

## Newness of the Spirit – Romans 7:1-12

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *What Relationship?*

1. One Summer when I was young, we visited my mother's family of 13 brothers & sisters who all converged on Seattle for a family reunion.
2. There were dozens of aunts, uncles, cousins & second cousins.
3. As we went from house to house, the introductions seemed unending.
4. Being only 8, I got confused trying to keep straight what my relationship to everyone was.
5. I had an especially hard time trying to figure out what a *second cousin* was.

#### B. *Our Relationship to the Law*

1. In the first half of Romans 7, Paul describes *our relationship to the Law*.
2. He knows some of his readers are probably confused.
3. He answers the questions he knows his they'll be asking.

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 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. Notice who he's writing this to – "*those who know the law.*"
  - a. Jews & Gentiles who'd come to faith in the God & given themselves to the study of the Judaism.
  - b. Prior to receiving the Gospel, they'd had it drummed into them they could *only* come to God *through* keeping the Commandments.
2. But Paul has made it clear that the law was never meant as a *way* to Him.
3. On the contrary, the Law confronted fallen man with his *spiritual inability not ability*.
  - a. As we saw a couple weeks ago, the Law was a *diagnostic* revealing man's spiritual & moral *brokenness*.
  - b. Because of man's inability to *consistently* do what's right, God provided forgiveness through *sacrifices*.
  - c. But those sacrifices had to be offered *every* year; a *constant reminder* of man's *failure* & that bulls & sheep are at best → only a *temporary* covering for sin.
4. **NOW** - Paul wants to make clear there's nothing wrong *with the Law*; it's still holy. It reveals the way we *ought* to be.
5. The problem isn't with the Law, it's with fallen man.

---

6. What *complicated things* was that over the years rabbis had fiddled with the Law –
  - a. Instead of using it as a *diagnostic* to reveal their spiritual *failure*,
  - b. They'd massaged & finagled it into a *pathway* to God.
  - c. They edited it into something they *could do* to achieve what they called "*righteousness.*"
    - 1) But it was all *external*. It conveniently avoided their *inner* brokenness altogether.
    - 2) In fact, they mangled the Law of God so badly that they twisted it into something that *reinforced* their sin.
    - 3) They *armored* their self-righteousness with *pride*.
7. Jesus stripped them of this bogus righteousness when He said it wasn't enough to just *not* commit murder. *Hating* someone was *also prohibited by God*.
  - a. It wasn't enough just to *not* commit adultery.
  - d. *Lusting* after someone other than your spouse was prohibited as well.

---

8. So far in Romans, Paul has made it *abundantly* clear that grace supersedes Law.

9. He knew some of his readers, who'd all their whole lives been told the Law was a pathway to God & righteousness, would be struggling, wanting to know, "If righteousness is a gift God bestows on us by grace, what **IS** our relationship to the Law? What role does it play?"
  - a. Even though most of us did not grow up in the same mindset as those Paul is writing to, what we find here is crucial.
  - b. It's it because of 2 things –
    - 1) First, as we've seen over the last few weeks, there's a persistent tendency with us to reduce our relationship with God to a set of rules & disciplines that we think is all God wants from us. That's just a twisted form of legalism.
    - 2) Second, it's inevitable that we'll meet religious people who turned legalism into an entire system then demand everyone comply with their rules.
  - c. So what Paul says here about our relationship to the law is vital.

---

10. He begins by saying that Law no longer applies to the dead.
11. He uses the example of the law regarding marriage in vs. 2-3.

### **B. Vs. 2-3**

**<sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. A husband & wife are bound to each other, "So long as they both shall live."
2. 2 things dissolve a marriage; divorce & death.
3. Once a spouse dies, the surviving mate is **free** to be married again.
4. Paul applies this to our faith in Christ . . .

### **C. V. 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. Our 1<sup>st</sup> birth **binds** us to the Law.
2. But coming to faith in Christ **identifies** us with Him, as we saw in ch. 6.
3. **Baptism** is a picture of our identification with Jesus in His death & resurrection.
4. Being born again means dying to that which answers to the Law & entering the place of God's grace.

---

5. Now, let me be clear here: While **Paul's point** is that being born-again means being **released** from bondage to the Law **into** the freedom of Grace, don't miss what this reveals about those who are **NOT** born again →
  - a. They **aren't** under grace; they're still under the Law.
  - b. They're going to be judged on the basis of their works.

---

6. Coming to faith in Jesus means God **terminates** our relationship to the Law & marries us to His Son.
7. That relationship allows us to do good & to live an eternally successful & productive life.

### **D. V. 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.**

1. The Law does more than just **reveal** sin. It **provokes** it. Here's why . . .
2. Before we come to faith in Christ, we're lost & in **rebellion** against God.
  - a. Like it or not, apart from Christ, we're **rebels**.

- b. Some may express that rebellion in more obvious ways than others, but *all* are rebels to one degree or another.
3. And here's the thing about rebels – it's their *nature* to rebel. They're *contrarian*.
4. There's something *perverse* in our hearts that's *provoked* by the Law, by rules.
  - a. We know it well. If we see a sign “**Keep Off the Grass**” something within just *itches* to make a mad dash across the center of that lawn.
  - b. If we see barricades around freshly poured cement, we look for a stick to put out initials in it.
  - c. When we see a sign, “**Do Not Touch: Wet Paint**” something grabs our hand to see if it really is.
  - d. Or in a store, “**Fragile: Do Not Touch**” we have to see just how fragile it is.
  - e. The speed limit says, “**25.**” We have no idea how fast we're going till we see the sign, then we looked down & realize we're going **35**, but instead of taking our foot off we think, “25?!? *Why? That's silly.*” And before you know it you've *accelerated* to **45**.
5. The Law makes clear the real problem with man isn't just *compliance* with the rules. It *reveals* he's a *rebel* against a holy God.

### E. V. 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.**

1. Faith in Christ so closely identifies us with Him that *when He died*, what the Law applied to *in us also died*.
2. And through Jesus' resurrection we gain a new life.
3. With that new life we serve God, not through rules & regulations,
4. But through an entire lifestyle empowered by the *Holy* Spirit.
  - a. Wait → The *what* Spirit? The **HOLY** Spirit!
  - b. If we're empowered by the **Holy** Spirit, what do you suppose our new lifestyle will *look* like –
    - 1) sin or holiness?
    - 2) evil or righteousness?
5. As followers of Jesus, we don't simply adopt an external veneer of holiness as the Pharisees did.
6. The Holy Spirit produces genuine holiness in us → *from the inside, out!*
7. Let me use this example. I do so because Paul does here → Marriage.
  - a. Jane wanted to be a good wife so she read everything she could about marriage & being a wife.
  - b. She talked to all her married friends & went to dozens of seminars & conferences.
  - c. After 10 years she was a bona-fide expert on being a wife.
  - d. Only problem is – she'd never been married..
  - e. She had a lot of *head knowledge* but *no practical experience* in wifery.
  - f. Because she seemed to be such an expert, she often spoke to her friends about how *they* could have a better marriage.
  - g. Then one day Jane met Tom & they fell madly in love with each another.
  - h. After a short engagement, they married.
    - 1) It didn't take Jane long to realize many of *her ideas* about marriage were off base.
    - 2) There were dimensions of love & relationship she had no idea existed before.
    - 3) But now that she was in love & married, it *transformed her view of marriage & her role in it.*
8. God does not want us to be *experts on the subject of holiness*.
9. He calls us into a fervent love affair with Him where **holiness grows as a by-product** of the relationship.

10. Or how about this example – 16 year old Nathan & his dad were close, *real close*. They spent a lot of time together because they truly enjoyed each other.
- Nathan couldn't understand why the other kids didn't spend as much time with their fathers & looked at him oddly whenever he described some activity he & his dad had done together.
  - At lunch one day, with Final Exams coming, some fellow students came to him with a plan.
    - They'd discovered where an especially tough teacher had stored their test.
    - They began making plans for taking a look at it so they could see the questions.
    - They asked Nathan to help them by keeping watch while they took a peek at the exam.
  - Nathan was struggling with that class & the temptation to join them was fierce.
  - But he knew the next time he saw his dad, he'd ask how things were going at school.
  - He knew if he told his father he'd cheated it would seriously *disappoint* him.
  - And the thought of *lying* to him made his stomach churn.
  - Indecision* caused him to pause. His friends *pressed* him.
  - Finally Nathan decided keeping the relationship with his father intact & free of guilt was *more important* than anything else, including his grade or his friends' approval.
11. Now, here's the deal – Nathan's dad hadn't *just taught* him to be moral, honest, & not to cheat.
- He'd certainly done that – but he'd done *more*.
  - He'd *maintained a close, warm relationship* with his son –
  - Knowing when the time of testing those virtues came,
  - Nathan would have a far better chance passing the test if he was *motivated by love* rather than a rule.
12. As we make our way through this world, we're going to face a gozillion choices.
- If we look to rules to guide us . . . Well – just remember that the Law *provokes* sin.
  - But if our decisions flow from our relationship with God, which is grounded in His love & grace – it makes all the difference!

#### F. Vs. 7-11

**<sup>7</sup>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."<sup>8</sup>But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.<sup>9</sup>I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.**

- Paul's spoken so often about the *purpose* of the law being to *reveal* sin he now asks if this means the law is *flawed*, if there's something *inherently wrong* with it.
- Of course not! It does what it's supposed to do real well.
- Paul even shares a short testimony of how the Law had *nailed* him.
  - Before coming to faith in Christ, he'd been a devoted Pharisee; one of the ultra-religious zealots for the law.
  - In Phil 3:6 he says when it came to outward rules of conduct, he was *blameless*.
  - And just when he thought he was doing really well, the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment busted him.
  - It says, "You shall not covet."
  - While *outwardly* he looked good, *inwardly* he was a seething cesspool of sin
- What happened with Paul happens to all.
  - We may be doing fine in *some* requirements of God's Law.
  - But there are *others* things we're not doing so hot at.
  - And no amount of trying to do better makes lasting head way.
  - In fact, the harder we try, the more we fail.

5. Paul says it this way in vs. 10-11 . . .

**<sup>10</sup>And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. <sup>11</sup>For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.**

6. It's like the law is a fence enclosing a field.

- a. *Inside* the fence is *life*; *outside* is spiritual *death & alienation* from God.
- b. Paul thought he was safely inside until he came to the fence post of the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment.
- c. Then he realized he was on the *wrong side* of the fence.
- d. The more he tried to climb over the fence to get in, the *higher* it got.

7. The 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment helped Paul realize he wasn't *really* keeping God's Law, he was only keeping the *rabbis' distortion* of it.

### G. V. 12

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

1. Paul wants us to understand that the Law isn't the problem; sin is.
2. It's man's spiritual inability that's at fault.
3. The Law is holy because it's a picture of the character & nature of God.
4. So here's the answer to our question about *our relationship to the Law* now that we've been born again & come in to God's grace.
5. We've been changed ***from rebels to children of God***
  - a. As His children we bear His image & *grow* into His likeness,
  - b. ***Which is revealed by the Law.***
6. The Law becomes a valuable resource in our ***growth in grace.***
  - a. It helps us know ***what holiness looks like*** when it's at work in daily life.
  - b. It describes what justice requires.
  - c. And it reveals what's ***good***, not just for the here & now but for eternity.
7. As believers, we're under grace, not law.
8. But we ought to be ***good students*** of the law because it gives us a better understanding of the One we're married to—Jesus.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Psalm 19

1. God said that David was a man after His own heart.
2. Though he lived long before Christ, he understood what it meant to live by grace.
3. That's the only way God could call him a man after His own heart.
4. So, listen to David's meditations on the Law of God →

**{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. The Ring**

1. Let me end with this illustration on our relationship to the Law.
2. This is my wedding ring.
  - a. When you see it you know I'm in covenant with a wife. I wear it proudly because I love Lynn.
  - b. My commitment to her goes way beyond just wearing this ring – it goes all the way to the deepest places of my heart.
  - c. This ring is just a little band of metal on my finger that speaks of a much greater reality of love & relationship that colors everything I do.
3. What if instead of just a ring, I made a 8 ft. tall, 3 ft. wide metal capsule, painted the words “I'm married to Lynn” on it, stepped inside & sealed it shut – & never came out?
  - a. It would certainly let everyone know I was married & obviously pretty serious about it,
  - b. But you know, I don't think *Lynn* would dig it very much.
4. Legalism is like that metal capsule. It looks good/religious but in fact it makes *impossible* the warm intimacy God wants with us.
5. The law ought to be like a wedding ring – a *symbol* of our love affair & covenant with Jesus.