

# The Power of Forgiveness and the Struggle with Sin

## Romans 6-7

In Baptism, Christ's story became our story: his death became our death; his life, our life. We died to sin with him. Now we also live to God in him. Sin will not be my master, because I do not live under the law's control, but under the power of grace! Yes, I needed to be set free from my unhappy "marriage" to the law. The only way that was going to happen was by me dying. Death ends all the law's claims and all the law's accusations. I died to the law "through the body of Christ." Now I can belong to another, to the living Christ! Now I can bear fruit pleasing to God. "What," you may ask, "is wrong with the Law? And why do I need to be freed from its control?" Answer: nothing is wrong with the Law in and of itself. The only problem is the way that a human being's corrupt nature uses the law. The law teaches us what sin is, and for a corrupt nature, that means trouble. It gives more information on how to sin. It stirs up sin from its dormant state. Then it hands me over to death. The problem isn't with the Law: it reveals what a death-dealing horror sin is. The problem is me. Even now as a Christian, I still struggle with sin dwelling within me. I still have a sinful nature. And so I find I do not fully do the good I want to do. Instead I often do the things I hate. Who can save me from this body doomed to die? Thanks be to God through Christ!

### 1. Study Romans 6:1-14

#### **Buried with Christ by Baptism to Walk With Him in a New Life**

- ✓ The two sections of this chapter are each introduced by a similar question (v. 1; v. 15): what false notion of grace does Paul intend to speak against here?
- ✓ vv.1-4: In baptism, God joined us with Christ. His death to sin became our death. His life is our life. The point is: when you die, a clean break has been made with the past.
- ✓ v.4-7: God freed us from our sins for a purpose: to live a new life of faith. It is a new life beyond death, a resurrection kind of life, a life free from sin's absolute mastery over us.
- ✓ Notice how God is the active agent here. God is at work with Baptism, burying us with Christ, raising us up to a new life.

The point is: our life of sanctification is part of the gospel gift. Along with justification by faith alone, God gives us the power to live the new life of faith. The first imperative really comes in verse 11. Paul starts out with the indicative: here's who you are. Now be who you are.

- ✓ Christians do have a choice now. We are not ruled by sin any more. Sin is not our master. We can say, "No!" to sin and "Yes!" to God.
- ✓ Why can sin no longer be our master (v. 14)?

### 2. Study Romans 6:15-23:

#### **Set Free—To Serve a New Master**

- ✓ Paul is "playing" with a paradox here. Christ has set us free. But not to a self-run life, or to a morally neutral state. There is no such thing. "You have been set free... to be a slave... a slave to a new and better master."
- ✓ Comment on the "before" and "after" Paul places before our eyes here.
- ✓ How is being a slave to God better than being a slave to sin?
- ✓ v. 23 Sin pays its wage. Salvation is a free gift. Let no believer think God owes him. Let no unbeliever complain God's not being fair.

### 3. Study Romans 7:1-6:

#### **Set free from the Law**

- ✓ Again we see a "before" and "after" picture. This time instead of talking about slaves and masters, the picture is of a woman bound by law to a husband.

- ✓ These verses teach what may be a surprising truth. In order to serve God fully and freely, we need to be set free from the power and dominating control of the law in our lives.
- ✓ vv. 2-3: Death ends every legal relationship. Death ends every legal claim. Death ends any accusation that can be sustained under law.
- ✓ vv.4: When did death “happen” for us?
- ✓ v. 5-6: What new way of service does the gospel open up for us?

#### 4. Study Romans 7:7-13:

##### **How Sin Misuses the Law**

- ✓ Here Paul explains more fully how law and sin work in tandem to produce death.
  - i. It teaches what sin is
  - ii. It stirs up sin
  - iii. Then consigns the sinner to the death penalty
- ✓ vv 7, 12: The problem is not with the law; the problem is with Sin
- ✓ vv. 8, 9, 11: Paul uses the word “Sin” in an unusual way. He personifies it as a malevolent power that is at work “in me.”
- ✓ In the Greek, the verbs are all past tenses here. Paul is reviewing his own past, pre-conversion experience from the vantage point of his present understanding.
- ✓ v. 9 “Once I was alive apart from law...” Before he realized the law’s perfect demand, and before he understood that it could only condemn him to death, he was ‘alive’ in his faulty thinking that he could keep the law and achieve righteousness (see Philippians 3:5).
- ✓ All that became death and ashes when he was bathed in the bright light and heard the voice from heaven say, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” His zeal for the law and his pursuit of his own righteousness had led him to persecute his own Messiah and Lord!
- ✓ v. 11: “Sin deceived me...” as did Satan in the beginning with Adam and Eve:
  - i. by misrepresenting the commandment
  - ii. by denying the consequences
  - iii. by using the commandment to question God’s goodness.

- ✓ Note in Philippians 3:5-6 that Sin is often at its worst when it’s trying to be good.
- ✓ v. 13 Note God’s good purpose through it all: the law helps us see what a horror Sin really is

#### 5. Study Romans 7:14-24

##### **The Struggle Between the Old Man and the New**

- ✓ Paul switches to present tenses here. Now he’s talking about the ongoing struggle with Sin (indwelling Sin) that makes his life—even as a believer—at times a misery.
- ✓ Notice how he speaks of a dual nature:
  - i. “What I hate (i.e. evil) I do...” “I agree that the law is good...” “I have the desire to do good...” “I want to do good...” “I don’t want to do evil...” “In my inner being I delight in God’s law...” “With my mind I am a [willing] slave to God’s law...”
  - ii. “I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin...” “Sin living in me...” “Nothing good lives in me...” “My sinful nature...” “Law of sin...” “Sinful nature.”
  - iii. Who’s is the real “me”? See verse 20 “It is no longer I who do it, but sin living in me...” and verse 25, “I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”
- ✓ How is this at one and the same time both a sobering truth...and a comforting truth for a believer?
- ✓ Once again, where does it teach us to rest our whole confidence? (see verse 25a).

Romans 6 and 7 balance one another out: because of Baptism, a new power has entered into our lives. The resurrection power of new life in Jesus. The power of saying ‘no’ to sin, and ‘yes’ to God. Now we are truly free to serve God with heart, mind, and body as we never were before. But although we long for heaven, we’re not there yet. We still daily struggle with sin and death, and cry out in the wretched state, “Who will deliver me!” “Jesus come quickly!”

For next time: Read Chapter 8 *More than Conquerors*

