

ROMANS - #7

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

FROM LAW TO GRACE

SCRIPTURE TEXT: ROMANS 7:1-25

MEMORY VERSE: ROM. 7:4. Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

INTRODUCTION

Paul's letter to the Roman Church has exhibited an unbroken line of reasoning regarding man's sinful plight and his hope in God. In chapter one it was the total reprobation of the pagan, Gentile world. In chapter two it was the sinfulness of the Jewish world. In chapter three all, both Jew and Gentile, were unrighteous and all concluded under sin. In chapter four he emphasized that Abraham lived by faith, not by the law. In chapter five, justification by faith was emphasized. In chapter six we died unto our sins that we might live through Christ and the atoning process. In all of these, Paul has continued with an ever evolving theme of God's redemption by grace through faith.

Chapter seven does not break that chain even though Paul brings in some thoughts about marriage. He is not teaching on the structure and function of marriage in this chapter. He is using marriage as an analogy of the association between law and grace in Christ and how they were now married to Christ legitimately because the law was now dead. (For Paul's views on marriage see I Cor. 7).

From this analogy of marriage he goes on to discuss two natures which are present in the Christian: the divine nature of Christ and the carnal nature of the flesh. He uses his day by day experiences to reveal the deep contrast and conflict between his carnal, fleshly desires and the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him. It is a conflict which rages in every Christian heart daily.

DAILY SCRIPTURES AND COMMENTS.

MONDAY. ROM. 7:1-3. MARRIAGE USED TO SHOW THE END OF THE LAW AND BEGINNING OF GRACE.

SCRIPTURES.

V1. Know ye not brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2. For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

COMMENTS.

“I speak to them that know the law”, (not to Gentiles who did not know it). That is, he is writing about a circumstance which existed under the law but now has dramatically changed. Note: It would be well to consider the awesome change required of the Jewish people when they came to Christ and had to die to all the previous functions of the law which were totally required in their time. Christ has come and the whole purpose and day of the covenant of Moses in the law was now fulfilled and therefore ended. Paul uses marriage to illustrate this change. While the husband lives the wife is bound to him by the law of marriage. (Note that it does not mention the husband being bound to the wife??) Clearly Paul is simply comparing the end (death) of the law, and the subsequent marriage of the Jew (formerly bound to this law) to Christ.

He argues that they who have come to Christ have died to the law. This was legal in that the law was now fulfilled (dead). It was not that the law was not good; only that its time and purpose was complete now that Christ has come. After all, the law was only a school master to bring them to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25). Christ is the end of the law to him that believeth (Rom. 10:4). The law being ended (dead), they were free to be married to Christ. Conversely, if the Jews had decided some two hundred years before Christ came that they would “divorce” the law and wait for the coming of Christ to be joined to him, they would have been in complete violation of the covenant they had to God through the law. That is the argument Paul is making.

TUESDAY. ROM. 7:4-6. THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER.

SCRIPTURES.

V4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

COMMENTS.

The analogy of the death of a spouse freeing the other spouse to marry represents the condition of law and grace. Under the (time of the) law, they were bound to remain faithful to it. Now, the law being dead, or more importantly, their being dead to it, they are free from that duty of faithfulness to the law, that they might marry another, even Christ. Therefore there is no union with the law or compulsion to obey it.

Because they (Jewish Christians) were dead to the law which once they were obligated to obey, Paul describes them as now serving in the “newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter”. In II Cor. 3:6, Paul mentions that his ministry was not of the “letter but of the Spirit, for the letter killeth,

but the Spirit giveth life". These contrasted terms, letter and Spirit, have been interpreted by some theologians as meaning the "word of God vs. the Spirit of God. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Paul is still speaking with reference to the law (dispensation) vs. grace (dispensation). The "letter" is a reference to the "letter or legalism of the law, while the "Spirit" is a reference to the dispensation of the Holy Spirit or grace. The word of God does not kill; the law did, that is, it made manifest their sins thereby killing them. The word of God gives life just as the seed you plant in the ground has the element of life in it.

WEDNESDAY. ROM. 7:7-13. THE LAW MANIFESTED SIN WHICH IN TURN SLEW ME.

SCRIPTURES.

V7. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet. 8. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. 9. For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin; working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

COMMENTS.

Because the law is dead does not mean that it was wrong. It was the obligatory covenant of God for his people during its dispensation of time (from Moses to Christ). The function of the law was far different than the function of grace, necessarily so. The law served to manifest, make aware or point out, the lusts and sinfulness of mankind. It did this by its prohibition against the practices of sin. For example, the law said, thou shall not steal or thou shall not covet. Thus the law was a means of making known that certain actions or lusts of the human heart and life were against the will of God. Before the law, there was nothing that told them that stealing or covetousness was against the sovereign will of God. Men went on their merry, lustful ways as though everything they did by their own will was okay. Then the law was given and they became aware of their sinfulness. Thus Paul said that he was "alive" without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. He does not mean that he literally died, but that the law imposed the judgment of death upon me when it came. That is why he has previously said that sin is not imputed when there is no law. Sin was still present with all of its consequences but I was not reminded of it until the law came. In this sense, I found that the commandment which was ordained to regulate life actually brought death to light.

Notwithstanding this, the law was holy, in that it was ordained of God and also because it had a holy purpose under God's providence. It was not the law that slew me, but my sin that it might be manifested for what it really was, sin and therefore death. The gross sinfulness of man's lustful nature and inherent depravity was made exceedingly obvious by the law.

THURSDAY. ROM. 7: 14-20. THE PARADOX OF TWO NATURES IN ME.

SCRIPTURES.

V14. For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

COMMENTS.

The law is spiritual in that it was given by God, both as a school master to bring me to Christ and also as a reminder of my sinfulness. I am carnal, fleshly, lustful, with no good thing dwelling in me. Because of this there is a continual warfare going on in the heart and life of the Christian. (The non-Christian has not yielded his members to Christ and mortified the deeds of his flesh and therefore is not engaged in this warfare but is already captive to sin. Sure, in most people there is some degree of good resident in their values, but not in the sense of completely mortifying the deeds of the flesh for the sake of Christ). This conflict is always raging in the life of the child of God and it seems that the nearer you draw to God, the more violent the conflict. This war is not with some "alien" foe that attacks me with violent, sinister, diabolical plans from another world. It is a war within my own members of my own heart, mind and body. As James writes, we are drawn away of our own lusts and enticed. Then when lust has conceived it brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished brings forth death.

This entire discourse about "doing what I would not" and failing to "do what I would", speaks of this warfare which rages within us. It says that the things I really ought to do, my flesh resists and the things I ought not to do, my flesh craves and demands. This is the warfare – the total complete struggle with sin – how to do what I ought to do when the lusts of my flesh are pulling in the opposite direction. When the thoughts of our minds are fueled by the desires and passions of our heart therein is the battlefield of life. It is not some invisible, alien, "devil" or "Satan" that attacks and tempts me to do evil; it is my own lusts and passions. They may at times be influenced from environment, raising, associations or other provocations but in the final analysis it is my own desires and lusts which will influence my choice of what I do. It is sin that dwelleth in me that is my enemy and it is that sin and sinful nature inherent in my own DNA that provokes me to lust after every kind of aberrant behavior.

FRIDAY. ROM. 7:21-25. O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM.

SCRIPTURES.

V21. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. 23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God: but with the flesh the law of sin.

COMMENTS.

This paradox of seeing what is right to do but being pulled in the opposite direction by what is wrong is the story of every Christian. Paul said that his delight was in doing the law of God but he saw another law in his “members”, warring against his desire to do good and seeking to bring him into its captivity. That is our battle today and every day. That is why Paul said “I die daily”, so that he may keep his body under subjection to the divine will of God. That, after all, is Christianity.

With this constantly raging warfare, Paul saw himself as a “wretched man”; wretched in the sense that his carnal nature was forever tempting him to do evil. As we live our lives today there will always be temptations from our carnal nature until the Lord comes and changes our vile and corruptible bodies to be like unto his glorious body. Then it can be said that death and sin have been swallowed up in victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

The law has ended and Christ has come. The Jewish nation through their self will and apostate condition could not see this fact. The Christian was dead to the law and alive unto Christ. This was the great change brought about by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. It was for Jew and Gentile that they might find true deliverance and hope in God’s plan of salvation.

However, being saved from our sins does not remove the daily temptations that our carnal nature desires and provokes within us. The grace of God, through faith in the atoning work of Christ, enables us to overcome the temptations of the flesh daily. That is exactly how Christ lived, giving us an example how we should also live. Daily we will face the desires of the flesh which always seek to hold dominion over all we do. It is an overwhelming power which we cannot master on our own. But conversion, forgiveness and deliverance from sin gives us the desire to do that which is good. So the warfare rages daily. The more we grow in Christ, the greater the battle. When we would do good, evil is always present, seeking to overcome the desire for good. But thanks be unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ we can be victorious over sin.

QUESTIONS

1. What is Paul teaching by his comparison of marriage to Christianity and the law?
2. Was the law holy or unholy?
3. If it was holy, why was there the need of Christ?
4. What is the warfare that every Christian faces daily?
5. How can you be victorious in this warfare?

