

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
April 2020

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Romans 6:1-14
Justification with Sanctification

Rom 6:2

² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Romans Chapter 6 begins the answer to a very common question.

At the beginning of the Reformation, Martin Luther rediscovered God's plan for Salvation, that had been the burden of Paul's preaching: that God's righteousness was passed to the elect through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, God come to earth. Recognition that natural, fallen humans cannot (in fact do not) repair the rift with God, caused by their 'federal' head, Adam's transgression. (Transgression that is confirmed and repeated by every human since). The 'law in their hearts' (conscience) and then the specific Law of Moses was not the path-way to reconciliation with God, only the benchmark which proved how far we are from achieving God's standard of righteousness by ourselves. Only the redemption by Christ's finished work and the 'covering' of our continuing sinful nature by the 'cloak' of His perfect righteousness, justifies us before God and makes us acceptable in His eyes, so that reconciliation to eternal life occurs.

At the end of Chapter 5 (of Romans) Paul sums up: We are not saved by keeping the Law or by anything we do ourselves. And, that God's free Grace is at its best when sin is at its worst.

Martin Luther's reiteration of free Grace, in His day, raised the question: what then will keep 'good order' among the masses? How can social order and discipline be maintained without the fear of hell bringing law abiding action? Paul's objectors asked a similar question: If justification (being pronounced 'not guilty') is free from the 'work' of keeping the Law, then why not be more and more Lawless so that God has the opportunity to be seen more and more gracious. The immediate, emphatic answer, "By no means, certainly not!"

When we began Chapter 4 we used an analogy: The Christian life was like a narrow road on which the true believers travel towards the ultimate Glory of God. But either side are wide rocky ditches in which stumble those associates that seem to be Christians that have not received the new heart from the Spirit. Not been able to utilise that faith in Christ that His Spirit places in the regenerated heart. Called but not chosen. Deriving benefit from the direction and purpose of the 'narrow road', but not on it. Having something of the appearance of a Christian, but not a true believer. Not yet converted by the Spirit.

Chapter 4 characterised, we said, the 'left ditch': those who hold to the self-centred pride that they will contribute to their own salvation, by 'being good and doing good'. Even those who accept God's grace, but claim their faith as a necessary additional effort on their part. God's grace is not enough for them, they imply. One must generate a saving faith in and by ones self How sad that one must rely on the proven inadequacy of human 'works' rather than trust solely and completely on God's perfect righteousness and promises.

Chapter 6 introduces the error of the 'right ditch'. Easy believerism, cheap grace! Now that we are saved, we can just sit tight and do nothing. Luxuriate in a continuing sinfulness. Contribute nothing to God's Kingdom on earth. Leave undone the good works that He has ordained for us to do. Ignore His recipe for the Christian life that would be guided by His Law. In short to ignore the call to discipleship. Rather than recognise that Christ is not only the Saviour from the penalties of our sinfulness, but is also the Lord of our 'new' life.

And so the question can remain: If I am not saved by righteous living, why bother with righteous living now? Paul's answer. Certainly not!

He asks: 'How can we, who are dead to sin, live in it?' He is clearly talking to believing Christians (initially in Rome). 'We who are dead to sin ...' That is, we who are no longer under the authority of sin. How was this death brought about?

Here are three illustrations:

The first uses the theme of gratitude for Christ's saving work, which partially motivates us to a life of Christian discipleship.

Long ago when slaves were bought and sold in such places as the Southern States of America. A fine, strong slave was being auctioned at a market. The 'trader' extolled the virtues of this healthy, strong man with the endorsement that he would be a great asset to the work that was needed on a plantation. That he would be so much more valuable than even the great price that would be paid for such a specimen. All the time the slave was saying under his breath, "I won't work for anyone. I just won't". But of course the cruel methods of the plantation owners made such working inevitable.

The price at auction went up and up. He was really the most admirable specimen of a slave. All wanted to own him. Eventually the final price was reached. A record price!

The new owner led the slave away from the noise and clamour of the market-place. The newly purchased slave muttering, "I'll never work for anyone." Out in the quiet country-side, the owner released the chains and said, "You're free". Out of gratitude, the ex-slave became a faithful free-worker for the owner that had freed him from a life of slavery.

The second illustration goes deeper into Paul's message in Chapter 6, where he says, ² *By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* ³ *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?* ⁴ *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

There was once a poor slave who was kept as a prisoner in the estate of his tyrannical master. The slave had to do all that his cruel master commanded and became more and more miserable because the tyrant exploited him and made his life one of increasing labour and toil. Sometimes he tried to escape by leaning a ladder with ten rungs against the outside wall of the estate. But he could never get very far up the ladder before the master appeared and snatched

off a couple of rungs and beat him almost to death. There seemed to be no way of getting away from this bondage and its sufferings.

It so happened that nearby there lived a great king, who out of love for the poor prisoner, planned a marvellous way to release him. We need not go into details except to say that the king killed the imprisoned slave by crucifixion. The tyrant came looking for his former slave but found him dead. This meant, to his annoyance, that he could make no more demands on him. None of the rights which he had previously exercised over the slave could operate any more. The master-slave relationship that had existed for so long was now at a permanent end.

When the slave's body was buried, the great king came along, raised him from the dead and took him to his own home! The slave was overcome with thankfulness for the fact that he had been delivered from his condition in such a remarkable way, and was overjoyed that he now found himself in the home of one so wise, gracious and powerful. His heart was filled with sincere love and affection for his deliverer, and he determined that he would now serve him. The old relationship had been ended by his death. Yet he was alive! He recognised that being given such newness of life, there was only one whom he could now serve. He was dead to his old master and alive to his new one. He was dead to sin and alive to God.¹

This new life defines a new master but we still have the sinful human nature. God justifies sinners. While they are still sinners. At the moment of 'conversion' our hearts are freed to recognise and love God. To possess and embrace the saving faith that receives God's 'not guilty' verdict of justification and through which Christ's righteousness is also credited to us. Our sinful natures remain but a process, called sanctification, begins by which we are moulded, through the guiding of the Spirit (Christ in us), towards the glorification that awaits, in eternity. This third illustration reminds us that while we are not instantly made perfect the direction of our lives and the moulding of our wills is 'under new management'. Christ lives in us.

A tourist party took a guided bus tour that lasted many hours. They began expectantly driving through familiar landscapes with the driver pointing out the local features. Seemed normal enough. But this driver soon proved to be a 'hoon'. The bus had been designed to provide a safe and pleasant ride. But it had the capacity to be misused. This driver abused the bus's abilities. He made it do things that the makers never intended. Not only was it a threat to the passengers, when driven in this way, but also to all nearby. Even the road surface, the verge and local vegetation were desecrated as the bus even left the normal path. This was no way to live for a tourist!

Half-way into the planned tour, the first driver as he turned out to be, was relieved by the second one. This driver knew what was intended. His aim was to provide a rewarding journey. He adopted suitable driving practice. The bus, the passengers, the passers by and the environment all were preserved. Yet it was the same bus. It had as it were the same 'nature'. Just different drivers.

1 Stuart Olyott, *The GOSPEL as it really is*, p 76,77

The first driver had retired to the back of the bus to rest. But he was critical of the new driver's driving. Where was the excitement of threat and danger. Where was the exhilaration of making those other vehicles and pedestrians dash for their lives. What no deep wheel ruts, black tyre marks, damaged trees and gardens! The passengers' hope was that the second driver should stay in charge!

We depend (our guaranteed 'hope') on the power of the cross of Christ! Not just the power that freed us from sin's condemnation. But the power that also broke sin's power over us. The 'good driver' shall stay in charge.

Let us return to the continuing story of the slave who died and rose again:

He is now spending his days serving the king who saved him from the old master's power. One day while doing an errand, he meets his old master! The old master tries to instil the previous terror into him, and gives him commands, just like he used to do. He even threatens to beat him if he disobeys. What is the slave to do?

Like that slave, we must remember that sin has no longer authority, no rights no power over us. We have died to sin with Christ. By the Spirit, our hearts have been regenerated to be able to recognise and love God through Christ. Our new will is free to refuse where previously we could not. Didn't even want to!

But refusal is not enough. Mischief loves a vacuum! We must continue to be busy serving the one who created us, redeemed us and from before time began loved us. All our 'members', (that is our faculties) should be employed in serving God. In this way we fulfil our purpose: 'To Glorify God and enjoy Him forever'.

This is the only way to be truly alive. To be alive with Christ in us. When all our time is spent in joyfully seeking to please our new Master, we shall no longer be easy prey for the old one.

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

[2041]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen

Romans 6:15-23
Who's the 'Master'?

Rom 6:18

¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

The most important thing we can learn in life – far more important than short-term success, material or physical comfort, or even satisfaction in human relationships – is how to be right with God. And how to be right with God (or 'justified') is exactly what Paul is talking about in the first five chapters of Romans. Against the terrible black hole of our sin, and God's righteous anger against sin, Paul has set out the rescue mission of Jesus Christ. God sends His only Son into the world [God Himself] as a man, to save us from our sin by His death on the cross.

The wonder of this is seen all the more clearly when we realise how desperate our situation was. Nothing we did, or could do, was able to save us. Even knowing God's law only highlighted wickedness.

God in mercy gave Jesus His Son as the sacrifice for sin. He died in our place, turning us from enemies into friends. When we [were made able to put our trust in Him], we moved from death into life – a new life characterised by continuing trust and joy.

That's the story so far in Romans.

But what does this mean for life now and into the future? We are standing on the mountaintop of God's grace, and it is time to take in the view.²

At the beginning of Chapter 6, Paul, not for the only time, uses the idea of 'union with Christ'. More than being on the same team, this idea is like being in a new place. A new safe zone, where our sin has already been judged, death's powers defeated, and eternal life becomes a guarantee. By being united with Christ we share in His achievements: His death is also ours; His resurrection, ours; and gloriously His righteousness becomes what God sees in us. We are saved from the penalties of our sins AND made acceptable in God's sight.

Such 'uniting with Christ' comes through the gift of faith in Him. Having a new life, with a new 'heart', where our trust and hope is only in Him. (refer Ez 36:22-28)

Our new status 'in Christ' is firstly a cause of great thankfulness and gratitude to God for this outpouring of His love and mercy. Through true trust in the finished work of Christ, we have been put right with God. There is assurance in this for eternity, but for the here and now our personal struggles to live the Christian life are still with us. We have no anxiety or fear about where we stand with God. And so from this concern we are set free so that we may fully consider how we are to live our 'new lives in Christ'. This Christian life is not governed by a fear of being under God's judgement – that verdict has already been given as 'not guilty', justified, by Christ's once for all act of atonement. We have confidence in the guaranteed 'hope' for eternity.

Paul then answers, several times, the humanist inspired corruption of God's love and mercy. The thankless notion that if we are sure of eternity, why be concerned with our life now?

Paul's consistent answer to the question: If saved by faith and not by keeping God's commands, why not sin all the more? Is --- Certainly not! By no means!
It is in this context that he introduces, our 'being in Christ'. Through faith in Christ we share in His death – a form of baptism. And so are dead to sin. We share in His resurrection. And so are guaranteed that we will rise with Him in 'newness of life'.

The apparent 'objection' to the free gift of salvation – apart from the law, that may have been anticipated from the Christians in Rome who had Jewish backgrounds, was of great concern to Paul. Since he raises it throughout the letter. Last week we considered his answer given in 6:1-14. Again in 6:15-23, which we will focus on today, and even again at the beginning of Chapter 7 (next week).

V 15-23. Nobody is saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, or by anything else that he does. A person is saved because God has united him to Jesus Christ. He comes into the possession of all the benefits that Christ has procured for him when God brings him to believe.

If nobody is saved by keeping the law, then, what place does the law have in a Christian's life? This is the issue Paul now tackles. Once more he does it by asking questions of his own, here at 15-23 and later 7:1-6.³

The initial question could be re-stated as: In light of God's free grace – apart from the law – why shouldn't a Christian live a life of sin. A life just like the one before one's 'conversion' (or even worse). Paul at verses 17, 19 and 21 draws attention to the recognition, by the Christian Gentiles in Rome, of the sinfulness of the life they once lived. *... you who were once slaves of sin ... just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, ... But what fruit (what benefit NIV) were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?*

If saved by God's grace and not by keeping the Law, why bother with the Law at all? Why not just continue as we are, and live as though the Ten Commandments never existed? "Perish the thought!" In essence the same question and certainly the same answer.

Paul continues with the slave analogy. We can recognise the meaning here, but for us the example of slave markets and the like seem rather distant in place even if not in time. Yet it was a very telling figure of Paul's time. The nature of development of the Roman Empire through conquest, together with a partitioned society of ruler's and plebs with unequally applied laws, meant that Roman society and its economy depended on slavery. In the first century it was estimated that 30% of the population was in bondage.

Firstly he reminds his readers of the common and familiar experience. Many of the Roman Christians had or were slaves!

Ask a slave who is his master. He will answer. But for reasons of his own will he necessarily tell the truth? No. You do not identify the slave's master by what the slave says. It is who the slave obeys! You can always tell whom a person belongs to in this way. And so with the two masters that Paul is instancing.

One master, in verses 16-18, 20 and 22-23, is named as 'sin' and in verse 19 as '*impurity and ... more lawlessness (ever-increasing wickedness, NIV)*'. The other in verses 17-20 is 'righteousness' and in verses 22-23, 'God'. There are two masters for us all who demand two different kinds of service and who bring about two different rewards.

Sin/impurity/wickedness as master causes you do things that are consistent with the nature of fallen mankind. It demands that you do iniquity and when you have done this go on to even more iniquity. V 19. It demands that you do things that later, as you become a Christian, you look back on with shame and loathing. V 21

The other master, righteousness/God, His demands are completely different. The God of righteousness ensures that His servants do His revealed will as it is contained in the doctrinal teaching of the Scripture. V 17, 22 Those who have this master live a life of holiness (special separation) and growth in the 'fruit of the indwelling of the Spirit'. V 19, 22 The two kinds of service are complete opposites.

The two masters bring about different final outcomes. The wage of sin is death. V 16, 21, 23 Not just physical death but alienation from God with eternal punishment. The other, God – through the work of Christ, brings the gift of life everlasting. V 22, 23

The issue is that one of these masters is *your* master; one of these services is *your* service; one of these outcomes is *your* outcome. If you live in deliberate sin and impurity it is obvious who your master is and where you are heading. But those who belong to God, just do not live like that. Paul has made it absolutely clear why a professing Christian cannot live lawlessly. It would prove, despite his claims to the contrary, that he is not a true Christian at all, but that sin is still his master. It would prove that he is a person who is eternally lost. A true Christian certainly needs to be urged to be more submissive to his new master. V 19 But he does not live loose to the law of God. ...

The proof that you are a true believer does not lie in words, but in the life that you live. The New Testament teaches that whoever God justifies, he also sanctifies. Whoever has a new record in heaven [being not guilty] also has a new life here on earth.⁴

In evangelism it is not enough to teach that men and women must be drawn to Christ in faith and repentance gaining assurance of eternal life, without the recognition that it is only those that God justifies that will then also be sanctified. That the proof of their being enabled to serve the new master will be seen in the 'newness of life' that they have through Christ 'living in them'.

The challenge to [modern Christians] is to continue to 'bear fruit' more and more. It is easy, in the midst of a busy life, to be distracted from godly living, to be sound in orthodoxy but with a heart that is dead toward God. The spiritual excitement of the newly baptised [or converted] is to be renewed again and again within our lives. Otherwise we may become like the fruitless mandarin I once had in my garden. It had luxuriant foliage but just a few mandarins per year, a miserable crop. This is not what we look for in a fruit tree, and not what God looks for in us.⁵

[1704]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

Bound to Christ

Rom 7:4

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.

In introducing Chapter 7:1-6, Stuart Olyott (*The GOSPEL as it Really is – p85*), having explained 6:15-23, says, “A Christian's relationship to the law should now be clear. He is free from the law in the sense that he does not need to keep it to *be* saved. Yet he is not free from the law, for he needs to keep it to *prove* that he is saved. This is true as far as it goes, but D Martyn Lloyd-Jones in, *Exposition of Chapter 7:1-8:4 The Law: Its Functions and Limits*, goes into more detail – 359 pages, in fact for these 29 verses!

Lloyd-Jones points out (frequently) that not only is keeping the Law, through our unaided effort, ineffective in salvation but also in sanctification. The apparent contradiction with Olyott is resolved if we interpret him in the sense that we are made capable of living the Christian life, by 'Christ in us', the indwelling of His Spirit. This manifest itself in the 'fruit of the Spirit' which will prove to be in accord with God's moral law and that this external evidence will point to our being saved (justified in God's sight). That is, in condensed form, we may say that, proof of being saved, is seen in the life we are made able to lead through the Spirit.

Today we will follow fairly closely Lloyd-Jones exposition, with an overview of the whole Chapter. And then return – especially in the coming weeks – to a verse by verse consideration.

Overview Romans 7 – 8:4

Chapter 7 has 3 sections, followed by a 4 verse summing up at the beginning of Chapter 8. From 8:5 onwards Paul returns to his main theme of “the great doctrine of redemption” which he left at the end of Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 have been devoted to anticipating 'objections' and false assumptions which could arise from the way he has presented his main theme. Principally from the tremendous statement made at the end of Chapter 5. v 20 and 21. ²⁰ *Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,* ²¹ *so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

This statement rounds off the detail of v 12-19 (of chapter 5) where Paul has dealt with our incorporation into Christ and explaining that we now are to Christ as we once were to Adam, and accordingly our whole future is certain and guaranteed, since as sin once reigned unto death, even so (will) grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This may lead to the first misunderstanding: the charge of antinomianism. 'Live as you like, sin as much as you like. All is well; grace will look after you and cover all your sin.' He answers that charge in Chapter 6: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? **Certainly not!**

He proves that the effect of abounding grace, far from encouraging sin, will mean the death of sin, and lead to holiness and righteousness and glory in the presence of God. Indeed he proves that the whole design of grace is to promote holiness, because the purpose of grace is to make us holy, unblameable and finally perfect in the presence of God.

The place and function of the law is also likely to be misunderstood. Paul thus answers the second charge, namely, that his preaching of justification by faith only, and of our being united to the Lord Jesus Christ, seemed to be doing away altogether with the Law, and the whole notion of law, in God's dealings with the human race. In particular the phrase, 'the law was brought in', seemed to suggest that the Law was an insignificant aside. It is to answer this charge that Paul writes Chapter 7. He explains why he says that the Law was brought in (as an aside) and that we should rejoice in the fact that we are not 'under the law but under grace'. His aim is to show us the function of the Law as given by Moses to the Children of Israel and also to show that sanctification by the Law is as impossible as was justification by the Law.⁶

Paul's thesis of Chapter 7 is not only can man not sanctify himself by observance of the Law, the Law is even a hindrance and an obstacle to sanctification.

The detailed outworking of this proposition can be divided into three sections.

1. Verses 1-6: The general statement which defines our relationship as believers, to the Law. Our change in our relationship to the Law is as absolutely essential for our sanctification as it was for our justification. The key verse is 4: 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. What Paul is concerned about is the **bringing forth of this fruit to God**. To glorify Him! The whole aim of the chapter is to show that you can never bring forth fruit unto God as long as you are bound, married, to the Law. There is only one way to bring forth fruit unto God, and that is to be married to the risen Lord Jesus Christ. In verses 1-6 he puts it in a general way: What is our relationship, as believers, to the Law? It is not what it once was; there has been a change. He tells us how it has come about, and he tells us the object and purpose of it all. We could never produce fruit unto God unless that relationship had been changed and we had entered into a new relationship.

2. Verses 7-12: This is vindication of the Law. Some may say that the outcome of defining the function and purpose of the Law as Paul does leads to the idea that the Law is sin. His answer is 'Certainly not!' He continues to vindicate the Law in and of itself, showing that it is not the Law which is responsible for our lack of fruit unto God, but that that trouble is in ourselves. To

⁶ Rom 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin.*

those who might have said that there was something wrong with the Law if it could not make us bear fruit unto God, Paul says, 'Oh no, the trouble is not in the Law it is I (you)'. The Law has been given by God, and therefore the trouble cannot be in the Law, it must be in us. Later in Chapter 8 verse 3, he summarises 7:7-12 by saying that what the Law could not do was a result of our weakness of flesh (our natural, fallen nature). The weakness was not in the Law but in us. Only joined to Christ, and in His power can we be sanctified.

3. Verses 13-25: This section works out in a practical and experiential manner, the statements he has already made in the first two sections. He wants to bring the truth fully home to us, not just as general principles, but to show us what our position would be if we were still left under the Law. He shows how utterly impossible our sanctification would be in that condition. His final words introduce our only hope:

²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! [... who delivers me (NIV)]*

This chapter is a mighty statement with respect to the function of the Law and the place of the Law in the life of a believer. It is also the greatest statement found anywhere in the whole range of Scripture with regard to the final impotence of the Law in the manner of salvation. It is beyond any question the finest exposure of the utter futility of the position of those who think that morality alone is sufficient. It shows the complete futility of believing in Christian morality or ethics alone while shedding the Christian doctrine of salvation. It is a chapter that is very much needed at this present time. (1973 and now) We are confronted today by numbers of people who take a very superior position as great intellects etc. They are no longer interested in Christian doctrine. Of course not! They do not believe in the miraculous and supernatural; they do not believe in the absolute necessity of substitutionary atonement. They have shed all that while they claim to hold on to the Christian ethic. This chapter exposes the utter futility of their position.

Many Christian people keep on putting themselves back 'under the Law'. It generally happens like this: They have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore they are Christians; but then they recognise that they have fallen into sin; and then they begin to think, 'Was I ever a Christian at all?' They become uncertain of their salvation, they not only lose their assurance, they even doubt whether they are Christians at all. What has happened? It is the result of a complete misunderstanding of the relationship of Christians to the Law. Each time they sin they put themselves back 'under the Law', and they find themselves under condemnation again. This a Christian should not do. He is dead to sin's power to condemn. But this assurance does not lead to sinning as much as you like. Rather, the exact opposite. Such assurance will give you great strength to withstand sin. Though not you, but Christ in you! As Paul sums up in the first two verses of Chapter 8: ¹ *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*^[4] ² *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^[5] free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

There is another way, by which Christians may put themselves back 'under the Law': They fail to attain the standards set forth in the New Testament; They begin to test themselves in the light of Scripture. That is good and right, but when they find that

they have not attained the standard shown, instead of saying that they are poor Christians they begin to say that they are not Christians at all. This is where they go wrong. Putting themselves back 'under the Law', rather than seeking to trust in the Spirit's power within. Paul is concerned to show that we are dead to the Law, that we are finished with it. We are in a new relationship, and never again can we return to the old.

Then there are those who hear it said that a man must never put himself under the condemnation of the Law again – absolutely right. But they interpret that to mean: It does not matter what I do, I can sin as much as I like; there is no condemnation for me, I am safe, I am secure. This is sheer antinomianism – lawlessness. To say that it does not matter how you live or what you do is to dismiss everything that the Law states. This too is a fatal misinterpretation of Paul's teaching.

There are then the two extremes. Both serious error!
The fearful person who puts himself under the Law and its condemnation; and the bold, the brazen type, who does the exact opposite, and is guilty of antinomianism.

Thirdly, there are many Christians who have never fully understood the doctrine of their union with the risen Lord. Paul began to state this in verse 10 of Chapter 5. ¹⁰ *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* As we once were in Adam we now are 'in Christ'. Paul works that out in the remainder of that chapter. The whole point of the argument is, that it is the power of Christ through His Spirit in us that produces the fruit. Thank God that it does so! We know only too well what we alone are incapable of. The chief thing in the Christian life, therefore is to realise our union with the Lord Jesus Christ; that we are joined to Him, married to Him. What is our duty? What has the Christian to do? In a sense the Christian has only one thing to do, namely to be faithful to Christ, to obey Him in the same way as, 'Forsaking all other, to keep thee only unto Him'. His is the power, His is the only force that can produce the fruit. Our business is to realise our relationship to Him, to 'keep ourselves only unto Him' and to obey Him implicitly in all the details of our lives.

[2149]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

Romans 7:1-4 **Bearing Fruit**

Rom 7:4b

⁴ ... that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Last week we began our study of Romans Chapter 7, with a general overview: Both chapters 6 and 7 form a necessary aside from Paul's main message: "the great doctrine of redemption" which he has been developing up to the end of Chapter 5 and will return to at verse 5 in Chapter 8. The aside was necessary lest, mainly Jewish believers, would misunderstand or misrepresent Paul's references to the inability of God's true and holy Laws to bring about either Justification (freedom from the penalty of sin) or Sanctification (Holy growth in the Christian Life). Chapter 7 – 8:4 contains 3 sections and then in verses 1-4 of Chapter 8 there is a summary of outcome.

These three sections were described as follows:

1. Verses 1-6: The general statement which defines our relationship as believers, to the Law. Our change in our relationship to the Law is as absolutely essential for our sanctification as it was for our justification. The key verse is 4: *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.* What Paul is concerned about is the **bringing forth of this fruit for God**. To glorify Him!
2. Verses 7-12: This is vindication of the Law. Some may say that the outcome of defining the function and purpose of the Law as Paul does, leads to the idea that the Law is sin. His answer is 'Certainly not! He continues to vindicate the Law in and of itself, showing that it is not the Law which is responsible for our lack of fruit unto God, but that the trouble is in ourselves.
3. Verses 13-25: This section works out in a practical and experiential manner, the statements he has already made in the first two sections. He wants to bring the truth fully home to us, not just as general principles, but to show us what our position would be if we were still left under the Law. He shows how utterly impossible our sanctification would be in that condition. His final words introduce our only hope. After asking "*Who will deliver me from this body of death?*", he exclaims: *²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Today we will look more closely at verses 1-4.⁷

Here the theme, as it is for the whole chapter, is the 'relationship of the Christian to the Law' – his freedom from the Law, and especially why this had to take place (not only for Justification but also) in order to secure our Sanctification. Paul begins by reminding Christian believers (not just Jewish 'brothers and sisters' – since elsewhere when he means only these, he adds the phrase, 'those of my own race' (Rom 9:3)) what they already know about Law. Law in general, the universal law, not only, but

⁷ We continue to follow closely the detail from D Martyn Lloyd Jones, *ROMANS Exposition of Chapter 7:1-8:4 The Law: Its function and Limits*, p 14-28

including, the 'Law of Moses'. They already know that laws only have effect on a person while he lives.⁸ It is a general principle of law and of its relationship to men and women everywhere. So Paul begins (as he generally does) to argue from the general and self evident common understanding of all. As long as you live, you are subject (under the 'dominion') of the law, but death cancels this. You can't sue a dead man!

Having laid down a general proposition about all law, he takes up a particular example of a law and how it works. Arguing from the general to the particular. The other component in Paul's method of debate is that he is using the known, accepted and familiar as a model for the spiritual truth he wants to establish. The marriage analogy was such a model in his day and until Georgian times in British society also. But today Paul may have needed a different model, since without any Biblical warrant, the concept of marriage has already undergone serious modification in Western civilisation and is even now under further threat.

In Paul's day he could assume a common understanding of marriage, and use it to make his spiritual meanings clear.

Paul's fundamental point is that 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace' (6,14 KJV). The first point he makes relates to the relationship of mankind to the Law of God in our 'fallen' nature and before we are regenerate and come under grace. To Paul, marriage resulted in a woman being bound by the law to her husband. It was universally accepted that she was under the authority of the husband; under the power and control of that man. From this Paul wants to establish such a relationship of the unbeliever to the Law. That just as while a wife's husband is alive the woman is under the authority and the power and the control of the husband. While the unbeliever is alive the Law has authority, power and control over the person.

The second value of the marriage example in Paul's day was to establish the binding character of the relationship. The use of the 'perfect tense' in the Greek implies that the woman which has a husband is permanently bound by law to her husband. She goes on 'being bound', the tense used emphasises. So the relationship of the unbeliever to being bound by the Law is also life-long. It is not broken by anything – but death! However the corollary is also clear and of great significance. Death does end both relationships. Not only does this free the widow to enter into a new relationship – perfectly consistently with the law, but the believer, who has died in Christ to the Law, is similarly, perfectly in accord with (upholding) the Law, when the new relationship 'under grace' is born.

This then introduces the third use of the marriage analogy. The possibility of having a new relationship that upholds the Law. While the husband lives a new relationship would see a violation of the law. But if the relationship is dissolved through death, a new relationship is lawful. Paul wants it to be clear that the new relationship that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, having died to the Law, in Christ's death, does in no way contravene the Law. The Law is not being set aside, the Law is being maintained, since the new relationship is lawful since the old relationship has been ended, through death.

⁸ In answer to the current debate called, the 'new perspective on Paul', this reference is not just to the superseded ceremonial laws.

The fourth value of the marriage illustration is that it can draw attention to there being an object of the relationship. A purpose! In the Spiritual sense Paul says in verse 4, ... *that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.* The ultimate purpose of marriage, is not to gratify lust, but 'that the earth may be replenished'. (Gen 1:28) ²⁸ *God blessed them* (the man and the woman) *and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; ..."* Such is the original object of marriage. The object of the relationship 'in Christ' is for it also to 'bear fruit for God' as He has ordained.

Paul wants to develop this further. Just as the widow is set free from the law that otherwise permanently bound her, in order that she may enter into new productive relationship, we must be delivered from the power and dominion of the Law if we are to produce fruit unto God. It is only through a death that this can happen. Before we can 'bear fruit to God' we must enter the new relationship in Christ, while honouring and being in conformity with the Law. Paul has already put this magnificently in 3:26. ²⁶ *It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

We should be careful when using the marriage illustration not to take the personification of the Law too literally. The wife is freed from the dominion of her deceased husband by death. We are freed from the power and dominion of the Law also by death. Ours not the Law's! Paul is careful not to suggest that the law is dead (he uses a phrase, such as, 'we are dead to the Law'). Later in the second section (7-12) he emphatically vindicates the Law.

The distinction he makes is this: The Christian is 'dead to the Law' that is God's moral Law, God's moral demands on mankind which is perfectly summed up in the Ten Commandments, in the sense that: We are no longer 'under' it as a covenant of works. We are no longer in the position of trying (unsuccessfully as it turns out) to save ourselves, to justify ourselves, to sanctify ourselves and to make ourselves fit to stand in the presence of God, by keeping the Law. That was our position; that is still the position common to the whole of mankind. That is what is meant by being 'under the Law'; it means the Law as a means or method of saving ourselves, of being justified before God, of being sanctified in the presence of God. The glory of the Christian gospel is that we are no longer in that position; we are now 'under grace'. We are no longer trying to justify ourselves by works, or by conformity to the Law. *'Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified . (10:4)* BUT only in that sense are we dead to the Law. It does not mean that because we are Christians we should have no interest in the moral Law of God and its demands. Indeed the whole purpose of justification and the subsequent sanctification is to enable us to keep God's Law, which without being in the new 'graceful' relationship in Christ we are otherwise incompetent to do.

Only through God's grace in salvation through our being 'in Christ' can we be seen as the fulfilment of the promise made to Jeremiah (31) and retold in Hebrews 8:8b-10

⁸... *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,*

⁹ *not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land
of Egypt.*

*For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.*

¹⁰ *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:*

*I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.*

The Christian must never say farewell to the Law. Thank God, we are no longer 'under' it as a way of salvation, but we are to keep it, we are to honour it, we are to practise it in our daily life.

In a sense, in order that we might be enabled to live according to the Law, and therefore bear fruit unto God, Christ came and died for us and rose again. It is in order that we might do this that we are bound to Him, married to Him, found in Him, incorporated in Him. And His power working in us, and through us, enables us to fulfil the righteousness of the Law.

[1942]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**