



## Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



### Law, Marriage and Control of Sin

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#### Introduction:

Romans 7: 1-6 – Law, marriage and control of sin

In this seventh chapter of Romans, the word “law” is used 23 times. Paul makes it clear that we are not justified by keeping the law and we are not sanctified by keeping the law. You can never hope to become just or please God by keeping a set of standards or laws. If you try to do so, you will become frustrated, discouraged and you will fall short of attaining the goal and standard you worked so hard to achieve. Once we learn how to know, reckon and yield, we start gaining victory over the habits of the flesh and we feel we are becoming more spiritual.

When we look deeply into our own hearts, we find sins that we didn’t even know were there. We wonder if we can ever do anything right. Without realizing it, we have moved into *legalism* and have learned the truth about sin and ourselves. Legalism is the belief that I can become holy and please God by obeying laws. It measures spirituality by dos and don’ts. It judges by the outward and not the inward. It fails to recognize the real purpose of God’s law and the relationship between law and grace.

In this chapter, Paul discusses three topics that if understood and applied will deliver us from legalism.

#### I. The Authority of the Law

Paul uses the illustration of marriage (v2) here to bring home his point. Marriage is for life and is only to be broken by a physical cause. One cause is death and another is unfaithfulness. This is why, as a pastor, I don’t rush in and automatically marry someone who has suffered a divorce, wants to remarry and asks me to conduct the marriage ceremony. Paul says according to the law people are released from their marital vows for one of two reasons. They are released because their spouse died or because of unfaithfulness. When a spouse is unfaithful, divorce is permitted because hearts have been hardened toward each other and so forgiveness cannot be given and received and the relationship cannot be restored. In such cases, Moses gave a divorce.

In our world today people get divorced just as easily as they get married. I believe this is a huge contributing factor why so many people just cohabitate rather than getting married. That way if things go south, they just pick up their belongings and leave. But that is not God’s way which is always the best way. I realize there are those who are sitting here this morning who have suffered divorce; you know the pain of going through that process. I believe God can heal and He will forgive any sin we confess to Him.

Let me just encourage you who are married to invest in that special relationship. Pay attention to your spouse and his/her needs. Sanctify your relationship so it is special and set apart from every other relationship you might have. Guard your marriage. Enrich

your marriage. Invest in your marriage because if you don't, it will cost you in the long run. God doesn't want your marriage to end in divorce. He wants you to be successful and that marital relationship to flourish. After all, marriage is to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. I speak from experience and can truly say at the start of our 32<sup>nd</sup> year of marriage, I love my wife, Julie, more today, than when we vowed our lives to each other.

Paul really is simply using marriage to illustrate a point here in his letter. That point is that as long as they both live, the husband and wife are under the authority of the law of marriage. If a woman leaves the man and marries another man, she commits adultery. However if the husband dies, she is free to remarry because death has broken the marriage relationship and set her free.

Here Paul states two facts about the believer's relationship to the law. **Romans 7:4 In the same way, brothers and sisters, you have died to the laws in Moses' Teachings through Christ's body. You belong to someone else, the one who was brought back to life. As a result, we can do what God wants.**

\* **We died to the law.** The law did not die nor end because God's law still rules over men. We died to the law and it no longer has dominion over us. We are not lawless; we are united to Christ, sharing in His life and walking in newness of life.

\* **We are delivered from the law** (V.6). This is the logical conclusion: the law cannot have authority over a dead person! Death means deliverance! We died to the law so that we might be united to Christ. The Christian life is not one of independence and rebellion. We were delivered that we might serve. Under the law, God's commandments were written on stone and read to the people. Under grace, God's Word is written on our hearts. We walk in newness of life and serve in newness of spirit.

## II. The Ministry of the Law (7-13)

Paul explains that even though we are not under law in Christ, we still need the ministry that the law provides to us.

\***The law still reveals sin.** Where no law is there is no transgression. The law is a mirror that reveals and

reflects to us the inner man and shows us how inadequate we are. Can you imagine if there were no speed limits, no yield signs, no stop signs or traffic lights? Everyone would be going as fast or slow as they wanted, they would not yield to pedestrians, they would not stop at corners and we would have a mess on our hands.

Paul used the last of the commandments (coveting) to speak to the inner man. All of the other nine commandments are outward in action but coveting is an inward attitude. ***This one sin alone leads to breaking the other commandments.***

\***The law arouses sin.** There is something inside each of us that wants to rebel when a law is given. Put a sign on something that has just been painted that says, **DO NOT TOUCH!** Does anyone touch? Of course they do! It is because of the boundary, the restriction that causes people to deliberately do what they are told not to do. People who try to live by a set of rules discover that this system only arouses more sin and creates more problems.

\***The law kills.** The law cannot give life; it can only show the sinner that he is guilty and condemned. This is why churches that are legalistic in their approach to God don't grow, because the law kills.

\***The law shows the sinfulness of sin** (12-13). Many times Christian people will excuse our sin with words like "mistakes", "weaknesses". God condemns our sins and tries to get us to see we are exceedingly sinful. Until we realize how wicked sin really is, we will never want to oppose it and live in victory. Paul concludes that the law is not the problem. The problem is with our own sinful nature. Then Paul goes on to explain the inability of the law.

## III. The Inability of the Law

Paul now writes about what the law cannot do.

\***The law cannot change you.** The law is described in these terms: holy, just, good and spiritual. Nobody can deny that the law is holy. It was given by a good and holy God. The law is good in that it helps us see God's holiness and our need for a Savior. But beyond that, the law is powerless to change you or me. Our nature is carnal. It is fleshly. The law's nature is spiritual. This is the reason why the old nature responds as it does to the law.

**\*The law cannot enable you to do good.** Three times Paul states that sin dwells in us. It is also a fact that for believers, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The believers' mind, body and will can be controlled by either the old nature or the new nature, by either the flesh or the Spirit. The law is unable to make us do good.

There are several personal pronouns in this section of Paul's letter that would indicate that Paul was struggling with self. There are two serious problems that confront the Christian. 1. We cannot do the good we want to do. 2. We do the evil that we do not want to do. **Romans 7:19-21 I don't do the good I want to do. Instead, I do the evil that I don't want to do. Now, when I do what I don't want to do, I am no longer the one who is doing it. Sin that lives in me is doing it. So I've discovered this truth: Evil is present with me even when I would do good, evil is present with me.** Here the problem is how can I ever do anything good? The legalist says, "Obey the law and you will do good and live a good life." Because my sinful nature rebels against the law, even if I think I have done good, I know that evil is present.

**\*The law cannot set you free.** The believer has an old nature that wants to keep one in bondage. Have you ever said to yourself, "I will not do this any longer"? What happens? You exert your will and energy and for a time you succeed and then when you are least expecting it, you fall again.

Instead of being a dynamo that gives us power to overcome, the law is a magnet that draws out of us all

## **Conclusion:**

So my challenge to you this morning is to take the next step. If you are married, enrich your relationship with your spouse this week. If you are a believer in Jesus, do not rely on the law to please God. Take the next step this morning by asking God to empower you with His Holy Spirit. Live your life and walk with God like you are dead to the law and alive to Christ.

kinds of corruption and evil. When you move under the law, you only make the old nature stronger. The inner man may delight in the Law of God, but the old nature delights in breaking the law. The believer under the law becomes tired and discouraged and eventually gives up. He is captive and his condition is wretched.

Jesus Christ is the *only* one who is able to bring us deliverance from this state. The believer knows that there is a struggle going on within him between the flesh and the spirit. Everything we read in God's word about the flesh or the old nature is negative. The flesh profits nothing. **John 6:63 Life is spiritual. Your physical existence doesn't contribute to that life. The words that I have spoken to you are spiritual. They are life. Philip. 3:3 We are the true circumcised people of God because we serve God's Spirit and take pride in Christ Jesus. We don't place any confidence in physical things.**

If we depend on the flesh, we cannot serve God, please God or do any good thing. If we yield to the Holy Spirit, then we have the power needed to obey His will. The secret then is to yield ourselves to the **HOLY SPIRIT**. The old nature knows no law and the new nature needs no law. The legalist becomes a Pharisee whose outward actions are acceptable, but whose inward attitudes are despicable. Jesus called them whitened sepulchers, which on the outside look beautiful and clean, but on the inside are filled with death, decay and uncleanness.