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Sermon Notes

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Dead to the Law, Fruitful for God

Romans 7:1-6

I. Sinai's Bondage, Calvary's Freedom

A. A Dreadful Day: Law Begins Its Murderous Career

Exodus 19: On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, ¹⁹ and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. ²⁰ The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up

B. Another Dreadful Day: Law Completes Its Work in Christ

II. Context: A Very Famous Chapter!

A. Context in the Bible: The Problem of the Law

1. Paul's Experience in Romans 7
2. Deeper question: what relationship should the Christian have with the Law?
3. What is the nature of the Law itself?

is the Law sin? is the Law evil? is the Law still to be obeyed?

B. Paul Answers Certain Charges

1. Jewish zeal for the Law

a. attacks on Jesus

Matthew 12:10 “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

Matthew 19:3 “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

“Is it lawful...???” was the key question for the Jews

b. attacks on Paul

Acts 21:27-28 some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, ²⁸ shouting, “Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place.

2. Paul’s doctrine

Romans 5:20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more

Literally, Paul says “The law came in alongside...” It seems like Paul treats the Law as an interloper, with no proper role in the history of humanity

Romans 3:28 we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Romans 4:13-15 [Paul proves that Abraham was justified while still uncircumcised...Law had nothing to do with his salvation!!]

YET... Paul says he upholds the Law:

Romans 3:31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

How, Paul? How can you possibly state that you uphold the Law?

What exactly IS the proper relationship of the believer to the Law?

THAT is the question Paul addresses in Romans 7!!

C. Overview of Romans 7

1. Romans 7:1-6 Doctrine laid out in principle and illustrated by marriage

Married to the Law bears fruit for death

Married to Christ bears fruit for God

2. Romans 7:7-12 Vindication of the Law Itself

Romans 7:7 “Is the Law sin?”

3. Romans 7:13-25 Doctrine worked out in practice: The contradiction of a believer living in the flesh as if under the Law

Culmination of entire chapter:

Romans 7:24-25 “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

D. Benefits of Studying Romans 7

1. Profoundest analysis of sin in the Bible
2. Profoundest analysis of the function of Law in the life of a believer
3. Total shredding of misconception of Christianity as basically an ethical/moral system

Lloyd-Jones: Most of the troubles in the Christian life are due to a failure to grasp Romans 7 properly. People grossly underestimate what a terrible thing is sin!!”

4. End results: solid basis for sanctification and Christian assurance

Many weak Christians constantly doubt their salvation because of failures to keep God’s Law! They constantly ask, “Am I really a Christian?” based on their daily performance! In one day, out the next, back the third!!

Two opposite errors Christians can fall into concerning their relationship to the Law:

- 1) I am not worthy because of my failure to keep the Law
- 2) I do not need to be concerned about the Law

Ironically both lead to a life of sin... one through discouragement and defeat “why bother trying anymore? The Christian life is impossible to live!!!”

KEY: UNION WITH CHRIST

III. ‘Till Death Do You Part: The Law’s Jurisdiction Limited By Death (vs. 1-3)

vs. 1 *Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?*

A. The Principle Declared

1. Again the Appeal to the Mind: “Do you not know...”

2. The Audience: Those Who Know Law

Roman law... Biblical law... Any law!

3. The Law’s Authority

a. Greek: “To Lord it over”, “to have jurisdiction over”, “to have dominion over”

b. authority to rule behavior (Pharisees: “Is it lawful to...?”)

c. authority to condemn misbehavior in life

law essentially demands perfection

even the slightest transgression makes us culpable before God

James 2:10 *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

law ultimately stands over us to accuse us

d. authority to condemn eternally

4. The Principle: Dead Men Are Released from Law

The Law has a jurisdiction... a power... an authority; but only so long as a person lives!

Illus. Lee Harvey Oswald never brought to trial

B. The Principle Illustrated by Marriage

vs. 2-3 *For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. ³ So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.*

1. Why Marriage as an Illustration?
 - a. legally binding relationship under law
 - b. bound together “Till death do us part!!”
 - c. binding, restricting behavior

The married woman is not free simply to marry another man! She is bound by the law of marriage!

- d. BUT restriction only lasts as long as both partners are alive
2. Central Concept: Death terminates relationship to Law

prior to death: restriction by law

after death: freedom from law
 3. Deeper meaning: we’ll see in a moment... marriages bear fruit!!!

IV. The Principle Applied Spiritually: Death to Law, Marriage to Christ (vs. 4)

vs. 4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

- A. Principle Applied Spiritually: You Died to the Law
 1. Union with Christ: Doctrine and History Save Us
 - a. “through the body of Christ”: INCARNATION
 - b. died through the body: CRUCIFIXION
 - c. to Him who was raised from the dead: RESURRECTION

These doctrines save us from the Law’s accusations: Christ took on a human body, that body was nailed to a tree under the wrath of God, Christ rose from the dead on the third day

These are historical facts and they are the unshakable basis of our new relationship to the Law

2. Result: death to Law... previous relationship has ended forever

“You died to the law...”

- B. How Christ’s Body Produced Our Death to Law

God has an unshakable zeal for the glory of His words... the Law must be upheld at every minor point!!

Illus. The "nice guy" an unjust judge

God must uphold His law... yet the Law accuses us of all manner of sins

If Christ would save us, He must stand under the Law

The Law killed Christ!!!

1. Christ born under the Law

Galatians 4:4-5 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

2. Christ perfectly obeyed the Law

Matthew 5:17-18 *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*

3. Christ died under the Law's curse

Galatians 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

4. All of this so that God could be just and justifier of the Law's transgressors

Colossians 2:13-14 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.*

Romans 3:25-26 *God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

God is absolutely zealous that not one of His words falls to the ground

The Law demanded the death of everyone who ever broke His Law... Christ paid that death penalty, and perfectly upheld the Law

C. So What Does “Dead to the Law” Mean?

1. Does NOT mean completely free from the Law’s requirements

a. law upheld by Christ

Matthew 5:19 *Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

b. law upheld by Paul

Romans 3:31 *“Do we then nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather we uphold the law.”*

Romans 13:8-10 *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

Ephesians 6:1-2 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother”--which is the first commandment with a promise-- ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*

c. Ten Commandments and Two Commandments

- Can we now have as many Gods as we like?
- Can we now make idols?
- Can we now dishonor our parents, or murder whenever we want?
- Can we now commit adultery whenever we want, or steal anything our hearts covet?
- Do we still have to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength... or are we free from that?

- Do we have to love our neighbor as ourselves, or can we hate him whenever we want?

Obviously the law still remains!

2. Law written in our hearts, lived out in our lives: NEW COVENANT

Hebrews 8:10 This 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.

3. What DOES it mean to be “dead to the Law”

- a. dead to law as condemner

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

Law will never again accuse you as a criminal before the bar of God’s justice

Christ’s death on the cross has removed forever the sting of God’s law

God’s law has been perfectly fulfilled by Christ’s atoning death!!!

Rejoice forever... the log record of all your sins has been removed... you died the penalty you deserved when Christ died

- b. dead to law as manner and mode of serving/relating to God

Romans 7:6 We serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code

We are dead to the law’s accusations

We are also dead to the law as a manner of relating to and serving God

V. A New Life: Married to Christ (vs. 4)

vs. 4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

A. Marriage Illustration Carried Through... With Needed Changes

1. Logic called for LAW to die

The woman married to the husband in vss. 2-3 remains alive and her husband died... she is then free to marry another

In like manner, Paul says a death has occurred so that a new marriage can take place

BUT the LAW is NOT dead... it will remain until the end of the world, judging all who have not trusted Christ

The Law also remains for Christians to live out by the power of the Spirit

2. NO... it is WE who died to the Law
3. In real life, this could never happen... the partner who dies cannot remarry
4. BUT we can, because we have been raised from the dead spiritually into a whole new life!!

B. Paul's Consistent Teaching of Sanctification: Negative-Positive, Dead-Alive

1. Dead to Sin, Alive to God
2. Dead to the Law, Married to Christ

C. Our Marriage to Christ

1. Whole new relationship to God
2. Law is gone... love has replaced it
3. "Profound mystery" Ephesians 5

Ephesians 5:31-32 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.

This marriage analogy now characterizes our whole new relationship to God!!! No longer as a slave in terror trying to fulfill all the Law's demands... always deserving and fearful of condemnation!

Now,

vs. 6 "...we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code."

We'll discuss the perfect beauty of this relationship next week

VI. Application: Has This Happened to You??

A. Description of the True Christian

1. Dead and Alive

- Not merely "brushing up rough spots" or "adding something to my life"
- Not merely dropping some bad habits and adding some good ones

Cutting out overeating, laziness, swearing, tobacco, arguments, complaining

Adding church attendance, a little Bible reading, before dinner prayers, even church committee work (!!) etc.

- RATHER: a radical transformation so stunning it could only be likened to dying and being raised to new life
- Have you died, and come back alive in Christ?

2. New Relationships to God & the Law

- Previously saw God as stern taskmaster... the Law as terrifying or irrelevant
- Previously sought to please God based on your achievements and daily performance of duties
- Previously saw the Law as attainable resulting in pride, or unattainable, resulting in despair
- NOW see God as loving Father receiving a forgiven adopted son/daughter
- NOW see Christ as the lover of your soul... the bridegroom to the bride of which you're a part
- NOW see the Law as impossible to attain in your flesh resulting not in despair but in becoming a spiritual beggar... trusting in Christ alone to save you
- NOW see Law as God's perfect will for your life... something He will work in you by His Spirit

A whole new relationship to God and to the Law

3. New Purpose in Life

- Previously lived for yourself, for your own lusts and desires, for your own glory and pride, for your own pleasures and goals
- Previously cared little for worldwide plans, or neighbor's woes... when you did care for neighbor, it stoked your pride and you boasted about it
- NOW you live for God, for His plans, His purposes, the advance of His worldwide Kingdom
- NOW you live to "bear fruit for God" day after day

4. New Power in Life

- Previously you were powerless before the sins of your life... before sin itself as a ruling principle
- Previously lived under the tyranny of sin, unable and unwilling to repent and change
- Previously you had no power to bear fruit for God, even if you knew what that would be
- NOW you have a relentless power inside you, driving you day after day to grow in holiness
- NOW that power presses you on to please God in every moment of the day
- NOW that power causes you to jump out of sin habits as soon as you indulge in them... to treat them with repugnance... to say NO!!! to ungodliness

B. Is this true of you?

1. Dead and alive?? What do you love & what do you hate?
2. How do you relate to God? Stern taskmaster/weak all-loving grandfather... OR
3. Do you have a clear sense of purpose in life?
4. Do you feel a new power in your life?
5. Is there a total focus on the Person of Jesus Christ?