

# Romans 7

## “Power Over Legalism”

6/13/12

### Introduction

- The Content of Romans is not hard to understand
  - As long as you remember it is helpful to compare the content of Romans to a great theological city

### The Book of Romans – The Great Theological City

#### #1 – The Courthouse – Romans 1-5

- Paul introduces the concept of righteousness by faith, but in order to show us our great need of salvation he spend the first five chapters showing are we are all guilty before God

#### #2 – The Power Plant – Romans 6-8

- Chapters 6-8 help us understand that is power to live out this Christian life God is calling us to – Pastor Rob is doing an in-depth series from these three chapters on our weekend services, but we will cover them as well, just at a much more rapid pace

#### #3 – The Synagogue – Romans 9-11

- in chapters 9-11 Paul shares with us how Israel fits into God plan now that there is this new thing called the church and answers the questions, has the church replaced Israel, where do they fit into God’s plan and how does God’s sovereignty fit with man’s free will – great stuff in this section

#### #4 – The Church – Romans 12-16

- in Paul’s final section of this book we will study how the church is practically suppose to operate in light of the all the amazing truths about God is this book – Paul ends all of his letters very practically Romans is no exception

### Tonight we continue in that second section, the power plant

- Now most of you Bible students understand that chapter breaks and verse numbers were not part of the original text
  - Jesus and Paul when they would quote the Bible would simple say – it says in Isaiah or Daniel wrote
  - The reason is there were no chapter breaks

### Now I am glad that they were added later to help us find verses more quickly

- but understand, that Romans 6-8 are one thought
  - it is difficult for us to see that because we see divisions, chapter 6, chapter 7, chapter 8
  - and it is really difficult for us because we studied chapter 6 two weeks ago
- So we have to remember here tonight this is one thought

### Paul begins that thought by starting back in chapter six by saying, “What shall we saw then, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound – certainly not” - Remember “perish the thought, never no, what a ghastly thought in the Phillips translation and then simple “NO, NO, NO” in the English Bible

- You see what Paul is doing is he is drawing our attention to all that has gone before
  - All that we learned in the courthouse
  - That Man is guilty and in need of a savior
- But Praise God he has provided Righteousness for us
  - Apart from our works and obedience

### Now some would respond to that by saying...

- Wow – that is great – then it doesn’t matter how I live, I can do anything I want, it doesn’t matter
  - As Paul opens this section he says, “Certainly not, perish the thought – no way

## **Two weeks ago we look at chapter 6 which helped us to understand we have power over sin**

- How????
  - by knowing something – your old man, that old nature no longer has authority over you – you need to know that
  - then you need to apply that – by not presenting yourself to the things of the flesh, making a conscience decision and the flip side, just as important – you need to present yourself to God
  - Why – does it make God love me more, does it make me more saved? – No, Paul goes on to share - because it matters for your freedom and the fruit of your life

## **Well here in chapter 7 Paul is continuing the thought**

- you see some would see grace and think, then I can live anyway I want
  - we know how Paul feels about that right – what a ghastly thought, NO, NO, NO
- But then some hearing that think, okay then, I am going to pull up my bootstraps and I am going to show you God
  - And by His grace and Spirit – we start to follow the afore mentioned steps – know the old man is rendered inactive, okay don't present myself to sin, present myself to God, this is important
  - And victory comes
- But then the next danger appears and that is thinking – well – I have really arrived, God really got a good deal when He got me
  - I start to think I am better, I am more loved than you – because I have figured out how to live – I am know earning God's favor and my own way to heaven

## **Whereas the first response to grace is I can do whatever I want**

- something the Bible calls licentiousness, I just think I have the license to do anything
  - and Paul dealt with that in chapter six

## **I can then being to think hey by my keeping the law I am making myself acceptable to God**

- I live by the law
  - And that is another wrong idea, another heresy called legalism
  - And Paul is going to deal with that in chapter 7

## **Now before we get into the text and see how we are believers can have power over the law, I think we need to clarify what legalism really is**

- because sometimes in today's Christianity with some very popular leaders in the church today, especially the younger leaders, the thinking is legalism is being very concerned with strict holiness
  - oh you have made the decision to not do that, not listen to that, not consume that
  - oh poor weak brother – that is legalism
  - that is being a Pharisee
- I personally couldn't disagree more

## **I think we'll miss what Paul is trying to say here in chapter seven if we don't clarify that a little bit**

- what is legalism –

**“Legalism” is thinking you can make yourself acceptable to God by keeping the laws and regulations of the scriptures, thinking you can maintain salvation by keeping the laws and regulations or judging others for not doing so.” – Dictionary of Theology**

- Now taking that three fold explanation, legalism is saying I am making myself acceptable, I am maintaining my relationship with God and you better too

## **It is not being concerned with holiness**

**Warren Wiersbe said**

**“Legalism is the belief that I can become holy and please God by obeying laws. It is not being concerned about holiness and seeing it as important to your life.” – Warren Wiersbe**

- We need to get to a point where we say, God because you love me, I want to be more like you, not to make you love me anymore, just because your Word says it is good to avoid some things and have other in your life – I want to obey
  - sin stinks, a little leaven leavens the whole lump – these are biblical truths
  - now what is a Pharisee

**What is a Pharisee???**

- A Pharisee was a religious leader of Jesus day who was concerned with outward shows of holiness to impress people but not concerned with inward holiness
  - Jesus said of them in Matthew 23

**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness.” – Matthew 23:27**

- Yeah that is it – A Pharisee is so concerned with the outward obedience
  - No - the Pharisee were concerned with outward obedience only
  - Jesus had no problem with their outward concerned for holiness, it was just their lack of inward concern for holiness
  - It was all a show
- Jesus went on to say

**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” – Matthew 23:23**

- Jesus said, you should have been concerned with these outward things, but you should not have neglected the inward life as well

**You see my point is, being concerned with strict holiness because you want to honor God and keep yourself unspotted from the world is not legalism or Phariseeism it is called holiness, and it is called the way God intended to you live**

- now if you start to think that you are working your way to heaven
  - if you start to think, God you saved me by grace but now I’ve got this
  - if you begin to turn your nose down on others who are not as holy as you
  - if you are just concerned with outward observance of the law, to impress people, to make them think you are more holy than you are
  - yes – then that is legalism and being a Pharisee
- but if you deeply desire to honor God, to take the regulations in His Word as serious and important – that isn’t legalism or phariseeism – that is holiness and that should be the goal

**If that is where you are at, awesome, but if you find yourself responding to the law in the other ways described, then chapter 7 helps us to understand how we can have power over the law**

- **three things to write down and understand tonight about how we can have power over law**

**Power over Legalism – Romans Chapter 7**

**The Power of the Law - Romans 7:1-6**

**The Purpose of the Law – Romans 7:7-13**

**The Problem with the Law – Romans 7:14-24**

**The Person who is the answer to the Law – v25**

- let’s consider those one at a time tonight

**Power over Legalism – Romans Chapter 7**

**The Power of the Law - Romans 7:1-6**

- Paul begins by explaining the power of the law and remember he is speaking to those who would have very familiar with the Old Testament law
  - It dominated their lives, the way they lived
  - It controlled them until the day of their death!
- Paul illustrates this by using marriage
  - Both in Jewish and Greek culture – women could not divorce their husband. – the husband could put away his wife, but not the other way around
  - The man had to die, for her to be free to marry another

**Paul is using this to show how man kind is bound to the law**

- we can not just say, - I'm no longer accountable to God, and His rules
  - not while the law still lives

**And the law will never die**

- it is perfect, God breathed, it is never going to go away
  - So the only option left is you have to die
  - And what Paul is saying is that is that was what happened “in Christ”

**As verse 4 says...**

- because of your relationship to Christ
  - you are dead to the law – it no longer has dominion over you

**And when you see that it will be a radical truth to your Christian walk!**

- why is this so important???
- because with the law sin is produced in our lives
  - What????

If I say to you – ‘don’t think about a really old, really large woman in a yellow with pink polka dot bathing suit.

You may not want to think about this old large lady in a yellow bathing suit with pink polka dot

- But you do, because I told you not to.
  - When my wife says, don’t eat the fresh baked cookies they are in the cabinet
  - What was that – Satan? – if you didn’t want me to eat them why tell me where they are

**And so with the law**

- the more you draw close to the Lord, you become more aware of you sinfulness
  - not that is not bad as we will see in a minute – however..
- we can become in bondage to those things
  - “I will never measure up, I should just give in, and not serve the Lord.”
- Or you don’t see the truth about you...
  - **With anger** - “Why can no one live as godly as me, don’t they see how joyful I am.”

**So are you saying the Law is bad??? – Paul asks the same question – and the answer is no – it is just doing its job – what job is that – lets continue**

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**The Power of the Law - Romans 7:1-6**

**The Purpose of the Law – Romans 7:7-13**

**“Paul asks, “Is the law sin”**

- His answer to his own question is “no” – the law is just doing what God breathed it to do.
  - It shows us how sinful we are

**Scholars believe verse 7 to be autobiographical by Paul writing of his first experience with this**

- As a young man Paul going through the law and doing pretty good,
  - I have never committed adultery, check
  - I have never killed anyone – check
  - I honor the Sabbath, my parents, I don’t worship idols, check, check, check
- But then Paul gets to covetousness

- As he meditates over it in his mind he realizes it is dominating him
- He wants to be the top Rabbi, he wants to make it in life – He wanted to be respected like Gamaliel
- He sees that He is sinful – I don't measure up

**The law not only reveals our sin as a mirror but it also activates our sin**

- thinking about purple elephant, or cookies – the minute we are told not to do something that is exactly what we do!

**Not only does it reveal, and activate but it also then destroys**

- for once we are aware of sin, we become more and more aware
  - that is why Paul goes through this progression
  - it wasn't he got more sinful, he become more aware of his sin

**That is exactly what the law is to do**

- show you who you are without Christ
  - now once you see that, here is the thing

**You can either let it lead you to Christ**

- depend on Him and realize He has forgiven you and loves you. And then you walk with Him, not in the oldness of the law, but the newness of life

**Or you can try to cover up your obvious failure with outward religion, outward works**

- and be miserable and dead inside

**The Law does its job perfectly – the question is what to you do with the law, once it does its job.**

- Because if you don't turn to the Lord you will find what Paul shares thirdly about the law...

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**The Problem with the Law – Romans 7:14-24**

- The problem with the law is that it can not change you
  - It can show you how sinful you are, it can show you how far you fall short
  - It does all of that well
- But change you, to teach you to do good, to set your free
  - It can't do it!!!

**We become so focused on rules and regulations**

- they begin to consume you
  - and they are all you think about.

I had a teacher is golf when I first started who had about 15 things for me to remember. Keep you head down, keep your left arm straight, get a full extension, transfer you weight from right to left, follow thru tummy to the target. I couldn't swing because I was consumed with too many thoughts

- And we can fall into this spiritually

**Now as Pastor Rob taught us when he was doing his in-depth study here in chapter 7 there is some controversy about from what perspective Paul is writing this**

- Because some scholars can just not fathom that Paul would struggle with his flesh, some say, this has to be written from the perspective before Paul was saved

**I totally disagree – because all of us, Bible believing, Jesus loving, on fire believers, can still identify with what Paul is saying here**

- we have read in the NKJV – listen to it in the New living Bible – it comes alive

"I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within

me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?” – Romans 7:15-25 NLT

- Paul couldn't have written this as a believer, believers never experience these feelings or realities
  - Whatever – I don't know who you are – but please share with us your secret with us after the study
  - Because I feel like this all the time
- I know what is right and I don't do it
  - I know what is wrong, and head down that path
  - Even as a bible believing, Jesus loving Christian

**Now please understand me – I don't think this means for Paul and I know it doesn't mean for me – that Paul was writing the Bible and hitting the clubs after ward – oh wrenched man why can't I stop picking up on the ladies – I don't think that is what Paul was dealing with**

- Sin and carnality is not just the outward open bad as we could consider them sins
  - It is also matters of the heart

**Paul says in verse 14, “I am carnal”**

- **“carnal” literally means fleshly**
  - chili con carne, chili with flesh, with meat
  - Carne asada – a Carne asada burrito is not a vegan burrito, it has meat, it has flesh
- So Paul is saying I get in the flesh
  - Now again lets clarify

**Now a “carnal Christian” can refer to living in the flesh as a Christian**

- That type of person is the most miserable in the world
  - Too much of Jesus to enjoy the world
  - Too much of the world to enjoy the Lord

**Carnal can refer to living in the world as a Christian, but it has other applications as well**

- Carnal means fleshly, and to live for the Lord in the power of the flesh, is equally as carnal as the Christian in the world
  - Do you understand
  - I don't think Paul was clubbing
  - Paul there would be times when He would think – Lord I will show you, I am going to be able to handle my sin – I have got this
- And these subtleties of sin never go away in our hearts
  - Praise God – Jesus deals with our drinking and carousing, maybe your cussing and stealing
  - But lest you think that one day you are going to arrive, the truth is, the closer you draw to the Lord, the more aware of even the subtleties of sin you since
- It is why as we have talked about before the Paul seems to go through a progression in his life...

**Early in his ministry he writes –**

**“I am the least of all the apostles” – 1 Corinthians 15:9**

- pretty humble
  - oh the 12 most holy men on the planet, I am number 12
  - sort of humble

**Then in the middle of his ministry Paul writes..**

**“I am the least of all the saints.” – Ephesians 3:8**

- Then at the very end Paul says...

**“Jesus came into the world to save sinners of which I am chief” – 1 Timothy 1:15**

- That doesn't mean Paul was getting worse, I would bet everything that He continued to become more and more like Christ his entire life
  - But the reason he would say that
  - The reason I believe Romans 7 is written from the perspective of a believer
  - Is the closer I get to the Lord – oh He deals with those major things in my life – and if you are still in those things – you draw near to the Lord
- But as you draw closer – you become ever more aware of your covetous heart, your pride, your self reliance – things that stink in the presence just as much as any drinking revelry you used to partake in
  - and you want to turn from pride, you want to be free from covetousness, but they seem to hang around, the dependence on self stay there
  - And that is why Paul says in verse 18

**“For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells...”**

- Now we know that verse, but do we believe its truth, we need to hear the apostle – we seem to think
  - “Lord there's a little good there” – isn't there

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**And then when we fall – we are so disappointed in us**

- And then Satan gets us to feel God is thinking the same thing – He is not, He knows....

**There is nothing good in your flesh**

- But that is why you can't live and operated in it.
  - You can not see the law, and think all right if that is what I need to do, I am going to do it!
- So you pull up your bootstraps and go to it
  - And so you miss the true use of the law, and you discover the inability of it to make you holy
- You see you the lie that sin tells you is that you can conquer this in the power of your flesh – you never will!

**You like Paul will come to place where you say..**

**“ Oh wretched man that I am...”**

- **The Greek word translated into English “wretched” indicates a person who is exhausted after a battle.**
  - such is the case of trying to please God and obey in the power of your flesh

**Do you find yourself right here with Paul this tonight???**

- Just tried of failing, tried of realizing you own inability, tried of feeling like you have let the Lord down – then don't miss what he says next

**“who will deliver me who the body of death???”**

- not what can I do to be delivered
  - But who will deliver me??
- You see Paul knew the principals, he knew the precepts
  - But the answer isn't in those things, the answer is in a person
  - One more verse tonight

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**The Person who is the answer to the Law – v25**

- And I believe the New Living Translation is very helpful here...

**“Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.” – Romans 7:25 – New Living Translation**

- Paul says thank God, the answer is in Jesus
  - Paul isn't saying like it kind of sounds in the New King James
  - My mind serves God, my body serves sin and all it good because they are separate
  - No!!!!
- My mind is so willing, my flesh is weak
  - That is not an excuse or some new way to view my Christian life
  - It is just simply showing why, it must be about Jesus, a person, not a program or a procedure

**The successful Christian life is not just about principals and precepts as much as it is about a person**

- More than “what will deliver me, Who will deliver me?”
  - Then answer....

**“Jesus Christ my Lord.”**

- The answer to sin, and to legalism is Jesus Christ
  - The secret to your Christian is no secret at all
- It is drawing near, listening to his still small voice, loving Him with all your heart

**The wrong response to grace is to either think I can live anyway I want, (licentiousness) or by the way I live I will make myself acceptable to God (Legalism)**

- **in either case there is power available to you**
  - power over sin
  - Power over legalism
- That power is not in a procedure or a principal
  - It is in the person of Jesus Christ
  - Drawing near to Him
  - Making Him your all
  - And letting Him change you from the inside out
- Whether you are someone the worlds says is really bad
  - You need to draw near to Christ
  - Or if you are someone who the world would say, has it together
  - You still need to draw near to Christ
- And He will make you like him
  - How does He do that – last verse tonight..

**“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” – 2 Corinthians 3:17-18**

- Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, that means where the Spirit is we can be free from sin, not to sin, that is not that verse means, it means free from sin
  - How – by the Spirit of the Lord
  - Jesus, not a program, not a principal, a person, Jesus, changes us into His image, by His Spirit
- That is what Chapter 8 is about, 4 weeks from now, we will look at it – Pastor Rob's series – 4 weeks – one thought – its Jesus gang, real simple!!!!