

THE SECRET OF ROMANS 7

Message 1

Words: 6276

INTRO: A while ago we were in Edmonton with a few trips to the emergency ward. We saw the almost hopeless cases that came in, I suppose mostly from self-inflicted problems such as drugs and alcohol. We watched some alcoholics and drug users. We saw the homeless. And when you look at it, it looks almost hopeless.

But when you look at those that we think seem well enough, they work and care for their families and maybe live what we could call reasonable lives; and you watch them it looks almost hopeless too. Most do not care about God.

Others, having been brought to think about life seriously realize there must be more to life than just living and dying. There must be some Creator. There must be some purpose to life, and they begin to search and Satan finds them. Since he can't get eternity out of their minds he steers them onto a false road. And now, having entered some religion, something is satisfied in these people because they think they have found the truth. But the facts are they are twice as lost as before.

But then, from time to time, the Gospel reaches one among the lost and they begin the Christian walk. Some of these, with an awakened conscience now enter a church out of concern for the well-being of their souls. But they have entered a liberal church that has a form of godliness, but denies the power to live a pure and godly life. And if they are truly born again or not, it looks almost hopeless that they will come through in victory. Jesus said, "Many will say to Me in judgement day saying "Lord, Lord..." and then they give a list of the things they have done. Surely they were Christians. But the Lord says, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

Others, possibly even having entered a fine church, get caught up in divorce and remarriage. Others, through some such sin as social drinking get led off the true path. And many who profess to become Christians, one wonders if they will ever grow up to Christian maturity.

And when one ponders all this, one sometimes begins to feel like it is all hopeless. When that happens I go back to Isaiah 55. Verses 7-9 say:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

God knew all along that few would be saved. In Noah's day, of the millions of people alive, 8 were saved. It was not because He had not done all He could to save all mankind. It boils down to one thing. Most of mankind is dishonest and does not want the truth.

Though we cannot understand how it was worth it for God to create mankind, knowing most would go to hell, we know that in the end it will be worth it all to God. And we know that God is %100 good, and therefore, out of that we know this is all good.

Recently I restudied Revelation 21:4. It says:

4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

As I pondered that, it does not only mean that He wipes away their tears for the moment. He wipes them away for eternity to come. Then I pondered, just what does this mean? Now I do not know but I recommend that it means He will give us information that will help us understand how everything was worth it for God to create man. I believe this will explain why hell is necessary. And I believe we will say something like this: "Lord God, your wisdom exceeds ours as far as the heaven is above the earth. You have done everything %100 good. You always have been and always will be %100 good." And then after this we are told there will be no more death, sorrow, crying nor pain. Everything that causes tears will be done away with. All that which has,

has been explained; and all that will now be will never cause tears again.

And from that I want to develop a new thought. On our few days in the city of Edmonton I was reading the Christian classic by O. Hallesby on the conscience. And he used an illustration on a certain truth and I thought, that is the best illustration to explain Romans 7 I have ever heard. And I thought, "Here is the secret to Romans 7." Then as I studied the chapter more in depth, though I have studied it to some degree since I was a young Christian, I came to what I saw additional truths to add to this. So I trust you will be blest as we go through this amazing chapter, and I trust it will help you understand your own experience in the Christian pilgrimage.

I plan to look at this chapter under three main points:

1. The Path to Romans 7
2. The Path through Romans 7
3. The Path after Romans 7

So we go now to our first main point, the path to Romans 7.

I. THE PATH TO ROMANS 7

A. Romans 1-3

In the introduction I drew a number of seemingly hopeless cases. When you look at the world, one can get drowned out by a seemingly hopeless case. Yet before Jesus ascended to heaven He said He would build His Church and the gates of hades would not prevail against it. For 2,000 years it has been in building, it is still in the process of being built, and it will continue to be built until the rapture takes place. And in life, in various ways, the Gospel goes out today as it has in times past and some are being added to the Church daily.

The plan is to take a trip through Romans 7. But Romans 1-6 brings us to this chapter and we will briefly go over those chapters. So I title this as the path to Romans 7. In the book of Romans, chapter 1

reveals that all Gentiles are sinners and lost. Chapter 2 then proceeds to show that all Jews are sinners and they are also lost. Chapter 3 sums it up to show us that all of mankind have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The net result is that all need salvation.

In the OT, there is a picture of salvation, and how God seeks to bring those who are truly His followers to full Christian maturity. This picture is found in Israel's experience when they came out of Egypt. They were in hopeless bondage to Egypt. There is a picture of the lost. The ten plagues were all against the various false gods of Egypt. God seeks to redeem us from all that wants to take His place in our lives.

Unless God delivered Israel they were hopelessly enslaved in Egypt. Unless God delivers us, we are enslaved to sin and we have no hope. We will be comparing Israel's experience with our own as Christians. Israel's enemies were 7 nations greater and mightier than they. The sin nature in us is so strong that only God can deliver us from its power.

Sinful man is lost and has no way by which he can get himself out. Ephesians describes him as without hope and without God in the world. Romans 1 shows how sin ever plunges man deeper into sin. We see Romans 1 being played out right in front of our very eyes in our own country. Without God man always goes deeper and deeper into sin. Our present culture is an accurate picture of Romans 1. Whereas once, even most unbelievers acknowledged that the Bible is the Word of God, now there is hardly any fear of God. Men claim to be women and women claim to be men.

Well, in Romans 1-3 Paul shows man's bondage to sin, whether he be Jew or Gentile. But in Romans chapters 4-6 we are shown that divine deliverance from the penalty of sin is available to sinful man by faith. Sin is man's extreme problem, and to be saved he must first be justified from his sins, that is he must come to the place where he can be declared to be righteous

before God. But at justification, man's salvation has only just begun. In sanctification comes the painful process of delivering us from the power of sin. If this many professing Christians know next to nothing. They glory in their justification and claim to live by a grace that is not grace.

From the perspective of what mankind believes happens after death we might divide mankind into three classes. There are the religious people. They believe in some higher power. Some claim Christianity is not a religion. That depends on how you define religion. Christianity believes in a higher power. The term atheism, which means one does not believe in a god of any kind, only came into being in the 16th century. Atheism may not be classed as a religion, but it is a faith. Everybody believes in something, even if they believe what you believe is not important. That is their faith.

But of those who believe there is a higher power but they do not believe the Bible is the Word of God, their idea of salvation can be described in a few words. They will come to the better life, whatever that is, by doing good works now. I must do good. Good works is how one arrives at a better destiny. How good is defined differs among them.

Among those who say the God of the Bible is the one true God, by far the majority also think that one's destiny depends on one's good works. Turn to Romans 3. This is a human flaw we cannot get rid of. It is ingrained, I think, in the sin nature itself. And so, when Paul has shown that all of mankind is sinful he says this in Romans 3:19-20:

19 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.

Salvation by the deeds of the law is salvation by good works. Here is what happens to such people. Mankind does not only have a sin nature. Man has a conscience. And our conscience agrees with the Bible that all are sinners. And so we see the law and it says don't do this and do that. And we say, "That is my problem. I have done that which it says I shouldn't and I have failed to do that which it says I should. Now I know what I should do and shouldn't do. From now on I will do what I should and I won't do what I shouldn't. And if I do that, when I die I will go to heaven."

That, in one form or another, is what by far the majority of those who call themselves Christians believe. They count on their good works. And when they fail, they look around to those who also say they believe and they see they are better than many of those, so they must still be OK. The vast majority of those who profess to believe the Bible live like that.

But our verses said that by the deeds of the law no flesh would be saved. Good works can never justify us nor give us the power to live right. It can only show us what is right.

Now look at verses 21-26:

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How is true righteousness obtained? By faith! How does that happen? That is what Romans 4-8 is about, and included in those chapters is Romans 7. Now let me say this: Salvation is not mostly about salvation from hell. It is about salvation from sin. It is about the fact that we should do what the law requires. The law says, in brief, we are to love man and to love God. To love man means we do what is right. That is, we don't lie or cheat or steal or murder etc... To love God means we put Him first and we worship Him and glorify Him.

Here is what God wants to accomplish in us. He sent Jesus Christ into the world to save His people from their sins. What is that all about? Well, some time ago I gave you this illustration. For a number of years, when I was younger I smoked cigarettes. When I got saved, I wanted to quit that habit because I knew it was wrong. But I could not come free. I would confess my sin, and then after some time, cave in to it again. And after a long battle, I finally stopped smoking. But whenever I had finished a meal, or had a coffee, or got nervous, I reached for my cigarettes which were no longer there. Smoking still had a hold of me. But when I was enabled to just refuse to smoke any more, eventually I overcame even the desire to smoke. And now it has no hold on me.

And here is what God wants to do; He wants me to overcome every sin so that it no longer has a hold on me. All of this is a process and this process is called sanctification. Sanctification simply means to make holy. And we are holy in practice only when we are separated from our sins. With regard to smoking, I am 100% holy. My past is forgiven, and I don't smoke

any more. God wants to do that with every sin; stealing, lying, cheating, envy, jealousy, coveting etc..

Now the very first thing that has to happen is we have to be justified from our past sins. You see, if I could get saved by works; that is by never sinning, and the day I turned to Christ I never sinned again, I would still be lost. Why? Because by that time I have already sinned many times and those sins must be taken care of. But living right from now on does not pay off the sins of the past. So even if I could live 100% right after I made my change of life, I would still go to hell. Before I can go anywhere at all, my past sins have to be taken care of, and that is called justification.

Now look at verses 21-26 once more:

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

You see, we are justified, that is we are declared righteous with regard to our past sins by putting our

faith in Jesus Christ. How can that happen? Well, Romans does not deal with repentance much, but the very first thing that must happen is that I repent of my sins. And when I have repented of them, then I must put my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and live by faith from that time on and for the rest of my life.

And why did God choose that man should be saved by faith and live by faith? Well, look now at verses 27-31:

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

Man's major cause of sinning is pride. Salvation by works brings about pride. I understand that many Calvinists are filled with a pride that comes from believing they are one of God's chosen few. True faith does away with all pride. All boasting proves there is no true faith. True faith removes all boasting. So Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

When we go through the doctrines of justification and sanctification in our Sunday School for the young people classes we will deal with this in greater detail. But when those who believe the Bible is the Word of God seek to get justified by works, the works they stress are things like baptism, reading the Bible, prayer, and giving. To this of course, the ten commandments are added.

Many who seek salvation in this way give up. Some think, "Well, I didn't pray enough or read the Bible enough." So they redouble their efforts only to fail again. One cannot overcome sin like this. It does not work. And those who try this route too often just give up and when you talk to them they say, "I tried religion. So no thanks." But the Bible is clear that

this is not the way of salvation. Salvation is by grace through faith.

Others conclude that since we are no longer under the law, and we are saved by grace, therefore if we cannot overcome certain sins that is not a problem, grace has us covered. We are OK, though we cannot overcome certain sins. Or we might have committed certain sins and we do not want to repent, so we claim grace.

But salvation is from such sins and it requires repentance and faith.

But let us just consider the end of Romans 3 before we go on to chapters 4-6. Verse 28:

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

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

Do we make the law void by being saved by faith? Since we are saved by grace through faith, are we now OK to live in sin? The law no longer is important? Paul says, "No, actually we establish the law." How so? If by grace through faith we overcome sin that means we are now living in harmony with the law. We are saying the law is good and I need to live by it. I need to overcome sin. And when I overcome sin, I establish the law.

For a Christian to not to be able to overcome certain sins and claim grace, is a failure to understand grace. Grace will give me victory over sin. If I am not overcoming I am not experiencing the grace of God.

So now that we have seen Paul's teaching in Romans 1-3, we conclude with Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Everyone needs to be saved and the very first thing that must happen is justification. My past sins must be dealt with. That takes us to Romans 4-6.

B. Romans 4-6

Now Paul says that this way of salvation is not a NT thing. It has always been like this. In the OT, all those who truly got saved got saved by grace through faith. So he will now use the life of Abraham to show how one is justified by faith, and not by works.

As Israel in Egypt is a picture of lost man under the bondage of sin, for they were under the bondage of Pharaoh, so justification by faith is a picture of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Israel was delivered out of Egypt by faith. They had to trust God to get out. It was not by their own works that they got out. God sent 10 plagues on Egypt before they grudgingly let Israel go. The Israeli's had sacrificed a lamb for each household and put the blood of the lambs on the doorposts of their homes. And that night God killed all the firstborn in every home where the blood had not been applied to the doorposts.

There we have a picture of the death of Christ for the sin of the world. One is justified from one's sin before God when one repents of one's sins and trusts in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Romans does not deal with the repentance aspect as much as the faith aspect of salvation. The purpose is to show that justification is by faith. However, Romans 2:4 does say, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" Repentance is the very first requirement before one gets saved. Then a lifetime of faith is required. In my understanding, faith in Christ is not believing that He died, was buried and rose again. Those are simple historical facts. Faith in Christ is putting

one's trust in Christ and then living in obedience to Him by faith for the rest of life. It is not if I believe once that I am saved. When I repent and put my trust in Christ, I am justified. But now I must go on being saved, which is sanctification; and sanctification is a life-long process.

Israel's journey out of Egypt and through the Red Sea pictures death, burial and resurrection. It was at the end of the third night that they came up out of the Red Sea. This pictured resurrection. It was at the end of the third night that Jesus came out of the grave. This pictures justification. Romans 4-6 speaks of this.

Before we go over chapters 4-6, it would be most appropriate to share the chart on justification by faith and standing and state. This is most crucial to understanding Romans 4-8. I didn't want to bore the older ones by teaching things I have taught in the past. But in thinking ahead, Lord willing, next fall in studying Basic Bible Doctrine with our young people we will be going over these. And so if I give those here, we can skip some of this in those classes because we have covered it here. And because it is such an important aspect of understanding a very key area for Christians, in this way I can refer others to these messages if the need arises.

Let me just mention, my style of presenting these messages will include more teaching than preaching for a few messages. I will just keep going until my time is up and stop without a conclusion as usual because I do not know how far I will get. When I preach I usually know how far I will get.

Before we look at the chart on justification by faith, let me show you the chart on the progress of salvation and how it works in the book of Romans, and how it compares to Israel's experience in Egypt.

CHART: Progress of salvation

In Romans 4 Paul shows that justification by faith is not a NT doctrine. He shows that justification, which is initial salvation, does not take place by works. He uses Abraham to show this. The whole chapter discusses Abraham's justification by faith. Paul shows that Abraham was justified before he offered up Isaac on Mount Moriah. If it had been after, we might argue justification is by works.

CONCL: