

Dead to the Law

Romans 6:19—7:6

Verses 19—20

In case what Paul said in the previous verses is hard to understand he now says the same thing in the plainest way possible. Just as they use to use their bodies to do ever increasingly evil things now they are to be used increasingly for righteousness with the end result of holiness. To be holy does not mean sinless perfection but to be fully set aside for God's use. When items in the Temple were made holy, they were used only in service to God and never used for anything common. We too need to give ourselves fully to the Lord.

Exodus 40:9—10 ⁹"Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and shall consecrate it and all its furnishings; and it shall be holy. ¹⁰"You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, and the altar shall be most holy.

Verses 21—23

While they were under the power of the old nature they produced nothing that had any value. This is because there is absolutely no good in the old nature and nothing that the old nature can do that can be called good. This is of course from God's perspective. We may interpret kind acts by others as being good but not if they are judged according to God's standard. Only those things done through the power of God are good, anything else would be done by the power of the old nature and is not counted as good or fruitful. (Romans 3:10—12; Ephesians 2:1—3)

So if the old nature is in control of all unbelievers why is it that they are not filled only with evil? Why would anyone outside of Christ do anything kind or helpful towards another person? I think it is God who is controlling the amount of evil present. He is the one from whom Satan needs to get permission to act. Also, God has built into every human being a conscience so anyone is capable of discerning good from evil. Those who do not know the Mosaic Law have a law written on their hearts that help to regulate their actions.

Romans 2:14—15 ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

There may be another reason that unbelievers can do things that are "good". Satan has been given the earth as his domain. This is his kingdom and is even called the prince of the power of the air. He was even able to offer this earth to Jesus in exchange for Jesus to worship him. You would expect nothing but evil to come from Satan but is it possible that Satan gets what he wants by encouraging people to do "good" things? His goal is to cause God's plan to fail and for people to turn away from God and worship himself. Many people rest in their acts of good works and thus feel they do not need Jesus Christ. This false sense of security in their own works puts the focus on themselves instead of Christ. If Satan can deceive people by encouraging them to maintain this self-reliance (through good works) then he can keep his grip on them until the end. This thought does not have any Scripture to back it up but I still look at it as a possible explanation of why unbelievers can do "good works".

The *but now* in verse 22 indicates a change. But now under grace instead of under Law you are free from sin and are now a slave to God. Instead of death, we receive life.

This section has been focusing on how we have been saved from the power of sin in our lives. We are no longer slaves to our old sinful nature but have become slaves to righteousness. At the moment of our salvation we were saved from the penalty of sin and at the moment we are called to heaven we will be saved from the presence of sin. The past, present and future aspects of sin can be summed up as follows:

Past: We have been saved from the penalty of sin
Present: We are being saved from the power of sin.
Future: We will be saved from the presence of sin.

Romans 7:1—4

In this section Paul turns to those who knew what was contained in the law. There is a little ambiguity as to whether he is talking about the Mosaic Law or the current Roman law. Stam says this is not the Mosaic Law while Campbell says it is. We do know the Mosaic Law defines marriage and what is to be done in the case of infidelity. Jesus even addressed the issue in Matthew 5:31—32 saying if a wife is divorced it causes her to become an adulteress and the person who remarries her commits adultery. Since Paul cites this same principle, it seems that the reference here is to the Mosaic Law.

With this in mind we can see that Paul is using marriage as an example of how the Law has control of a person until they die. At death, the Law can no longer control that person. Even when the woman is given a certificate of divorce, she is still tied to her husband through the Law. She is not free to remarry even with a divorce. Only when the man dies is she free to remarry because he and she are no longer bound by the law.

One reason for this (if not the only reason) was to create a picture of God's relationship to Israel. God calls Israel His bride. She was never to go out and find another "husband" but she did by worshiping other gods (Hosea 2:1—13). In fact, Hosea is a picture of God and Israel. He was told to marry a prostitute to show God's relationship with Israel. Even though Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea during their marriage, Hosea always took her back, just as God did and will do with Israel.

Hosea 2:19—20 ¹⁹"I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, ²⁰And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.

Although there are many who claim the Church, the Body of Christ is the bride of Christ it is Israel who is actually called a bride with Christ as the Bridegroom. This analogy is consistently used in the Old Testament and the Gospels but is never applied to us. The confusion arises when the Church is substituted for Israel and when Scripture is misapplied. The following Scripture is often used to prove that the Church is the bride of Christ when in reality this passage is merely showing a hierarchy of authority but in no way equating the Church with the bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:22—23 ²²Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Verses 4—6

The whole point of the first three verses is to show the power and authority the Law holds over us throughout our life. We have no way of freeing ourselves of God's Law except through death. Fortunately we do not need to die a physical death to free us because by being "in Christ" we have died with Him and therefore are free of the Law. It has no hold or jurisdiction on us because we are considered dead. It is impossible to be joined to the Law and to Christ simultaneously.

Ephesians 2:14—16 ¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

The reason God did all of this is so that we could bear fruit for God. In the flesh we could only bear fruit unto death. There was no good work we could do that would be pleasing to God. God needs to energize us through the Holy Spirit in order for us to do anything that can please Him. When we try to do good things outside of His power, we produce nothing more than wood, hay and straw.

1 Corinthians 3:10—15 ¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no man

can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

As a side note, notice Paul is laying his foundation on Christ and we are to build on Paul's foundation. Paul did not want to build on another man's foundation. We see this principle at work in Peter and Paul agreeing to separate their ministry so as not to overlap. Peter went to the Jews with the Gospel of the Kingdom while Paul went to the Gentiles with the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Galatians 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

Romans 15:20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

Now that we are slaves unto righteousness we are able to bear fruit pleasing to God because it is Him who gives us the ability to do so. Instead of serving the oldness of the letter we can now serve God in a new a fresh way in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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