

Romans 7:1-25

Sanctification- Our Response to the Universal Good News of the Gospel:

"Dying to the Law's Condemnation in Our Lives in Order to Bear Fruit for God & Belong to the One Who Rescues Us"

When a spouse dies the widow is free to remarry because he or she is no longer bound to the wedding vows they made when they were married. If a husband or wife tries to marry someone else while they are married then that person becomes an adulteress because they are still bound to the vows they made to their spouse but if that person dies they are released from those vows and free to marry someone else if they so choose.

Analogously speaking, it is the same way for the person who is in Christ as it concerns their relationship to the law. Before a person is saved and redeemed by God through faith in Jesus their relationship to the law is one in which they're inextricably bound to it. In short, they are married to the law's condemnation in their lives. They are outside of Christ and they are lost and their relationship to God's law is one of condemnation.

The law is God's perfect moral and spiritual standard and all human beings are required to perfectly keep and maintain it because God demands that it be perfectly kept in order to be in right relationship with Him. But our problem is that we can't perfectly keep this law, as evidenced by the fact that when we take our lives and do a self-checkup based off God's holy standards we see how far we fall short. So what happens is that God's Law ends up condemning us because it shows us how much we sin.

We look at the law and we say wow I'm pretty lousy at keeping this and then feelings of condemnation start to set in and we begin to think I must be in real trouble because I haven't measured up so well. Before long we start to wonder, what will happen to me when I die? What will I say to God about all of my failings? Will God forgive me? Will I be with Him in His eternal kingdom? And before you know it you are under condemnation because the moral and spiritual perfection of God's law has condemned you and you realize that you will not be saved because you have miserably failed God's standards.

But when you give your life to Christ and trust in what God has done for you through his life, death, and resurrection, you die to the law's condemning power in your life and you become married to his mercy and grace. Your spouse is no longer the law, so to speak, but it is Jesus and you are freed to become his bride because the bride has put to death the power of the law so that you might be free to belong to him. Death changes everything. It releases you. In Jesus you have died to the law's condemning power so that you might be married not to condemnation but the grace and mercy of our Savior. This is why Paul says in the text in v. 4, **"So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."**

But how does Christ wipe out the laws' condemnation in our lives? Well he does not do it by making the law irrelevant. The law is still relevant for Christians. Paul says in the text that the **"law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good."** (v.12). The problem is not with the law itself, the problem is that when we are outside of Christ the law condemns us because it is still God's standard and we have failed to meet it. The problem is also the fact that when we are outside of Christ and have no relationship with God, the law (because of the power of sin in the world) has a funny way of inciting us to sin.

It can illustrate this with the cookie jar illustration. Mom puts the cookies in the cookie jar and sets it on the table and says keep your grimy little paws out of that jar. Mom's law backfires and ends up inciting

the kid to steal a cookie when she is not looking. The problem is not with what mom said, the problem is with the sinful nature in the child that loves a good challenge. Another way to illustrate this comes from my own life. I used to make paper helicopters and fly them out of the window in my physical science class. My teacher, Mrs. Pickler, told me not to do it. Her law was right but when she told me not to do it I wanted to do it even more. That is the sinful nature at work and that is what Paul meant when he said, **“For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.”**

Guess what happened every time Mrs. Pickler caught me throwing a paper airplane out of the window? She walked over to my desk and popped my hand with her ruler. Her commandment (which was good) brought death to me because her commandment incited my sinful nature to rebel against her command and I got punished.

So the law is not the problem, the problem is our sinful nature and it is our sinful nature that latches on to the law that brings us death. But nonetheless, how does Jesus set us free from the law’s condemnation?

I have said it a million times, but every time I hear someone in the church say I hope I make it into heaven and I hope I have been good enough I cringe because I know they have not gotten the gospel. People who understand the gospel don’t make those statements. They don’t make them because they are arrogant but rather they don’t make them because they get what the Savior has done for them and they trust in the provisions he has made for them.

How does the Savior remove the condemnation of the law in the life of the believer? First he died a condemned death in your place and then second he lived a perfect sinless life in your place. In doing these two things he took away the power of the law to condemn you.

I want to make this practical for you right now. Right now I want you to think of the worst thing you have ever done in your life. I want you to think of the thing that brings you the most shame and guilt in your life when you reflect upon it. For those of you who are better than some of us you might not be able to come up with much beyond the time you stole a tootsie roll from the candy store but for many of us who are here today we might be thinking about some things that we don’t want to think about. Nonetheless, right now you got it in your mind. According to the law of God you should be condemned for what you are holding in your mind and you know you should be condemned, in fact that very thing you are holding in your mind might be causing you to doubt your salvation, but the good news of the gospel is that God’s Son Jesus bore that condemnation that your sin deserves upon himself on the cross. Friend, the price has been paid for what you have done and you have been set free from the law’s condemnation because of the condemnation of the one who was condemned in your place.

The second thing that I want you to realize is the thing that you did or the person that you became because of sin in your life Christ never did or became. He was and is sinless. He never failed, ever. The person you slept with, the spouse you cheated on, the words you said that crushed someone, the things you stole, the lies you told, the drugs you took, the alcohol that you over indulged in that destroyed your body, mind, and spirit and relationships, the person you failed to stand up for, the bad parenting you did, the times you were a lousy husband or wife, the people you were bitter at and could not forgive, all the time you wasted in your life, and all the time you neglected your relationship with Maker, all of those things that make you say I have no hope when you think about them; all of those things Jesus Christ did not do! He was sinless! He kept God’s law perfectly and he did it not for himself but for you, so that he could be your

sinless substitute and representative before a holy God. All those things that you so miserably failed at he accomplished in his sinless life and you are now declared righteous.

The law no longer condemns you because there is one who has met the righteous requirements of the law on your behalf. This reality becomes our great motivator for dying to sin so that we might bear fruit for God. Once we begin to grasp that we truly are not condemned because of what God in Christ has done for us we will begin to freely (not out of compulsion) want to please the Savior. Realizing that you are now loved and forgiven by God in Christ and not condemned, becomes the perfect motivator for bearing the fruit that makes you a new creation in Jesus.

So if you are in Christ please do not ever say I hope I will get into heaven. Don't do it because you are cocky and arrogant, rather don't do it because you realize and accept what Jesus has done for you. Do not cheapen the salvation Christ has accomplished by saying I hope I'll get in heaven. If you are in Christ you will be there because of him!

Yet we still struggle don't we? When we came to Christ we died to the law's condemnation in our lives and we were set free to bear good fruit for God in our lives, yet we struggle. Becoming a new creation in Christ is a process and there are setbacks. Sometimes we fail and for most people there are things they will struggle with until they die. Paul gives us insight into this struggle when he says in the text, **"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate to do... For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-this I keep on doing."**

Why? Even though you are now in Christ you still have a sinful nature; therefore you will still do battle with the flesh and yes sometimes, if not many times, you will lose some of those battles. Paul said, **"For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members."**

Are we to be ok with this? No! As Christians we are called to fight sin and to flee from it and to "hate it and forsake it because it is displeasing to God" and destructive to us and others. So no, we should not be ok with our struggles, but should we despair? It is easy to despair when we fail at the same things over and over again but no we should not despair.

Why? Because we have a Savior who has rescued us from this body of death. This is the best news in the text! **"What a wretched man I am!"** Paul says. **"Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!"**

Amen.