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Sermon Notes

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Serving in the New Way of the Spirit

Romans 7:4-6

I. Our Covenant-Keeping God

A. Covenant: A Binding Agreement

1. Clearest example: marriage
2. From history: Mayflower Compact, December, 1620
3. Also: Presidential oath on Inaugural Day
4. Also: covenant of church membership

B. God Makes Covenants

1. Word used 275 times in Bible
2. Major manner of God's dealing with man
 - Covenant with Noah: Never again destroy the world with a flood
 - Covenant with Abraham: "To your offspring I will give this land"
 - Covenant with Moses: "If you obey me, you may keep the land"
 - Covenant with David: "I will establish the Kingdom of your son"
 - Covenant with Jesus Christ: "I will save any for whom who die"

C. God Keeps His Covenants

D. Our Salvation is Guaranteed by the New Covenant

2 Corinthians 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life....

II. Context

A. "Not Under Law But Under Grace"

Rom. 6:14 “Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law but under grace.”

1. BUT doesn't that mean we'll go wild?
2. Won't it lead to lawlessness... the very definition of sin???
3. Paul says “No... because we are in a whole new covenant”

B. Old vs. New

1. Old Marriage vs. New Marriage
 - a. formerly married to the Law... Paul's analogy of Romans 7:2-3
 - b. now we died to old relationship, married to God under new covenant
2. Old Way of Service vs. New Way of Service
3. Old Covenant vs. New Covenant

III. Old Covenant: The Old Way of the Written Code

A. Promised, Then Established

1. Genesis 12:7 Promised to Abraham at great tree of Moreh at Shechem: “This land will belong to your offspring”
2. Established fully by Moses at Mount Sinai

Exodus 24:3-4, 7-8 When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said....Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

Deuteronomy 11:26-31 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse-- ²⁷ the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; ²⁸ the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God

This is the essence of the Old Covenant: blessings if you obey, curses if you disobey

Now, what was the essence of the Old Covenant in the life of Israel?

Law: Relationship to God's word

Salvation: Relationship to God's Holiness

Worship: Relationship to God's Throne

Service: Relationship to God's World

B. Law: Relationship to God's Word

vs. 6 "the old way of the written code..."

1. Physical: engraved in letters on stone
2. External: not in the heart, but outside... something external to be obeyed
3. Powerless:
 - a. made no change in human heart
 - b. ultimately rendered powerless by sin nature

vs. 5 For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

Romans 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son

RON CARLSON & Buddhism Drowning man; law stands as spectator and calls instructions to him, teaching him how to swim; Christ actually jumps in and saves him, pulling him safely to shore

4. Useless

Hebrews 7:18-19 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

Useless to make us perfect... useless to bring us to God... useless to accomplish any real change at all

C. Salvation: Relationship to God's Holiness

1. Perfect obedience required

Leviticus 19:2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'

- a. perfect holiness required to be in God's presence
- b. BUT commandment doesn't make any change in us

Hebrews 7:19 ...for the law made nothing perfect

- c. law only brings curse when we disobey in the slightest

***Galatians 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written:
"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."***

- d. priestly sacrifices did nothing actually

Hebrews 9:9-10 the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

- 2. Righteousness demonstrated by perfect obedience

Romans 10:5 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."

- 3. Eternal life comes from this accomplished righteousness

"The man who does these things will live by them."

Clearly Paul means live eternally... live on a daily basis, but also live before God forever

- 4. BUT all of this impossible... LAW MERELY BRINGS SIN AND DEATH

Law provided absolutely no hope for salvation... only despair and the curse, or self-righteousness and self-deception that made the law attainable

Romans 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.

D. Worship: Relationship to God's Throne

- 1. God's holy throne... the center of all worship

Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple

Revelation 4:2-6 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

2. God's throne unapproachable by sinful man

1 Timothy 6:15-16 God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light

3. Old Covenant worship: shadow not reality

Hebrews 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves.

4. Therefore, Old Covenant worship focused on God's UNAPPROACHABILITY

Exodus 24:1-2 Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, ² but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near.

That's it!!! "You are to worship at a distance!!!!"

- Fence around base of Mt. Sinai so that no Israelite may come near
- 1000 yard distance between Israel and the Ark of the Covenant
- Curtain in the Tabernacle separated priests from the Holy of Holies
- Only the priests could enter the Tabernacle; only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies
- BLOOD SACRIFICE underscored the holiness and unapproachability of God

After striking Aaron's son Nadab and Abihu down for offering incense God did not command:

Leviticus 10:3 "Among those who approach me, I will show myself holy; in the sight of all people I will be honored."

Essence of Old Covenant worship: worship at a distance, because I am holy and you are not!!!

E. Service: Relationship to God's World

1. Duty

- a. serving in the “old way of the written code” leads to “obligation”... DUTY
- b. “Do I HAVE to do this again??”

Malachi 1:12-13 "But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, 'It is defiled,' and of its food, 'It is contemptible.' ¹³ And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty.

2. Fear

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

1 John 4:18 "...fear has to do with punishment"

Serving in the “old way of the written code” produces fear

3. Hatred

Romans 8:7-8 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Because the sinful mind cannot submit to God’s law, it begins to hate God and rebel against that Law... it begins to chafe, and rebel, and yearn for freedom from the yoke...

Illus. Martin Luther’s confession to Staupitz: “Love God?? I HATE Him!!!”

4. Fruit for Death

vs. 5 For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

Nothing good ever came from fleshly obedience to the law

Illus. To the generally obedient, there was the white devil of pride; to the disobedient, the black devil of rebellion

Either way, Law only brought forth fruit for death

Summary: Serving in the “old way of the written code” was service in the Old Covenant, under the Law of Moses

Law: Relationship to God’s word... written externally on tablets of stone, making NO IMPACT on the heart, no actual change of the sinful nature... law powerless to change us, useless to save us

Salvation: Relationship to God’s Holiness... law commanded perfect holiness but no one could ever do it... law never brought salvation, only curses and death

Worship: Relationship to God’s Throne... law made it very clear that God is holy and we’re not... “worship at a distance”

Service: Relationship to God’s World... done from duty, pride, hatred, fear—bore fruit for death

IV. New Covenant: The New Way of the Spirit

A. Established

1. Promised

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "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. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, " declares the LORD. ³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Spectacular promise from Jeremiah: “NEW COVENANT”... quoted twice by author to Hebrews

Nothing wrong with covenant itself... something wrong with the PEOPLE; their sinful natures made it impossible to approach God on the basis of the Old Covenant

a. replacement covenant

Hebrews 8:13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

- b. unbreakable covenant: not like the former one
- c. internal covenant: in their minds and hearts
- d. universal covenant: everyone in the covenant will be transformed... “They will ALL know me...”
- e. cleansing covenant: “I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more”

Two key aspects to New Covenant: complete and total forgiveness of sins; internal transformation of the heart

2. Fulfilled

- a. every covenant established by blood of the sacrifice
- b. so also this one

Matthew 26:27-28 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Jesus' blood is the basis of the new covenant... His sacrifice on the cross forever atones for the sins of His people... “I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.”

B. Law: Relationship to God's Word

vs. 6 "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code."

1. Spiritual: Indwelling Spirit drive word home to heart & mind
2. Internal: Written on the heart by the Spirit
3. Powerful: Transformation of human nature... from rebel to son, from hatred to love, from “have to” to “want to”
4. Effective: Law is now internal, powerful, and effective by the Holy Spirit

Jeremiah 31:33 "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts."

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

By sending Jesus Christ to die under the curse of the Law for us, **God has atoned for our sins;** by sending the Holy Spirit to live within us, **God has empowered our obedience**

C. Salvation: Relationship to God's Holiness

1. Christ's perfect obedience accomplished
2. Christ's perfect righteousness applied to us by faith
3. Gifts of salvation on that basis
 - a. total forgiveness: "made perfect" justification by faith
 - b. new life in the Spirit: "being made perfect" sanctification by faith
 - c. promise of total perfection in heaven

Essence of New Covenant salvation: the blood of Jesus Christ and the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit

- 1) I will remember their sins and wickedness no more
- 2) I will write my laws on their hearts

D. Worship: Relationship to God's Throne

1. Reality
 - a. not shadow... actual worship by the Spirit in a tabernacle not made by human hands
 - b. Spirit-empowered worship

Philippians 3:3 "For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh."

2. Freedom

Illus. Samaritan woman at the well... the question about worship

Old Covenant worship based on laws, rules, regulations

New Covenant worship based on holy freedom in the Spirit

John 4:23-24 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Not a matter of the right place, the right time... but of the right Spirit, and the right doctrine... worshipping a God we know rightly in the power He gives internally

3. Access

- a. Christ's death tore an opening right into the very Holy of Holies

Matthew 27:51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

- b. we have complete freedom to approach God directly

Ephesians 3:12 In Christ and through faith in Christ we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

E. Service: Relationship to God's World

1. Not duty but delight

We serve God not out of obligation, craven duty... "I have to do this..."

We serve God out of delight

Psalm 40:8 "Here I am... I delight to do your will, O God; your Law is within my heart."

2. Not fear but confidence

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Ephesians 3:12 In Christ and through faith in Christ we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

3. Not hatred but love

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

4. Not fruit for death but fruit for eternal life

Romans 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the fruit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

V. Application

A. Christian

1. Rejoice in total forgiveness from sin... when the devil uses the Law to accuse you, recite the words of the new covenant

Jeremiah 31:34 “I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.”

The blood of Jesus Christ is more than enough to cover all your sins! Rejoice and refute the Accuser!!

2. Delight in a whole new way of serving God... not like a slave but like a son or daughter
 - Delight in worshipping God by the Spirit
 - Delight in serving God daily, offering each act of service up as a sacrifice by the Spirit... you don't need to go to the Tabernacle or be a Levite to offer up a sacrifice, an aroma pleasing to God
 - Delight in God's word... read it with your eyes, and you will find it resonating in your heart! God has already written the entire Bible on your heart... as you read it, you will find a perfect echo: “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me!”
 - Delight in God's family: realize you are not the only one God has done this to, but the indwelling Spirit makes us one family of God

B. Non-Christian: YEARN FOR THESE BLESSINGS!!

Come to Christ and ask Him for the two great blessings of the New Covenant: total forgiveness of sins, and a totally changed heart by the Holy Spirit