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Living Hope EFC

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The Christian's Struggle with Sin! (Part 2) Romans 7

ILLUS: Drowning man. Going down for the 3rd time

Watchman Nee's story: At a summer camp, he saw a man drowning in the lake. The lifeguard was just standing there watching him. Finally, when the teenager was going down for the 3rd time, the lifeguard jumped in & easily pulled the boy out. Nee started to reprimand the man: "Why didn't you jump in sooner, he could have drowned?"

Life Guard: "I had to let him exhaust himself or we both would drown."

This principle is applicable also, in the Christian life.

- **Living the Christian life does not come naturally.** Often—we will not allow God to rescue us from our self-life until we're ready to drown!
- **7:15-18,22-24.** This is exactly where we find Paul in Romans 7!
- *And sooner or later, it is exactly where we will find ourselves!*

It is interesting that Rom.7, lies between Rom.6 & Rom.8.

- Rom. 6 & 8 are chapters about living in **victory** over sin! (**6:14**)
- Rom. 7 brings us to the reality of **our struggle** & often failure with sin.

POINT: Knowing (6:6) is not enough in itself to deliver us from sin.

Sadly, until there is real failure (ch7) we often do not progress into Rom.8

Romans 7 is an explanation of the Christian life lived on the basis of "law keeping," or "trying to be a good Christian in our own strength."

...And – why this is impossible to do!

Last Week

Rom.7:1-3 Understanding the Principle of Law.

POINT: Man's relationship to law is terminated by death.

- While we live, we are under the rule of the laws of our land.
- When we or another die, laws cease to have any bearing on us.
- **Law's jurisdiction is terminated by death.** Same principle as in 6:6-7.

Q: Why does Paul bring this up? (He is not finished with this topic.)

> Because the default program of the human nature, non-Christians & Christians alike, is thinking we can please/ serve God on the basis of law.

- In 3:19-20 Paul had explained that law couldn't save anyone from sin
- In 3:21 God's r'ness had to be given to us "apart from law," as a gift.
- In 5:20 he stated that the Law was given so sins would increase.
- And in 6:14 Sin's mastery ended *because*, "we are not under law."

POINT: Law never could make us r'ous before God. Once we become Christians, law has no more ability to make us good than before.

- **Law has its purposes, but making man r'ous is not one.**

Rom.7:4-6 We died to law in order to be married to Christ.

1. (v.4) The Christian (Church) has been separated from "law" by death, so that we can marry Another & live a new life.

- GRK: "**You were put to death, with reference to the law.**" HOW?
- **Christ** died to law's jurisdiction, and lives unto God (**6:9-10**).
- **Law said:** "Wages of sin = death." Christ took our sin, satisfied Law, came back to life – immortal, incorruptible, sinless, living to God.
- **Christ is forever separated from any former/ future demand of law.**
- WE, by virtue of our union with Christ, died to the Law's claims upon us, and live - partaking of the power of His endless life in us.

ILLUS: "Law" was our first husband. Death ended our relationship to law so we would be free to marry another. We are united to Christ. -**6:3-5,8**.

Every man ever born is subject (married) to God's Law –by nature of the fact that God is our Creator & we are His subjects. God's law demands that we obey Him 100%. **Sin interrupted this possibility**, so now, while law properly demands allegiance to God, *sin keeps us from complying*. The only thing Law can now do is reveal our failures & our judgment.

As long as we're related to this principle of "law" (Gal.3:10), we're doomed. And the only way to end our relationship to law, is **to die** to it.

2. We could not marry Christ until we died to our first husband, Law.

ILLUS: The 1st Cov't had to end before the New Cov't could begin.

Hebrews = The Supremacy of Christ over the Law (1st Cov't).

(1) The Law was totally ineffective in forgiving sins & giving eternal life.

- The priesthood, Law, Temple, Sacrifices all were ineffective!
- The First Cov't had to be ended, & set aside – **8:7-13**

Heb.8: ⁷For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. ⁸But God found fault with the people and said:

"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

⁹It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers...because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord.

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

¹²*For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.*"

¹³By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

POINT: The Law could not forgive sins or make anyone righteous.

(2) Christ was God's means of giving man eternal life (New Cov't).

- **Heb.9:14-15, 10:14**

9: ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, *so that we may serve the living God!* ¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under *the first covenant*.

"By one sacrifice he has *made perfect forever* those who are being made perfect," 10:14

- CONTRAST: **8:8** "God found fault with people," **10:14** "perfect."

POINT: The Law is a schoolteacher to lead men to Christ.

Christ is God's means of salvation, complete to the **inner** spirit of man.

- **By faith in Him, we enter the New Cov't of grace, and also die to any relationship to the 1st Cov't, Law.** – **Gal.2:19-20.**

OUR NEW MARRIAGE is not based on LAW but on LOVE/ SPIRIT!

- Joined to Him = we have entered New Life, **Rom.7:6. Heb.12:22-24.**

3. (v5) The law actually enflames & arouses our sinful passions.

"The sinful nature" (FLESH): describes man's condition before the gift of the Holy Spirit, the very antithesis of the Spirit, the special vehicle of sin.

4. (v.6,4) Joined to Christ, we can NOW produce fruit for God. (6:4)

- We are released from law: both as to it's claim and to the influence of sin as it uses the law against us.

Moule: The common ground of both law and grace is our obedience; at which both Law & Grace aim. *Law* does so "by the letter," by prescribing its own inexorable (unalterable) terms. The *Gospel* does so "by the Spirit," by the divine plan of redemption, which brings direct upon the soul the influence of "the Spirit of the Son of God," who pours out the love of God in the heart. *The Gospel both intends and effects the submission of the will to the will of God,*" 126.

Rom.7:7-8 Sin uses the Law –to bring out all kinds of bad desires.
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1- (vs.7) NOTE: Law is not sin. *It is important* - with all this talk about how law condemns, brings wrath, arouses & exposes our multiple sins – that we don't think that Gods Law is somehow defective or bad.

- **Law performs the function for which God sent it: to reveal His character & moral standard, so man would see his sin & repent.**
- PAUL – "I wouldn't have recognized sin without the law."

APPLY: Fact is, we are many times blind to our sin. We can easily explain sin away as: lack of education, "I'm Irish," our culture, "everyone does it." - If our conscience becomes calloused we are in grave danger

- **Here is where the Law of God does its "saving work" by exposing our sin to us, and leading us to a Savior.**

2- (vs8) Sin uses the Law –to produce all kinds of bad desires in us.

ILLUS: Little boy starts 1st grade.

- He is filled with excitement. Buys colors, paper, pencils, backpack.
- School starts! It's not long & he gets scolded for talking to new friend
- 3 times! All the sudden it dawns on him, "he can't talk in class."
- He must sit still in his seat & wait till recess. *"Teachers eyes are on me and she'll judge my every move! And punish me if I break rules."*
- All the sudden he feel 1,000 eyes are on him. He must be good!
- He can't even look like he wants to talk to his neighbor...and he never wanted more – to talk! He wants to get up, move around, see others' papers, ask questions, be friendly. **But he must not...or else!**
- Otherwise mom & dad will find out. And what will the other kids think of him if the teacher disciplines him for "being bad?"

POINT: Rules (law) totally ruined his school experience.

- **Q: Are the rules bad?** No, they're good & for the good of everyone.
- **But they show up the worst about him.** And that's not the end of it.

RESULT: To keep from being embarrassed, he now tries to be sneaky. But he still gets caught. Now, besides breaking rules, he is deceitful.

- He feels guilty over breaking rules. He sees himself as a failure, worse than other kids who are just "naturally good."
- Now he begins to dislike the teacher because she is **the rule enforcer.** He's afraid of her. He talks about her behind her back.
- He even starts disliking the "goodie-two-shoes" who always obey and get teacher's praise (praise).
- Discouraged...he plans his escape from 1st grade! - Plays sick.

Q: How did little Art go from looking forward...to hating first grade?

- **RULES did not make him this way, they only revealed his nature.**

PRINCIPLE: Rom.7:9-11

- **As adults** – we face this same scenario throughout our lives!
- **Pick any vocation, marriage, our citizenship...Rules always exist!**
- **Idealism** soon turns into *rules that limit us, and we rebel.*
- **Law holds up and appropriate standard but something inside us (sin) misinterprets law as being confining, unfair – bad, and we rebel.**
- **The extent of our rebellion will be determined by the extent to which we become focused on the rules/ law. Law arouses sin!**

Rom.7:12-13 The Law did not make us sin, sin did.

Paul exonerates the Law, totally. Law is from God and reflects right and wrong. It can never be accused of evil. It is holy and good.

- God sent His Law to warn & protect us against sin, to help us!
- It is through the command that sin is seen as utterly sinful!

ILLUS: Law is like a Plumb line, (A level)

A level can expose a crooked wall, but it didn't make the wall crooked, nor can it straighten it. *The wall is crooked by itself.*

- **Law doesn't create sin, it shows up in us what was there all the time**
- We are very resourceful at hiding our sin, and that is dangerous.

Rom.7:14-20 The Law is Good, "I" am the problem.

Here Paul lays out the duplicity in every Christian's experience.

1- There is a traitor within. The heart of our problem is the "flesh."

- σαρκί: "Fleshly-(v14) = **sold under sin!** My flesh –v18,25.
- **Gal3:2-3;5:17** The FLESH is in complete opposition to Spirit. **8:6-8.**
- Although we accepted Christ and His Spirit has come to live within us, our "flesh" (sin nature) has not changed, and never will!
- **No amount of LAW, guilt or effort can change our sinful nature – so that it will finally live according to God's Law!**

2- (vs.17,20) Paul is not excusing his responsibility for sinning.

- He is explaining the fact that inside him (us) yet resides the remnant of the Old Life, the sin nature. And he is not able to resist it.
- We can't absolve ourselves of responsibility for our actions.

JOKE

Like the guy before the judge who said, "**My OSN made me do it.**"
Judge: "Then I sentence your OSN to 6 mos, and you too for complicity."

3- You hear the crisis in Paul's voice, vs.18! "I Can't do it!"

- Here is the Christian in crisis – trying to do what is right, trying to please God, **trying not** to covet, lust, hate, be bitter, selfish & failing.
- (What is your besetting sin – that keeps mocking your Christian life?)
- **But will power alone – is not strong enough to free us from sin.**
- We determine to obey God, make every effort to hit the target, and end up hating ourselves because once again we failed.
- The problem is not that we disagree with the Law of God, we just have no strength to keep it! **Our best efforts fall short. Is there hope?**

Rom.7:21-25 The personal struggle rages on!

1- (v.21-24) There are two raging forces, warring within the Christian.

- There will never be a truce or peace treaty. Paul is sin's prisoner!
- Here is Paul, going down for the 3rd time! **About to drown.**

- ***He is desperate for Someone to rescue him!* – vs.24**
- He's been to seminary, taken all the seminars claiming to offer the secrets of spiritual victory, read all the books, prayed, memorized Scripture, attended church, witnessed for Christ, even started churches...and yet here is Paul, the Apostle, sinking in sin.

2- Vs.25 – “In Jesus Christ.” (6:23, 7:25, 8:39)

- **Back to Christ he goes! And HIS finished work against sin 6:11.**
- **Faith reckons** upon (6:11), and freedom comes immediately.
- **Q:** Was victory over sin, covetousness, a victory already purchased and promised? While Paul was struggling in his doubt, was Christ's victory over sin any less real, available, valid?
- **Paul's failure is not a commentary on God's provision, but on our unwillingness to walk after the way God tells us to,** to make it ours.
- **God cannot give victory over sin to our self- effort to keep the law, when it took death and resurrection to defeat sin. Gal.2:21**
- Rom.1:17 – Salvation, r'ness – comes by faith/grace—from first to last.
- We are living with New Cov't provisions, in fallen bodies.

SUMMARIZE CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Law presents God's standard to man, and condemns his shortcomings.
2. Death ended our relationship to law so we could be united to Christ.
3. Although we accepted Christ and His Spirit has come to live within us, our “flesh” (sin nature – yet within us) cannot keep God's Law.
4. No amount of LAW, guilt or effort can change our sinful nature!
5. When we attempt to keep God's Law with the strength of our self-will, our “fleshly nature,” we fail miserably and come under condemnation.
6. Victory over our sin nature (keeping God's good laws) will not come from the power of our “will,” but from counting upon our death & resurrection union with Jesus Christ - Rom 6:11-14.