

# “Our Relationship to the Law” – Romans 7:1-12

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *The Scorpion & The Trutle*

1. A scorpion, being a poor swimmer, asked a turtle to carry him on its back across the river.
2. "Are you mad?" exclaimed the turtle. "You'll sting me while I'm swimming and I'll drown."
3. "My dear turtle," laughed the scorpion, "If I were to sting you, you would drown and I'd go down with you. Now where is the logic in that?"
4. "You're right," cried the turtle. "Hop on."
5. So the scorpion climbed aboard and halfway across the river gave the turtle a mighty sting.
6. As they both sank to the bottom, the turtle, resigned, said, "Do you mind if I ask you something? You said there is no logic in your stinging me. Why did you do it?"
7. "It has nothing to do with logic," the drowning scorpion replied. "It's just my nature."

### B. *No Logic In Sin*

1. Viewed from the perspective of heaven, sin makes no sense
2. Viewed from the place of truth, sin *is* illogical
3. Sitting here, after having just lifted our voices in praise and worship and sitting in the environment of Christian fellowship, it's relatively easy for us to take a detached look at temptation and sin
4. And we can easily see the absurdity of sin
5. But every one of us knows it is a different situation when we leave here, and a couple hours from now face that inevitable confrontation with temptation
  - a. suddenly logic and reason are clouded
  - b. temptation makes sin look so good
  - c. and caught in the grip of temptation, yielding will seem like the perfectly logical thing to do

### C. *Romans 7*

1. Romans 7 gives Paul's experience with this struggle
2. And because it deals with the very real *struggle* between sin and obedience, it has proven to be a real problem for people as they have read it
  - a. people want to know if Paul is speaking of his personal struggle with sin
  - b. before he became a Christian, or after
3. In chapter 6, Paul tells us what our union with Christ means
  - a. we died with Him and rose with Him

- b. we are now dead to sin and alive to God
- c. we are new creatures with new natures
- 4. As he says in v. 14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace."
- 5. And as he says that, the immediate question that arises is this,
- 6. "If we are no longer under law, but are under grace, then what is the Christians relationship to the law?"
- 7. "Does not being *under* it mean that the law is meaningless for us who believe?"
- 8. Chapter 7 begins by answering that question

## II. TEXT

### A. V. 1

**{1} Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?**

- 1. Paul takes it for granted that his readers understand something pretty basic:
- 2. That law only applies to the living
  - a. law exercises no authority over the dead
  - b. it is only the living who are ruled by law
- 3. By "the law" Paul means all law, not just the Law of God
- 4. Because we are alive, we are under one form of law or another
- 5. As citizens of the United States, we are subject to the laws of the land
  - a. and there are various levels of law
  - b. state, county, city, national or federal law
- 6. As long as an American lives, they are under the rule of American law
- 7. But when they die, they are no longer bound by that rule
- 8. The law loses its claim on the dead
- 9. By virtue of our being born into the human race, we are under the Law of God
- 10. Paul now goes on to give an example of this principle of the rule of law over the living

### B. Vs. 2-3

**{2} For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband.**

**{3} So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.**

- 1. The law of marriage is clear and it's stated in the vows
- 2. A husband and wife are bound to each other, "So long as they both shall live."
- 3. There are only two things that can dissolve a marriage; divorce, and death
- 4. Once a mate has died, the surviving mate is free to be married again
- 5. Paul now applies this principle to the life of faith . . .

### C. V. 4

**{4} Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.**

1. By our first birth, we were bound to the law
2. But our faith in Christ identifies us with Him, as it says so clearly in Chapter 6
  - a. when He died on the cross, what we were before we came to faith in Him died with Him
  - b. and when he rose from the dead, we rose to a new life as well
  - c. all of this is pictured in baptism
3. We are now, *born again*
  - a. no longer under the rule of law,
  - b. we are now bound to Christ
  - c. and the result of this new union is not the fruit of sin but a harvest of good

#### **D. Vs. 5-11**

**{5} For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.**

**{6} But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.**

**{7} What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."**

**{8} But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.**

**{9} I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.**

**{10} And the commandment, which was to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.**

**{11} For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.**

1. Paul clearly shows what kind of an impact the Law has on fallen people
  - a. {5} For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.
  - b. {9} I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.
2. Paul is speaking from personal experience here
3. He thought he was fine, doing good; then the law was revealed to him and he realized how lost he was
4. You see, the law does to things
  - a. first—it *reveals* sin as sin
  - b. second—it *revives* sin
5. First, It Reveals Sin
  - a. people go through life, thinking everything is peachy
  - b. then the law is made know to them and the realize how they fall short
  - c. how many times have you been driving down a street when up ahead you see a speed sign that says, "25"
    - 1) you realize you haven't been paying attention to your speed at all

- 2) the sudden thought a policeman may be around
- 3) so you quickly glance at the speedometer and realize you're doing 45?
- d. you were blissfully ignorant of the law, and thought you were fine
- e. but with the discovery of the legal limit, you become aware of the fact that you have broken the law

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- f. God gave us the moral law so that we might realize we are fallen
  - g. In Galatians 3 he puts it this way,

**{22} The Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**

**{23} But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.**

**{24} Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**

- h. the law is like a mirror in that it shows us as we are
  - 1) it reveals our sin
  - 2) and it points out our need of a Savior
  - 3) but like a mirror, the law has no power to effect change in us
  - 4) it can only reveal
- i. in v. 7 Paul says . . .

**I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."**

- 1) Paul was a Pharisee
- 2) which means he was ultra religious
- 3) he was a fierce zealot for the law
- 4) and as he says in Phil 3:6, according to the outward rules of conduct, Paul was blameless regarding the law
- 5) but there was one command that nailed him
- 6) The Tenth Commandment - "You shall not covet."
- 7) while Paul may have kept the outward things of his life together
- 8) the inner man was a seething cauldron of sin and impurity
- 9) it was the law that revealed this to him

- 6. We are concerned with discovering what the Christian's relationship to the law is today
  - a. and it is right at this point that we need to stop and make sure we are all on the same page
  - b. THE LAW REVEALS SIN!
  - c. and by so doing, IT POINTS TO THE NEED OF A SAVIOR!
  - d. we need to emphasize this point because the "modern" gospel being preached from so many quarters today is ineffective precisely because it ignores the law of God
  - e. the gospel has become merely an offer of a better life; not a new life, just a better one
    - 1) Christianity is present as just one more *alternative* lifestyle
    - 2) an addendum to be tacked onto one's already busy schedule
    - 3) you've heard the appeals, "Come to Jesus and find peace, and love,

- and joy and all the other things King's kids deserve."
- f. the bad news of sin is left out
    - 1) after all, sin is such an offensive word
    - 2) it sounds so intolerant
    - 3) and my goodness, how damaging it is to one's self esteem to insinuate that a person is a sinner
  - g. so, because the law reveals sin, the law isn't mentioned
  - h. and because it isn't mentioned, sin isn't revealed
  - i. Ray Comfort uses this provocative illustration to give an example of this
    - 1) you have two passengers who get on a jet to travel cross country
    - 2) the flight attendant gives each of them a parachute
    - 3) to the first she says, "Please wear this, it will make your flight more comfortable."
    - 4) to the second man she says, "Please put this on and keep it on. At some point in our flight, the plane is going down and you will need it if you are going to survive."
    - 5) what is going to happen to these two in the course of the flight?
    - 6) the first man is going to find his seat and when he tries to sit down he is going to realize that the parachute is getting in the way
    - 7) he may struggle with it for a while, but eventually he is going to take it off and put it aside because the flight attendant's promise that it would make the flight more comfortable turned out to be not true
    - 8) the other man is thinking about one thing: The plane is going down
    - 9) the discomfort of the chute is overlooked in the security he gains by knowing it will save him from something far worse than the temporary discomfort of sitting in an airplane seat
  - j. why should a person be saved?
  - k. not just because it will make the trip through life more comfortable
  - l. but because at some point the plane is going down and we need a rescue
  - m. if in our evangelism and sharing we don't use the law of God and show people what He requires of them, they will never really come to see their need
  - n. the law reveals sin
7. SECOND: The Law Revives Sin
- a. Paul uses graphic terms here
  - b. in v. 8 he says that sin **takes opportunity by the commandment**
  - c. not only does the law *reveal* sin, it agitates it
  - d. this word "opportunity" meant a base of operations from which an expedition is launched
  - e. I think most of us know what Paul is talking about here; we've all experienced this in one way or another
    - 1) "Keep Off The Grass"
    - 2) "Wet Paint" - Knotts Berry Farm years ago
  - f. the reason sin is stirred up by the law is that fallen man is a rebel
    - 1) there is no real reason why the law provokes us

- 2) there is no logical connection because sin isn't logical
- 3) it just proves we're incurable rebels!
- 8. Well then, if sin takes advantage of the law to become worse, we have to ask if the law is fundamentally flawed or itself evil?
- 9. Paul answers this question in v. 12

### **E. V. 12**

**{12} Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**

- 1. The problem is not the law - it's sin
- 2. The Law is holy--it's a reflection of the character and nature of God
- 3. This then becomes the answer to our question about our relationship to the Law
- 4. We are not under Law, we are under grace
- 5. And because we are under grace, we have been brought near to God
- 6. We are changed from rebels to children of God who bear His image, and grow into His likeness, which is revealed in the Law
- 7. The law becomes a valuable resource in our growth and development as Christians
- 8. It is holy, just, and good
  - a. it defines holiness, gives it content
  - b. it gives shape to justice
  - c. it reveals what is eternally good
- 9. Christians are not under law, but they should be good students of it
  - a. because it will give them a better understanding of God
  - b. it will show you how to grow
  - c. because it will continue to reveal sin, it will drive you to more grace

## **III. CONCLUSION**

### **A. David**

- 1. David, the king of Israel, was a man after God's own heart
- 2. Though he lived in the days of the OT long before Christ, he well understood what it meant to live and walk by grace
- 3. How else could he be called a man after God's heart?
- 4. Listen then to David's meditations on the law of God (Psa 19:7-13)

**{7} The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;**

**{8} The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;**

**{9} The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.**

**{10} More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.**

**{11} Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.**

**{12} Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.**

**{13} Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.**

***B. What Gospel Have You Heard?***

1. Apologize
  2. Invite
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