

**Subject: *The Believer and God's Law***

**Scripture: *Romans 7:1-13***

The main theme of Romans is God's righteousness in the salvation of sinners. Why do people need to be saved? How does God save sinners in a way that satisfies their needs and upholds His character? How do believers live after we are saved? These are the questions Paul asks and answers in the letter of Romans.

- Righteousness is needed by all people (1:17—3:20)
- Righteousness is provided by a holy God (3:21-26)
- Righteousness is received by grace through faith in Christ alone (3:27—4:25)
- Righteousness is applied in Christian living (5:1—8:17)

God's plan of salvation involves three great works:

- Justification – believers have a right standing before God
- Sanctification – believers are set apart to live right for God
- Glorification – believers will be able to live forever with God

In Romans 7 Paul is dealing with the God's work of sanctification. In connection with believers being sanctified or set apart, Paul describes the Christian's new relationship to grace and law. Believers are now under grace and not under the law, but what does that mean?

- We are under grace, but *grace is not a license to sin*
- We are not under law, but *now we are free to serve a new master*

The Bible has a lot to say about God's Law. The Old Testament makes a distinction between three kinds of law:

- Ceremonial law to regulate sacrifices and worship
- Civil law to regulate daily life and protect life and property
- Moral law to define God's standard of right and wrong

God's moral law was first given in Exodus 20. We call it the Ten Commandments.

In Romans 7, Paul is clarifying the relationship between a Christian and God's moral law. From Romans 7:1—8:4, Paul refers to the law 35 times. We are "under grace and not under the law" (Rom. 6:14-15). What does it mean that believers are not under the law?

**1. Believers are free from the dominion of the law (7:1-6)**

- A. The law has dominion (jurisdiction) over a person only when he is alive (vs. 1)

When a person dies, he is no longer subject to the law or its penalty.

- B. The analogy of marriage illustrates this truth (vs. 2-3)

The law that applies to a woman when she is married no longer has any control over her actions when her husband is dead.

C. Believers are dead to the law by the death of Christ so that we are free to marry Him (vs. 4).

Christ died on the cross in our place as our substitute to pay the penalty of the law we had broken, so now the law has no jurisdiction, power, rule, or dominion over a true believer. We are dead to the law and free to marry Christ.

D. When we were unsaved we sinned and the result was death (vs. 5)

The flesh can refer to the human body or to our fallen human nature apart from Christ. Paul has that in mind here and is talking about our sinful life before we were saved.

E. Now we are delivered from the law and we serve in newness of spirit (vs. 6)

We are delivered from the penalty of the law and burden of guilt. We now have the Holy Spirit living in us and now we are able to serve Christ by His power rather than trying to obey the letter of the Law in our own power.

**2. Believers are thankful for the work of the law (7:7-12)**

Paul now reminds us that the law is not a bad thing, but a good thing, and he shows us the purpose of the law. Were it not for the law we would not be saved. In verse 7 we notice that Paul refers to himself (“I”) and he does so through the rest of the chapter. What is true of Paul here is true of us all. In verses 7-13 Paul describes the experience of an unsaved man and in verses 13-25 he describes the struggle of a saved man.

A. The law reveals sin (vs. 7)

***Romans 3:20*** *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

***Galatians 2:16*** *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

The law reveals sin, but it can't remove sin. Law cannot save us or change our heart.

B. The law arouses sin (vs. 8-9)

The word “opportunity” describes a base of operations for an expedition or an attack. The word “concupiscence” means evil desire. Sin uses the law as a base to launch its evil work. Whatever the law forbids, we desire. Whatever the law commands, we neglect. The things that are forbidden by God's law are attractive to our sin nature because we want to exercise our self-will. That's not the Law's fault. It's our fault. The stipulations of God's law are like a sign that says Keep Out or Don't Touch.

C. The law condemns sin (vs. 10-11)

The law reminds us that we are under a death sentence because we can't keep it. When God reveals to us that we have broken God's law, God breaks us and we realize we deserve death. Through the law sin becomes exceedingly sinful (vs. 13).

D. The law is not sinful, but is *holy, just, and good* (vs. 12-13)

The problem is not with the law. The problem is with us. The law is God's perfect standard and it is a reflection of His character and will. We can't keep the law perfectly and consistently. The law is intended to bring life, but not in the way that people think. We can't earn God's acceptance and work our way into heaven by keeping the law. The law brings life by destroying our self-confidence and self-righteousness, by revealing our true condition, by showing us that we desperately need a Savior who can deliver us from the curse of the law and make us acceptable to God. The law humbles us and points us to Christ.

**Galatians 3:24** *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

**Romans 3:31** *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

The law has not been revoked, nullified, replaced, amended, or discarded.

Let's go back to Paul's analogy in the beginning of chapter 7 for just a minute. The Holy Spirit presents Christ to us as the one who died for us to set us free from the penalty of the law, and He asks: "Will you take Christ to be your spiritual husband?" What will you say?