

Alive in Newness of Spirit

Romans 7:1-6

Pastor Paul Anthes

Introduction: Because of Spiritual Union the believer died with Christ at the Cross and was raised to new, immortal and eternal life with Him. Spiritual union means that we are no longer “in Adam” and slaves to sin, but we are “in Christ” and free to live for God. This is a continuation of the Gospel good news. Christian! Do you want to live for Christ? Then know this; God made this possible through the miracle of Spiritual Union.

Romans 6:6-7 ⁶ For we know that our old man [ADAM] was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

It is obvious that when you die, you no longer sin. Death breaks the power of sin to enslave a man. Through the miracle of spiritual union, believers are dead to sin.... [it is not our master] and alive to Christ..... [who is].

The main charge of gospel deniers has always been that Grace gives license to sin. That if men are freely justified by faith then they will not obey the law of God. Believers know that sin is our enemy in this world and in these bodies. But God completely opposes the charge that Grace gives license to rebel against Him. Grace liberates from the power of sin while the law brings men into its bondage and holds them there.

Romans 6:14 ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under **law**, but under grace.

Grace breaks the bondage of sin while The Law sustains, and as we will see, even provokes it. Those under the jurisdiction of the Law are never free from bondage to sin. We need another master! One who can replace sin with righteousness and death with life. God says that the Law can never create righteousness. Its purpose was to reveal sin.

Romans 3:19-20 ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the **law** says, it says to those who are under the **law**, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the **law**; rather, through the **law** we become conscious of sin.

But does this mean that we are in fact free to defy God and live lives of sin and debauchery? Absolutely not! Scripture answers that question before we can even ask it.

Romans 6:15 ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under **law** but under grace? By no means!

Chapter seven jumps squarely into this discussion and gives God’s prospective on Law. Is The Law the standard of behavior, that if followed, will conform a believer to Christ and give daily victory over sin? Is The Law God’s tool for making men righteous and transformed in this world....as we have often heard? Let’s read the opening six verses of Romans Seven:

Romans 7:1-6 Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? ² For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ³ So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man. ⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Men and women in spiritual union with Christ are in the process of being transformed. Paul will call it, in chapter eight, “being conformed to the image of Christ.” How does that happen? Will it be through a concerted effort on our part to finally begin to obey every precept of God? To perfect ourselves through rules and law keeping? Our human inclination to self-righteousness will say sure! How else will that happen? But God will say “NO WAY!” In chapter seven Paul will give his own testimony of seeking to obtain righteousness through the law. This is really important to your Christian life. If you get this wrong you are speeding down the wrong track toward the demolished trestle. Here are four points we can consider from these verses:

- The authority of all law ends with death. [1-3]
- You are dead to the Law and joined to the Risen Christ [4]
- Before salvation our sin was awakened by the law [5]
- Our Union with Christ nullified the law’s sin provoking bondage. [6]

The Authority of all law Ends with death. [1-3]

Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? [1]: Paul has returned to affectionate language here. He has not called them brothers since 1:13. This is a more intimate conversation...an application of a large amount of intense theological teaching. “do you not know” is a phrase that implies that they now do know and will therefore agree with what he is about to say...which is true of both Jewish and Roman law. Paul’s readers were a mixed audience and law [without the article] seems to be generic at this point. The entire premise of our text this morning is summed up here and is pretty obvious to all.

“The Law only has jurisdiction over a person who is alive!”

Jurisdiction is the word “Lordship.” And this is true of all law. Of any law, not just the law of God. The law has no authority or power over the dead. What follows is a metaphor to apply and further explain the teaching of Romans six where it says....

Romans 6:8-9 ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies [2a]: To illustrate how death breaks the power of the law, Paul chooses the legal contract of marriage. This is not a teaching on divorce. God deals with that in other passages. It is an illustration that we can understand. The laws power or authority in a person's life is only valid over the living....never the dead!

She is released from the law concerning the husband. [2b]:The word translated "released" is very emphatic. Morris says that....

"'Released' is scarcely strong enough for the verb Paul uses. It means to render completely null and void. The apostle is saying that the woman's status as a wife has been abolished, completely done away. She is no longer a wife. And that means, of course that the obligations proper to a wife have no relevance to her." **Leon Morris**

So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress [3a]: If a wife leaves her husband and joins herself sexually to another man she will be called [bear the stigma of being] an adulteress.

But if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man. [3b]: A widow bears no such stigma. She does not have to deal with the law at all to be released from her marriage contract. It just ends with the death of her husband. If we make this about marriage and adultery we WILL miss the point that is being made....upon which the rest of the chapter balances. That point is very simple as William Barclay succinctly states it...

"The basic thought of the passage is founded on the legal maxim
that death cancels all contracts." **William Barclay**

You are dead to the Law and joined to the Risen Christ [4]

Therefore, my brethren [4a]: Having illustrated the truth that death ends the power of the law over us, Paul begins to tie this directly to your Spiritual Union with Christ.

"My brethren" is a further term of endearment. He knows that they are concerned about the place of the law. Many of his readers are Jewish converts to Messiah. They are steeped in the law. They have been taught, like many of us, that keeping the commandments is the way to holiness and righteous acceptance by God. Even after forsaking our own works and trusting in Christ alone for salvation, believers are very, very inclined to go forward in their own righteousness.

Speaking of this in "Transforming Grace," Jerry Bridges wrote: "Funny how the exceeding riches of God's grace seem to run out the moment we're saved. From then on, we tend to base our relationship with Him on our performance rather than on His grace. Of course, God continues to deal with us on the basis of His grace, whether or not we

understand it. It's just that when we don't, [understand it] we forgo the abundant freedoms that come from not having to measure up....the truth is...You'll never be able to ask for too much, need too much, hope for too much, or even sin too much. Like a never ending stream of ocean waves crashing on the shore, His grace 'super abounds' toward you without measure."

You also were made to die to the Law [4b]: Just like the separating death in Paul's illustration, we also are dead to the law and therefore severed from its jurisdiction. The definite article is now used referring to The Law of Moses. The verb here is also precise. "You were caused to die completely, in the past to the law." You did not die automatically and you did not make yourself die to The Law. God did that! The question becomes...."How did He do that?"

Through the body of Christ [4c]: When Christ died on the cross He not only caused you to die to Adam and that power of sin to rule and enslave you....BUT....He also caused your death to The Law and its power to condemn you to eternal death. This death is absolutely essential because until it happens we cannot be joined to Christ. You are either going to be justified entirely by your own righteousness or entirely by Christ's. There is no mixing of the two.

James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become **guilty of all**.

So...here is the problem; The Law is unable to make you righteous even though it itself is the very epitome of righteousness. It reveals righteousness and even defines it, but it cannot make a sinner righteous. Our union with Adam [at conception] made us sinners [Romans 5:12] and The Law condemned us for our sin and brought us death.

Romans 3:19-22 ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Chapter's five and six tell us that when God made us alive to Christ we also became dead to Adam. Now we discover that we are also dead to The Law. Its power, jurisdiction and authority to condemn us is over, nullified and declared void. BUT...this is not license to sin! The Law could never make you righteous in the first place. Its jurisdiction was not to produce righteousness, but to damn you for your sin and to make you convict you in the courtroom of heaven. No matter what a person does, God says, it is not a sin until there is a law. Have you ever said..."There ought to be a law?" Why do we say that? So that the evil person will be held accountable for what they did. The power of the law to hold you accountable for your sin is broken at the cross! BUT...this is not license to sin! It has been broken for a very specific purpose...here it is....

So that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead [4a]: You cannot be joined to Christ while under the condemnation of the Law any more than a wife can legally marry another man while still married to her husband. One relationship is broken and another is instituted in its place. This "joining" is the Spiritual Union that

Paul has been explaining to us since the beginning of chapter six. It has a specific purpose in God's design.

In order that we might bear fruit for God. [4b]: The Law produces no fruit for God. Paul explained it this way to the Colossians. They were flooded with false teachers trying to drag them back under The Law. These teachers were insisting that men are only justified by keeping certain days and eating and drinking certain things. To these brothers Paul said....

Colossians 2:20-23 ²⁰ If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹ "Do not handle, do not taste, **do not touch!**" ²² (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)-- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? ²³ These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

"The elementary principle of the world" is this...."Men are justified by works and religion and not by faith alone in Christ alone." These elementary principles are the foundation of every religion, **but not of Christ!** The Law was hijacked by principles and used to drag mankind back under the world's control. Trying to become holy and righteous by keeping the Law is a fool's errand. Only Christ is righteous so only those spiritually joined to Him will ever be transformed and conformed to righteousness before God. What Christ is...you are! That is how you get to heaven...period! AND...it is how you overcome sin in your life and become more like your Lord everyday...Period!

Romans 3:21-22 ²¹ But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

Those in Spiritual Union with Christ **will** bear fruit for God! This union is required for Fruit Bearing because until it happens you belong to Adam, to Sin and to the Law. ALL are cruel slave masters who produce no fruit of righteousness. On the other hand what the Spirit produces by grace, cannot be created or opposed by the Law.

Galatians 5:22-23 ²² But the **fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Before salvation our sin was awakened by the law [5]

For while we were in the flesh, [5]: By way of further explanation, Paul backtracks into our pre-believer past. "The Flesh" is our first birth. We were born sons and daughters of Adam and were slaves to sin. You cannot be in the flesh and in the Spirit. In the next chapter Paul explicitly says that....

Romans 8:8-9 ⁸ those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

The sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law [5b]: Sinful passions are just that! We were very passionate about what we wanted...what pleased us and we had little or no interest in what would benefit others or please God. But passions almost by definition, are not under our control. They are driving the agenda. We are not even sure why we want something so badly, never mind how to control them. They seem to come out of nowhere!

We already know what the Law cannot do! It cannot make a sinner righteous. It can only give men laws to disobey which expose their sinful passion and rebellion toward God. What we DID NOT KNOW until now.... Is that The Law itself actually aroused or inflamed those passions in us before our union with Christ. Being exposed to The Holy Laws of God provoked our rebellious and anti-God natures to break them.

“One wonders how a good thing, such as the holy Law of God, can arouse that which is sinful. First of all it does so because, apart from the knowledge of the Law, a person would not know good from evil. The Law, in declaring what is wrong, also arouses evil in the unregenerate person because his naturally rebellious nature makes him want to do the very things he learns are forbidden.” *John MacArthur*

Morris comments... “Paul is not saying that the law tried unsuccessfully to control these passions. He is saying that the law brings them about.”

Lloyd-Jones says that these passions... “are actually inflamed even by the Law of God. The very law that prohibits them encourages us to do them, because we are impure. So morality teaching can even be a positive danger.”

So the entire concept of forbidden fruit is Biblical after all. The Law exposes rebellious enemies of God to His Holy Character and requirements. Men in the flesh [in Adam] are incited by this exposure to defy God and break His laws. Like all sin it is....

..... at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death [5c]: It produced the exact opposite of righteousness and life. God wants you to be righteous. He died for you in your sin. He loves you in your sin because every sin of your life was known to Him before He set His affections on you.

Ephesians 1:4-6 ⁴ He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

But righteousness does not come through the Law. Not for salvation...which you all believe, AND NOT for godly living! Law keeping is the death knell to a transformed and Christlike life. It was not intended to work before you were saved!!! RIGHT? Why would you expect it to work after you are saved?

SO...The Law cannot make anyone righteous. It can only make us sinners by exposing us to the righteousness of God and condemning us for our unwillingness and inability to obey.

AND...The Law actually incited us [when we were unsaved] to commit sin because it gave us specific ways that we could rebel against God.

Our Union with Christ nullified the law's sin provoking bondage. [6]

But now we have been released from the Law [6a]: Coming back to the present after a quick tour around our past unsaved life...We have been released from the Law. We were captives and could not escape. But its power has been nullified and its authority to condemn has been voided. These are the meanings behind the verb "we have been released." This is the same word used to describe the woman whose marriage was nullified by the death of her husband. Death voids all contracts and nullifies the power of the law over men.

Having died to that by which we were bound [6a]: We died to the Law's power and its power to condemn us to hell when we were spiritually joined to Christ. This is why you and I have hope. It is not just a hope for heaven. So many Christians are hoping for heaven and exhibit little or none in this life. This is why Christ "made you die to the Law."

So that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. [6b]: There is an authentic expectation of a changed life because of Spiritual Union with Jesus. It will not be through trying harder to obey the commandments of God or as so many people do...creating a bunch of commandments that God does not even require. Be careful that you do not try to be holier than God by going beyond what God requires or cares about. This will kill your love for Christ and for others. Paul warned the Corinthians

1 Corinthians 4:6-7 ... not to exceed **what is written**, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. ⁷ For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

"We serve" is the root word for slavery. Our blessed Savior has broken our bondage to sin and the Law and bound us to Himself as His servants and His children and blessed heirs of eternal life. In fact, everything that Christ receives from the Father we receive, because we are in spiritual union with Him.

CONCLUSION: God's grace transforms us. It does not just give us a free pass to continue in sin and live in rebellion to God. Saving Faith produces new birth. Our first birth left us the spiritually dead children of Adam. Our second made us the spiritually alive children of God. We were taken out of Adam...the old man....and placed into Christ the new.

Sanctification is God's work to do in your life just as surely as salvation was. You need to know this and live accordingly. It is the Holy Spirit that will transform you. Yes, you need to know and understand the Word of God! You need to be in the Word and under it as well. You need the fellowship of believers and the care and instruction of those who care for your soul....but ultimately it is God alone who sanctifies you. He is the one to whom all that glory is due. Writing to his disciple Titus, Paul reminded him and us that ...

Titus 3:3-8 ³ we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.