

***“Paul’s Testimony As A Law-Keeper Is Still An Example For Us All”
The Normal Christian Life – Paul’s Testimony Still Speaks, Part 1***

Review: “Will We Be Slaves to Sin and Death or to Obedience and Righteousness?”, Introduction, Part 2

- ***The Logic of Grace Is Foundational In Practical Living As Well As Salvation***
- ***Though We Are Blessed By Grace, the Weakness of the Flesh Remains***
- ***Freedom From Righteousness Was Once Our Constant Condition***
- ***Freedom From Sin Is Now Our Constant Blessing!***

- ***The Logic of Grace Is Foundational In Practical Living As Well As Salvation***

Romans 6:14-15

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

- ***Paul continues the same teaching as in the earlier section, but will repeat it with a somewhat different emphasis to further strengthen his argument. Apparently, he expected many opponents then and in future times. Therefore, he begins again with the word “for”. This is divine logic indeed. No, Paul is not simply repeating himself according to his bold statement in verse 1?***

But the emphasis in verse 14 is that since we are not under law, why not just commit acts of sin when the opportunity arises and it seems “convenient”? The difference from verse 1 here is actually somewhat significant. In the first case, one might choose to live just as before one was saved and leave it at that with no further consideration – since our sin will magnify the depth of God’s abundant grace toward believers.

That is a theological failure indeed made real in one’s life. In the second case, while we have been set free from the bondage of sin through Christ, we now live under grace, and sin therefore, is passed over by our always gracious Lord. Therefore, we might conclude that we may sin as opportunity allows, even though we know that is not the best course for us. This second of the two circumstances seems to me to be far more common than the first. And, I believe it is all too common in our lives.

- *Paul has asked the question, and his answer follows:*
- ***Though We Are Blessed By Grace, the Weakness of the Flesh Remains***

Romans 6:16-19

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

- *The indwelling sin nature, the flesh, is a constant presence and source of passions tending towards sin in the believer. Of that all must agree. But there is an alternative and the apostle here strongly exhorts based again as before on the liberty theme highlighted earlier.*
- *He also highlights in verse 17 with much thanksgiving to the Lord God that the believers to whom he writes had willingly and from the heart received the true doctrine regarding their gifts under grace. As a result they had presented themselves to righteousness and away from sin.*
- *And so he exhorts them again (since apparently he knew there was now a need for that), to fully exercise their privilege under grace to present their members as instrument so righteousness, not as previously when they were indeed enslaved to sin. For now, he writes, we believers are no longer slaves to sin. Why therefore, should we now freely offer ourselves as such? May it never be so.*

- ***Freedom From Righteousness Was Once Our Constant Condition***

Romans 6:20-21

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death.

- ***The teaching of verse 19 is now restated in terms of “freedom” or “liberty”. LIBERTY is such a wonderful thought, isn’t it? Our founding fathers successfully exhorted many in the same way, didn’t they? Remember the call: “give me liberty or give me death” by Patrick Henry.***
- ***Before we were NOT FREE regarding righteousness, but now we ARE. Why throw that away for nothing; so much has been gained through it. Indeed, the riches of God’s abundant grace are poured out upon us including also the new nature and the Holy Spirit. They are always with us as a result. So we have every advantage now compared to when we were in bondage as sin’s slaves. Why treat the great gift of God with such disrespect? Christ died for our liberty? Do we not remember that? This is a powerful argument indeed, isn’t it?***
- ***That is a proper ending point and the apostle will now conclude by summarizing his teaching in the wonderful words that follow:***

- ***Freedom From Sin Is Now Our Constant Blessing***

Romans 6:22-23

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- ***Let’s not forget the structure of the passage: Verse 14 begins this section and verses 22-23 conclude it. Remember what the apostle wrote there:***

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

- *Here “Made free from sin” means “liberated from the power and bondage of sin” , and “become servants to God” means “have freely become bond slaves to God” as I might paraphrase it.*
- *And verse 22 is here stated to be true of all believers, carnal and spiritual, immature and mature, just as verse 23 does also. The implications are that Paul is teaching about the benefits of God’s abounding grace in each of us. All of the negatives, the sins, under grace, have been cast aside.*
- *So we find ourselves here firmly planted on the high plain of God’s abundant grace, surrounded by high peaks of grace just waiting to be known even more fully as we live here so surrounded, and with these constant reminders, the apostle cannot withhold. Amen and amen.*

Our Outline Today: “Paul’s Testimony Still Speaks”

- ***An Analogy with the Mosaic Law Teaches Truth About the Law Today***
- ***Our Nature of Sin Is Encouraged by Law, And the Knowledge of Sin Results***
- ***Paul’s Full Knowledge of the Power of Sin Should Still Be Teaching Us!***
- ***What was and is Paul’s testimony regarding the Law? It was not what, as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he had kept the Law with the promised blessings enjoyed. No, but to the contrary, it was that, as a law-keeper, he failed dramatically to keep Moses Law, and in the process learned some significant lessons that we all need to know today. For though we are not today “under” law, but rather, “under” grace, our liberties in Christ are ours to fully receive and enjoy. But as always, with such a gracious exhortation, are we filled to overflowing with the joy of our blessed Lord and his glorious work in and through us?***

The first step, of course, is always that we must know the truth, and that is where we must begin today. What is the truth about the Law or even law in general?

I. An Analogy with the Mosaic Law Teaches Truth About the Law Today:

[READ] Romans 7:1-4

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

- *Twice, Paul makes this statement, here and also at the end of his long section about divorce and remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7. The subject was clearly important to him. The law with its bondage applies only during the life of the one who is under it.*
- *The apostle is writing primarily to those of Jewish heritage, and the verse makes that clear, since no Gentile was ever under the law of Moses. Many in the Roman assembly were Jewish, it seems. And he says here that they knew the law very well indeed.*
- *Verses 2 and 3 are an illustration of what Paul is teaching here, though they do not represent an analogy technically, as the terms do not properly correspond... But the teaching is that the Mosaic Law bound a woman to a man for life (as in “till death do us part”, common in Christian marriage services since 1549).*

So the obvious conclusion the apostle intends here is that a marriage is not to be broken, for it is sacred before the Lord God. The wife is bound to her husband for life — until he dies, at which point she is freed from the bondage or law of her husband and is free to marry again. But the text goes beyond this (for the marriage bond is not his primary subject) to the liberty of the believer as the Lord God sees it. And that is what the previous chapters were teaching about the bond of all to Adam, apart from Christ’s death for sin and sins. All were seen by Almighty God as “in Adam”. But now those justified (declared righteous) on account of his glorious resurrection are seen as “in Christ” and no longer “in Adam”. Christ’s resurrection alone could break that bond and set us free through justification.

- *This is stated so well in verse 4: By Christ’s death and resurrection, we have been set free from our previous bondage to Adam and his*

sin and have now passed from death to life, where “fruit”, not compliant works, are the focus. Praise God!

What Paul is writing here is most important: God sees us as free now and is working accordingly in ways he did not before. But we must take it by faith, or we cannot experience the blessings of this work.

- *But next the teaching reaches a deep subject indeed, but an important one, the relationship of law and sin dwelling in us still. For Paul, this teaching is most important, and it should be for us as well. We need to understand this dynamic working well so that we, once liberated, do not fall back under the power of the sin nature dwelling within.*

II. Our Nature of Sin Is Encouraged by Law, And the Knowledge of Sin Results:

[READ] Romans 7:5-6

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

- *He begins by stating affirmatively in verse 5 that there was a direct connection between the Law and sins for Jews, clearly. It is not a positive comment at all. However, the Old Testament reveals this in detail, so that we may hardly read it without exclaiming, “Who shall deliver me?” as the apostle does near the end of the chapter.*
- *In the previous chapter, we saw the same teaching:*

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

- **Verse 6 is central now to his “argument”:** “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ...” **So the law here referred to is the Law of Sin and Death, for it was that law that bound us to Adam’s fall and consequent judgment. But there is another kind of sin mentioned here, isn’t there? A sin that dwells within our mortal frame, even a nature of sin. That nature (the “flesh”) brings forth acts of sin as verse 5 reveals. Furthermore, that**

nature of sin is excited and encouraged by the law, as the phrase “by the law” shows. But the law demands obedience without exception, so there is a deep issue here that Paul testifies here as having begun to see, although he had been many years as a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Indeed, “who shall deliver me” was a fitting response to all of this there at the end of the teaching with the strongly implied answer having already been provided (as we shall soon see as we proceed). THE SIN NATURE IS INSATIABLE!!

- *The analogy with the marriage bond in verses 1-4 teaches us that our identity in Adam as his offspring and therefore as ones bearing his curse of sin and death has now ended, since we have a new identity in our risen savior, Christ Jesus. We are now in Christ and no longer in Adam, and that has made the difference we are considering here in this study. Being bound to another, even the risen Christ, gives us new privileges and new expectations. Amen.*

This is all about how God is working now, no longer under the bondage of the Law (or really any law), but under grace, to give us fruitfulness instead of works leading to death in its various dimensions.

III. Paul’s Full Knowledge of the Power of Sin Should Still Be Teaching Us!

- *Verse 7 explains the dynamics of the reality we find dwelling in ourselves. That he chooses one of the Ten Commandments as his focal point here is bold indeed, for it was central to his testimony being shared with us readers here:*

[READ] Romans 7:7-8

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet [or, literally, “have strong desires”].

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [same word in the Greek translated in the previous verse “covet”]. For without the law sin was dead.

- *Now, in verses 7 & 8, the apostle gets down to the specifics, again here, by way of his own personal testimony? I wonder how many others have had the same (or a similar) experience. I know of one, myself... (short testimony).*

- ***“Sin” here refers to the nature of sin that dwells within us all. He is not asking if the nature of sin and the Law are identical, of course, but just that they are of the same sort, for example, both given by God and therefore always to be closely associated together. The next verse explains his meaning. The Law was, in its essence, a good thing indeed. But the presence of the sin nature in its fallen subjects interacted with it in a very negative way. It was like pouring water on an oil-based or grease-based fire. The fire was burning before, but then becomes an inferno after adding the water. I will not go further now with that analogy.***
- ***Take note of what commandment Paul chose. For it is for us, and was for him, a very special one. Why? Because it cuts to the heart of the whole essence of legalism. Law demands obedience to every detail. Our mind and then our nature respond with the desire to obey, of course. Our failure leads our nature to try even harder. Strong desires are the consequence.***

But what does this commandment, this negative commandment, demand? It requires that somehow that response is suppressed or cancelled! But that just encourages an even stronger response. That Paul learned and for him it threatened his entire life of service as a believer who was trying his best to be still a Pharisee.

[READ] Romans 7:9-14

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

- ***Here we have the detailed teaching where the apostle dives down to the depths regarding sin and its indwelling power. It is a very negative statement indeed, with little positive teaching. The positive conclusion with the hope implied so strongly is left to the end of the chapter, or, since there are no chapter divisions in the original, the***

introduction to chapter 8.

He states much-needed truth here regarding the fallen realm where the law works. After all, “the law works wrath” (Rom. 4:15), even in this case, since it is God’s Law, the Law worked wrath to those who were under it, the Jews. I thank God that in Romans, Paul makes this clear.

- *Verses 7 - 9 lay the foundation for the teaching in simply revealing his own experience, beginning with his denial that the Law itself, whatever else it may be, is NOT sin. He then writes concerning what the Law actually is and how it worked in him – that he had no knowledge of (the is, no intimate and deep knowledge of) this strong desire or lust of the flesh until “the law said ‘thou shalt not covet.’ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” Under that law operating in his life then, he testifies here that he began to possess a knowledge he did not have before and to know lust in a new way because the law had said “thou shalt not covet”. He also uses the words “the law came ...”.*

A key question here though, is this: was this something Paul experienced before or after salvation? All the evidence here in this extended description points us to a post-salvation experience. For he writes in verses 9 & 10: “I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.” When was Paul alive apart from the Law, one must ask? Surely not as an unbeliever, since according to Galatians 3:12, “And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.” So Paul before he was saved was “living in the Law” and in no other way even though that law “killed” him, as it were and as the next verses explicitly declare with the wording: “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” The final verses in this chapter also confirm that Paul was writing here of an experience after salvation and not before. We will read those in a moment.

- *So what is Paul’s point here in this section? Simply put, it is that the Moses’ Law, though given by God and therefore good and holy in itself, provided opportunity for the indwelling nature of sin to be emboldened, therefore bringing rebellion against that Law and then judgment. So instead of life resulting, it was death as demanded by that law.*

- ***The other issue, of course, was that the Law of Moses had been set aside and was no longer applicable to believers, as it only had relevance while the connection to Adam remained. But now, under grace, all believers, including Paul, were delivered from the Law as written earlier in verse 4, “my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” In many places here in this teaching there is no definite article before the word “law” since he is writing more generally of any law.***
- ***So the bottom line is this: When Paul, as a believer, had placed himself back under law, in the case, the religious law of a Pharisee, then he had works leading to judgment by that law and not fruitfulness in living. And that is true for all of us today. And this is true of any law we attempt to place ourselves under, whether the Law of Moses, the Kingdom Law, the law of the church, or, the law of our own individual mind, any religious law.***
- ***Will we take God at his word, or will we go back as Paul did to law and religious works for deliverance? Or will Paul be our guide to liberty and life?***

What will our testimony be? Will we live in the liberty of Christ and bring forth fruit unto God, or bound to a religious principle and bring forth carnal, fleshly works, as an inevitable result?

- ***But there is hope for the believer today as the apostle summarizes it here in these last verses:***

[READ] Romans 7:24-25

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

- ***I am sure this teaching has stretched your minds to the limit and perhaps beyond. That is to be expected. It should. For only then can we come, with the help much needed of the Holy Spirit, to fully grasp what it means to say as our apostle does so often, “we are not under law but under grace”. We also may then begin to understand far better what the essence of the Normal Christian Life is.***

Conclusions / Exhortations:

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Paul’s full knowledge of the power of sin should still be teaching us today. But is it?

Next time: The Normal Christian Life – Paul's Testimony Still Speaks, Part 2.