

# Holy Week

*And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.  
And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.  
And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.  
(Matthew 27:50–51 ESV)*

## You Also Have Died

**Good Friday**

**March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Matthew 27:11-54**

**Romans 7:1-6**

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### **Introduction:**

Our task this morning is fairly straightforward. We want to remember what happened and we want to understand what it means. To remember what happened I invite you to open your Bibles to Matthew 27:11-54. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

<sup>11</sup> Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.” <sup>12</sup> But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. <sup>13</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?” <sup>14</sup> But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

<sup>15</sup> Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. <sup>16</sup> And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. <sup>17</sup> So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” <sup>18</sup> For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. <sup>19</sup> Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” <sup>20</sup> Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” <sup>22</sup> Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” <sup>23</sup> And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

<sup>24</sup> So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” <sup>25</sup> And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” <sup>26</sup> Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

<sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. <sup>28</sup> And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup> and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” <sup>30</sup> And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. <sup>31</sup> And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

<sup>32</sup> As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. <sup>33</sup> And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), <sup>34</sup> they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. <sup>35</sup> And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. <sup>36</sup> Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. <sup>37</sup> And over his head they put the

charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”<sup>38</sup> Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.<sup>39</sup> And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads<sup>40</sup> and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”<sup>41</sup> So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,<sup>42</sup> “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.”<sup>43</sup> He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”<sup>44</sup> And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.<sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>47</sup> And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.”<sup>48</sup> And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.<sup>49</sup> But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”<sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

<sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.<sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,<sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.<sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:11–54 ESV)

That’s what happened, but what does it mean? You understand of course that KNOWING ABOUT GOOD FRIDAY does not save anyone. The devil knows all about Good Friday – he was there. He had a front row seat but he is not saved. We need to know more than the facts – we need to know what we are supposed to see and believe and receive so as to be saved. There is obviously a lot that could be said about that. The rest of the New Testament is written to explain the significance of these events by which we are saved. There is always a lot material to choose from on Good Friday; there is always a lot that could be said, but today I want to focus in on two things. I want to help you see two things as you contemplate Christ upon the cross. These two things were very important to the Apostle Paul and so I think they should be important to us. In Romans 6,7 and 8 Paul talks about these two things at great length. Obviously we don’t have time to read all of what he said in those three chapters but there is one little paragraph in the middle of that section where these two themes are presented together in very accessible language. Paul provides an axiom, an analogy and a very straightforward application and I propose that we use that section as a guide to our contemplation of the cross on this Good Friday morning. Turn in your Bibles now to Romans 7:1-6. Hear again God’s Holy, inspired and inerrant Word:

<sup>1</sup> Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?<sup>2</sup> For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

<sup>4</sup> Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.<sup>5</sup> For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.<sup>6</sup> But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. (Romans 7:1–6 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

I mentioned that this very accessible paragraph is organized around an axiom, an analogy and an application. Why don't I just walk us through each of those and hopefully, at the end, we'll all see what the Apostle wants us to see.

### **The Axiom:**

An axiom is just a self-evident truth. It's a truth that is so obvious you don't actually have to defend it. Everybody knows its true and you can use that truth to build out to other truths and that is what Paul does here. The axiom is found in verse 1. Paul says:

Or do you not know, brothers...

Which means of course: "I know that you do all know"; this is an axiom, this is something everybody understands:

that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? (Romans 7:1. ESV)

Everyone knows that the law only applies to people who are alive. If you go to a bar and you get drunk and you drive your car home and you crash into another car and you are killed in that accident the police do not write you a ticket. Even though you broke the law. Even though you injured other people. You're dead – case closed. They will not prop you up in a court of law and do a "weekend with Bernie" thing and walk you through the legal process – once you die the law has no claim on you. That is a self evident truth that does not need to be defended. Your death ENDS your responsibility to the law. The law only applies to LIVING PEOPLE, that's the axiom.

### **The Analogy:**

In verse 2 he provides an analogy. Consider the case of a married woman, he says. If while her husband is alive she goes off and marries another person, what do we call that woman? We call

her an adulterer. She is already in a binding relationship with this man over here so she cannot just willy nilly enter into a marriage covenant with that man over there – it just doesn't work that way. Now, on the other hand, if her first husband DIES and then she goes over there and marries another man – does anyone have a problem with that, Paul asks. No, of course not. The death of her husband FREES her to establish a NEW RELATIONSHIP. That's the analogy.

### **The Application:**

Now in verses 4-6 Paul provides a very simple application. He says that it is **like that** – look at verse 4:

**Likewise**, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. (Romans 7:4. ESV)

Likewise, my brothers; just like that the believer in Jesus Christ is:

- 1. Dead To The Law**
- 2. Wed To Christ**

That's what Paul wants us to see when we look at the body of Christ upon the cross. He wants us to see our freedom from the law and our intimacy with God through Christ. That's what this is about. That's what God is offering to us in the body of the Lord. Freedom from sin and intimacy with Christ. That's what you should see this morning when you look upon Christ upon the cross.

Now, I want to take just a minute and make sure that we understand those things. Those are precious truths and they deserve a few minutes of our time. First of all let's talk about what it means to be dead to the law.

- 1. Dead To The Law**

What are we talking about here? Well we don't have to guess what Paul means because in the verse immediately before the paragraph that we just read the Apostle said to the Romans:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 ESV)

So obviously to be dead to the law means to be free from the penalty of the law. The Bible says:

The soul who sins shall die. (Ezekiel 18:20 ESV)

This world belongs to God. He made it – his Word is Sovereign over it. From the very beginning human beings were born into a world that was subject to the Word of its Creator. God said to the first man and woman:

<sup>16</sup>“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16–17 ESV)

That’s the law. The Word of God establishes our permission and our prohibition and if we violate those parameters then we are subject to the penalty of the law. That’s the way this world was set up and nothing about that has ever changed. Old Testament and New Testament:

the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)

Now, that’s the hard truth – but this is the Good News:

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)

That is the Gospel! That’s the Good News! God didn’t change who he is – he didn’t re-wire the universe so that it was no longer subject to his Word – no, instead, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He obeyed the law for us – he did FOR US what we could never do for ourselves and HE PAID FOR WHAT WE DID DO IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS – that is the Gospel! The Gospel is the Good News that because of the life and death of Jesus Christ you can be FREE from the penalty of the law!

If you are in Him – if in him you have died to the law – then the law has no further interest in you. Your debt is paid.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1 ESV)

You are free from the penalty of the law.

And more than that, you are actually also free from the power of the law. Paul says something really interesting in this section of Romans. It was very different than what Jews were used to thinking about the law. Most Jews thought of the law as restraining sin – and there is a sense in which the sanctions of the law would function practically that way, but Paul says that ultimately if the history of the Jewish people teaches us anything it is that the law was ultimately unsuccessful in restraining sin. The law was like a fence that we jumped over into death and ruin. That just can't be denied Paul says. In point of fact, he argues the law – though it itself is holy, just and good, became a weapon in the hands of the devil. He used the law to kill us. Think of it this way, the devil knew that our hearts were warped and corrupted. He knew that we were born resenting the authority of God and resenting the restrictions that we perceived he had placed on us. And so the devil stood just beyond the law and he sung to us the siren's song. He lured us onto the deadly peril of the law. He knew that if he could get us to cross the line we would fall under the powerful sentence of God's just and holy Word. The devil used the law to kill us.

Paul talks about this surprising partnership between the law and sin and death in verse 5, listen, he says:

<sup>5</sup>For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.<sup>6</sup> But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. (Romans 7:5–6 ESV)

Do you hear that? The power of the devil to use the law to arouse our passions so as to lure us into death and ruin is broken because we are no longer subject to the law, rather we are filled with the Spirit. This is very important for us to understand. The devil used the law to arouse our hatred of God. He used the law to arouse our interest in forbidden things. He used it like a stick to agitate us and to instigate us to do things we never should have done. But Christ has broken that stick, he has taken it out of the devil's hand and he has put in us his Holy Spirit. And now it is the Spirit that drives us – we are under HIS INFLUENCE and INSTIGATION NOW. He is the one arousing in us new desires and inclination. He is driving us now – not towards death and ruin – but towards life and fruitfulness. He is driving us to Christ. That's what it means to be DEAD to the law and it allows us now to be wed to Christ. Let's take just a minute and talk about that as well.

## 2. Wed To Christ

Now that we have died to the law we are free to marry another. We are free to marry Christ. Salvation is always from and to, you remember that from our 2 Corinthians series. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Paul says:

<sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;  
<sup>15</sup>and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves **but for him** who for their sake died and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5:14–15 ESV)

In 2 Corinthians Paul says that we are saved FROM OURSELVES and FOR CHRIST – here in Romans he says that we are saved FROM the penalty and power of the LAW and FOR CHRIST – it’s the exact same teaching. “From ourselves” means from our sinful passions that led us into death and ruin, “from ourselves” means from our sins, our debts and our rebellion. Either way you describe it we are saved FROM SOMETHING and we are saved FOR SOMEONE. We are saved for Christ. We are saved so that we might enjoy union with God through the person of Jesus Christ. That’s what you should see when you look upon Christ upon the cross.

Do you remember what Matthew said happened the very moment that Jesus died? We read it this morning:

<sup>50</sup>And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.  
<sup>51</sup>And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. (Matthew 27:50–51 ESV)

The curtain of the temple represented our separation from God by sin. When Jesus died on the cross that curtain was torn in two. The dividing wall was removed. All hostility was ended. Every barrier between us and a holy God had been effectively and entirely dealt with. The way is open now; the sun shines again and we are home.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1 ESV)

In Christ you are no longer prostitutes and tax collectors. You may have started out that way – you may have started out as rebels to the will of God – but if you are in Christ then as far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us. There is no debt to pay –

that is what happens when you are married to the Lord! When you get married the debts of the one are assumed by the other. You owed God a debt. But you married Christ. Christ assumed your debt and he paid it to the full. Your debt became his obligation and now his riches have become your eternal inheritance.

That's what it means to be wed to Christ and that's what you should see when you look upon the cross. You should see the end of your debt and the beginning of your inheritance. You should see the death of your past and the birth of your future. You should see a world shaking and breaking apart. You should see tombs opening and the dead rising and veils being torn and children welcomed home.

That's what God offers in Christ upon the cross - that's what happened on Good Friday - that's what you should see. Freedom and favour forever because this is the Word of the Lord. Let's pray together.