

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 24TH-25TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

DEATH TO THE LAW (ROMANS 7:1-6)

In chapter 5, Paul wrote that justification and peace with God have come through faith in Jesus, and God's law simply reveals our sin and need for Jesus.

- Where sin increased, grace increased all the more (Rom. 5:20) - there is no sin or amount of sin larger than the grace of God.
- In chapter 6, Paul teaches that we are by no means to continue to live in sin.

In Christ, we are "dead to sin." Therefore we're to know our identity in Christ, put our sin to death, restore God as the center of our lives, and remember the consequences of sin and the rewards of obedience.

- Is it possible to do all of these things we're called to do by the strength of our own resolve?
- We're saved by grace, but do we mature and grow in Christ by law?

The "law" (God's righteous commands OR whatever standard you set to prove your worth and gain your acceptance) is only binding on a person when they're alive (vs. 1), but when you became a Christian, you died!

- Before you were in Christ, you were "married" to the law - it was how you established your identity, worth, and acceptance in the eyes of God, yourself, and others (vs. 2-3).

When you came to Christ, you died to the law, so your "marriage" to the law ended (vs. 3).

- That means you died to your keeping of the law as the basis of your acceptance and value.
- You died to the law so that you may belong to another, "to Him who has been raised from the dead" (vs. 4).
- You have received God's love, unmerited favor, forgiveness, and kindness through Jesus!

You were "married" to Jesus and received His free gift of grace and salvation so that you would bear "fruit for God" (vs. 4).

- When you were married to the law, the fruit you produced was "fruit for death" (vs. 5) - the law exposed and amplified your sin.
- But now we are released from the law because we've died, so we get to serve God in the "new way of the Spirit" (vs. 6).

When you were married to the "law," it was a way to gain acceptance from God.

- But now that you've been saved by Christ and given the acceptance of God as a gift, you desire to obey the law not to earn acceptance from God, but because you already have been accepted by God.
- In other words, a gift of the Gospel is that you are no longer motivated by fear but by love!

THE VALUE OF THE LAW (ROMANS 7:7-13)

Paul likes to anticipate objections that many of his readers may have as they read his letter.

- Many Jewish readers might have found Paul's writings on the law to be offensive-as if he were somehow suggesting that the law was sinful, it wasn't needed, and it should be thrown out.
- "By no means," Paul says. The law is exceptionally valuable and important for us.

THE LAW REVEALS SIN (VS. 7)

The law is like an x-ray machine; it reveals what's there but hidden. You can't blame an x-ray for what it exposes.

- A law like "you shall not covet" exposes the inward attitude of the heart.
- Covetousness is a hidden sin that most people never recognize in their own lives, and it's the root sin of all other sins! God's law reveals the root.

THE LAW AWAKENS SIN (VS. 8-9)

Since we have a sinful nature, rules awaken our sin nature in the same way a magnet draws up steel.

- Sin seizes an opportunity through commandments and produces in us all kinds of sin (vs. 8).
- The law reveals the human tendency to sin, and in so doing, it shows us the absolute moral bankruptcy of the human condition.

The more of God's law, rules, and commandments we learn, the greater and more pronounced our sin becomes (vs. 9).

- Our sin "comes alive" - we see the enormity and the darkness of our own sinfulness.
- And we "die" - in seeing the depths of our own depravity, we also see how we are unable to keep God's commands on our own strength.

THE LAW KILLS (VS. 10-11)

The harder we try to learn the law so that we can keep the law so that we can prove that we are good and worthy people on our own, the more it will kill us spiritually (vs. 10-11).

- This explains why legalistic Christians and churches don't bear real spiritual fruit.
- The law simply proves that without Jesus, we're spiritually dead, and apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

THE LAW SHOWS THE SINFULNESS OF SIN (VS. 12-13)

The law is holy, just, and good (vs. 12), but the law reveals sin to be something far darker and more deadly than we often are willing to admit.

- We often excuse our sins as simply "mistakes," "failures," or "shortcomings," but God shows through the law our sins to be "sinful beyond measure" (vs. 13).
- Repentance is simply agreeing with God's assessment of your sin.

CONFLICT WITH THE LAW (ROMANS 7:14-23)

God's commands are holy, just, good, and spiritual, and useful in every way for showing us our sin and need for salvation.

- But there's a problem- the law is "spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin" (vs. 14).
- The law deals with the inner, spiritual part of us that motivates our external behaviors.
- But within us, there exists an old, fleshly nature that doesn't want to obey the law.

Verses 15-16 speak of an all too familiar struggle in the life of a Christian - "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate...I agree with the law".

- Our problem isn't a lack of desire- there's a longing in us to please and obey God and to stay away from sin.
- Our problem isn't a lack of knowledge- we agree with the law and know what the right thing is.

Our problem is a lack of power - we lack power because the law can't provide it.

- The law says, "Here are the rules, and you better keep them!" but it doesn't give us any power to do so.
- We need power to live in victory over the sin that still dwells in our flesh (vs. 17).
- What is our flesh? Our mind, body, and spirit apart from Jesus - remnants of our sinful nature.

"Nothing good dwells in our flesh" (vs. 18)- our hearts apart from God are so corrupted, so self-centered, and so rebellious that we can't call anything in us apart from Jesus "good."

- If we're in Christ, there are two natures existing within us - there's who we REALLY are in Christ: saved, forgiven, redeemed, dead to sin, alive be the Spirit, and given new desires to please God and do what's right.

THEN THERE'S THIS OTHER GUY...

Our sin nature doesn't ever want to do what is right, only wants to live for self, and wants the path of least resistance & greatest immediate pleasure.

- This other guy even goes so far as to "wage war against the law of our mind and take us prisoners to the law of sin" (vs. 23) - our sinful nature is a MASTER at making excuses and creating justifications for sin and selfish behavior.

Even when we want to do the right thing and we delight in God's law in our innermost being, this sin nature is lurking in the background (vs. 21-22).

- These two selves - the nature in Christ through the Spirit and the old nature of the flesh - are both in you working against each other.
- Can knowing more rules kill "the other guy"? No.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE LAW (ROMANS 7:24-25)

The word "wretched" (vs. 24) implies exhaustion, weariness, and failure.

- When we try to please God under the principle of the law, it will lead us to exhaustion and failure.
- Legalism will always bring you face to face with your own "wretchedness," and you can either deny it and become self-righteous or despair and give up following after God.
- We are wretches in need of deliverance!

"...WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH?"

When our perspective finally turns away from our self-focus and self-obsession against our struggles with sin and towards Jesus - we start to see hope, victory, and deliverance.

- When we live under law, and we look to self and personal performance, we're not living with our eyes on Jesus; we're just focusing on us!

As soon as we look to Jesus, we have something to thank God for (vs. 25).

- In looking to Jesus, we understand that we've received God's love, unmerited favor, forgiveness, kindness, and acceptance because of His work- not because of our conformity to the law.
- Paul doesn't deny the struggle (vs. 25b) - it's still there and will be there all our lives.

We now have freedom to "bear fruit for God" (vs. 4) because when we look at Jesus and realize His great love for us IN SPITE of our sinfulness, that motivates us to want to obey Him out of a heart of love (rules & laws can't create love).

- As believers, there will a constant war in our inner lives over sin - we must be willing to fight.
- We fight by looking at Jesus, putting our sin to death, and choosing lifestyles of joyful obedience and trusting surrender.

If we are truly born again, we also must know that we fight FROM victory, not FOR victory.

- If we're in Christ, our story ends with us beholding Him in His glory and being transformed by that glory in a perfect, sinless, resurrected body (1 Jn. 3:2).
- In Christ, each day, we're being transformed and remade by the Holy Spirit - are you being "filled with" or are you "quenching" the Holy Spirit?

THE WAR WITHIN.

You've died to the law, and now you're married to Jesus. Your acceptance from God and your value doesn't come from your ability to be a "good person" (vs. 1-6).

- The law is good because it reveals that without Jesus we're spiritually dead, and apart from Him we can do nothing (vs. 7-13).

In our struggle to keep the law, our problem isn't our lack of knowledge or even desire to keep it- it's that we have no power in ourselves over the "old self" (vs. 14-23).

- We find deliverance in our inner struggle over sin by looking to Jesus, acknowledging the struggle, and fighting from a place of victory, not for it (vs. 24-25).