

Dead to the Law, Alive to Christ

By David Harrell

Romans 7:1-6

Indeed, I pray that your heart is hungering for the greatness of the glory of God this morning.

Will you take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter seven? We will be examining the first six verses this morning as we continue to make our way through this magnificent epistle.

While you are turning there, may I remind you that there tends to be a new gospel, a synthetic gospel that is being preached today and it probably always has been in certain realms of the world. And that new gospel centers upon man and how God serves him.

But, dear friends, that is not the old gospel. That is not the true gospel. The true gospel centers on God and how man is to worship and serve him. So with that in mind we come yet again to the infallible record of the Word of God and we want to have God centered in our thoughts and we want to have God feared in our hearts.

So with that in mind we approach this text and look to see what God would have us understand more about him and how we should worship and serve him.

I have entitled my discourse to you this morning, "Dead to Law and Alive to Christ." And we will see this here in this wonderful text.

Romans chapter seven beginning in verse one.

Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.¹

So we return again to this profound section of Scripture where the Spirit of God speaks to us regarding the issue of sin, that deadly enemy that invaded the world through Adam and, thus, every man since Adam. And like Adam, that former emperor of Eden who was

¹ Romans 7:1-6.

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banished from paradise, banished from the presence of the living God, so, too, every man now lives in paradise lost, separated from God unless God does something to him to reconcile him unto himself.

Sin is that accursed thing. We should never forget this. It is responsible for all of the miseries of life. Just think of some misery in your life, some great difficulty in your life. Without question it is rooted in sin. Maybe not your sin, perhaps so, but certainly in the sins of others and sin in general. Sin is that wickedness that is responsible for all that we endure in our lives. It is that wickedness that brought about the divine curse on God's creation, a curse that we all experience in our bodies, in the world around us. Indeed, sin is high treason against the majesty, against the glory of God that places every man under God's holy divine condemnation.

But here in this epistle we learn about the undeserved mercy and grace and the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have already learned much about the staggering realities of our justification, the benefits that we have because God has declared us righteous because of the imputed righteousness of Christ in which we are now hid and covered.

And in chapter five you will recall that Paul closed with an astounding statement at the end of verse 20 and verse 21, a text that really summarizes the magnificent blessings that belong to all who put their trust in the one act of the Son of God.

He says:

“...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”²

And then he moves from that magnificent statement into chapters six and seven where he will answer the inevitable misunderstandings that arise from this doctrine. In fact, chapters six and seven are basically a parentheses between chapters five and eight.

Here he answers the issues with respect to sin and the life of a believer. He elaborates on the benefits that we have in our justification. And he also speaks about our sanctification, that process whereby we are being ever more conformed into the image of Christ.

And then at the end of this parenthesis, he will return once again to his original premise and he will say in Romans chapter eight and verse one:

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”³

Now I find it fascinating, by way of introduction, that when we read the first six verses of chapter six we learn that we died with Christ and we are dead to sin. And the first six verse of chapter seven we learn that we died with Christ and we are therefore dead to the

² Romans 5:20-21.

³ Romans 8:1.

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law. In chapter six we see that we have been freed from the tyranny of sin. It is no longer master over us. We are no longer its slave. But in chapter seven we have also been freed from the penalty of the law. It is no longer our accuser as it once was.

You will recall that in chapter six we are taught that we must know what God has done for us in Christ. We must grasp the glorious realities that we are a new creation in him. We must know it in our mind, affirm it in our heart, live it by our will so that we can rejoice knowing, according to verse 14 of chapter six, that sin shall not be master over you for you are not under law but under grace.

What an astounding reality. The sins that once enslaved us prior to salvation have lost their power unless we choose to yield ourselves once again to that power.

What a magnificent liberation that should evoke our praise, our thanksgiving. You will recall there in verse 17 of chapter six Paul explodes here with gratitude and he says:

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.⁴

So having explained how believers have died with Christ and are dead to sin's mastery over us in chapter six. We move into chapter seven where he will explain how believers have died with Christ and are now dead to the law. He will demonstrate that even as in... as justification is impossible by the law, so, too, is sanctification. You are not going to become more holy by keeping the law. That is the point. In fact, trying to keep the law in an effort to become more holy will produce the opposite effect. A man simply cannot justify nor can he sanctify himself. That will be Paul's great premise here.

And when he tries to do that, his futile attempt of law keeping will actually become a hindrance to his salvation.

Now Paul anticipated that there would be great confusion with respect to this doctrine, especially among his kinsmen the Jews. They are going to say, "Are you trying to tell us that obedience to the law is not important, that we should just forget about the 10 Commandments?"

Well, the answer is not at all. Quite the contrary will be true as we will see.

So let's examine this fascinating and immensely practical chapter by focusing first this morning on the first six verses.

By way of an outline, it is really rather quite simple. In the first three verses we are going

⁴ Romans 6:17-18.

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to understand our relationship to the law as believers. And then, secondly, in verses four through six we are going to understand our relationship to Christ. And there is four points that will follow that. We are going to see that because of our relationship to Christ we are a new person. We once were dead. Now we are alive. Secondly, we are going to see that we have a new position. We were once under law. Now we are under grace. And, thirdly, we are going to see that we have a new purpose. Before we come to Christ, we bring forth fruit unto death, unto self, but now we bring forth fruit unto God. And finally we are going to see that we have a new power. We were once empowered by the flesh and now by the Spirit.

And I would pray that each of you will listen very carefully to these truths because you will find that they speak powerfully to our lives. They are very practical. In fact, I would say that Romans six and seven have had, perhaps, the greatest impact on my life than any other passage of Scripture. This is a profound analysis of sin. And every believer that is serious about understanding spiritual growth, every believer that is serious about raising his children and discipling others simply must master these glorious truths.

And I might add that you want to be careful. This is not just some ancient writing dealing with ancient Jewish people. This is speaking to us as well. Remember, the apostle Paul tells us that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate. In other words, it means literally that we might be able to meet all the demands of life and be equipped for every good work, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

So, dear friends, bring your life to this text this morning. Bring your life here. Let God reveal himself to you and let his Word shape you more into the image of Christ even as it did to those early saints in Rome some 2000 years ago when they first heard these magnificent truths.

Number one, our relationship to the law. Notice verse one.

“Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?”⁵

Paul often begins his line of reasoning in such a way. He begins with a very non offensive proposition, a very obvious truth that all reasonable people will agree upon so that he can establish a basis for his conclusion. And this is a good strategy for all of us to use when we are representing biblical truth.

I might add that if you read the writings of Solomon in Scripture, you will see he did the same type of thing. Certainly the Lord Jesus did this over and over. They were masters at presenting something common, something very easily understood to illustrate some sublime transcendent truth.

⁵ Romans 6:1.

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So he says here in verse one:

“Or do you not know...”⁶

Or we could put it this way. “Certainly you understand, brethren...”

“...(for I am speaking to those who know the law.)”⁷

Now let me pause here and give you something technical, but it is important. Actually in the original language the word “the” is not there. It is what we call an anarthrous construction in the Greek text. There is the absence of the definite article before a noun. So it is literally saying, “For I am speaking to those who know law.”

So he is speaking here of law in general or any law.

“...(for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?”⁸

So he is simply saying this. Everyone would agree that any law has authority over a person as long as he is alive. But, by implication, if the person dies, the jurisdiction of the law is no longer there. And he gives this amazing analogy here in verse two.

For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law,⁹ so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

Now, as a footnote, the intention here of this text is not to address the issue of divorce and remarriage as some would argue. This is merely an analogy. Some would try to argue from silence that divorce is never justified for a believer and that a believer can only remarry if their spouse dies. And they base that upon this text.

Well, I might humbly say that such a position is irresponsible and it is easily refuted by other passages of Scripture. But what Paul is doing here is merely using this an analogy to prove a point regarding the law’s jurisdiction over a person. He is simply saying if a woman is by law married to one man, but joins herself to another, she violates the law, because a married woman is bound by law to her husband.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Romans 7:2-3.

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But if her husband dies, she is free from the law. There is no more jurisdiction. The law no longer ties her to her husband. Therefore she is free to remarry.

In antiquity the marriage covenant, the marriage contract was literally considered to be a legal contract that gave the husband authority over his wife so that in that sense the woman was under the power of her husband. But obviously upon his death that power ceased. That authority is no longer rebinding.

Now we must ask: Where is Paul going here with all of this? Why would he use a marriage analogy when he could have used a myriad of others to demonstrate this point?

Well, the answer will become obvious. Notice in verse four, the first part. He says:

“Therefore, my brethren...”¹⁰

I might add, notice the tenderness with which he speaks here, the tender tone.

“ Therefore, my brethren...”¹¹

Because he knows he has got a hostile audience here that thinks that he is just throwing out the law.

“Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ.”¹²

He is saying, “Even as a married woman is freed from the jurisdiction of the law upon the death of her husband and thereby free to remarry, so, too, as believers we are freed from the jurisdiction of the law upon our death in Christ. And we are also freed, therefore, to remarry another.”

Who is that? The Lord Jesus. That is the point.

So in verse four he is saying that those who place their faith in Christ were made to die to the law through the body of Christ.

The term “die” translates a Greek word *yanatow* (than-at-o'-o) and it is in the in the aorist tense, the past tense, which really underscores the absolute decisive and final nature of death. It is literally speaking here of an event that has happened once and forever. That is the grammar here that the Spirit of God uses through his inspired apostle.

¹⁰ Romans 7:4.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

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Well, what was that event in which we died? Well, it is when we placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, when we were born again, an event that is never again needed to be repeated.

But what is fascinating here is that this is in the passive voice in the Greek grammar which indicates that as believers we do not die to the law on our own naturally. It is not something that just happens to us. Nor do we in any way kill ourselves to the law. But rather the grammar indicates that we were made to die, that something outside of ourself, something outside of the realm of our volition caused our death.

Well, what on earth could that be? Well, the answer is it is not anything on earth. It is something in the gloried heaven. It is God himself. He is saying that God himself made us to die to the law when he caused us to die in Christ.

Now you will recall in our study that when Christ died in some unfathomable way, we also died. In fact, our spiritual baptism united us to Christ in his death, in his burial, in his resurrection and the ritual of baptism pictures these astounding truths.

You will remember that we have been immersed into his death in chapter six verse three. And therefore in verse four of chapter six we read “we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”¹³

And in verse eight he adds:

“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.”¹⁴

So Paul clearly makes his case with respect to believers, to our relationship to the law of God given to Moses. We were made by God to die to that Mosaic law, to God’s standard of righteousness. Not that we are no longer to obey it, but rather it no longer has jurisdiction over us. That is the point.

Beloved, you must understand this. You must carve this truth into the granite of your mind. Once the law had the power to condemn us to eternal death because of sin, but now because of grace and our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we have not only died to the power of sin, but also to the penalty of the law. What a magnificent truth.

Now I would submit that we tend to have a rather cavalier attitude towards God’s law. In some ways we may think, well, that was some ancient document that God gave to an ancient people, the Jews, and that really has no relevance in my life today.

Well, dear friends, that would betray an ignorance of Scripture. The truth is our creator God created us to give him glory and his law shows us how.

¹³ Romans 6:4.

¹⁴ Romans 6:8.

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Let me speak about the law of God for a moment to remind you of it. It is sometimes referred to as the mosaic code. It was the codification of God's holiness, his standard of righteousness.

And if you consider the features of God's law in Scripture you will see that first of all there was a two fold summarization of the law and that was simply that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and, secondly, to love our neighbor as ourselves. We see that in Deuteronomy six. We see the Lord reiterating that truth in Matthew 22 and so forth.

And then there was also a 10 fold summarization of the law. That was called the Decalogue or we know it as the 10 Commandments. It was also called the tablets of stone. And that was the Mosaic law that was given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. We read about it in Exodus 19 and 20. It has also been called the old covenant and, of course, the covenant was that basically if you keep the covenant I will bless you. If you violate it, I will curse you. And if you look at that Decalogue, those 10 Commandments you will see that the first three basically tell us how we are to love God perfectly and then in the middle you have laws pertaining to the sabbath and then the last three tell us how we are to love our neighbor as ourselves."

And then, thirdly, there was also what we would call the manifold law or the words of the covenant as it is described in Exodus chapter 24 verse seven. And this would include, for example, the entire book of Leviticus that is a detailed expansion of the law.

Now all of this was written down and it was placed in a receptacle on the side of the ark of the covenant with the tablets of stone that were inside the ark.

Deuteronomy 31 verse 26 we read:

"Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you."¹⁵

Whoa. That is tough.

You see, the purpose of the law was to expose our sin. It was a witness against you. And any breach whatsoever, any violation meant that you broke the whole law. And the consequence was death.

So the law was an extremely oppressive thing. In fact, when Paul examined his life against the law of God, chapter seven here here in Romans, verse nine, he says that he died. In other words it killed him. Why? Because it exposed the depths of his sinfulness. It raised the standard so incredibly high that he knew he was instantly guilty before a holy

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 31:26.

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God. There was no hope here. All of his religious accomplishments and pride were reduced to ashes. And I might add that if we look at the law, it will have the same effect on every one of us.

In Matthew chapter 22 verse 36 you will recall that one of the Pharisees asked Jesus, “

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'¹⁶

Now, my friends, I ask you. Who among us can say that we have perfectly obeyed these two commandments? None of us. We all stand guilty.

Also as we think about the law which can be understood as all of the Old Testament Scriptures, it really had three divisions as we study it. First there was the moral law that regulated how Israel was to love the Lord their God and how they were to love their neighbors as themselves and all of these were based upon the 10 Commandments. And, secondly, there was the judicial law that really regulated the theocracy of the nation of Israel. And then, thirdly, there was the ceremonial law that regulated Israel's worship. And ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ when he came fulfilled each division of the law. We read about that in Matthew 5:17, for example.

In his sinless life, he fulfilled the moral law. His condemnation and temporary judgment upon Israel whereby he has temporarily set them apart as a witness nation fulfilled the judicial law. And finally his atoning work on the cross fulfilled the ceremonial law.

But we must not forget that although the judicial and ceremonial laws were fulfilled in Christ and are now obsolete, the moral law is still being filled through the Church because we are united to Christ through faith. In fact, the apostle Paul spoke to this sobering truth in Romans eight verses three and four where he reminds us that:

“God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”¹⁷

But now as we come to these first four verses in Romans seven, Paul reveals to us that because we have been made to die in Christ we have been freed from the penalty of this law. It is no longer binding upon us. Why? Because we are now hidden in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to us. He is the one that perfectly satisfied the demands of the law. No longer are we in a position of having to somehow save ourselves by

¹⁶ Mathew 22:36-39.

¹⁷ Romans 8:3-4.

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keeping the law. In fact, as we study the law we see that the law never had power to redeem us from sin. Its power was only to condemn us. Obedience to the law was never a means to salvation.

Romans 3:20 teaches us that.

Oh, child of God, don't miss this. Freedom from the penalty of the law was necessary to secure our sanctification. You see, the very purpose of our salvation is to enable us to fulfill the righteousness of the law through Christ. That is something we could never do on our own, only through the power of Christ.

And please understand. Paul is not merely saying here that now we are able to obey the law. No, no, no, no. It is far more than that. He is saying that now we will obey the law ultimately through Christ.

You see, the moment we are united to Christ we are instantly free to live righteously by the power of Christ. Yet at the same time we are loosed from the binding obligations of the law that we will still violate from time to time in our flesh. But because of our justification, God no longer sees our sin, but he sees the righteousness of sin in which we are now clothed.

What a magnificent salvation belongs to the redeemed.

After speaking about our relationship to the law, in the first three verses, he moves to our relationship to Christ in verses four through six.

Notice verse four.

“Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.”¹⁸

My, what a stunning summary of a Christian. If you want the gospel in a nutshell, here it is. If someone says to you, “My friend, what does it mean to be a Christian?” I would encourage you to go to this verse and just put it this way. It means that I was made to die to the law through the body of Christ that I might be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead that I might bear fruit for God.

Isn't that a great testimony? There it is.

Now will you notice the apostles defines a Christian here as having four elements. There is four things about a believer that are radically new in quality. Let's look at them for a

¹⁸ Romans 7:4.

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moment. We are going to see that we become a new person with a new position, a new purpose and a new power.

And you must ask yourself, my friend, does this describe me? First of all, he speaks of a new person, the idea that we were once dead spiritually. Now we are alive. Again, notice verse four.

“...you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead.”¹⁹

See, at salvation we pass from death to life. Can there be any more radical of a contrast? We see this theme throughout the Scriptures, don't we? Becoming a Christian requires a death. And it will also involve a resurrection. Paul has already spoken to this. In chapter six verse four he speaks how we have died with Christ and we have been raised to walk in newness of life. And now here in verse four of chapter seven we see that we have been made to die to the law and we are joined to Christ and resurrected with him.

Now let's look at this closely. He said

“...that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead.”²⁰

I find it interesting. Wouldn't you expect him to just say that you might be joined to Christ? Why would he say joined to another, to him who was raise from the dead? Why would he give... go on to give such a description about Christ?

And the answer is to emphasize the radical nature of the change that has taken place. You see, becoming a Christian requires a death and a resurrection. We are united to Christ in both.

Beloved, when some one asks you to tell them what it means to be a Christian say to them with a humble boldness to be a Christian means that God has caused me to pass from spiritual death to life. I have been born again. I have been transformed. I am a new creation, a new creature in Christ. There has been a radical transformation all because of his glory, his mercy, his grace. I have died to the power of sin but also I have died to the penalty of God's holy law. I am no longer under that condemnation even though I have violated and I continue to violate that law so egregiously.

Again, as verse four could be stated, “I was made to die to the law through the body of Christ that I might be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead.”

You see, friends, this is the stuff of genuine saving faith.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

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If I can digress for a moment, what would be the mark of a new person who was once dead and is now alive? What would be at least one mark of that, one characteristic of being born again?

Let me phrase it a little bit differently? What is the first thing a new born infant does when it is born? And the answer is it will scream for mother's life giving milk.

It cannot live without it. Therefore if you say you are a Christian, if you say that you have been born again and yet you have no insatiable appetite for the Word of God, you are not alive. You are dead.

Peter spoke of this. He says:

...like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.²¹

1 Peter 2:2.

Can you imagine speaking to a mother and she tells you, "Oh, yes, I had a baby a couple of years ago, a beautiful baby, but it is interesting with this baby. The baby has never had an appetite. It never eats."

What type of baby would she have? She would have a dead baby.

Dear friends, you show me a Christian that has no desire to feast upon the Word of God, show me a Christian that has no desire for expository preaching, for expository reading, one that whines and complains if he hears anything in Scripture that he does not like or does not understand, someone who would literally subject himself as many do to nonsense like an Andy of Mayberry Bible study curriculum. You show me a person like that and I will show you a person that is spiritually dead.

How long do you think you could live physically on cotton candy and candy bars and ice cream?

James 1:19 tells us that we are to be quick to hear the Word. It is the idea of we should run for every opportunity to hear the Word of God taught and preached, that we should seize upon every opportunity to expose ourselves to Scripture, that we might understand more of the glory and the grace of God, that we might become more conformed to the image of Christ, that we might know more of his love and worship him more fully and deeply. We need to be people that starve for the greatness of God. And the reality is that people that are truly a new person in Christ they will do that. But not so the dead.

²¹ 1 Peter 2:2-3.

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1 Corinthians two verse 14 we read:

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”²²

Meaning they are incapable of discerning spiritual truth.

I witnessed that this last week as I preached the gospel at my mother-in-law’s funeral. I could look out on the faces of people rolling their eyes, shaking their heads, uncomfortable.

And how tragic to think that the majority of ostensibly Christian churches are filled with people who have no appetite for the Word of God. It is a tragedy of tragedies. Moreover, think of all the folks who claim to be a Christian, yet have no desire to be a part of a church. In fact, they despise being around other believers. I have heard it said before, “Well, I prefer to worship God in the great outdoors, in his great cathedral. I love being up there in that deer stand and worshipping God.”

Oh, come on. Who are you kidding? All through Scripture we see God giving commands with respect to how worship, corporate worship is to be regulated and he instructs his people on how they are to conduct themselves in the church.

Moreover, in 1 John 3:14 we read:

“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.”²³

You want a test of a believer, there is another one. You love the brethren.

“He who does not love abides in death.”²⁴

My friend, examine your life. Do not succumb to this self deception. So not only are we a new person, we were once dead, now we are alive, but secondly we have a new position. The idea here is we were once under law. Now we are under grace.

Again, verse four.

“...you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another.”²⁵

²² 1 Corinthians 2:14.

²³ 1 John 3:14.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Romans 7:4.

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Again, the analogy is clear. Even as the death of a husband releases a woman from the obligations to him, so, too, salvation causes us to be united to Christ who paid the penalty of death on our behalf and that releases us, therefore, from the obligations of the law and unites us in some unfathomable way to a spiritual marriage with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are now his bride. He is our bride groom. Paul speaks of this marriage figure, for example, in 2 Corinthians 11 verse two.

There he says:

“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.”²⁶

So, you see, our whole standing before God has changed when we come to Christ. We have a new position before him. Once we were bound by the law. Now we are bound to Christ in grace. And I might add if this is true in your life—and I hope that it is—you will no longer struggle with fear and with doubt or with an accusing conscience. You will understand that now because of Christ there is no more condemnation. You will see yourself clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And God will not be your judge, but he will be your Father.

Moreover, Paul tells us that we have a new purpose, number three.

Before we brought truth to what... brought forth fruit unto death. Now he says we bring forth fruit unto God.

Notice, again, verse four.

“Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.”²⁷

You see, a Christian has a whole new purpose in life. Think about it. You know non-Christians' friends and they might be here in this room today who are playing church. They have no such purpose. They do not think in such terms. They do not get up in the morning and say, “God, how can I give glory to you in my life today? How can I bring forth fruit to you?”

No, rather, they live solely for their own pleasure to satisfy the lusts of their heart.

And I would ask you. What is the consuming passion, the consuming purpose in your life? Is it to bring forth fruit to God or to yourself?

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 11:2.

²⁷ Romans 7:4.

Dead to the Law, Alive to Christ

By David Harrell

Romans 7:1-6

Notice verse five in chapter seven. He says:

“For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.”²⁸

You see, he is saying that unbelievers are ruled by their sinful passions that are aroused by the law.

He has mentioned this before. He is speaking of our human nature that has a proclivity to rebel against the things of God. It is an automatic knee jerk reaction that we have. Every child is born resenting authority, resenting boundaries. We all want to make it our priority to do that which is forbidden. As soon as you tell a child that he is not allowed to cross the street, what will he do? He will swear an oath in his heart that one day I will cross that street and I will own the other side of that street. That is how we function.

So, indeed, prior to salvation he is saying that the sinful passions of our flesh are aroused by the law. He says that they were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

The word work, *energeō* (en-erg-eh'-o) in the language, we get our word energy from that. it means to bring about or to affect something.

So he is saying that prior to salvation the sinful passions were at work in the members of our body, referring to our physical body that comprises the whole of our person, this body that will one day be done away with.

And what is at work to do? Well, to bear fruit. In other words, to produce something. Well, what is that? Well, ultimately death, referring to eternal death. the ultimate consequence of divine judgment.

And then in light of this notice what he says in verse six.

But now...

I love those two words.

But now...

You see there is something different here.

“But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”²⁹

²⁸ Romans 7:5.

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The term serve, But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

The word serve, *douleuw* (dool-yoo'-o) in the original language. It is rooted in the word that means... that speaks of a slave. And here it refers to having the attitude of a slave who lives to please his master.

Does this describe you? Is this the priority of your life? So, again, according to verse four the believer has a whole new purpose in life. And that is to bear fruit to God.

You may recall that in Luke chapter six verse 44 Jesus speaks about the fruit of a good tree versus a bad tree. And there he said:

“For each tree is known by its own fruit.”³⁰

He later goes on to say in verse 45.

“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”³¹

You see, an unbeliever, he is saying, will produce the fruit of self. Unbelievers are totally self centered. They are self absorbed. But a believer will be God centered and committed to God's glory. That will be the pattern of his life. It is a huge difference here.

A believer's heart will bear fruit as well as will, his actions as well as his attitudes. His heart will yield, for example, the fruits of the Spirit as we read in Galatians 5:22:

“...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”³²

And so forth. And his will also and that will is the actions that proceed from the heart, that will will produce, it will yield the fruits of righteousness. The ultimate goal of all that he does will be to bring glory to God.

You might recall that Paul prayed for the Philippian believers in Philippians 1:11 that they might be filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

²⁹ Romans 7:6.

³⁰ Luke 6:44.

³¹ Luke 6:45.

³² Galatians 5:22.

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So, again, I would ask you. Does this describe your life? If so, you will know it in your heart and others will see it in your life.

So Paul says we are not only a new person with a new position and a new purpose, but finally we have a new power. We were once empowered by the flesh, now by the Spirit. Again, verse four.

“Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.”³³

Notice in that text what is the source of power? Notice how it says we were made, that we might be joined that we might bear fruit. It does not say I made myself to die to the law. It does not say that I chose to join myself to another to bear fruit for God. Now, that, you see, that can't happen because when we are apart from Christ before we were born again, we are a slave to sin. We are slave to our flesh, not to Christ. We were spiritually dead, not alive.

And in verse five he says:

“For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.”³⁴

You see, the point is now we are empowered by the Spirit, not by the flesh.

What does Paul say in Romans eight verse nine?

“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”³⁵

Beloved, apart from the indwelling power of the Spirit of God, our flesh would dominate. You see, again, we have been redeemed by God that he might inhabit us, that he might justify us and empower us to righteousness.

Paul expands upon this in Galatians two verse 19 and 20. He says:

For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.³⁶

³³ Romans 7:4.

³⁴ Romans 7:5.

³⁵ Romans 8:9.

³⁶ Galatians 2:19-20.

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What a magnificent statement. And it was for this reason that the apostle Paul just explodes with passion in Philippians three and verse eight.

Do you remember what he says there?

“I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”³⁷

All my accomplishments, they are worth nothing. And in verse nine he acknowledges that there is no power in the law to save. There is no power in the flesh to conquer sin or to be able to serve Christ. We are just hopeless and helpless here.

So where is the power? He tells us in verse 10. It is in knowing him and the power of his resurrection.

You see, friends, when we come to the Christ we have a new power. We have got to rejoice in this and live consistently with it. Paul understood that there is no greater power in the universe than the power of God that raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. And this is the only power that is able to help believers live to the glory of Christ.

Again, verse six.

“We serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”³⁸

My friends, I would ask you in closing this morning. Do you experience and enjoy the power of God in your life? Or do you find yourself living discouraged and depressed and defeated? Worse yet, do you find yourself trying to outweigh your bad deeds with your good deeds as if there is some scale here that you have got to constantly be balancing so that you can become more acceptable to God? Is your happiness tied directly to your circumstances in life?

Oh, dear friend, if the answer is yes to any of those, you are still under the jurisdiction of the law. And God has found you guilty. But oh what hope we have in Christ.

If you don't know Christ, today is the day of repentance. Won't you believe in him and die to your sin and die to the penalty of the law? Be able to say, “Therefore, I have died to the law and I have been made alive in Christ. I have been freed from the penalty of the law and now I have a whole new relationship with God. And even with the world in which I live, I was once characterized as a person that was dead, but now I am alive. I am a new person. I once had a position under the law, but now I am under grace. I once had a purpose that brought forth fruit unto death, but now unto God. And now I have a new power. No longer am I empowered by the flesh, but I am empowered by the Spirit of God that dwells within me.

³⁷ Philippians 3:8.

³⁸ Romans 7:6.

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Oh, how I long for that for each and every one of you.

And, dear Christian, may I encourage you. Meditate upon these truths. Make them become a part of your testimony so that literally when people ask you to give your testimony you will move beyond the typical old clichés. Well, yes, I accepted Christ as my personal Savior.

Well, first of all, you didn't accept him, he accepted you. But beyond that, add to it some of these rich and glorious truths. Make them such a part of your life that it literally flows off of your tongue because it is a part of your heart. And we will do that to the praise of his glory.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these truths. Cause them to bear much fruit in our lives for your glory and speak to every person within the sound of my voice that knows nothing of the power of Christ. Lord may today be the day of their salvation? We cry out to you on their behalf in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

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