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Romans 65

Free from the law? - Introduction to chapter 7

Romans 7:1-6

Romans 7:1-6, *Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law [a]has dominion over a man as long as he lives? ²For 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. ³So 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. ⁴Therefore, 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. ⁵For 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. ⁶But 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.*

Sanctification we have been talking about progressive spiritual development.

John 17:17, *“Sanctify them by Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.”*

Sanctification is separation from sin.

There is an initial separation at salvation, and then there is an ongoing increasing separation through all our Christian experience. This is the work of the Word of God. It is the Word that sanctifies.

Psalms 119:11, *Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*

It is the Word that purifies.

You are clean by the Word which is spoken to you. So, it is the Word is the sanctifying agent.

There are a lot of different terms that are used in the Scripture to describe the Word.

It is called

- ✓ Scripture,
- ✓ Testimony of God,
- ✓ Statutes of God,
- ✓ Ordinances of God,
- ✓ Commandments of God.

- ✓ Fear of the Lord.
- ✓ Precepts of God.

The Bible is the Word is essentially the reflection of God's nature and character.

What God has said,
What God has revealed, and
What God has commanded us, in His Word, is a direct reflection of Him.

It is His will because He doesn't reveal His will any other thing than that which is a perfect reflection of His perfection and His holiness.

What pleases God is absolute righteousness.

When you think about the Word of God, you are simply identifying that which is the expression of the nature of God.

Bible is the pure expression of His character, and expression of His will.

God cannot do less than command it or mandate it because He cannot settle for anything less than a perfect reflection of His own perfect holiness which would be a demand for perfect holiness.

So, when you become a believer and the process of sanctification begins, it is nothing other than conformity to the revealed will of God in Scripture.

The Bible then lays out for us what it is that we are to become.

1 John 2:6, *“If you say you abide in Christ, you ought to walk as He walked.”*

Of course, Jesus walked in perfect obedience to the Father.

- ✓ I only do what the Father tells Me to do.
- ✓ I only do what the Father commands Me to do.
- ✓ I only do what I see the Father doing.
- ✓ I work alongside My Father.
- ✓ I only do what pleases the Father.
- ✓ I only do what glorifies the Father,

John 6:38, *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

Jesus was the illustration of perfect obedience and therefore perfect sanctification.

For us, then, to grow spiritually, for us to progress in our sanctification, we must bring our lives into complete conformity to the will of God, which is revealed in the Word of God.

The spiritual and moral Law of God.

In **Romans 6**, which we have already gone through few weeks, we considered several very significant truths. We have died to sin, which is the subject that takes up the first part of the chapter.

Paul makes a very amazing statement in **Romans 6:14**. There are two basic statements in verse 14.

The first statement.

Romans 6:14, *“Sin shall not be master over you,”* which sums up the first part of the chapter.

Paul explained the meaning of that statement in **6:15-23**. That is an exposition of that statement.

The second statement.

“for you are not under the law, but under grace,”

Paul explains in chapter 7.

He makes those two statements, explains one, and then the other because he cannot leave them unexplained.

For those who have such a high and sacred view of the law will be devastated by his statement.

They have all their lifetime lived under the law. It's all they have known. So, he must explain it. Paul does it in chapter 7.

So now you understand the rationale for chapter 7. Against a background of such affirmation of God's law, there must be some explanation about what it means to say we are not under the law.

It seems that men have been under the law for a long time, how has that and why has that changed?

What do you mean we are not under law?

This verse has become a sort of an open door for all kinds of misdeeds and misbehaviour.

"You are not under law," has been misinterpreted to free people from any obligation to the revealed Law of God.

Is that what Paul is saying?

Does that mean we no longer have to live our lives according to God's revealed law?

We now are under such grace that we are right back kind of where we started just before chapter 6.

Are we to sin that grace may abound since grace abounds all the more where sin abounds?

If we are under grace, does this mean we are free to live any way we want without any thought of conformity to the Law of God?

Now let me give you an overview before we go specifically into chapter 7.

Remember the context of all of this. The major theme of Romans is justification by faith. In other words, you are saved not by keeping the law but by believing through grace.

Now we have started with justification by faith in **Romans 3:21**. The first 3 chapters showed us how sinful we are.

Justification by faith runs all the way to the end of chapter 8.

Chapters 4-8, all justification by faith is the theme.

Chapters 9 to 11, he applies it to Israel.

Chapters 12 to 16 he shows how it works out in living.

But the main theme is justification by faith.

Having presented the doctrine itself in chapters 3 and 4, he then is presenting the fruit of that doctrine.

The first fruit of justification was chapter 5, and it was eternal security. We have peace with God.

The second fruit of which he speaks in chapter 6 is holiness. We have union with Christ in chapter 6, and now His holiness is imparted to us.

So, the fruit of justification: First security, second holiness. Now we come to chapter 7 and the third fruit is liberty.

We are free from the law.

Main thrust is that the salvation we have got in chapter 3 has tremendous effect upon the who got it.

You cannot claim to be a Christian without a demonstrable effect in your life. Salvation transforms people.

That is the essence of what Paul is spending chapter after chapter to tell us.

We have in **chapter 5 peace with God.**

We have in **chapter 6 union with Christ.**

We have in **chapter 7 freedom from the law.**

All of that is the fruit of salvation.

All that answers the rather silly question in 6:1.

Romans 6:1, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”

What the critic would say?

Your doctrine of justification by faith through grace means that you can just sin all you want and every time you sin God has grace, so your doctrine leads to unrighteous living.

The legalist would say that we have got all the rules. When you come along and say, 'You are not saved by the law. The law can't save you. You can't keep the law. You are saved by grace through faith.' You are just turning people loose and they are going to run berserk."

So, they accuse Paul of this doctrine that leads to sin. Whereas Paul says quite the opposite.

True salvation leads to holiness!

That is what we saw in chapter 6.

Grace doesn't lead to license. It leads to the very opposite of license. It leads to holiness.

Chapter 7, it leads to freedom from the law.

23 times in Romans chapter 7 there's a reference to the law. It is the theme of this chapter.

Now the law of God is a glorious thing.

We need to establish that because this chapter says so much about being dead to the law that we need to understand in order to balance that off that the law of God is indeed a glorious thing, in spite of the fact that we have been set free from it.

Psalm 19:7-10, *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*

- ✓ Law,
- ✓ Testimony,
- ✓ Statutes,
- ✓ Commandment, and
- ✓ Ordinances refer to the law of God.

Psalm 119, the whole Psalm is dedicated to the glory of the law of God, all 176 verses of it.

Psalms 119:12, *Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes.*

Psalms 119:16, *I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.*

Psalms 119:18, *Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.*

Psalms 119:77, *Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; For Your law is my delight.*

Psalms 119:97, *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

Psalms 119:136, *Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because men do not keep Your law.*

Psalms 119:142, *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.*

Psalms 119:165, *Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble.*

Psalms 119:174, *I long for Your salvation, O Lord, And Your law is my delight.*

Now that truly honours the law of the Lord, the law of God.

Deuteronomy 27:26, *'Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.'* "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"

Cursed is the person who doesn't do all the things written in the law.

Ecclesiastes 12:13, *"Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."*

So, obedience to the law again is exalted.

Now look with me at the 6th chapter of

Deuteronomy 6:1-15, *Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, ² that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³ Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey.'*

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Caution Against Disobedience

¹⁰ “So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, ¹¹ houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full— ¹² then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. ¹³ You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. ¹⁴ You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you ¹⁵ (for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.

Now God is saying to them, “Obey My commandments or be destroyed.” This gives a very high position to the revealed Word, the law of God.

Isaiah 42:21, *The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make it honourable.*

Psalms 138:2, *I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.*

As you study the Old Testament, you cannot be but overwhelmed by the dignity and the honourable character and the centrality of the revealed law of God.

Moses said to Jethro his father-in-law about his role as a leader of the people.

Exodus 18:16, *When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."*

Moses said as the leader of Israel, my job can be narrow down to one that I let the people know the law of God.

Do you know the last command in the Old Testament?

Malachi 4:4, *"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments.*

So, from the Pentateuch to the last book of the Old Testament, and all in between, the law of God is exalted.

Now the result of this was that during the life of Christ and the time of the Apostle Paul, the Jews had elevated the law.

In fact, they had even almost made an idol out of the law itself, so that in many cases they were worshipping the law rather than the God who wrote the law.

But the point is that they had a very high view of the law of God. All you need to do is to look at the Talmud, which is the rabbinic commentary on God's revelation. From one end of the Talmud to the other about the sacredness of the law of God.

Now the Jews, then, had developed a theology that said men can make themselves right before God by the exercise of the law, by keeping the law.

So, the law was sacred. Not only was it sacred because of its honourable definition in the terms of the Old Testament, but because they had made it a mode of salvation.

When we come into the New Testament, none of this is lost.

It is apparent in the New Testament time that the people were equally committed to the sacredness of the law.

In John chapter 9 when Jesus healed the man born blind and the Pharisees came to investigate the miracle.

John 9:28-29, *Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."*

They said that "We know that God spoke to Moses."

Here they are advocating the law of Moses as the very revealed truth of God. It gives us insight into how they did perceive the law. They perceived as the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul has returned to Jerusalem after some missionary journeys. Paul has brought some Gentile Christians with him. He has brought gifts from the Gentile churches to give to the poor Jews in Jerusalem. Paul comes back and reports about what God has done among the Gentiles.

Acts 21:20, *And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;*

A good insight into the attitude of the people toward the law. They were zealous for the law.

The apostle Paul, wanting to show his own regard for God's revealed truth, went into the temple to go through a rite of purification.

Acts 21:26-28, *Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them. ²⁷ Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.*

Of course, a riot broke out and they would have killed Paul. As it was, the Romans took him and put him in prison to protect him. He stayed there two years before he got to Rome.

So, it was the very zeal for the law that precipitated the imprisonment of the apostle Paul.

When we come into the New Testament era, we lose none of that dominant commitment of the people of Israel to the law.

The testimony of Paul follows along the same line.

Philippians 3:5-6, *circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

So, the man really with a vengeance pursued the law of God.

Now as you flow through the New Testament, this commitment to the sanctity, and the dignity, and the respectability, and the honourable nature of God's law is not diminished at all.

Hebrews 2:2, *For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,*

Acts 7:53, *who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."*

Matthew 5:17-18, *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. ¹⁸For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

Jesus said He didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfil the law.

Romans 7:12, *Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*

Romans 7:14, *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

Romans 7:22, *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

1 Timothy 1:8, *But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully,*

All the way from the beginning of the Old Testament right through the New Testament, and God's law is exalted.

God's law is lifted up, both in the eyes of the Jew and the Gentile who came to Christ in the church.

How would you define sin?

1 John 3:4, *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness*

Romans 3:31, *Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.*

In other words, if you can come to God by faith and you don't have to do the law, you don't have to keep the law in your own human strength, if God accepts you by faith, do we then make void the law or render it useless?

The answer is ***m genoito*** in the Greek, which is the strongest negative. No, no, no, no.

No way, impossible.

So, Paul wants to establish the place of the law.

Now, with that all in mind, that the law is sacred, holy, just, good, honourable, respectable, and all that let us look at Romans 3.

Romans 3:19-20, *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

The law is good.

The law is holy.

The law is righteous.

The law is honourable.

The law reflects the mind and heart of God.

But nobody, no time, under any circumstances will ever be justified by keeping the law.

Romans 5:20, *Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,* Instead of the law creating righteousness, the law made sin abound.

Does justification void the Law since it's by faith?

Talking about sanctification, if we are no longer under the Law, have we just voided the Law – not this time in the name of faith, but this time in the name of grace.

Which then poses the question.

What is the believer's relationship to the Law?

Romans 7 really gives us a full answer to that.

Chapter 6, as we remember, from verses 15 to 23, addresses that we are not under the Law as a dominating master, but under grace. Which we are all grateful for.

When law is our dominating master, it will destroy us. It will render us guilty before God and bring us to damnation. We are under grace as an operative principle through the work of Christ and our faith in Him.

We have a new relationship to sin Paul goes on to say in verses 15 to 23. We used to be the slaves of sin, now we are the slaves of righteousness.

- Our relation to the Law before we were saved was one of condemnation.
- Our relationship to the Law now is one of obedience.
 - We used to be the slaves of sin, living lies that endlessly violated the Law.
 - We have now become slaves of righteousness. We live lives of obedience to the Law.

That's what being a slave of righteousness means. Because the only way we know what is righteous is by revelation of God in His Law.

So, we know we have a new relationship to the Law. Before, we lived in violation of it.

Now we live in submission to it.

But what about that statement "you are not under law?"

How far can we push that?

That is a very important question for us to answer.

We will look at the answer that really unfolds at the beginning of Romans chapter 7.