

War and Peace

Romans 7

Gospel Truth #4, **Believers obey God**

(heart)

When we unpack the Gospel, we find there's **only 2 masters** in this universe. And we are not one of them. Our society would look at that with great disgust. Because they would say that we are masters. We have choice. Choice, yes. Masters, no. The Bible is clear (Rom 5:12vv) that people are **born under sin as master**, on Adam's team (condemned). So people need rescue. As unbelievers **under Adam**, the only option is serving **under sin's power**. It may seem like people are serving their own interests but in the long run, the puppet master sin (Satan) leads them to death and eternal punishment. Even the most religious fall short of the glory of God. And those who refuse to acknowledge the One who put the stars in place – end up being given over to their depraved, sin infested motives. Everything from shameful lusts to greed, envy, murder, deceit, gossip, disobeying parents, slander and boasting. They become senseless, faithless, heartless and ruthless. And approve of those who will join them in it (Rom 1:18-32). They store up God's wrath and condemnation (Adam's team). Jesus declared that evil comes from within the heart (Mk 7:21-23) and makes all

unclean before God. In English, we call this a sin nature.

An amazing thing that happens when we believe God sent Jesus to save us. He indwells us and realigns our heart desires so that we want to serve our original purpose.

*But thanks be to God, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become **slaves to righteousness**.* Rom 6:17

Obeing God from our heart? That is a miracle. Many people clamor after a physical miracle. Instantaneous healing, knowledge of the future, superpowers. But this is a greater miracle. The testimony of a transformed heart and mind. That brings God glory.

What should be clear from studying Romans 6, is God did not **set believers free** from Satan's hold (sin and death), so they would volunteer for sin again. I say 'volunteer' because God's rescue, means believers have a choice about who they serve.

Pray A little boy went over to a pastor's house, where the pastor was doing some carpentry in his garage. The boy simply stood there and watched him for quite a long time.

The preacher wondered why this boy was watching him and was finally so curious that he stopped and said, "Son, are you trying to pick up some pointers on how to build something?" The little boy replied, "No. I am just waiting to hear what a preacher says when he hits his thumb with a hammer."

If we've been set free from sin as the master (justified by faith), how do we deal with the ongoing struggle with sin inside (mortal bodies)?

It begins with **right thinking**.

If you've been told that becoming a follower of Jesus means a life of blind faith and you leave your brains behind. That's dead wrong. God's Gospel is very specifically concerned about how we think: How we think about God; How we think about sin and God's law; Who we're serving and what kind of results we want now and forever.

God sees the believer, having died with Christ. Anyone who has died with Christ is **dead to sin**. Sin no longer has the authority (strings are cut) to enslave and hold for God's judgement of 'guilty'. What's new today is going to be shocking news for Paul's readers trying to be righteous by following God's law. Anyone who has died with Christ is **also dead to God's written law**. (Mosaic)

Read 7:1-3 Authority till Death

Paul is speaking to those who know the law - could be believing or unbelieving Jews and even Gentiles who converted to Judaism. The point is obvious – We are obligated to stay true to the law while were alive - just like in marriage – till death do us part. It will do you no good, attending a funeral to deliver a court order to the deceased. He's dead already. The family is left to settle things. The law cannot reach him nor can the pastor. His accounts will be settle directly with his Maker.

Read 7:4-6 Bearing Fruit

Why did God leave us here? *That we might bear fruit for God*. I was reminded about the imagery of a grape vine that Jesus used. The Father is the gardener, Jesus is the vine, and believers are the branches in the vine that produce. The vine receives the perfect amount of nutrients (esp. love) for the branches because the gardener makes the perfect conditions. We are to remain faithful (attached to the vine). And God will make sure we bear much fruit for Him. And we'll be developed – pruned with trials for perseverance, character and hope (Rom 5:3-5). And what is fruit that brings glory to God?

Making disciples. Praising God (Heb 13:15)
Letting God shine through (Matt 5:16)

Loving one another to prove Jesus is alive! (Jn 17)

The way it works because of Adam, is that all people are bodily connected (flesh) to the realm of sin. So much so, that he calls it the realm of flesh. So, when God's good law is introduced, the person is already being 'excited' at a natural level to break that law...in all kinds of ways. (mind and body).

What's tricky for us is believing we have been transferred under Christ, yet experience the powerful effects of sin in our mind and body. Right? Satan loves it when believers are caught up with a war inside - distracted from producing good fruit. Doesn't sound much like peace with God, does it?

Does dying to the law mean it ceases to exist as a lamp to light our way? Surely not. All Scripture is God-breathed and trains us for righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). *My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commandments in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you...*(Prov 3:1-3a).

We've died, not the law. The law was meant to bring Israel life. The hope was that if they began to disobey, they would turn to God for mercy with a broken heart. But they were too

proud. They stubbornly said, "I'll show God I can meet that law."

Under Christ, the believer is in tune with the heart of God's law. Not just mechanical obedience to the written code, but what's behind it...the spirit of the law. It's the difference between what the Jews knew to be the law (do not kill) and what Jesus taught at the sermon on the mount (love your enemies). By the Holy Spirit, believers are empowered to live more like citizens of God's kingdom. We don't just restrain ourselves from killing someone, we find in God the resources to not to let anger have its way and even love our enemies. Being dead to the law in Christ means that the Mosaic law does not have the authority to condemn. Jesus paid it all and lives to guide us more fully into God's will by the Holy Spirit.

This is God's promise being fulfilled: *I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts* Jer 31:33

It will come about after this that I will pour out MY Spirit on all mankind Joel 2:28vv

Born-again believers are the only ones equipped to properly know and carry out God's will because His Spirit is in US (if we obey).

Now Paul will describe his life before meeting Christ (trapped in sin and condemned to death).

Read 7:7-13 Can't blame the Law

The law did its job to point out coveting as sin, so he would live righteously. But Saul of Tarsus is trapped under the power of sin (was a trap). He can't blame the law. It is God's holy and righteous standard. God is not going to lower His standards. Sin twists what is good to bring about the curse and death.

In the next section, Paul seems to continue relating as one under Adam and the law. Others see Paul, speaking from his current experience as a mature believer but this would not fit with Paul's teaching in chapters 6 and 8 well. No matter how you see it, the point is to show the weakness of the law to save anyone...because the law cannot free us from spiritual death (under Adam, condemned).

Read 7:14-20 I do not do

Paul has separated himself into 2. The thinking side wants to do good but the unspiritual (composed of sinful flesh) seems to drag him into doing what he hates to do. He doesn't understand why his thinking side is losing, except that the sin living in him does it. "It's not really me." It's the dilemma of humanity.

Read 7:21-25 War

Are believers still slaves to God's written law while in Christ? No. The beginning of chapter 8 will settle that point for good.

If Paul is speaking as Saul, why does he answer the cry of all humanity –

with a clear Gospel answer? How could he not? There's limits to the illustration. Paul is making a plea to those still trying to be saved by their works. (You can read a stronger one in Gal 5). Paul is pleading, you need rescue – just like I did. And thanks be to God, Jesus confronted me on the road just outside Damascus. Thanks be to God for sending that neighbor over to invite me to 5-Day club...to meet Jesus.

And for us, thanks be to God will receive sinless bodies in the end. But we must recognize sin still exists as a power connected to our mortal bodies. But if we think like we're still stuck on Adam's team, we're in for a life of ongoing internal war. When we realize that we are in Christ, life has a series of battles with some defeats but many victories and blessings that bring God glory. Because Jesus has won the war!

For the believer, sinning is more than being overcome by sin's power. It's worse but not without hope. When believers sin...

We are ignoring our transfer to Christ and what He did to get us there. We just heap on more sin. Jesus died, so we could obey God from the heart: bringing Him glory and blessing for us. When we choose the wrong master, ignore God's warnings and grieve the Spirit of God. We go back to serving

the one we're no longer obligated to serve anymore. It is closer to being like Peter – seeing the eyes of Jesus, while denying you even know Him. There is hope. Why? Because we've been reconciled with God. We are not transferred back to the realm of Adam each time we sin. That would mean the Holy Spirit leaves us and we are no longer in Christ. Christ died once for all (Rom 6:10).

That's a strong argument that Paul is speaking as Saul. He says *I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin* (v14), *a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me* (v24). We may feel like we deserve to be tossed from the game...back on Adam's side to die. Christ's sacrifice paid that price. Satan can only deceive us into thinking

we're a lost cause. Stop believing it. And so when we come to our senses, like the prodigal son...we go to our Father and confess our sins and ask if He will take us back as a servant. And what does He say? My son is home.

Our testimony to the world is they can catch glimpses of Christ in us...despite living in the same kind of bodies they live in. Many are sick of living in weakened bodies...but don't have hope. We are the ones to let them know...by faith, they can receive incorruptible, eternal ones in the end (1 Cor 15:50-53). No more sin!

Application: Practical and Personal

In a nutshell, Paul teaches that sin is refusing to honor and praise God. Here's some helps for putting off the sin that so easily entangles? (Heb 12:1).

1. **Don't underestimate the power and seriousness of sin.** It exerts power over the flesh to oppose the Spirit. Even our heart is deceitful (Jer 17:9). Sin mingles with our motives and deeds. It steals joy, ruins fellowship with God, diminishes fruitfulness, robs us of peace, hinders our prayers, brings the discipline of God and renders our service useless. It leaves people in a state of self-loathing that leaks everywhere.
2. **Talk to God about it.** "I don't want to break your law, grieve your Spirit or dishonor the name of your Son." Psalm 119 is a great example for developing resolution not to sin and seeking the Lord's help.
3. **Take care of the dust of today.** Don't harbor sin. Resist the first risings of the flesh – don't pocket them for another time. Keep a short, daily account with God. Call it out at conception (James 1:13-15). Start the day with the Lord's prayer.
4. **Be watchful.** Satan is a deceiver and we're not as spiritual as we think (by God protection). Don't put yourself in harms way (Job 31:1) Guard your heart (soul care). Meditate on the Word (ie Col 3:16, Ps 37:31; 119:9). Pray for God's help regularly and 'in

the moment' (Eph 6:18, Col 4:2). Remember you're not here to be pleased, you're here to please the Lord - better fruit (Gal 5:22-23).

5. **Repent immediately** (Peter in Matt 26:75). Repentance is confessing and planning not to do it again. Name it before God so there is a high degree of accountability. If you hold back, your guilty of really wanting to do it again.
6. **Wisely find family help.** Establish relationships with other believers that will watch your back (Gal 6) to help you with holy living.

Credit is due to John MacArthur for some of the framework and wording on this list

Jesus said, in this world you will have trouble but I have overcome the world. Why did Jesus tell us that? So when we would trust Him for **peace**. (Jn 16:33) Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 Jn 3). **Remain in Christ for peace.**

Benediction

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9-10