), conduct (action), and command (word). In our new life of freedom from the law of sin and death, we have been given the right and the power to live righteously before our God.

Verse 2. For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. The apostle Paul uses the analogy of marriage in which death affects the legal status of the living. The law of marriage has force only as long as both partners are alive. As soon as one dies, the marriage restrictions are gone.

Our death with Christ through His crucifixion has released us from the law of sin, and as a result, has given us a new union with Christ. This is what the apostle Paul aimed to share with his readers; he wanted them to know that they were no longer under the law of sin and death if they have been united with Christ in His death. The death of Christ put an end to the reign or strong hold of the law of sin.

Verse 3. So then, if while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. This speaks the salvation story and the new life we have been freed to live perfectly. Because a death occurred, a new relationship can be formed. We have died to the law or strong hold of sin; sin no longer dictates our every move driving us to act in accord with sin's demands. When we, through our acceptance of Christ, died to sin and its ruling law, we became live and free to now live in accord with the commands and rule of Christ. We now have not only the authority but we also have the power to say no to sin and yes to righteousness.

Verse 4. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. The apostle Paul, in this verse, brings home the point to which he has been building in this chapter. He has written that one who has died is no longer bound by the law, just as a woman whose husband has died is no longer bound by that marriage. She is free to marry a new husband. As Christians who are dead in Christ, we are alive to now live in the Spirit of the one who raised us from the dead to a new life. Our life now should be lived unto God in such a way that our conduct, attitude and motives represent our union or relationship with God through Christ Jesus. This is the fruit we should bear if we have been made new in Christ Jesus.

Verse 5. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. When we were under the law (or in the flesh), we did bear fruit unto God. Instead, we bore fruit to death, because the law aroused the passions of sin within us. We can only come fully to the place of bearing fruit unto God when we are at the place of being free from the law of sin and death. All our efforts to do good and bear fruit unto God in the flesh proved in the end to be fruitless.

Verse 6. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. As part of our death to the law and new life in the Spirit, we have been set free from the dominion of the law over us. The law alone can not make us right with God. The law can not sanctify us; it can not take us into a deeper relationship with God nor can the law make us holy before God. This must be understood by the one who thinks serving God stems from church work or church attendance. Serving God stems from a true relationship with God wrought through our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. Serving God begins in the heart and is then manifested in bodily living. Our new life in Jesus Christ stands in contrast to our older life under the letter.

Verse 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”. Knowledge of sin comes through the law. It is the consummate tool that identifies and exposes sin. So, we can say the law is somewhat like an x-ray machine in that it exposes. What the apostle Paul is trying to convey here is that...once we have knowledge of the law, we have no alternative but to admit we are wretched sinners, guilty of violating the law and standing in need of forgiveness...which only comes by faith in Christ. It is as we come face to face with the perfect law of God that the horror of sin is exposed and our desperate need of God’s gift of salvation becomes clear. When we view the law in the light of being what exposes sin, we realize that the law itself is not sin; the law ushers in the necessary sight men need to see that they are living in sin and opposed to the law of God. Apart from the law, we were a people in captivity to sin but without knowledge that we were. God gave us His law to open our eyes to exactly what was standing in the way of us being in right relationship and fellowship with Him.

Verse 8. But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. Let’s make the point clear...the weakness of the law isn’t in the law – it’s in us. The heart of man, apart from God, is so wicked that it can find opportunity for all manner of evil desire. It took the law to break through the evil of man’s heart and shine before man the birthing of the knowledge of sin that was operating in man. In Psalm 51, King David understood that he was like all men, fashioned or sharpened in iniquity because of the sin nature birthed in him. It is in this 51st Psalm that King David cries out to God asking God to purge or cleanse him from the sin that dwelt within him. Like David, we too must cry out to God for deliverance or for freedom from the bonds of sin that holds us captive.

Verse 9. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. What the apostle Paul is describing here is someone who once lived with no awareness of the law. In that state he was “alive”. Paul is not suggesting by this that he was without sin. What he is referring to is his own awareness—his perspective. The apostle Paul is making the point that man had no awareness of his spiritual disconnection from God. This is a matter of perception—Paul saw himself in one way only to find his perspective was wrong. It was the law or schoolmaster that not only made man aware of his sinfulness and separation from God, the law also describes for man the type of conduct that stands in contrast to the character God expects from man. This is why the apostle Paul insists that, in spite of the law being a good gift from God, it is not how God intends for us to become righteous people. The law is how God intends for man to learn that he is a sinful people; that he is a people in bondage by a law that identifies man’s weakness but within itself does not have the power to free man from this bondage.

Verse 10-11. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Here in these verses the apostle Paul

is simply summing up what he shared in the previous verses concerning the law. 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 told His followers in John chapter 8, "*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*". Sin, by its nature and its deception brings death not life. Sin deceives man by falsely promising satisfaction; by falsely claiming an adequate excuse with the end goal of keeping man believing that he has no other option but to remain as he was, locked in sin. This is where the enemy of our soul does some of his best work. Satan's greatest deception is to get man to think of sin as something not bad but good; to think of sin as something God desires to deprive us of enjoying. Satan knows very well that sin, when followed, always lead to death never life.

Verse 12. Therefore, the law is holy, and the commandments holy and just and good. Here, the apostle Paul is addressing his critics who, somehow, claimed the apostle was teaching that the law of Moses was sinful. This is not what the apostle Paul was doing. Paul was teaching how the law—God's commands—make us aware of the sin already within us. The law makes us aware that we are sinner, spiritually dead, in bondage and thus separated from God. Instead of seeing ourselves as good, and moral, we realize we're corrupt and in need of forgiveness. So, to counter the false claims of his teaching on the law, the apostle Paul says outright that God's law, the law of Moses is holy. The commandments in the law are holy and righteous and good. The law, the apostle says, is a great gift from God to His people Israel. It is in the law where God revealed His heart and His standards for right living. The unfortunate truth is that man can never keep the law, that instead man is a sinner in need of saving.

Verses 13-25 (A Terrible Inner Conflict)

The apostle Paul was not just having a bad day when he wrote Romans 7. He was not merely suffering from a sense of inadequacy and low self-esteem. The apostle Paul's realistic appraisal of his spiritual life came from measuring himself against the high and holy expectations that God for has all of. In taking a true self-assessment of himself, the apostle Paul saw within him a struggle between knowing what was right and good for him to do and the reality of him not having the power within to do that good.

Verse 13. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. The fact that the law provokes our sin nature can be viewed as a good thing because in doing so, the law exposes our deep state of sinfulness. Because sin's desire is to hide within us and conceal its true depth and strength, we needed the law to cause sin to appear sin. The most deplorable result of sin is that it injures us most by taking from us the capacity to know how much we are injured. The law, therefore, is the grand instrument that ministers to us to alarm and awaken our sinful state.

Verse 14. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. The word carnal simply means "of the flesh". The apostle Paul recognizes that a spiritual law cannot help a carnal man. Even though the apostle Paul says that he is carnal, it doesn't mean that he is not a Christian. His awareness of carnality shows that God did a work in him. This also is the proof of the spiritual and wise man. He knows that he is carnal, and is displeased with himself. The proof of a foolish, carnal man is that he regards himself as spiritual and is pleased with himself. Like the apostle Paul, we too must come to the place where we recognize that we cannot obey the law of God as long as we are sold under or practicing sin. We too must come to the place of honestly assessing our spiritual standing before God. Otherwise, we risk the chance of remaining in the bondage of sin's grip.

Verse 15. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. Here in this verse, the apostle Paul characterizes himself as a person who continually does the opposite of what he himself wants to do. Instead of doing the things he wants to do, he does what he hates, instead. Those who believe the apostle Paul is describing his life before becoming a Christian understand Paul to mean that those who are still under the law of sin are confused about why they cannot do that which they know is right to do. Why do people continue to disobey God's Holy commands even when they don't want to? The answer is simple, because they are still a slave to sin; they are still in bondage to the stronghold of sin in their life. They are need of the freedom from sin that only comes through faith in Christ Jesus.

Verse 16-20. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. Here the apostle Paul gives an account of the force and power of indwelling sin in him, and the conflict there was in him between grace and corruption: he had knowledge of that which is good, approved of it, and yet did it not, hated sin and yet committed it. This is how being in bondage or chained to sin behaves. While we know that what we are doing is out of order and while we will to do what is in order, finding the power or means by which to do that which is good and right and in order is absent from within us. This is the life-long struggle of the man who has not yielded his body, as the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 12, as a sacrifice unto God. This is the life-long plight of the man who is yet under the law of sin and death. The apostle Paul makes a blunt declaration; He has learned that nothing good lives in his flesh, his unspiritual mind and body. As a physical human being, good does not out of him, no matter his best effort.

Verse 21. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. Anyone who has tried to do good is aware of this struggle. We never know how hard it is to stop sinning until we try. Apart from the working of the Spirit of God within our inner man, we will never be able to overcome the sin nature we were born into. While we may want to do or set our desire to do what is good and right, our nature, which is inherently corrupt, hinders all our efforts to do what is good. As a witness, I'm sure we can all think of time wherein we purposed in our heart to do what we knew to be right in a given situation only to find our actions in the end lending themselves to performing the opposite of doing the right thing. This is the bondage that Christ Jesus came to set us free from. Our Lord tells us *"everyone who sins is a slave of sin. As a slave, we are not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. So if the Son makes you free, you are truly free."* It takes true and total submission to a life in Christ Jesus that breaks the bonds and chains of sin's captivity.

Verse 22-23. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. The inward man here denotes the rational part of man as opposed to the sensual; the mind of man as opposed to the body of man. In our mind, we desire to do what is good and right before God; however, in our flesh or body our actions support that which is not good and right. The apostle Paul says this is because there is another law which wars or fights against our rational mind. In our unregenerate state or in our bondage to sin, this law reigns. It is the will of this law that we find ourselves carrying forth. It is the law of sin and death that we are held captive to.

Verse 24. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? This is the cry of every man who is brought to the place of realizing that he is in an evil state. The cry in this verse is an admission of his complete inability to do what is right no matter how hard he tries. At this place, the man

comes to see that he is truly a slave to his own sinfulness with no hope of escape within himself. The man acknowledges that he needs someone to step in and save him from his body of death. This is where we each find ourselves at the moment that we realize our need for Christ Jesus and the deliverance or salvation that knowing Christ Jesus gives us. This is the place that breaks us down to our knees seeking God's forgiveness and asking for His restoration to a new life. On a personal note, I remember the moment I reached this point. I saw myself living a life that I had come to realize was not the life God desired me to live. At the same time, I knew I did not have the power to effect the change in my life I desired. I cried unto the Lord and He heard my cry and He delivered me from my distress.

Verse 25. I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. When a believer finally realizes – without Christ I can do nothing but in Christ I can do all things, he is able to say thanks be to God who gives me the victory in Christ Jesus my Lord. The believer is now able to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord; he is able to break free from bondage to the law of sin and its terrible consequences. He is able to walk in the newness of life, to walk in spirit and truth and to come to an understanding that in our Christian life we are not under bondage to the law, but we are under grace.

CONCLUSION

Let us never forget that we are neither justified in our own strength nor are we sanctified in our own strength. We are not able to save ourselves from sin no more than we are able to live the Christian life in our own strength. It is all through Christ Jesus and Him alone. If we are to gain victory and break free from the stronghold or bondage of sin, it is going to take us inviting the Savior, Christ Jesus into our heart and then totally surrendering the all of who we are to the safe keeping of all Christ Jesus is. While the struggle of Roman chapter 7 can be the struggle of the unsaved, unregenerate soul, it can also be the experience of the Christian who has been saved by grace through faith but who thereafter tries to live their Christian life in their own strength. Like the apostle Paul, my brother and my sister, who too must come to the truth that without Christ Jesus I can do nothing to please God, but in Christ Jesus I can do all things for He is the One who empowers and strengthens me.

God's peace and blessing be upon you...

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