

Romans 7:1-6 - New Covenant Life

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If you would, please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 7.

One of my favorite places to visit in Idaho Falls is the DMV. Now, I know the stereotype and I know your initial gut reaction. Because I tend to hate other DMV's too. But at least from my personal experience, things have been really easy and really efficient at this DMV compared to others. So you move to Idaho Falls and you have to eventually go in there, every lady is smiling at you (slight exaggeration here), and you start the process of getting an Idaho driver's license. And they at some point ask you this question, "do you want to be an organ donor." You respond with a "yes" or "no" and life goes on. Other than a small little red heart on your physical license, nothing else has changed.

Is your Christianity like your organ donor card? You said yes once, but it doesn't really affect any part of your day to day life. To the unbeliever here, is this your understanding of Christianity? Is this how you have heard someone possibly explain the good news of Jesus to you? You say yes to the Gospel and life goes on except you now have a **"get out of jail free card."**

I want to humbly but firmly tell you that is not Christianity. This is not what we understand it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. No, the Gospel, this good news concerning Jesus Christ, that he was sent into the world to rescue and redeem a sinful people and sufficiently did so through his life, death, burial, and resurrection, so that all you who place their faith in him those who recognize this Good news and respond with not just a DMV type "yes" but with their whole hearts and minds, understanding that God has done a work in their heart and they desire to live for him, then that person is truly a Christian. Truly redeemed by the blood of Christ and *therefore* will live for him for as long as God gives them breath to breathe in this world and even after into eternity. That's Christianity. That's what we see in the Scriptures, and that's, in part, of what I see Paul trying to correct in this section of Romans.

He begins by outlining to the Romans beginning in chapter 6 (remember after establishing the fact that all have sinned before God, Jew and Gentile alike, and therefore deserve God's righteous judgment), that they should

embrace their new life in Christ! Even though sin is dreadful, truly horrific, as we will see, God's grace is sufficient to cover over all sin. And so Paul asks the question, "should we continue in sin so that grace may abound?" That is, why can't I just keep living how I was Paul, you just told me how absolutely wonderful and amazing God's grace is, let me live my way and satisfy the sinful flesh! You just told me God's grace will cover it!

And Paul responds by no means! You don't understand the nature of God's grace at all and the nature of your new life at all. And real quick, just a quick point of application from our study of Romans so far, "are you tempted to knowingly sin because you know God will forgive you?" Are you flirting with it? Then look to the cross, and remind yourself once more of why the perfect Son of God had to die for you, for your sins. It is not a thing to take lightly or to flirt with. So Paul establishes all of this as Jeff showed us the past few weeks and wants us to see that we are no longer slaves to sin we are now slaves to God, slaves to righteousness. But then we come to Romans 7, and he's going to answer the question of what about the law? How does this apply to us?

So Romans 7:1-6: (CSB)

Since I am speaking to those who know the law, brothers and sisters, don't you know that the law rules over someone as long as he lives? 2 For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law regarding the husband. 3 So then, if she is married to another man while her husband is living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. Then, if she is married to another man, she is not an adulteress.

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another. You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

Let's Pray.

The main point of this passage is as follows:

In Christ, we have died to the law and have been raised to new life.

This is straightforward and while we are dealing with the law in particular in this section, Paul's overarching theme in chapters 6-8 is for us to understand and comprehend what this new life actually looks like and entails. So for our time today we are going to flesh out that main point in 3 ways. What does it mean that we have died to the law? What does it mean that we have been raised to new life? And what does it mean that we are now "in Christ?"

1. We have died to the law

Paul wants the saints in Rome to understand their relationship to the law. And the first way he explains it is through death. We have died to the law.

2 For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law regarding the husband. 3 So then, if she is married to another man while her husband is living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. Then, if she is married to another man, she is not an adulteress.

The picture for us is clear and doesn't have to be dissected piece by piece. Paul's telling them that they were married to the law, but now in Christ that husband has died and they have a new one, Christ himself. And he explains what this practically means in verses 5-6a: 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us...

Two things we must see here, what sin does to the law and our proclivity to live under the law.

1) What sin does to the law

- a) Sin distorts the law. I don't want to steal Jeff's thunder from next week but sin radically distorts everything that is good, and the example here is the law. God's Law is a revelation of himself, holy, just, and good. Yet sin takes that and makes it a weapon. It enslaves those who seek to follow the law by

constantly prodding them to break the law. That's his example of coveting that is coming. Paul is going to go on and tell us that the law is absolutely not sin, but that sin uses it and abuses it to bring about more sin in each of our lives.

- i) So as Christians we need to hold this in tension. The law is good. We aren't under the old covenant but we are informed by the Old Testament and the Scriptures as a whole and we learn what the progress of revelation means and how Christ fulfilled the Law. **Therefore we aren't under it as Israel was but we still adhere to much of it, because it is the revelation of God.** So we hold that on one side, while recognizing that it (the law) combined with our sinful nature only produces more sin. The Law could never save Israel! They couldn't keep it. They needed a new covenant head, no longer to be in Adam but now to be in Christ.
- ii) But each of us have experienced what sin does to the law before coming to Christ. As a child we hear, "don't step on the grass, or jump in the puddle, or take that bead and stick it up your nose." And what do we want to do? That very thing. We see this in adults who in their sin, hear God's universal law come to them and they what? Rebel against it, are aggravated by it and want to break it. In our sinful disposition before being in Christ, the law is warped so that we desire to sin all the more when placed under its stipulations. And what is the outcome of those still living under the law in sin? V. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death.
 - (1) It does not matter how nice someone is, it does not matter the good works someone does, it does not matter how much money they give to good causes. Apart from knowing Christ and having experienced a new birth like Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, the person in the flesh is bearing fruit for death. Christian keep this in mind when you evangelize the lost. Apart from God doing a work in their hearts they are bearing fruit for death.

2) Our proclivity to live under the law

a) You might be here and thinking, well yes these Jews and Gentiles had to wrestle with this but I am a Christian and I don't feel tempted to live under the law. Well friends, just like our fear of man can be subtle and worm it's way into our hearts when we least expect it, so too we can fall back into living under the law when we are not on guard, not actively preaching the truth of Christ to ourselves. The reality friends is that there are many Christians **who still put themselves under the law.**

i) It can look like this, you have come to faith in Christ, you have trusted in him for salvation and are following after him. Then you sin, you mess up, and you wonder, "was I really a Christian?"

(1) This was me for many years as I would constantly understand myself to have fallen away from the Lord and need to "re-dedicate" my life to the Lord. So camp experience after camp experience this is what happened. (I come back down to the front, or I ask Jesus back into my heart). But that's not what we see in Scripture. Paul's going to outline in the rest of Romans 7 in a very personal way (while painting a bigger picture) how we still struggle with and fight sin in our lives. We will see that next week, but remember what he said clearly in chapter 6 verse 14, you are not under the law, but under grace. So what do we do? What did I do? We become Christians and then we sin, and we wonder if we ever really were a believer. We become uncertain of our salvation, we lose our assurance of faith, and we end up doubting whether we were Christians at all. Maybe even others begin to wonder, "were they a Christian?"

(a) What's happened here? Now I do want to acknowledge that there are false professions of faith, but there are also Christians who struggle with assurance of faith and that's what I am hitting on. So what has happened to the one who questions if they are saved when they sin? They have completely misunderstood their relationship to Christ and have put themselves back under the Law. A Christian should never do that. I love what Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, "it does not matter how deeply, how violently you may sin as a believer, you should never come again under condemnation." There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Again, don't misunderstand this and become antinomian. I'm not talking about a license to sin because grace abounds, therefore it doesn't matter what you do or say. No, that's another misunderstanding of

the law. I'm talking about recognizing how the law as used by sin has no hold over you. We aren't anti-law and we aren't bound by the law. We must understand the difference in this Christian life.

- ii) How else do we come under the law? Let me ask you this question: Are you a frustrated Christian this morning? . . . Maybe you don't pray as much as you should, you don't read your Bible near as often as others, you see things in your life, areas of sin, that you still fall short and are wrestling with? Good. A Frustrated Christian is a sign of new life. Of the new birth. **Something has changed within you where you hate sin and desire to grow day by day into the image of Christ. Praise God!** But for those of us frustrated, we must be careful not to fall under the law as well. Because we read about the saints of old, we read about the hall of faith in Hebrews 11 as they "shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging of fire, and tortured not accepting release so they may gain a better resurrection." We then compare ourselves to others in the church and think "I'm nowhere near them, I'm nowhere near that level of maturity." And so again we think, well am I a Christian? And we place ourselves under the law once more. And here is what we must realize.
- (1) It is good and right to test ourselves in light of Scripture and to see where we are falling short. But that doesn't mean **you have no salvation when falling short, it means you very well may just be a poor Christian! A Christian who needs to mature.** But a Christian, nonetheless. So Paul is taking pains to show us that we have a new husband, we are no longer in that marriage but are now married to Christ, and as we will come to see this changes everything... But time and time again we have seen in Romans that salvation is all of God and we will also see that our sanctification is all of God. Our day by day growth is all of God. This is why we often sing "I won't be formed by feelings, I hold fast to what is true." Hold fast, saints! Because when we incessantly look at ourselves and our failings instead of to Christ we run the risk of putting ourselves back under the law. Hold fast to what is true.
- iii) We have died to the law brothers and sisters. Let us then live in that reality. Let us live in light of our new life.

2. We have been raised to new life

I want us to see from verse 6 of our passage and 2 other supporting passages what it means that we have new life and in particular, new covenant life.

6 But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

In 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 we have the closest parallel in language to this verse.

5 It is not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God. 6 He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

So in these two verses we see that we have been released from the law, and that this new covenant is not of the letter (not of the law), but of the Spirit. One more verse that we have referenced throughout Romans.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 - 33 “Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the Lord’s declaration. “I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them”—this is the Lord’s declaration. “For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.”

What does new covenant life entail? No longer is the law external, written on tablets of stone, but now it is internal, written on our hearts. Knowing God then is now an internal experience. And what grounds this statement? “For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.” SO in the new covenant we are forgiven, we can know God, and we can love God. THIS is the new life that we have been raised to.

Paul wants the Roman church and us to see this. Look back at the start of v. 6 - “but now”. There is a change, a deliverance, a release. This is how it was, this is now how it is for you. But now we may serve in the newness of the Spirit.

Elsewhere Scripture will say that we walk in the spirit, we pray in the spirit, and here we serve in the spirit. In other words, now that we, new covenant believers, have the Holy Spirit it is truly a new life that we experience.

Day by day, walking with God, growing into the image of Christ, hating sin and taking it seriously, all the while reminding ourselves of what the cross accomplished until either Christ comes back or we go to be with him. I can’t

think of a better description of this new life than in Colossians 3. Look at these new covenant realities that are ours in Christ Jesus: Colossians 3:1-11

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, God's wrath is coming upon the disobedient, 7 and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. 8 But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator. 11 In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Notice the similar language to what we have been looking at in Romans. You died with Christ. You have been raised with Christ. Put to death what belongs to that nature. Put on your new self.

Is that true of you this morning? Have you experienced this new life? And are you living in it?

You might be here and you are not a Christian. A friend or family member invited you and here I am telling you that you can have a new life. But you might like your life, you could say. You see no reason for something new. Well friend the heart of Christianity is that you need to be made new, for in and of ourselves we can have no hope to stand before God. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. You need a new heart, and you need to be found in Christ on that last day. So if you aren't a believer, we hope you keep coming back. But I'm going to ask you to write down one Bible verse and I want you to think on it over this week. That verse is John 3:16, which says, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. That everlasting life is held out to you today. But as I said before. This is not an organ donor type of yes. When you come to Jesus he must be Lord over all of your life. So think on that verse and we would be glad to talk to you any time about what it means to be a Christian.

3. We are united to Christ (and this affects our everyday lives)

Verse 4 is the main point of this section and really what the Apostle Paul is trying to communicate about the law, the new covenant, and our union with Christ. Look with me at verse 4.

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another. You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Paul draws a summation from his analogy in the first three verses and this is where our main point that I stated earlier and the three supporting points we have been discussing are grounded. Therefore you were put to death and raised from the dead.

Look at this union language that we see in verse 4: “you were put to death through the body of Christ, you belong to another. You belong to him”

Throughout the book of Romans, justification by faith is the resounding cry of the letter. Nothing you can do justifies you or saves you, it is only by faith, only by a trusting reception in the work of Christ that we can be justified before God. But here in Chapters 6 and 7, he’s making a similar but slightly different point and it is this:

Just as justification by obedience to the law is impossible, so is sanctification by obedience to the law. Obedience to the law cannot justify you AND, Paul is arguing here, it cannot sanctify you. This is big.

I get, Ryan, that my justification is by grace through faith. But even afterwards, doesn’t obedience to the law make my sanctification take place? And the answer is no. Your sanctification is also brought about because of your faith in Christ, and in particular, your union with Christ.

This is an important doctrine that the Christian must know and rest in and it’s what is undergirding all of chapter 7. The Christian is united with Christ. We are now “in Christ.” We are now married to him. All the language is communicating the same truth here. It is the power of the indwelling spirit that has brought about new life and also grows us in this new life.

But this is the point at the end of v. 4, did you see it? “You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that you might bear fruit for God.” Under the law, in our flesh, we bear fruit for death. But now, united to Christ, we bear fruit for God. Our good works in Christ, our bearing fruit for him, are evidences of both his work in our life and his kingdom at work in this world. We now bear fruit for God.

So what Paul is saying is this, there are three ways people relate to the law. 1st is legalistic. We live under the law and try to keep it with every ounce we have and sin reminds us that we can't and we constantly want to break it. The Scriptures are saying, don't do that.

The second way is we throw out the law altogether. We can live however we want because God's grace will cover us! And Paul is saying, that's not what I'm saying either. God's grace is sufficient, but we are not to be antinomian (anti-law). We don't turn liberty into license. Don't do that as well.

Rather in our new life we need to recognize that we have a law-fulfilling freedom found in Christ! We are, in Christ, a law-fulfilling free people. We rejoice in our freedom from the law to give us justification AND sanctification, and we rejoice in our freedom in Christ to fulfill the law. It's the beautiful middle-ground that we must fight to keep. “We delight in the law as the revelation of God's will, but recognize that the power to fulfill it is not in the law but in the Spirit. Thus legalists fear the law and are in bondage to it. Antinomians hate the law and repudiate it. Law-abiding free people love the law and fulfill it.” (Stott)

But for the reality that we are in Christ, that brings about some very important truths that we must grasp. As Jeff said last week, we must “count” our salvation to be true and we must do the same with our union with Christ. So allow me to give you some brief conclusions and benefits of our union with Christ (there are many we could say, but I want to focus on a few):

Benefits of our union with Christ:

1) There is no condemnation for us

a) I hit on this earlier, but you have to grasp this in your heart and mind. Paul uses a marriage metaphor in the first three verses and so let me just expound on that. For you to feel condemned by the law, or to live as if “under the law” is like being the wife who still feels afraid of her first husband whom she has been separated by death from. It makes no sense. You might feel and think certain things: “I am so unworthy of Christ, I am such a sinner, I feel that I am such a failure.” You might truly *feel* those things, but you must not allow yourself to come under condemnation. You cannot think of it in terms of your lack of faithfulness to Christ, rather you must always think of it in terms of Christ’s faithfulness to you.

i) This means that there shouldn’t be a perpetually miserable or unhappy Christian. Notice the word perpetually there. This is not our constant state of mind or disposition. Why? Because of our union with Christ! We must understand this! **Why would you be perpetually miserable or unhappy if there is no condemnation for you?** IT does not make sense. So, We must look at our new husband, Christ, and smile in his face in spite of us being what we are, and we must look and see him smiling at us though we are what we are!

2) We are subject to Him

a) Just as we were controlled by the law, subject to the law, so now we are the same to Christ. We must recognize and live out this position. Being one flesh with Christ, as Paul can mention this mystery in Ephesians, we now can glory in the things of God and desire to that we live unto Him as He helps us to do so.

i) So day by day we seek to have the Gospel in our hearts and minds, we seek to “have the mind of Christ” as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2. We seek to wake up and live as his people who belong to his kingdom. We are subject to him.

3) It is a permanent union

a) Paul tells us that the law has died and so has our marriage to it. But the reality is that Christ shall not die again. Romans 6:9 - 9 because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer rules over him. And if you know him and are found in him then death no longer

rules over you. You might die physically, but you spiritually you shall be with Christ for forever. Praise God!

4) We have his care and protection

a) Paul tells the Ephesians when describing marriage that 28 In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 since we are members of his body. - Ephesians 5:28-30. In our union with Christ we are cared for, protected, nourished to grow into the stature of holiness and love that he calls us to. He gives us his name! We are Christians. We can look to him for all things. He sees and cares for us as Jesus tells us in Matthew 6. He provides for us physically and spiritually nourishes and plans all of our days. How else does he care for us? It is as Jude 24 says, 24 Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and with great joy. It is Christ's joy to protect you in the faith, to nourish you into maturity, to one day present you in the presence of glory and without blemish. It is his joy, brothers and sisters! You are his joy. I pray that we would glory all the more in this doctrine! Lastly,

5) We shall reign with him

a) This is incredible to think about. But one day the name Christian won't be despised by the culture and those who hate God.

i) On Thursday morning I meet with upper classmen guys at Chick fil a and we study the Bible. They wake up and show up, get breakfast, and they have to study the Scriptures with me. It's great. But since we are going through 1 Corinthians I keep reminding them, this is what the world thinks of you, this is what the wisdom of the world says about you: **you're a fool...**

(1) Oh in our postmodern society it's very easy to say you're a Christian and they will say that's great (you do you) as long as you don't talk about it much or actually have a faith that affects your day to day life. But what do they really think when they start to talk to you? When they see that your faith actually does affect your day to day life and you hold these "antiquated views?" You believe in a man who supposedly did miracles, who died (everyone dies), oh he came back to life? So you believe in a fairy tale.

- (2) Paul tells the Corinthians time and time again, the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world, foolishness to those who are perishing. And so I tell these young men. You live out this faith, you follow Christ, in the world's eyes you'll be a fool. Can you count the cost?
- ii) **And what Paul is saying here is that one day, those who are called fools in this life will be found out to have been not actually fools at all**, for we who know God and love God. Because we will be ruling and reigning with him. We haven't gotten to it yet on Thursday morning, but he's going to tell us in Chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians that "do you not know that the saints (Christians) will judge the world?" We will "even judge angels?!"
 - iii) Because of the position and status of the son we will, in our union, reign with him in the new heavens and new earth to the praise of His glory.

Christ Community I pray that we would love God and love others. That we would preach the Gospel to ourselves and to others. That we would know what it means as well that we are united to Christ. We would resist the urge to put ourselves back under the law (resting in his grace instead) and we would live in the freedom of our new life in Christ. Knowing, comprehending, grasping, loving, counting what it means to be united to Him and praising him that he will never cast us out. That is our new covenant life.

Let us pray.