

ROMANS 7

Message 10

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Scripture: Romans 7:11b-14

INTRO: Let me just say something about these messages. The Corinthians thought they were very spiritual people. That is a sign of carnality, fleshliness. So in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 Paul said this:

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

Hebrews 5:12 says:

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

If you find Romans 7 difficult, it is because the teaching of these truths is spiritual meat. Do not despair. You cannot sleep through these messages and understand them.

In restudying Romans 7, it seems to me this is the most revealing passage in the Bible regarding the sin nature in man. It operates largely through our desires. Paul said that the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," discovered his own sin nature to him. He had thought once he was among the elite of men. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Concerning the law, he was perfect. And then the Lord apprehended him on the Damascus road, and then he went to school for three years and God gave some great revelations to him. Numerous passages speak of this.

And one of the things he learned was what he was truly like. After this he would say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, not even one good thing dwells." He called himself the

chief of sinners and the least among all the saints. Saul became Paul. He became small enough to go through the eye of a needle.

I watched a philosopher this past week on the internet who specialized in studies of the mind verses the brain and consciousness. The knowledge these men have is staggering. He used 24 cylinder words like one syllable words. He could be asked questions by brilliant students and he hardly had to think to answer. He mentioned that doctors can make things like a heart, but they can make nothing to replace the brain. Google is desperately trying to tap into this special knowledge as to what the mind is. If they could accomplish this, it might make them capable to control the world. What they do not realize is that their own heart, or mind is desperately wicked. And they live in total oblivion to their own depravity and what their own discoveries might do to themselves.

In the past, self-deceived man thought he could educate man into morality. Now we think we can psychologize man into morality and successful living. But we fail to recognize sin and man's sin nature. There is only one place you can truly get to know man and how he operates and that is the Bible. And Romans 7 is a huge revelation of the sin principle working within. The sin nature is so wicked it will use the very law of God itself to work evil in us.

One of our folk sent me this quote by Alexander Pope.

Sin is a monster of such awful mien, (character)
That to be hated needs but to be seen.
But seen too oft, familiar of face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

But the amazing thing is that the man who recognizes and deals with sin in repentance and then lives by faith, becomes the greatest treasure God possesses. But oh, when we find ourselves caught in sin, we are like a wild bull in a net. And we fight and we seek to justify ourselves. We do almost anything but repent and live by faith.

Hebrews 1:6-7 says this:

6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?"

7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands.

And the new Christian must be brought to see what he or she is like inside. And God gave the law to reveal that. I sat in Paul Maxwell's class where his dad's course "Law and Grace" was taught for the last time. And he said, "It is time we hear the thunders of Sinai once more." The sin nature sets up a beachhead in the law and seeks to work all manner of evil desire in us. But amazingly, God is able to use this for His own good as we will see. So Paul said in Romans 7:10-11:

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.

Yet this very law shows us what kind of life pleases God. So verse 12 goes on like this:

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

We begin this morning at verse 12:

2. The Problem cont'd (8-12)

In verse 7 we have the benefit of the law for the believer stated like this:

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."

But that benefit brings about a problem, and that is what we have been dealing with in verses 8-11. These verses say this:

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.

Verse 12 now says this:

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

I want to raise a question from the word rendered "therefore" in verse 12, and then go back to the last part of verse 11, which we did not complete in the last message. Here is the question: What is it in the previous verses that tells us the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good? Well, I take us back first to verse 11 once more. We have not yet looked at the words, "...and by it killed me." How did sin make a beachhead out of the commandment, and deceive me, and by it kill me?

Well, we have seen how sin deceives us. It does so through our desires. When you see Eve before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it built up all kinds of desire in her once Satan pointed out its fruit. Desire is a huge thing. It is amazing how we can explain how much we need something when we desire it. It is amazing how many problems we can explain away when we desire something.

Pastor Daryl pointed out that the word "longsuffering" is long angered. It is *makrothumeo*. The word "desire" in our passage comes from the word *epithumeo*. It has the same root word but a different preposition attached to it. The *thumeo* part is a word for anger. Why do anger and desire have the same root word? Anger happens when desire is thwarted. When you get what you don't desire it wants to cause anger. Desire is the passion of wanting something or wishing for something.

And where does desire come from? Well, evil desire is created in us through the flesh. I am going to go out on a limb now and I would be happy for

further enlightenment if anyone has such. Here is my limb: The death brought about by sin through the commandment is death to selfish, fleshly, desires. The death of these desires is brought about by the cross. If I would live as a Christian, these desires must be overcome in victory, and only the cross can do that. It is the cross that ends the control of fleshly desires in us.

So Paul says in Galatians 2:20:

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

In other words, I have been crucified to my own desires. I no longer live for my own desires, Christ lives in me. And the life I now live "in the flesh" I live by faith in the Son of God. Now listen to Galatians 5:24:

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

So Paul says that the commandment which was given with reference to how to live, I found to be to death. Sin set up camp in the commandment and deceived me through my desires and I sinned. And by this it killed me. I see that to mean the sinful desires of the flesh had to be crucified with its passions and desires.

We come now to verse 12 which says this:

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

What has Paul taught in the previous verses that would lead him to conclude that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good? And the limb I stand on is this: By revealing the evil that is in me, it caused me to die to those sinful, selfish, deceitful desires! I learned to be crucified by faith.

So consider first that the law is holy. What does that mean? It means it is apart from sin. The question of verse 7 was, "What shall we say then, is the law sin?" And the answer is, "No, of course not. I could not have known sin apart from the law." If it had not been for the law, I would not have known what I was like inside. The law is holy, and thus showed up my unholiness.

Now Paul says the law is holy, and the commandment is holy. Why would he give both? Is not the commandment contained in the law? I think the idea is that the whole law of God is holy and every individual commandment is just as holy. Paul has pointed out one commandment in particular that discovered the magnitude of his own sin nature. It was the commandment that said, "Thou shalt not desire what is not rightful to desire."

But each one of us might find one commandment in particular that troubles us and it is just as holy as any other commandment. Paul thought at one time that he was perfect. He was a Pharisee. He did everything right, so he thought. Then he got saved and the very law he thought he had kept now showed him what he was really like. Sin then took occasion by the commandment, and there he learned what he was like inside. And now, the commandment that was given with reference to life, he found to bring death and it killed him. It caused him to die to his own selfish, deceitful desires.

Furthermore Paul says the commandment is just. When the commandment says, "Thou shalt not" when every desire screams, "I want, I desire," it is a just commandment. It is right. To obey it is right. But learning how to obey by faith when desire is high, this is the battle, and we will yet see more of it.

Not only that, the law and the commandment are good. What does that mean? They are God's means of showing us what He wants. They are that which shows us what actions are in line with the perfect will and character of God. They are good for us. When we give in to wrong desires, it will not be good for us. Sin is a monster. So there is a saying that says:

SIN - will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.

Look at this in a small child. The child wants to play in the street. Mommy says, "No, you may not play on the street. It is too dangerous." Why does she give such a command? It is for the child's own good.

3. The wilderness battle (13-14)

All this brings us now to verse 13:

13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

At verse 13, in the Christian experience, there is a sign. It says: Welcome to the Wilderness: Canaan, this way. From here to the end of the chapter we meet the wilderness experience every believer must pass through in one form or another. There are no short cuts. But one does not have to circle in the wilderness for 40 years. The time it takes to reach Canaan depends on the obedience of the believer. Is he a hard learner, or does he submit to God in faith at every hard turn?

Here is the question of this verse that brings us into the wilderness: Has what is holy and just and good, the law, become death to me? Is it the cause of death? No, the sin nature, using the law as a beachhead, brought about this death in me. Has what is good become death to me? The answer is: God forbid! But how could Paul come to that conclusion? In the passage, is it not obvious that the law is the problem? Well, let us ask it like this: It was the doctor who informed me about my cancer. Does that make the doctor bad? No, it is the cancer that is bad.

So Paul's conclusion is: No, certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin was producing death in me through what is good. When sin is not

manifested as sin, we think little of it. But let sin be made to appear as sin, now we may be brought up to attention. To overcome sin, sin must be shown up in me for what it is, and that is what the law does.

Because we have learned that we are not under law but under grace, we preach grace and not law. But when we do not preach the law, we do not find ourselves to be in need of grace. To come into need of grace, sin must be manifested or appear to be sin. It must become to us as exceedingly sinful. So I am once more back on my limb. I believe that the death sin produces in the believer through the law is the death of the believer's own sinful desires. It is the death of the flesh. It is the death brought about by the cross.

If Paul was not concerned about his life as a Christian, he would not be concerned over his sin. But he is a Christian now, and he knows he should not sin. And how does one get rid of sin? Here is what I suggest: We will not give up selfish sinful desires until sin becomes exceedingly sinful to us! And how does that happen? It happens when the law points out in me what is in me, and I am brought to vomit at the sight of my own wretched sinfulness. And what brings me to that state? When sin becomes exceedingly sinful.

Lloyd Jones says the whole function of the law is to show us the exceeding sinfulness of sin. He further states that verses 14 to the end of the chapter show us that we cannot be sanctified by the deeds of the law. You see, when Paul was saved he learned he was not justified by keeping the law. That is the problem of all legalism. But now, as a Christian, he had to learn you cannot be sanctified by keeping the law either. How do I become more and more holy? When sin becomes exceedingly sinful to me, now I will flee to the Lord for grace to overcome sin. Only by grace through faith can we overcome sin.

Paul had once tried to be justified by keeping the law. That made him a Pharisee. Now he has sought to be sanctified by keeping the law, and that made him

a failure. That failure we will see in verses 15 to the end of the chapter.

The law does not only teach us how to identify sin, it teaches us to understand sin. And when we understand sin within ourselves, when our own sin appears to be exceedingly sinful, we gain an understanding of sin.

Consider these: Adultery, fornication, stealing, cheating, jealousy, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, greed, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, homosexuality, sodomy, covetousness, reviling, extortioners, and any other things the like this; this is spiritual slop. Until I feel like I am drinking from a ripe slop bucket when I am involved in sin, I will continue to partake of that slop bucket. It must become exceedingly dirty to me.

Take Jesus in Gethsemane. God said, "I love mankind. I will do what is right for Me to do, even though it means having You to drink this slop bucket. Come and look in this cup. All the filth of the world is in there. I want you to drink it." And Jesus shrank back in horror. He is God. He is holy and just and good. And so He prayed for an hour. There sat the cup, just as full as before. Another hour of prayer. It is late. Judas is on his way. Still the cup sits there. And then, yet another hour of prayer. And at last, with blood oozing out of His pores, He takes the cup, raises it to His lips, so to speak, and drinks it to its bitter dregs.

Now He will die. He is defiled by sin. My sin. Your sin. And then, after He takes on our sin, He is dealt with like a criminal. He is God in the flesh, but He is treated like a murderer. And man's hate for Him and his love of sin, takes Jesus to the cross and nails Him there.

And then, later, sinners hear about what He has done for them. And when they repent of their sins they become Christians. Now they are justified from

their sins by what Christ did for them. But within them they still have this sin nature. And now they will have to learn that inside of them is this slop bucket. And until they realize what they are like inside, they will never deal with their sin. And so God allows the sin nature in them to appear and be exposed to them. Oh, bitter exposure. There are no beautiful people inside until they come to this exposure. And many baulk at this exposure and back off. Some back out altogether. But others begin to die to all those desires that lead to those sins. But first, sin must become exceedingly sinful.

And what happens in many modern churches? We might preach about healing. We might be told how you should never be sick. We preach that you should be rich. It is God's will that you should drive a Rolls Royce car and many such things. We have holy laughter and all kinds of such things. And inside many of those preachers, all this slop sloshes around. Take men like Benny Hinn or many others.

Or we preach love, unconditional love. Or unconditional grace and some of the other unconditionals, and all the while sin fails to become exceedingly sinful because we do not preach the real issues.

Or we might go to church on Sunday and go home and back to our business and never open the Bible until the next Sunday. And we are not brought to the place where sin becomes exceedingly sinful.

Has the law, which is good, become death to me? No, truly, I could not come to life until it taught me that I was exceedingly sinful. It was sin that produced death in me. Justification is only the beginning of the Christian life. Sanctification, becoming holy is a lifetime process. There is so much in us that needs exposure and needs to be overcome.

Now let me read verses 13-14 together:

13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so

that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

Since the law is holy and just and good, has what is good become death to me? No, it is I that am the problem as we see now in verse 14:

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

Here is what we know; the law is spiritual. What do we mean by spiritual? Spiritual means non-physical, non-material. If you want an interesting and challenging study, study the secular world's view of what the mind is. Everybody knows the mind is not the brain, but what it is nobody knows except the Bible believer. The Bible knows all about the spiritual nature of man.

The law says, "You shall not covet." Coveting is a spiritual event. The law says, "You shall not commit adultery." But it too is a spiritual event, though the body is involved. All the commandments are spiritual in nature. But look now at the contrast in verse 14. It says:

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

The contrast to the spiritual law is that we are carnal. Carnal means fleshly. There are the two opposites I showed you some time ago in a diagram. Before we are saved we are operated mostly through the flesh which gets its information through the five senses. God wants to control what we do in the flesh by His law. It tells us what kind of life God desires from us. And then what happens? We seek to become sanctified by keeping the law. But in the process of sanctification, we must learn to be controlled by God's Spirit through our spirit. The law is spiritual.

So verse 6 said:

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.

Now note verse 5. It says:

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

When were we in the flesh? When we were unsaved. What fruit did the flesh produce? Sin. It is sin that brings forth fruit unto death. Romans 8 is the victory chapter. Turn to this chapter. We begin in verse 5:

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

That is a description of the non-Christian. But in verse 9 he begins to describe the Christian. It says:

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Now I have mentioned numerous times that between Egypt and Canaan lay the wilderness. It is this wilderness that all must pass through in their Christian experience. Justification is pictured by Israel's singing when they had crossed the Red Sea and the Egyptian army floated in the sea. The Christian's singing begins when he is saved. The

amount of singing usually depends on the depth of danger they have escaped by justification.

Now let me point out something most amazing in the matter Paul has been dealing with, namely the sin nature. We have seen that the sin nature uses God's law to set up a beachhead from which it can travel throughout the new Christian. Before I show you this amazing thing, let me give you a little story I have given you in the past. It shows us how the sin nature with this beachhead, this *aphormee* has access to the rest of one's being.

I quote from another message:

J. Oswald Sanders gives in his little book, This I Remember, this little story, "On occasion I was invited to speak at the Whitsuntide Convention at Cliff College near Sheffield in England, of which Samuel Chadwich had been the Principal and which attracted thousands of people. While dining I found myself sitting alongside an elderly man who told me he came from Huddersfield. I was immediately interested because I had sometimes used an illustration which involved that town, but I had never been quite sure of its authenticity. So I told him the story, and asked if it were true.

"Yes, it is true all right", he replied. 'When I was a boy I used to run messages for the old Quaker you mention and he used to give me an orange and a penny. It is true all right.'

And this is the story.

As a young man, Sir John Ramsden established his textile mill in the small town of Huddersfield. As his business prospered, he bought increasing areas of land to enlarge his mill and accommodate his growing band of employees. Eventually he was able to purchase the whole town with the exception of one house adjoining the mill which was owned and occupied by an old Quaker.

At last, in order that he might be able to boast that Huddersfield was all his, Sir John determined

to pay the Quaker a personal visit, and make an offer so generous that he could not refuse it.

'I suppose you know who I am,' said Sir John, when the door opened.

'Oh yes,' responded the Quaker in his quaint English, 'I know who thee art.'

'And I suppose you can guess why I am here?'

'Oh yes, I can guess why thee art here.'

'You know I have often tried to buy your property but you would not sell it. Well, I will make a very generous offer. If you will sell your property to me, I will cover the land with gold sovereigns.' He did not dream that such an offer could meet with refusal.

For a few moments the Quaker was silent, then with a quizzical smile he said, 'If the wilt put them edgeways we might talk business.'

Angry and crestfallen, Sir John turned on his heel and left the house. When he had reached the gate, the old Quaker called after him, 'Sir John, remember that Huddersfield belongs to thee and to me.'

In order to reach his home, the Quaker could walk all over all the rest of Sir John's Huddersfield. If there is some area of our lives on which Satan has some claim, he can tramp through all the rest of our lives to reach that part in which he has a vested interest. And he can say, "Christ, remember that that soul belongs to you and to me!"

The flesh has this area, this aphormee, this beachhead from which it can attack the entire person. But here is the amazing thing now. God can turn use this to His own good use as well. The sin nature uses this beachhead it has set up in the law and from there produces all manner of evil desire (v. 7). But from this God can teach the true believer what is in him or her. And now, if the believer desires Christ above all else, he will

learn to overcome his evil desires by grace through faith through the operation of the Spirit of God.

Let me show you this another way. It was time for Israel to go back to Canaan. But Israel was comfortable in Egypt, though they were in bondage in Egypt. Then God used their bondage to Egypt to bring in them a desire to leave Egypt. So when they complained about their bondage, more bondage was heaped on them. And finally, blessed finally, they were willing to risk all and leave Egypt. If Egypt had not so burdened them with bondage, would they ever have become willing to leave? It does not appear likely. But what was it God was able to use to bring them back to the promised land? Pharaoh, a very wicked man. He was evil. Yet God could use this evil man to bring about His own will.

And even so, God can use the sin nature residing within us to bring us to desire victory over it. Through the revelation of our bondage to sin, if we are truly committed to Christ, we will learn to overcome our desires and triumph in victory over them! This is the amazing thing. As I pondered these things I wondered, do we preach the law enough? What is it Ray Comfort uses in all his preaching? The law! He uses the law to enlighten the unbeliever to his need of justification. But do we use the law to enlighten the believer to his or her need of sanctification?

But this law is misinterpreted for both justification and sanctification. The error of the Pharisees and legalism is being perfect in the law, as Paul thought he was before he was saved. Then, when we are truly justified, we want to make the other error, and that is to think we will become holy by keeping the law, and that is what Paul shows in this chapter is not possible.

So we go to verse 14 once more:

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

According to this verse, here is what we know. The law is spiritual. This relates to our spiritual

life, the soul and the spirit, which are spiritual. The other thing we know is that I am carnal, that is fleshly.

That once more raises this question: what time of his life is he speaking about? He says here, "I am carnal." That means, "I am fleshly." Then he said, "I am sold under sin." He is sold under sin. That makes him a slave. What time of his life is he speaking about?

Well, he does not leave us in the dark. He explains what he means. So let us read verses 15-24:

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Now I ask you, what time of his life is he talking about? Is it before or after he was saved? It is after. Is it the unbeliever who so desperately wants to live right? Is it the unbeliever who rejoices in the law of God? Again, when he says he knows he is fleshly and he is sold under sin, he is talking about his early Christian experience. This is the wilderness!

The new believer must make a transition from being operated through the flesh, to being operated through the Spirit and this is a battle. The bondage is bondage to the sin nature. It is the desires of the flesh he must overcome.

CONCL: So to conclude by summarizing the message let me say this. Romans 7 is not to be lived in for the entire Christian life. It is meant to be passed through. Sin, setting up a beachhead in the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. What this shows is that the commandment is holy, and just and good. So should we then say that what is good has become death to me? No! Certainly not! It was sin, that it might be manifested as sin that produced death in me. But it did it through the commandment. Through the commandment I am brought to see that sin is exceedingly sinful. And until I am brought to see that sin is exceedingly sinful, I will not gain a desire big enough to overcome the desires of sin.

Here is the problem. The law is spiritual. It works in the spiritual realm. But I am carnal, that is fleshly. I operate in the realm of the flesh. The five senses want to rule my life. And now the new believer must make a transition from living by the flesh to living by the spirit. God's Holy Spirit works through our spirit. He wants to control our life like that. So Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not be drunk with wine but be continually filled with the Spirit." When we are full of wine, it controls us. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He controls us.

Now the transition from living by the flesh to living by faith through the Spirit is a difficult transition. Transitions, change, is hard for most. And the transition from living by sight to living by faith is hard for us. Israel had to transition from Egypt to Canaan and they found the change very

difficult. Many failed entirely. The problem? I am carnal, sold under sin. And God wants me to become entirely spiritual. And in verses 15 and on Paul will show us what this transition was like for him.