

Romans 7:1-6

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[0 : 00] Read verses 1-6 with me. And if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

Will you pray with me for the preaching of God's word?

Father, your word is powerful. It is living and is active and it pierces between the joints of marrow to the intentions of the heart. And we ask this morning that your word would work in us to humble us. To remind us freshly of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And to find great joy in him and in communion with Jesus Christ. Lord, we ask that the word would cause us to rejoice.

That it would make the simple wise and it would make the unclean clean. And that it would be richer than gold and sweeter than honey this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

[1 : 52] So to introduce today's sermon, I would love to share a little bit about the life of Martin Luther. Martin Luther was educated under medieval theology.

In this education, Luther was taught that justification is to make oneself righteous. Righteousness, in this thought, began with baptism and was continued through taking the Catholic sacraments. In addition to being made righteous through the sacraments, they would teach that one could have a claim on God, even demand certain things from God, if they just did their very best.

Their natural abilities and their good works would merit or would provide merit that would then justify them. If we just did what was in us, if we just did our very best, we can be disposed to God's grace.

That was the doctrine that Luther came out of and that was in his mind as he became a monk. And it was the doctrine that eventually drove him to despair. Between 1516 and 1517, Luther abandoned these teachings.

[2 : 59] He called them the rancid rules of the philosophers. He realized that we don't have a disposition towards God, but actually indisposition. We're actually naturally rebellious towards God.

Luther came to an awareness that the sinner is utterly helpless to save himself or to have any right standing before God based on their own merits. As he came to this reality that he was sinful and God was holy and just, he was undone.

All his attempts to satisfy God, his prayers, his fasting, his vigils, his good works, all the things he did left him wholly disquieted.

His mood swung from despair to anger at God over this reality. And it began to produce an experience that he called *infectum*.

It's a German word and it doesn't translate well into our language, but it carries lots of meaning. For Luther, this was dread. He would see God's righteousness and feel dread and despair.

[4 : 06] This sense of foreboding doom. This assault on his soul and anxiety. And it left him lowly. Luther felt as if his whole sinful life was exposed before God's presence.

As Luther went to the word in the season, he saw the righteousness of God through the law. Later in his writings, Luther would say, God gave the law then to put us to death, to kill us, so that we would see the enormity of our sin.

Luther would talk about God's law as a hammer. He says, This presumption of righteousness in us is a huge and horrible monster. To break and crush it, God needs a large and powerful hammer. That is the law, which is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of divine wrath. To what purpose? To attack the presumption of righteousness, which is rebellious, stubborn, and stiff-necked beast in us.

The law was the hammer of God that would expose Luther's seething rebellion against God, and it would ultimately show his deep need for Jesus Christ for salvation.

[5 : 19] Between 1518 and 1519, Luther, in studying the book of Romans, discovered that justification is not to be made righteous. It's not a progressive work that we justify ourselves before

God.

Justification is to be declared righteous based on the works of another. Justification is not doing one's very best, as if we are good and can show approval to God.

But justification is based on Christ and his righteousness. Luther says justification is by faith alone, because it looks to Christ alone for forgiveness of sins and salvation.

Faith itself doesn't save, but faith saves because we receive Christ by faith, because we possess and grasp Christ by faith.

In Luther's theology, before salvation, the law exposes our need for Christ. It reveals our complete inability to be righteous, that our good works don't give anything to God.

[6 : 19] There is no hope and freedom found in our own works, but only through Jesus Christ and his works. What Luther discovered is that true and lasting freedom comes through Christ.

He has done all the work. Because of Christ's work and his fulfillment of the covenant of redemption, we are freed from the law. We are freed from its rigor and its curse.

The Holy Spirit has given us new hearts and unites us to Christ. In Christ, we are free, and the law now serves as a rule of life. It's a means by which we express love to God and to please him.

So today, the main point I want you to see in this sermon is that in Christ, we are freed from the law so that we can serve God, serve Christ by the Spirit.

So in Christ, we are freed from the law so that we can serve Christ by the Spirit. So point number one, the law had rule over us.

[7 : 24] Point one, the law had rule over us. If you look at verse one with me, and do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to those who know the law, that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives.

Paul begins Romans 7 with another rhetorical question, which as we have been following Nathan's preaching, we see that this is how he forms his arguments. He proposes a good concept, and then he then starts to explain it and asks a question about it, and then answers the question.

So here we have another question, and this question is meant to explain the relationship between the believer and the law. What relationship does the law play in the believer's life?

So questions I hope to answer today is, what was the relationship between those in Adam and the law? So as we're thinking about Romans 5, what is the relationship that those in Adam, unbelievers, have with the law?

Second question I hope to answer is, what relationship are those in Christ have with the law? What relationship does believers have in regards to God's law? Is it no law, or is there still something that bounds us that is good, that we love, that frames the way in which we live?

[8 : 37] So if you look at verse 1, there is a gentle but firm rebuke to the church. He asserts that they know the law. The audience of the Jews and the Gentiles would know the law in which he speaks about.

And as we've made our way through Romans, we see that Paul is building a case. And if we look at the way in which Paul has talked about the law in the first six chapters, and the way he talks about the law in chapter 7, I think that we can understand which law he is referring to.

And from this letter, I propose that this law that he's talking to is what we call the moral law, or the Ten Commandments. So throughout this law, Paul's case he's building is that all are unrighteous and deserving of God's wrath.

So as we talked about last week in Romans 1, that people see God's glory in creation, they see his righteousness, but they suppress the truth, and they exchange his glory for creation.

In Romans 2, we discuss that all people have the law of God in their hearts, and their conscience bear witness against them. The law of God in Romans 2 is the law that forbids stealing, idolatry, idolatry, and the misuse of the Lord's name.

[9 : 48] And it's referred to as the law of the letter that was written on stone. In Romans 7, verse 6 tells us that the law came in the old way of written code. And then verse 7 goes on to say, we would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, you shall not covet.

So at this point, Paul's talking about this law in Romans 7 that forbids stealing, adultery, idolatry, blasphemy, and covetousness. The law was written on stone and is referred to as the law of the letter.

I believe that from all these things, Paul has in mind the Ten Commandments, which God wrote on stone. This moral law has been revealed in the hearts of all men in creation and was put in writing

on Mount Sinai.

This is the law of creation that is made explicit in the Mosaic law. So with that said, John Calvin has proposed three uses of the moral law that I think we will find very instructive today.

He says, use number one is the civil use. This is the use of the law that restrains evil and promotes righteousness.

[10:57] It restrains the wicked inclinations of the heart from manifesting itself. And we see this law being applied in how we tell people right or wrong, but we ultimately see it in how we create and preserve a society.

There is always some sense of civil use throughout society that upholds and sustains a society.

Number two is the pedagogical or the evangelical use of the law.

This law functions like a mirror. It's supposed to expose to us our sin or reveal our unrighteousness. It shows our complete inability to be righteous so that we would see our need for a savior, see our need for someone who was righteous.

And the third use is what Calvin called the normative use. This use of the law reveals God's will and frames the law as a rule of life. It's the way that believers express their love to God and delight in him.

So the three uses of the law are the civil use, the evangelical use, and the normative use. So in verse one, Paul is applying the evangelical use.

[12:02] We see that the law is binding. It has an authority, authority. But this isn't just authority. This word is used in this context to mean a rule, a mastery. BDAG, which is the Greek lexicon, supports that this is a rule over, that it has authority that's not just, it tells us what is right and wrong, but it is binding, it's domineering over us.

And Paul here describes us being married to the law. All men are obligated to the law's demands, and if they break the demands of the law, it's penalties.

The ten commandments bind all in Adam. In this marriage, we are under a taskmaster. The law reveals the ways in which we cannot keep the commandments.

And in doing so, according to verse five, the law arouses sin in us. It exposes sin in our hearts. The law shows us our utter inability to keep it.

So James 2.10 says, whoever keeps the whole law but fails one point is guilty of it all. To be bound under the law is to be bound under the rigor of its obedience that it requires from us.

[13:14] The law lays this heavy yoke upon us and gives us the least help or necessary strength to fulfill it. It doesn't offer life or salvation, but offers a requirement.

The law has an impossible demand of exact obedience. As James 2 says, if we fail in one point, we've broken it all. Samuel Bolton says, the law looks for exact obedience in every jot and tittle. The demands of the law are unbearable and they leave the subjects beat down and condemned. The law's requirements are too great for any. This is why Paul says, no one is justified before God by the law in Galatians.

So we see that the demand of the law is great. The consequences for breaking the law are severe. In Galatians 2.10, all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.

For it's written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them. The severe consequences of those who rely on the law, that means those who rely on their own works, those who rely on their own will, or those who rely on their innate goodness, is death.

[14:27] We see this in 6.23, the verse right before verse 1. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus. So in Adam, we were under this rule of law.

It had authority and rule over us and sin had dominion in us. The demands of this master were great, the consequences severe. It was an impossible yoke and an eternal punishment for breaking it.

This is why when we sing the hymn Rock of Ages, we say, Not the labors of my hand can fulfill thy law's demands. Could my zeal no respite know? Could my tears forever flow?

All for sin could not atone. Thou must save and thou alone. This is where we see the evangelical use of the law. This is where we see the law shows our complete inability to keep it.

That we need someone greater than us who can fulfill all demands. It can fulfill every jot and tittle of its requirements. But not only that, we don't only need someone to meet the demands, we need someone to also bear the penalties because we've all broken the law.

[15 : 41] So the evangelical use of the law takes the law and shows us that we need the gospel. Samuel Bolton says the law is subservient to the gospel. It's under the gospel.

It serves it. Its purpose is to convince and to humble us. And the gospel is to enable us to fulfill the obedience of the law. The law sends us to the gospel for justification.

It doesn't justify, but it sends us to the gospel. And the gospel sends us to the law to frame our way of life. And we see this exact thing in Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan.

In Pilgrim's Progress, the main character named Christian is making a journey. And along his journey through the Christian life, he meets a man named Faithful. And Faithful and Christian now are journeying together.

They're sharing how they came to salvation. They're sharing their experiences as being a believer. And Pilgrim asks Faithful about how he came to Christ, but then his experiences from it.

[16 : 40] Faithful retells that he comes to the hill of difficulty. And as he comes to the hill, he meets someone named Adam the First. And Adam the First tries to appeal to Faithful with all the world's pleasures.

I'll give you the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And you can come and enjoy my estate is what Adam the First says. But Faithful has this thought that he needs to put off the old man and turns away from Adam the First and starts climbing the mountain.

And as he's climbing, Adam the First yells, I'm going to send someone after you. So Faithful tells his story from there. He says, so as soon as the man, or as he's going up the hill, in the next scene, he sees someone coming after him.

And he says, so as soon as the man overtook me without saying a word, he struck me and knocked me down unconscious. When I came to, I asked him why he had thus assaulted me.

And he said that it was because of my secret inclination to follow Adam the First. And with that, he struck me with another deadly blow on the chest and beat me down backwards. And I laid at his feet as if I were dead.

[17 : 48] So when I came to, I cried to him for mercy. I said, I do not, he said to me, I do not know how to show mercy. And he knocked me down again. And he would have beaten me to death except one who came and told him to stop.

So Christian then asked Faithful, who came and told him to stop? And Faithful says, I did not recognize him at first, but as he went by, I saw the wounds in his hands and in his side.

Then I concluded that it was our Lord. Christian then explained the incident to Faithful. The man who overtook he was Moses. He spares no one and does not know how to show mercy to anyone who transgresses his law.

So here, Bunyan is picturing the law as one who came and beat him down. And the law pointed that he had no ability to fulfill it, no ability to do the demands of the law.

But then came someone with wounds in his hand and wounds in his side who stopped the beating and this was his Lord. The point he's making is that the law should point us to our need for a Savior.

[18 : 51] We need the law to point us to our need for a Savior because we cannot be justified by the law. So the law had great rule over us with its demands and its severe consequences.

Christ has set us free from the law's demands and consequences by his work of redemption. So point number two, Christ has set us free. Christ has set us free.

The law of Romans 7 is binding on all and the only way to be freed from this law is death. According to verses 2-3, the married spouse is bound to her husband by the law of marriage.

This union is for life for as the text says, as long as one lives. The married woman would only be free to marry another by law if her husband died.

Paul uses this picture to portray the freedom that we have through our union with Jesus Christ.

Because we've been united to Christ, we have died to the law through his body, according to verse 4.

[19 : 55] Verse 6 explains that we've been released from the law, having died to that which held us captive. How can this be? How can our union with Christ provide us freedom?

It is because Jesus was our federal head. He was our perfect representative. The covenant of works that God made of Adam, Adam broke. The covenant of redemption that God made of Christ, Christ kept.

When we are united to Christ, we are represented in his life, his death, and his resurrection. In his death, we died with him. It says we were crucified with Christ, and in doing so, we died to the law.

And in his life, we were raised with him and are justified. His life and resurrection provide us justification. That means true freedom comes from the works of Jesus Christ. In Christ, you are free indeed. John 8.36 says, So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Galatians 5.1, For freedom Christ has set you free.

[21 : 02] 2 Corinthians 3.17, Now the Lord is spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. In Christ is where we experience true and lasting freedom.

There is freedom, and you are free indeed through our Savior. And this is an essential part of your gospel, of the gospel that we believe. John Calvin says, Liberty is a necessary attendant to the doctrine of justification.

John Owen calls Christian freedom the second principle of the Reformation. Our gospel is a freeing gospel that has fulfilled the law and broke the bonds in sin and death that we were under.

We see this in the work Jesus has done for us. The heavy demands of the law and the severe consequences that we deserve were credited to Christ, were counted on him.

He fulfilled the demands, and he took the consequences for us. Jesus was placed under every rigorous demand of the law and obeyed it in every way.

[22 : 05] Jesus obeyed the law, every dot and every tittle. Jesus perfectly offered obedience to God, fulfilling the law. That's why Romans 8 says that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

While blameless, Jesus, in fulfilling his covenant and being the better representative for us, he also became a curse and he took all the severe consequences that you deserve. Every breaking of the law, every sin that you have committed, Jesus took for you and he died once and for all.

Galatians 3.13 says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, curse it to everyone who is hanged on a tree. Because Jesus fulfilled the covenant of redemption, we are free.

We are free from the dominion of sin. The sin that you once served, that once held you captive and that you labored for, you've been set free from. We are free from Satan and the tyranny of Satan and his dominion.

Colossians 1.13 We are free from the demands of the law and the exact obedience that it renders, that it asked for. And we are free from the curse of the law.

[23 : 17] All your penalties were taken by Jesus. The Reformation song, which we will sing after the sermon, says, In Christ alone, we're justified. His righteousness is our plea.

Your law's demands are satisfied. His perfect work has set us free. Brothers and sisters, do you see this amazing love that Christ has for us?

There is no labor. There is no work. There is no decision that you can offer to God for his approval. You are not under a magnifying glass. There is no perfect and foreboding standard that makes you lie worthless, that makes you feel inadequate, because Christ has done it all.

God looks at Christ's works and finds great approval for you. Therefore, you don't have to work. His work has provided you a sweet and amiable relationship with the Father.

You are valued on Christ's merits and now have access to the Father, now have communion with him. Brothers and sisters, there is nothing this world can offer you for your godliness.

[24 : 23] The self-help mantra that says, you are enough, be the better you, be your true self, is not to be trusted. You are not enough, but that's okay because Christ is.

He was enough and is enough and he has purchased all for you. All the spiritual blessings and the sweetness of his communion are given to you in Christ, to those who repentably, to those who the Spirit has made new.

And we see in Romans 7-4 that Christ has set us free that we may bear fruit for God. We have been set free from the law's rule and sin's dominion so that we may live for another, that our lives now may be lived to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

Verse 4 says, we belong to another. We are now united to Christ. We have died to the law and we now live for another. But the implications of this are so wonderful.

As we go in Romans, you'll continue to see these implications. Romans 5 is a book of saying implications for being united to Christ. But get this, those who are in Christ are now bound to Christ for life.

[25 : 32] And nothing can separate them from His love. See, chapter 6, we are now united to Him. In chapter 8, at the end of it, nothing can separate us from Him. You are secure in Christ and you

are in His love.

And there isn't any sin, any principality, there is nothing on this world or in heaven that can separate you from Christ. You are free indeed, brothers and sisters, and you are free to worship Him and to live for Him.

So point one, we had been under the rule of the law. Point two, Christ has set us free from the law. Now point number three is we live by the Spirit. Verse six says, we have been released from the law so we serve in the way of the Spirit and not in the way of the written code.

The new way of the Spirit is what we call the covenant of grace. This is the new covenant promised in Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31. Will you turn to Ezekiel 36 with me?

In Ezekiel 36, this is the new covenant promise that is to come for the Old Testament believers that is fulfilled in Christ. When Christ at the Lord's Supper said, this is my blood, the new covenant for you.

[26 : 47] He is enacting, He is initiating the new covenant now being applied to believers. Verses 25 through 28 say, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land I gave to your fathers and you shall be my people and I will be your God. Ezekiel 36 promises a work in which God has already done for those who are in Christ. This is the work to cleanse us. This is the radical work of heart surgery. We are all born in Adam with a heart that is hard to God, that hates God, that does not want to love and serve Him.

And this promise here says that God will remove this heart of stone, remove this hard heart and put a heart of flesh, a heart that desires to love God, desires to follow Him.

We see it right here, it says that they will desire to do God's law, that they'll walk in my statutes.

Now will you turn to Jeremiah 31 with me? This is another promise of the new covenant.

[28 : 13] Verses 31 through 34 say, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

My covenant they broke though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each brother and each his brother saying, Know the Lord for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.

So Jeremiah 31 is building on this promise of giving the spirit and in this promise he says that he's going to put his law within their heart and he's going to write it on their heart. It calls back to Ezekiel or calls forward to Ezekiel where it says that he'll cause them to walk in his statutes.

What we see in Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31 is the promised new covenant and it's the new way of the spirit. The way in which we now have the spirit that caused us to love God but also to obey his law, to please him, to express love to him.

[29 : 33] Before in Adam we had a heart of stone that hated God and loved sin. The law had bound us and we were in captivity. Sin reigned over us and we served it as an instrument of unrighteousness.

God has done an amazing work. His spirit has done the work of regeneration and given us new hearts. By the work of the spirit we partake in the covenant of grace. We've been united to Christ and in the new way of the spirit the law is within us and written on our hearts.

So to remind you of Samuel Bolton's quote, the law sends us to the gospel for justification. The gospel sends us to the law to frame our way of life. The law is now within us.

In Christ we serve by the new way of the spirit. And we can say with Paul as in Romans chapter 7 I delight in the law of God in my inner being. And at the end of chapter 7 he says I serve the law with God.

I serve the law of God in my mind but my flesh serves sin. The law is no longer a hammer for us but a staff that guides us. As those in Christ walking in the statutes of the moral law is the expression of

love to God and to delight in him.

[30 : 43] That's why when it says that we should love our God and love our neighbor as ourself that's the summary of all the law and the prophets because the first four commandments is to love God and the first six commandments is to love our neighbor as ourself.

So the commandments should be something that we see as a delight now. I want to worship God. I want to bear his name well. I want to give time to worship him well. And then I want to serve my brothers and sisters well.

I want to do the one anotherings well. I care for your soul so I want to make sure that there's no lust in my heart. I want to make sure that I don't consider stealing or being covetousness. I want to love you as my own soul.

This is the life in the spirit. The life that we say Father I love you because I keep your commandments. Our religion is not law based works based righteousness.

It is heart based. This is what Calvin would call the third use of the law. What Calvin calls the normative use of the law. It is the way believers normally use the law for life and godliness.

[31 : 49] This is how believers relate to the law. Compared to the unbeliever who relate to it in a civil and evangelical way the believers now relate it in a normative way. If you turn to the back of your bulletin there's a quote by Richard Sibbes and it says when we come to be religious we lose not our pleasure we don't lose our pleasure but we translate it before we fed on common notions now we live on holy truths.

Do you see the change? Before we lived on the things of the world common notions are sin but now we live on holy truths and they are pleasurable they are delightful they are great to live by. The 1689 London Baptist Confession is very informative here.

In chapter 19 paragraph 7 it says these uses of the law are not contrary talking about the civil evangelical and the normative use. They are not contrary to one another they don't oppose each other these uses of the law are not contrary to the grace of the gospel but are in sweet harmony with it for the spirit of Christ subdues and enables the human will to freely and cheerfully do what the will of God requires in the scriptures.

The gospel doesn't do away with the moral law but actually strengthens it. There is a sweet harmony between the law and the gospel but the law is subservient it serves the gospel. Through the gospel and the work of the spirit believers can freely and cheerfully do the ten commandments we have them as a joy for us but this harmony of law and gospel is essential to the Christian life.

As Christians the light of Christ should shine in every domain of our lives. It should affect all of us every aspect of us. So just two places of application for today and then we will be concluding.

[33 : 41] Number one our friendships and our marriages how does law and gospel harmony law and gospel distinction affect our friendships and marriages? In our friendships and or our marriages while we greatly enjoy both of those relationships the aim is to please and glorify God.

That's what they're designed for. He's given these relationships to us as a gift and in these relationships the law and the gospel are significantly important.

If we live these relationships based on perfect obedience or extreme expectation we will be left discouraged and angry. We must be careful not to build our relationships just based on law and to be those who bear our friends with the law and our marriages with the law to enact perfect obedience from our spouse or to enact perfect obedience from our friends.

Gospel living is always accompanied with the gospel. We need to hold our friends and spouse to the law of God as a frame of life and when they fail we bring it to their attention gently and as we bring it to their attention we say brother sister honey whoever you're speaking to this thing you said or this thing you did does not honor the Lord the way that it should and it grieves me that that happened and I see my own sin too but we need to be careful and quickly to ask God for help so we can repent and enjoy the life in the spirit.

It is a beautiful thing to live by law and gospel because the law is now a way of life that we instruct and love each other by and then it provides gospel interactions. Your friendships and your marriages can now be built on the gospel because you are faithful to the laws of frame of life the normative use.

[35 : 31] So some brief verses faithful are the wounds of a friend profuse are the kisses of an enemy. See the difference there the comparison faithful are the wounds profuse are the kisses proverbs 27 6 iron sharpens iron and one man sharpens another proverbs 27 17 when we are doing this well when we are balancing law and gospel well we can say of our friendships and

