

“Law & Marriage”

Romans - the Gospel of God

Romans 7:1-6

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Jeff: Gracious God in heaven, we give You thanks that You are all-powerful, that You are sovereign, and that You exercise Your power and might through Your providence to preserve all Your creation and to preserve all things, and to lead and guide all peoples and actions, everything that is, to the purpose of Your will. Father, we give You thanks for this and we praise You for it. We bow before You as the sovereign King of all things.

And Father, today we bow before You as the King of our hearts. We ask, Lord, that You'll rule and reign in us and that Your word will guide us, and where we fail that Your Spirit would correct us and set our feet aright upon Your path. And Father, we pray that You'll use brothers and sisters in the church, your body, to encourage us along the way, to strengthen us as well. And let us be a strength to others.

Father, we think in this regard of Kevin. And we're thankful for the friendship that he has with some of the men here at Brave Men and for the connection that he has with us. And yet we pray, Father, that You will indeed give him much mercy, Father, as he is experiencing the effects of cancer in his body. We pray that You will cause him to be pain free. We pray that You'll certainly heal him; we pray that. We know Father, that things happen according to Your will. And yet You invite us to pour out the longings of our hearts, and so we do. We long for our brother to be healed. And yet we commit ourselves to Your will and ask that You would lead and guide and bring about your good purposes in Kevin's life. And we pray, Father, that as You do that You would cause him to know that these are Your purposes, and that You would comfort his heart as such.

Father, we pray for Your hand to be upon us as we study Your word. Lord, we know that Your word accompanied by Your Spirit changes lives, shapes us after the image of our Savior Christ Jesus. And so, Father, we pray that Your hand would be upon us today for that very purpose. Father, as we study the book of Romans we're thankful for it and for the message of it, and for the way that You have used it, not only in the first century but throughout the centuries. We're thankful, Lord, that this has been the instrument by which many great men in the church have been saved, by which revivals have been caused. We pray, Father, that You will continue to bless us as we study this great Word of Yours. And Father, we commit ourselves to do it in Jesus' name, and so we pray. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well, we are taking up Romans today—Romans chapter 7—so let's turn there. And as we do I want us to think about where we are in the book of Romans. Again, if you remember, chapter 5 basically brought us up through the discussion that Paul led us through when it came to justification. And now in chapter 6 he's starting to think about sanctification. So we've been through chapter 6 already. We're still thinking about sanctification in chapter 7.

And one of the things that we need to remember is that Romans chapter 7 is one of those chapters where people have said, “I'm a Romans 7 Christian.” But you can't be a Romans 7 Christian without being a Romans 6 Christian without being a Romans 5

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Christian without being a Romans 4 Christian, and so on. So you need chapter 6 and all that’s previous to that in order to understand the message of Romans chapter 7.

so we’re going to engage in Romans chapter 7. But as we do we’re going to draw from Romans chapter 6. And there’s certainly something that we need to learn to bring with us when we get into chapter 7, and we’ll see that as we go along. But I see that Don has the page turned to Romans chapter 7. And Don, would you read for us the first six verses of that text?

Don Maurer: Okay. *“Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law of her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.*

“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Transcriber’s Note: NKJV.

Jeff: I’ve got to tell you guys something. Roger was speaking at our men’s breakfast last week on Saturday, and he read the Scriptures to us. And after reading them he said, “This is the word of the Lord,” and he forgot that he was in a Presbyterian church. *(Laughter)* There was dead silence. *(Laughter)* No one said a word. They looked around like what in the world is this guy doing with “This is the word of the Lord?” *(Laughter)* Ted’s not laughing. *(Laughter)*

Ted Wood: I’m not laughing because the Presbyterian church that we go to responds to this with “Thanks be to God.”

Jeff: Well I want you to know that I’m faithful to their low church roots. *(Laughter)*

Ted: The high church roots are a lot deeper and a lot more ancient. Let’s debate it. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Yup., *(Laughter)* All right. So today we’re going to look at three things as we look at these first six verses. We’re going to look at a principle found in the text. We’re going to look at an illustration just very briefly. And then we’re going to look at the application. There are three points to the application that I want you to notice. And the application really is obviously an extension of the principle. So we’re going to find ourselves thinking particularly about one principle today.

So let me first of all say something by way of introduction before we get into what this principle is. One of the things that I think we need to continue to keep in mind, especially as we live in our culture today, is that we need to make sure that we’re pointed in the right direction. And when I say that I mean pointed in the right direction with regard not only to our behaviors. But if our behaviors are guided by our cognition we need to be thinking rightly in order to be pointed in the right direction in our behaviors. And one of

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the things that I think we have a tendency to think about when we think about being pointed in the right direction is that we think about sort of the pragmatics of the faith. We think about our prayer life. We think about our love for our neighbor. We think about those sorts of things, all of which are very important.

But I think that when we think about doctrinal matters, some of those doctrinal matters that we really need to be thinking rightly about get relegated to the bottom of the barrel in terms of our thinking. And one of those things is the doctrine of sin. When we think about doctrinal matters it's not just justification that's important; it's not just sanctification. It's not just all of the matters of the *ordo salutis*. But it's really the doctrine of sin that we need to think rightly about when we think about being pointed in the right direction, because if we're not thinking rightly about sin we're going to get ourselves into trouble. And I'm going to say some things right now that are going to get me into a controversy with some of you, at least in your thinking, and maybe not just your thinking. Maybe you'll want to get your verbal duked up with me about it.

I want to tell you that one of the problems with our culture today is that it has reduced sin to categories that we should be uncomfortable with. So let me just ask first of all, what is sin? And I think that when we answer that question I think we're going to give a twofold answer, at least a twofold answer. We're going to say that there are sins of omission.

Now what's a sin of omission? A sin of omission is not doing what God requires. That's when we leave off doing what God commands us to do; that's a sin of omission.

But it's not just sins of omission; there are sins of commission. And commission sins are doing the very things that God forbids. So God gets us coming and going. We can't leave off the things that He commands us to do. And we can't transgress the things that he asks us to do. We've got to think rightly about sin, because if sin can be sins of omission or commission then we need to think rightly about what sin actually is.

What is sin? And I know that one person here today indeed has the answer to that question in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. And I know that even if he doesn't have it in his memory—and I would be surprised if he didn't,—I'm sure he has it in the book in front of him. *(Laughter)* Do you have it?

Ted: Pray tell, who are you talking about?

Jeff: I am talking about Jordan; Jordan has it. I love the fact that Jordan brings this book because I can reference it. These are the standards of the low church tradition.

Ted: Lower than low. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: They came out of the high church tradition, right?

Ted: Lower than low.

Jeff: They came out of the Church of England, took the *39 Articles* and made them respectable. *(Laughter)* So do you—

Jordan Obaker: I don't have it memorized, so I—

Ted: All right.

Jeff: No, no, no; we're not going to—

Ted: Don has it.

Jeff: Oh, Don!

Don Maurer: Okay. “*Sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.*”

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Jeff: All right. So Don, is that what I just said?

Ted: Yup.

Jeff: Omission and commission.

Don: Yes.

Jeff: What did it add?

Don: Transgression of the law.

Jeff: The law of God. “Any transgression of or lack of conformity to the law of God.” So we have a standard from God that says, “This is right, this is wrong.” And we need both to obey it and not forsake it; that’s the idea. Yes?

Brave Man: so where is that referenced in the Bible? Was that back in Moses’ time or in the Old Testament? I can’t remember where God actually tells us that clearly.

Jeff: Well you can go to verses like Deuteronomy 12:32. Do you know that, Don?

Don Maurer: “You shall not add to or take away from the words of this law.”

Jeff: Yes; you shall not add to or take away from; you shall not forsake or—Go ahead.

Brave Man: He tells us not to sin. But does he describe what sin is?

Jeff: Oh yes, for sure. For instance the classic definition of sin is the transgression of the law of God, right? And so when you have the Ten Commandments you have the first four pertaining to God and how we conduct ourselves toward Him. And then the latter six are about how we conduct ourselves toward our neighbor. And the one thing about the *Westminster Confession of Faith*—and I really appreciate this—is that it says, for instance, that it’s not just the negative or even the positive transgressions in and of themselves that are transgressions of God’s law. But these are examples of a broader principle.

So for instance when we talk about adultery, we’re not just talking about adultery. We’re talking about sin of a sexual nature, right? When we’re talking about stealing we’re not just talking about stealing someone’s property; we’re talking about stealing of a wider variety. So in other words, could we in some way trace all sin back to one or more of the Ten Commandments? Well of course we could. And the idea is that commandment #10—not to covet—involves many of the other commandments, right? So I would say yes; go back to the Ten Commandments. And remember, Romans chapter 2 says that these are written on the conscience of even the unbeliever, so that even if he doesn’t have the tablets of stone from the Old Testament he even knows by his very conscience bearing witness that these things—for instance, murder and stealing—are wrong.

Now he might say, “No, no; I didn’t know that.” But I’ll tell you what. Let him work a day’s labor and then have his employer withhold his paycheck, and he’s going to say, “That’s not fair; you’re stealing from me!”, whether or not he ever saw the Bible and its prohibition not to steal. He would say, “That’s thievery.” So it’s written on the heart of man no matter what. So does that help? Okay.

So here we have a definition of sin. The standard is God’s law. We can’t forsake it; we can’t forsake doing it, and so we must do it. And that’s the idea behind it.

Now sin is important. And this is an important idea for us to think about, and I say it’s important. But it’s only important inside the church.

What do I mean by that? Well let me tell you what I mean by that. And this is where I could get myself into some trouble, but that’s okay. “*Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.*” (*Laughter*) And so it’s okay. But I want you to know that outside the church

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sin is sickness and disease, but it’s certainly not sin. And here’s the most controversial thing. The trouble is that the world’s idea and understanding of sin as sickness has crept into the church.

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: So now there are sins that are transgressions of God’s law that are no longer sins; they are sicknesses or diseases. And this even changes, doesn’t it? Take homosexuality for instance. Back in the ‘80s and before that, remember that psychologists in that day said it was a mental illness, right?

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: So here we find that homosexuality has moved in our culture from sin to mental illness now to what?

Brave Man: Acceptable.

Jeff: Acceptable. Not only acceptable, but we should all be affirming it, right?—that sort of thing. So outside of the church sins are sicknesses and diseases and illnesses. But in the church that’s even becoming the case.

So when I say that we need to have sort of a compass that’s headed north in this area this is why I’m saying it. Let me give you a for instance of what I’m talking about. Let’s say you sit down with someone and you hear from him a profession of faith. And you hear a good profession of faith. You hear that Jesus died for me. I need to believe in Him. And if I repent of my sins I am forgiven and I have eternal life. You hear that simple gospel message; it’s very clear.

And then further into the conversation you hear this person say to you that he or she is a trans-gender person or a homosexual person. And you say, “Wait a second; wait, wait, wait, wait! How do you understand the profession of faith you just made with how you just identified yourself?”

And he would say, “Well, what do you mean?”

And I would say, “Well you have just defined yourself by your sin. And yet you said that you repent of your sin and that you’re forgiven. How do you reconcile those two?”

And the person says to you, “Oh, I see what you mean. You’re working with an old understanding of what homosexuality is. See, I don’t recognize homosexuality as a sin that I need to repent of. So I’m not identifying myself according to my sin. I’m identifying myself according to my sexual orientation which is not sin, which is neutral. And therefore I don’t need to be redeemed from that which is neutral.”

And I say, “Wait a second! The Bible says that is a sin.”

“But you’re working with an old understanding of the Bible. You see, when you look at homosexuality in the Bible, that had to do with temple prostitution. That has nothing to do with the kind of homosexual relationships that we have today—you know, two men or two women in love with one another and committed to one another, seeking to adopt children. You’re working with an old understanding.”

Do you see the problem here? The problem here is that this kind of thinking creeps into the church. And pretty soon we say, “Yes, this person believes the gospel and is forgiven and saved. And this is no longer a sin of which they must repent,” and you explain it away. Go ahead, Don.

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Don Maurer: I’m going to get into real trouble here. But isn’t it the same thing with alcoholism, what the Bible calls drunkenness? How many times have we heard that that’s a disease?

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: Don, do you mean to say that alcoholism doesn’t have some disease qualities to it?

Jeff: Oh, I can’t wait to hear this! *(Laughter)*

Don: Well, it causes diseases. You know, you can get cirrhosis of the liver or brain damage or something.

Don Bishop: Then it becomes an addiction.

Ted: But see, does it, according to Don?

Don Maurer: Well,--

Ted: Is addiction a legitimate Christian category?

Don: I think it’s another word for sin.

Ted: Okay. Well I would disagree.

Jeff: What do you think?

Ted: I think there is such a real thing. I mean, we have psychological issues, and in fact those physically work on us. It doesn’t mean it’s not a sin; obviously it is a sin.

Jeff: So do you mean to say that there are certain genetic makeups where if a person consumes alcohol that he can become dependent upon that alcohol in a way that maybe someone else can’t?

Ted: I think that certain people have a greater disposition to addictive behaviors; yes, I do.

Jeff: Do you think that’s cognitive, or do you think that’s biological?

Ted: I would say it might be both.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: I’m not denying that it’s a sin.

Jeff: Oh, no. I just want to say that this is an important topic that we ought to be thinking about at some point. So when you think about it biologically or cognitively, I can understand. I’m not a biologist.

Ted: But I play one on TV. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: There is no way that I can make a good judgment about whether or not somebody can be physically prone to be dependent upon alcohol, though I think that those factors can be there. Cognitively, for instance, I think that somebody can create pathways in his thinking to sort of cognitively become dependent on things. For instance, take something as non-substance oriented as pornography. I mean, if you’ve read about pornography, you know for instance that there is a chemical released in the brain when you engage in that kind of behavior.

Ted: Dopamine.

Jeff: You also know that certain things reinforce behaviors. For instance, if men view screens and men masturbate and men do these things and they’re all coupled together while they view pornography, that just creates a stronger pattern of addiction, a stronger pattern that’s hard to pull out of, right?

Ted: Well let’s not even deal with pornography. Let’s talk about body building.

Jeff: Yeah, absolutely.

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Ted: I mean, my daughter was married at one time to a fellow who was into body building.

Jeff: Absolutely.

Ted: And I can see by going to the competitions and talking to them that there is a whole very addictive quality to them.

Jeff: Yeah. Or think about body image in and of itself.

Ted: Yes, right.

Jeff: It’s the same thing: it’s body building or its weight loss. So what happens is that you begin to see yourself in unreal ways, right? Why is that? It’s because that’s a cognition issue that has its effect biologically for sure. But you know, I think the questions are great.

I’m not a biologist, but here’s what I can say. I’ve told you this before. Let’s say we start here with Adam in the garden, right? Adam in the garden is a pristine human being. Now what was it that happened to Adam when he sinned? God imputed to him the curse—the result of his disobedience—and said what? “You are now guilty and corrupt.”

Now think about that. Did every effect of his sin come rushing upon him at that moment? In one sense yes, because now he’s under the curse, him and all his posterity. But did he feel every effect that for instance later posterity would experience? No. That worked into the human race over time.

For instance I think aging is one of those issues. Now you may disagree with this, but I think that age was a factor. Think about it, right? Some people think that Genesis chapter 6 says that 120 years was how long God was going to contend with man. And some people think that God limited man’s age to 120. And then by the time you get into the Psalms, 70 is basically the age that man lives; 80 if he’s strong enough. But my point is that man was built to live 900 years or more—eternally, right? And yet, over time what begins to happen as a result of the curse? The diminishing of years.

And that’s what I’m saying. That was on Adam in the curse. But the effects that have worked out through his posterity have been catastrophic. For instance, what was the potential for cancer in Adam? Of course it was, at the Fall. But there are so many proliferations of cancer nowadays. There was only the possibility or the potentiality in Adam, but now it’s an actuality in all of the human race. And this is the proliferation of corruption; corruption spreads.

And so when you think about it, when you think about being biologically affected by sin, of course I think it’s there. And when you think about cognition and how we’re affected by sin in terms of our pattern of thinking, it’s there, right? And yet the gospel call is for you to repent of your sin.

Let’s say this, for instance. Let’s just give someone the benefit of the doubt and say that you have a propensity biologically to express addictive behaviors; let’s just say it that way. Okay, is the call to repent of your sin incumbent upon you, or do you have an excuse?

Ted: You don’t have an excuse.

Jeff: No, you don’t have an excuse.

Ted: If you excuse it, ultimately that addiction will kill you one way or the other. With body building you take too many steroids.

Jeff: Right.

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Ted: I mean, you name it; you name the addiction. Ultimately it will drive you straight into the ground.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. But here’s the thing, right? Is the gospel repent and believe? The gospel is repent and believe. Here’s the problem even with the church today. The problem with the church today is that the church says that there isn’t enough grace in the gospel to help me to overcome this sin. Does that sound familiar? Or have you not heard that?

Don Bishop: The famous saying is, “Well, that’s the way I am.”

Jeff: That’s the way I am.

Gary Craig: I was born this way.

Jeff: I mean, here’s the thing that I want to challenge. The thing I want to challenge is that whether it’s biological or cognitive, the fact of the matter is that God doesn’t say, “Repent of your sins, except for the ones which are biologically rooted or cognitively rooted that the gospel really doesn’t have power to overcome. You’re going to have to be on your own; you’re going to have to tap into the secular experts for this because grace just doesn’t have it; it’s just not able to cut it.”

I don’t read that anywhere in Scripture. And yet I read that mentality in the church more than I hear what I say. Do you know what I mean? And that’s in everything from body image issues to what I believe are—

Ted: Stamp collecting.

Jeff: Stamp collecting? *(Laughter)* We’ve figured out what Ted’s addiction is. *(Laughter)* It slipped out as a Freudian slip but it came out. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I keep my stamp collection books stuffed in my closet so that I—*(Laughter)*

Jeff: No, no; please don’t explain any more. *(Laughter)* We don’t want to get into it. *(Laughter)*

Gary: They’re hidden under his mattress. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know, somebody was going to say something serious *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

Ted: I was just saying that for me addiction is a result of the problem of angst. Not to get too Freudian here, but it’s the result of existential angst, unsettledness, unhappiness, whatever. An addiction promises a solution to that.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: And the way out of it is to repent and believe. And then I would add to that.

Jeff: Yes?

Ted: The mercies of the church.

Jeff: The means of grace.

Ted: The body of Christ, all the means of grace that the church brings to bear.

Jeff: That’s right; absolutely. Yes?

Gary: It helps to remember that the Twelve Step Program from Alcoholics Anonymous is taken out of the Bible.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: It comes out of Pittsburgh, from Sam Schumaker in the 1930s. Did you know that?

Jeff: I did not know that.

Ted: He was a key player in the formation of AA. He also wrote a book in the 1930s which said how to be born again. Did you know that?

Jeff: What?

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Ted: He was an amazing guy.

Jeff: That’s great; that’s good.

Brave Man: I guess I was thinking about what we were just talking about here. So when we talk about things like alcoholism, I wonder if the Ten Commandments kind of help us here, right? So you say that if people are addicted to something, you’re essentially making it an idol.

Jeff: Sure, of course. They’re coveting something through their addiction. Like Ted said, they’ve created an idol. They’re pursuing something other than God in their lives.

Brave Man: That’s how I would understand where that would fall. Like you said, it’s not like the Bible says that drinking alcohol is wrong.

Jeff: No, but for instance the New Testament says, “Don’t be addicted to anything,” right? And so “don’t be addicted to wine, for that is debauchery”; I think that’s Ephesians 5. So somebody can’t say, “Well, I’m not transgressing the Scriptures because I’m addicted to Jack Daniels and not wine,” right?

Brave Man: I think the idol part applies to anything, though.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right; that’s exactly right.

Ted: You’re saying that thing will save you.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: And the hardest part for me in my coming out of that addiction was that at one time I said, “I can’t live without it.” And I came to live without it.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: I did it one day at a time. And one day at a time becomes one week at a time and it becomes one month at a time.

Jeff: And that is because you were in Christ.

Ted: That was because I was in Christ and I knew what the truth was.

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: To be in an addiction is to be in untruth.

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: And we will always do what we believe is true, because doing what is true is in our best interests, even if we think truth is sin.

Jeff: Yeah. I remember now. Here’s the difference between my brother-in-law and Ted. My brother-in-law was in prison for having a meth lab. And they sent him to a pharmaceutical prison, a maximum security pharmaceutical prison. It was Westchester, south of Philadelphia. And I remember that at the time I was going to Westminster for my doctorate. And I would just drive half an hour down to the prison to see him while I was over there.

And I remember sitting with him and talking with him. And in the area where we were allowed to sit there was a TV on. And maybe you remember the program: “Intervention.” There was a program on TV where real drug addicts would have their families have interventions. And this program would show addicts shooting up.

And I remember talking to my brother-in-law one day, and he was literally shaking. And I said, “What’s the matter?” And he pointed up to the TV. And he had probably been in prison for maybe a year by that time.

And he said, “I’m really glad that I’m in these walls, because I’m afraid that I would do that if I were out.” And I talked to him about the gospel repeatedly. And he was out

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three years. And at some point in the three years, later in the three years, he got himself back into drugs.

And then it was a couple of years later after he got himself into drugs that he was staying with us. And I was in the parking lot, talking to him one night and sharing the gospel with him one last time. And he rejected it; this is the first time he ever said this to me: “I’m not interested, Jeff.” Two weeks later he took bath salts. He was on a job site up by the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area. He got into a delusional state and hanged himself in a tree. He needed those walls to keep him from doing those things to himself.

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: And what I’m saying is that the grace of God is sufficient. Now it’s the grace of God and fellowship and the means of grace that the church has to offer, all of that. But the fact is that the grace of God is sufficient.

I’m not saying that somebody doesn’t need intervention medically, or anything like that. I’m not saying that somebody may not need counseling and some one-on-one dependent help to get through certain things. But what I am saying is that if we are not willing to say that grace is sufficient to overcome sin, I don’t want to be here anymore. This will be my last day here and in church and at the seminary. I’m done, because if grace doesn’t have the power to overcome sin I’m wasting my time, and so are you. And I think that’s what we have to keep in mind when we think about sin and the grace of God. Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: Yes. And Paul enforces this in Romans and also in 1 Corinthians 6 and says that very thing. There wasn’t counseling and psychology and everything in his day. Maybe there was, but not what we have today. And he said, “*Such were some of you.*”

Jeff: Yeah, that’s right.

Don: “*But you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified.*”

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Don Bishop: You use the word “counseling.” Proper counseling is simply using God’s word.

Jeff: Well, yes. When I talk about counseling I’m talking about somebody meeting with somebody else to help them through a bump in their sanctification road. So for instance, counselors who create dependence upon them is not counseling, right? Counselors who create dependence upon Jesus Christ, and who manifest that help in doing so for a short particular time, that’s counseling, right?

So if people come to me for marriage counseling I tell them “I’m helping you through a bump in your road on the way to being more Christlike.” I’m trying to work myself out of a job. I’m not trying to create dependence upon me.

And oftentimes that’s exactly what therapists do; they create dependence, right? I know this because I actually counseled a therapist once who had come to faith because his wife had an affair. And so they came to faith; they started coming to church. And we had been in counseling for maybe six months, and they were doing pretty well.

But I called them one day and said, “Hey, I’m going to have to move our appointment.” And I talked to the wife, and the wife said, “No problem; we’ll just re-schedule it with you a couple days later.”

And the husband called me back. Now the husband was a professional therapist. He’s like “You can’t do this to me!” (*Laughter*)

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“Wait a second! We need to talk about something other than your marital problems.” And so we did. The next time I went over there I talked to him and I said, “I am not your savior. And I’m not the savior of your marriage,” right?; that kind of thing.

All right. Well what I want us to do is that we’re either going to work through this very quickly because I didn’t anticipate this much time—but it was a good conversation,—or we’ll just take it and we’ll put what we need to put over to the next time. Romans 7:1 says, “*I am speaking to those who know the law.*”

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff is reading from the ESV.

Jeff: Now I think that is an important interruption in what he’s saying. He is saying, “I am not speaking to those who don’t.” Now you can argue and say, well wait a minute; doesn’t everybody know the law? Go back to Romans chapter 2, Jeff; it’s written on their consciences. And you can say of course everybody knows the law. And so he saying I’m right; everybody knows the law.

But I think what he’s saying here is, “I speak to those who know the law in the way that I’ve been describing it in chapter 6.” That is, those who know Christ, who are in Christ, are dead to the law and its implications. I think that’s what he’s saying here.

Now what’s the principle? If that’s the case, what’s the principle? The principle is prefaced in the text by the phrase “*Do you not know*” in the ESV. It’s really the word from which we get our word *agnostic*. He’s really saying, “Are you ignorant?” *(Laughter)* You know, the apostle Paul’s rough edges are always polished a bit by the other translations; you know what I mean? *(Laughter)* “Are you ignorant? Don’t you know? Are you so foolish?”; that sort of thing. “So are you ignorant of this?”

And here’s the principle: The law has jurisdiction over a person as long as that person lives. Now that’s a relatively simple point. And I don’t think I need to belabor that.

For instance, think about this scenario. You have a murder/suicide, okay? The guy murders somebody and then he commits suicide. I want you to think about that for a minute. You are not going to take that guy’s body and wheel it into the courtroom and put him up in the chair and have him sit through a trial as if he is under the law. He is no longer under the law because he’s dead; he’s dead to the law, right? He has removed himself from the sphere over which the law applies, at least in this context.

So the often mistaken thought is that the law is sin. And oftentimes that’s what people get when they read a text like this one, and that’s a mistake. The law is not sin; the law actually brings sin to light.

And so people don’t like tattle tales, right? People don’t like to be ratted out. The law will rat you out. So people think the law is terrible; the law is sin. No, the law is not sin. The law is a faithful witness against your sin; that’s what Paul is saying here.

Now how is that the case? I’ll simply say this. A guy by the name of John Frazier wrote a book on Romans 6-8; it’s an old-timer from the 1700s. I love his illustrations. He basically says, “I want you to think about this.”

Think about when the sun comes out in a cow field. He says that when the sun shines on those cow patties, those cow patties stink. And he says that when the law shines on those places of corruption in your life, they begin to stink. And that’s why people avoid reading the Scriptures. They avoid reading those places in the Scriptures that would cause those places of corruption—a lot of those places that remain—to stink.

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remember, this is what we talked about in Romans chapter 6. You are not under sin’s power any longer, right? You are not under the penalty of sin any longer. But the presence of sin in your life remains. And when the law shines on those places where sin remains, it stinks. And those are the places that you need to confess; those are the places that you need to turn to God, that you need to uproot and you need to transplant with godly habits. That’s the idea, right?

Now the illustration that’s here is very simple. The illustration is that of marriage, and look at the scenario. A married woman is bound by law to remain married to a man; that’s the principle in the text.

Now if a woman leaves, she’s broken the law and is an adulteress. Again, that’s straight from the text. If you have questions and want to pause, that’s fine. I’m just moving through this because of our time, and I want to get through this. But we don’t have to; if you want to pause, that’s fine with me. If a woman leaves, she has broken the law and is an adulteress.

Now take the same woman. Her husband dies; she’s free to remarry. Okay, all of this is basic principle stuff from the text. That’s the illustration, and we’re going to work with that illustration.

Now the application is this. Do you detect a problem in terms of what this text says, and the application that we’re going to make from it? For instance, look at verse 4; take a look at verse 4. After having said what I just said, verse 4 reveals what might be a problem here.

Don Maurer: Antinomianism?

Jeff: No, no, no; something simpler than that. In Paul’s illustration we are the person who dies. We die to the law in verse 4.

Think about a woman married to an abusive husband. The woman is married to the abusive husband. When the abusive husband dies, she’s free. That’s not the way Paul has it. Paul has it that we die.

Think about the woman. The woman is married to an abusive husband. She dies, and now she is freed from the abusive husband. And you’re going, “Wait a minute; I don’t get it.”

And there are some, especially liberal commentators, who say this. Paul had a senior moment. (*Laughter*) No, I’m not kidding. There are some liberal commentators who say that what happened here is, as Paul was either writing or dictating to an amanuensis—his secretary,—he was going on and he got himself tangled up in his illustration. And his amanuensis said, “Wait a minute, Paul; hold on a second. Wait a minute; you got yourself tangled up, because what you said in verses 2 and 3 and what you said in verse 4 don’t match up.”

And Paul said, “Well, you don’t have an eraser, and we’re running low on papyrus. So let it go to print, because that’s all I have.” (*Laughter*)

No, that’s not it. That’s not the way we ought to think about this, because obviously Paul may have had senior moments. But he didn’t have them when he was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God inspired this text, and it says exactly what God wanted it to say.

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So how do we understand this? Well let's finish Paul's thought. What's Paul's thought? We had to die. And only in dying to the law could we be free from the law, right? That's Paul's thought; that's still his illustration.

The woman dies and so is free from the abusive relationship. But free in what sense? Now here I want to talk about the uses of the law. And maybe we should pause here a minute. Maybe we'll go back next time and think about this.

But the law has three uses. First of all it leads us to Jesus Christ by exposing our sin. Secondly, it has a political use, a restrainer of evil. And then thirdly it has a Christian use. It is a guide to the regenerate mind as to how to please God; it becomes our guide, not our condemnation.

Now in what sense are we free from the law? Certainly not in the third use of the law; the third use of the law is that it's our guide, not our condemner; it's our guide. It's not in the second use of the law; the law certainly restrains sin, for that is its purpose, right?

It is in the first sense that we are freed. That is to say that the law mirrors our sin, and we see ourselves condemned in its light. And having been condemned by it, we stand in need of grace. And so when we find ourselves in the grace of Jesus Christ, united to Him by faith alone, we are dead to that sense, to that use of the law. So we're dead in that sense to the law.

Now in dying to that use of the law we live. And that's our resurrection in Christ. That's where Paul did not have a senior moment. He said to his amanuensis, "Wait a second. I didn't get myself all tangled up, because this woman who dies to this abusive husband comes back to life." She's resurrected, and she's resurrected to a new relationship. And that new relationship is the one we read about in chapter 6. She's resurrected to Christ. He is now her new husband. Remember, we died in Christ's death; we were raised in Christ's life. And so now our husband is not the first Adam; our Husband is the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the idea. That's not a senior moment; that's theology being worked out using applications and illustrations.

I want you to notice verse 6 though. "*We are released from that sin which held us captive.*" Notice that we are passive in all of this. This is something that Christ has done on our behalf; it's not something that we do. Both phrases have that in common.

I'll simply end by saying this. Actually I won't end by saying that. I'll end asking you if there are any questions or comments that you want to make about this, any clarifying things that you want to take up. This is a basic concept that we'll be carrying forward into verse 7 and following. Any thoughts or comments? No? Great. all right; let's pray and then we'll wrap up.

Father, thank You for the day that You've provided us with. Thank You, Father, for giving us the work that we have to do. Thank You for providing us with family, with friends, with interactions here. And Lord, we just ask that Your hand would be upon us in blessing for good, not only for ourselves but for those around us. Lord, let us carry the gospel forward in our lives in such a way that it radiates to others as they see what Christ has done in us. Father, please continue to use the law in our lives as a guide. Lord, please let grace have its way with us, and let us understand more fully how powerful it is. And Lord, we ask that You'll be glorified in the midst of it all. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.