

Series: Romans – The Life of Faith; The Power of Grace

“The Law and the Christian” Romans 7:1-25

Jon Haakana

It has been hot out there! We have been facing some extreme temps these past 2 weeks. Brutal temps with high dew points one day; wind, rain, and cool temps the next. Now I like the summer much better than the winter, and even though I am not a fan of the heat we have been having, I will take this over below zero temps any day of the week.

But I do hear many people complain about the cold in the winter, and now complain about the heat in the summer and wishing we were back in the winter! We are a people who don't like extremes and when we are experiencing one end of the spectrum, the other end always seems to look better.

In the church, we see this too. We see people in churches and sometimes churches themselves, seeking to live or encourage people to live as they wish, using their freedom in Christ. And when that is going on, we see some people or churches say, “We need more order and more rules.”

As we have been going through our Romans series this summer, Paul has dealt with the extreme of living any way you want in chapter 6 as he asked, “What shall we say then? Are we to sin more that grace will increase?” He says absolutely not! Christians cannot use their freedom in Christ to go on and live in ways that do not glorify the Lord.

That would cause people to ask another question. Well if we need to live differently, then what do I need to do to follow Christ? What are the rules I need to follow, the things I need to do or not do to be a Christian. Early on, as Christianity was largely Jewish, many of the Jews felt that those trusting in Christ had to follow the Law.

Today, we see churches on both ends of the spectrum with one side saying you can live any way you want, and the other side saying, “If you are going to be a good Christian, then you can't do these things, and you need to dress in these clothes and you need to live in this manner.”

Paul speaks to all of this today in Romans 7. There is a lot in this chapter about our relationship to the Old Testament Law, but Paul starts out with the fact that for those in Christ, the Law does not have authority over us (v. 1-6).

Paul uses the illustration of a marriage that when one spouse dies, the other is then free to marry again. In this case between the Christian and the Law, it is the Christian who has died to the law. When we receive Christ as Savior, the old person dies and the Law has no authority over a dead person. But in trusting Christ, we haven't just died to the law, but we have been made alive in Christ so we are now united with Him and not with the old way of the law! In **verse 4** we read: “Likewise, my brothers, you also 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 (Christ our Savior), in order that we may bear fruit for God.”

We have been given new life that is not bound by the law! This new life gives us freedom. Freedom to live for Christ; which we did not have before.

But, Paul does go on in this chapter to say that the Law does still have purpose for us (v.7-13). The purpose of the law is to reveal sin. A good illustration of this is when we were kids and were told specifically not to do something. What is it that was on our minds after we heard that? Doing exactly the thing we were told not to!

Jon, now don't splash in those puddles outside. So, what did I do next? You got it! I splashed in the puddles, of course! I was very good at hearing one thing and then doing another!

So, the law shows us just how sinful we are. Then Paul asks and answers another question in **verse 13**; "Did that which is good, then (the law), bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that through the commandment sin might be shown to be sin... ' We needed to recognize how sinful we were, and are, so that we could then recognize our need for a Savior, our need for Christ. The Law has no authority over us, but it has purpose in revealing sin and leading us to the cross of Christ.

The final thing that Paul talks about here and we desperately need to realize is that the Law does not have power to change us (v.14-25). I think there are many Christians who think that now that they are a Christian, they can now live a sinless life. You can't.

Paul here describes the dual nature of a believer in Christ. **Vs. 22-23**: "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."

Before trusting Jesus as our Savior, we have one nature and that nature is our sin nature. We are sinners through and through. Everything we do is tainted with sin. There is no good that comes out of us and through us from God's perspective at least. **Verses 19-20**.

Now when we receive Christ as Savior, and trust what He did for us through the cross and the empty tomb, our old nature is put to death positionally. What does that mean? It means that when we trust in Christ, we receive the Spirit of God who dwells in us, and when the Father sees us, He sees the righteousness of His Son, and we are His Child in a salvation sense. Nothing is ever going to change that. We are God's child.

Now practically speaking, our old nature is still here. While we are still alive physically, we still have a sin nature, but we also have a spiritual nature now. This Spiritual nature gives us new desires, desires that we did not have before, but desires that are in conflict with the desires of the sinful nature.

Now this is not an excuse to just give up and sin more. This is just recognizing the reality of our need for Christ in every aspect of our life. **We need Him. We need His forgiveness. We need His wisdom. We need His love. We need His grace. We need His mercy. We need**

Him.

You are not going to become holy by keeping the Law, the Old Testament Law or some new and improved law that Christians or anyone else develops that says you need to do this or not do this to be holy. It is all about being in relationship with Christ and His cross. What your focus needs to be on is your relationship with Him and growing in that relationship. If you are in deep and abiding relationship, the “rules” will not be an issue. It is all about relationship. For the Christian, concern yourself with recognizing and responding to the love Christ has shown by seeking to take steps that grow your relationship with Him. Being in God’s Word; spending time with Him in prayer; being in Christian fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul tells us in **Galatians 5**: “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Keep walking side by side with the Spirit. It is not a law we need as Christians, it is a growing relationship we need with Christ that will make us joyful and holy.

Conclusion

Are you in a relationship with Jesus? Is it a growing relationship? Don’t try to live better. Instead, draw closer. Join a Bible study or Life Group. Spend time in prayer. You can’t change yourself for long. But by growing in relationship with your Savior, He can transform you for eternity! Trust Him, walk with Him, worship Him, grow in Him and glorify Him. In Jesus...Amen.