

“Law, Conflict, and Salvation”

Romans - the Gospel of God

Romans 7:12-25

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Jeff: Well, why don't we pause for a minute of prayer? Father in heaven, we thank You for the day and for the blessing of life in Christ. We ask that You'll certainly be with us this morning as we open Your word and as we spend some time in it, Lord,—not only discovering what it says—but also, Father, as we listen to it and as we're shaped by it, Lord, we pray that we would certainly come to love Your word more. But we also pray that our lives would be conformed to it. And Lord, we pray that it would be like an old coat that we are used to wearing—not in the sense that we forget what it's like because we're used to it—but because its habits and its practices fit us well. Let that be the case, Lord, with our lives, so that our habits are that of godliness and righteousness.

Father, we pray that Your hand would be upon us for good, not only as we gather together to study, but also as we go from here and as we minister throughout the world, and in our own way and in our own roles. So Father, we pray that You'll bless us as fathers and grandfathers. We pray that You would bless us as mentors and employees and bosses and all of these things—as husbands, assuredly. And Father, we pray that Your hand would be upon us. We pray that as we minister in the lives of others, just living our lives out of Your grace—out of the great abundance of Your grace—we pray that others would experience that and know the love of Christ.

Father, we pray that Your love would be made evident to us as we lift our prayer requests to you. And we think of Linda and the loss of her sister. And Lord, we just ask that You will certainly send Your Holy Spirit to her. And we pray that You'll surround her with Your comfort. We pray that she'll have that wonderful sense of what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians when he told them to use the words that he wrote to comfort them. Lord, we pray that she'll be comforted by those same words.

Father, we pray for Tab as she has another surgery on her ankle. We ask that You will bless her in that, and certainly bless her not only in the procedure but also in the outcome.

And Lord, we pray that You will be with Don as he preaches today. And certainly, Lord, we pray that You would give Him divine unction, and that You'll help him in his preparation. And Lord, we pray that Your mercy would extend not only to him but to his hearers, for we pray these things in Jesus' blessed and precious name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well, let's turn to Romans chapter 7 today. And I want us to think about Romans chapter 7, and we're going to start at verse 12 because that's really where we sort of left off. We didn't talk about the nature of the law the last time we were together. So I thought we'd pick that up. So why don't we return to verse 12, and then we'll read through the end of the chapter? This is the word of the Lord.

“So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good then bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

“For we know that the law is spiritual. But I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate.

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“Now if I do not do what I want, I agree with the law that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, (that is, in my flesh.) For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want. But the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

“So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. But I see in my members another law, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.” I think I did that wrong. This is the word of the Lord. *(Laughter)*

Ted Wood: You can read the last verse and then we’ll do it again.

Jeff: I said it first though.

Ted: That’s okay.

Jeff: All right. Somebody said to me that it’s Good Friday on the way in. And I said that I’m low church; I’d forgotten.

Ted: That’s lower than low church. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I need to be quiet. When I face off with Ted on these matters I always end up losing. All right. Well, let’s think about what we’re doing today. We’re looking at Romans 7:12-25. I’m not sure we’ll get through all of 7:12-25 because there is so much there. And it just depends on how much by way of discussion we have. Again, I’m open for as much as you’d like. But I do want to finish with what we talked about last time. I want to close out with thinking about the nature of the law, because that’s really where we stopped. And I think that was an important thing for us to come back to before we head into this next section.

So I want us to think about that. And yet before I do that once again I want us to think about where we’ve been. At least we’ve made it through chapter 7, because the chapter shifts and the sections are important for us to keep in mind as we come to this section, which is really 13-25.

So in 1-6 of Romans chapter 7 one of the things that we found out was that Paul was articulating a basic principle, and that is that we died to the law. We died to the law in the sense that Christ satisfied the righteous requirement of the law, and so in His life we live. So there is that basic principle.

And remember, he painted for us a picture basically of a woman married to a man. And we might think of the man dying and setting her free to live. But that’s not quite how the illustration goes. The illustration goes that she’s married to the man. She dies and then is raised to newness of life and is brought into another relationship with her new husband who is Christ. And so that’s kind of the way that the picture was painted for us.

But the principle is very similar no matter how you might paint it, and that is that we died to the law in Jesus Christ. His death is our death; His life is our life. So that was the principle.

And then there was the flashback. There was the taking us to the past. And that was in 7-13, where he basically says to us, “Let me remind you of what life was like before being in Christ.” And so he’s clearly dealing in the past tense. And he wants to help us to understand how we stood in relation to the law at that time.

And then in 7:14-25 the text changes. And now we are brought up into the present tense. And this is kind of an interesting thing to think about, because one of the things you realize in coming

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to Romans chapter 7 is that because of the text changes there are people who wonder, well, is Paul writing about his Christian experience here, or is he writing about a pre-Christian experience here? And you're going to see that as we get into this section one does sometimes wonder. What is he saying in this text? It sure does look like he's still struggling, and so maybe this is pre-Christian.

I want to put my cards on the table right out of the cage and tell you where I stand on this issue. I think Paul is writing about his present Christian experience. I think what he's saying—and I'm going to say this later, and I hope it will make sense to you later—but what he's going to say to us, if I can give you something of the conclusion now, is that the law has not changed. In other words, the nature of the law has not changed. My relationship to the law has changed.

What that means is this. Before—when you go to the flashback—before I was in Christ, when I understood in relation to the law that I was a coveter, I died. My relationship to the law was such that the law killed me. Or better, sin living in me used the law and I died.

However, now my relation to the law has changed. The law hasn't changed; the law still points out covetousness in me. But because I stand in Christ I died to that aspect of the law in Jesus Christ, and so I live, even as the law stands pointing at me, saying, “What I see in you is covetousness.”

And I say, “You are right. But Christ died for me. He took the penalty on that on Himself. And what I'm dealing with is called progressive sanctification as a result of that.” So I'm not saying I'm perfect. What I'm saying is, I'm with Paul in Romans 7:13-25. There's an ongoing struggle, even though my relation to the law has changed. Does that make sense? Okay. Hopefully if that doesn't make sense now that will make sense at the end of this morning, or depending on how much discussion we have, next Friday.

Let's finish the point. I want you to take a look at verse 14. And this is just drawn from the Scriptures. *“The law is holy and righteous and good.”*

Now in order for us to understand that the nature of the law doesn't change, we need to understand what the nature of the law is. And when he says that the law is righteous and good, I think what he's telling us are some things he thinks we already know. But it is good for us just to think about these things.

What does it mean to be holy? Well, holiness basically means two things; it encompasses two things. Holiness means to be set apart. However, that's not the only aspect of holiness. That's an aspect of holiness as it pertains to us living in a sinful world. But God is holy prior to the creation of the world, prior to the world's fall into sin.

So what did holiness mean to God prior to creation, prior to the fall of creation? Well, holiness meant to be set apart. And what is that second aspect? To be devoted to something. So God is holy in the sense that He's devoted to Himself.

So when we talk about holiness, oftentimes we talk about being separated from something, separated from the sin of the world. However, there's that other aspect of holiness: our devotion to something. And what is our devotion to? Of course it's God and the things of God. So the law tells us what it is that we're to be separated from, and what it is that we're to be devoted to—and in more specific categories, right? The law is holy.

But the law is also righteous. Now when you think about righteousness you think about an external standard that tells us if something is—can I say it this way?—straight. So for instance, one of the things that I like to do is underline books. And I struggle with that because the lines are not straight. If I put a ruler on the lines it shows me just how crooked they are. That's

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righteousness. It’s a standard, an external standard that measures our behavior. And so the law is that external standard; it’s a standard that measures behavior.

And then it’s good. Now I’m going to describe it in this sense. “Good” means to bring benefit. I realize that there are other nuances to this, or ways that we could describe that. For instance we could appeal to *Webster’s Dictionary*, where it says that to be good is “to have goodness.” “Good” means to benefit from. And certainly we benefit from the law.

I want you to think about verse 10. Have you ever thought about this? Verse 10 says that the law promised life. Now I want you to think about that, and ask yourself whether the law ever promised you life.

The law never promised you life. The law promised Adam life. Had Adam obeyed the law in the garden, he would have received life. He failed to obey. And he received death as a consequence. And “*In Adam all die.*” And in Adam all die because of his failure to see the benefit of the law; that is, to see it produce life with true obedience, instead of sin.

So in those three ways Paul sums up the nature of the law. I realize there are other ways that we could talk about the law. And for sure we could say, on the basis of this alone we could say this. Well let me sum it up even more simply, and say that the law is the embodiment of God’s character, because God is holy, righteous and good. And so the law is the embodiment of God’s character, and surely it is.

So there are ways that we could talk about the law. Paul sums it up with these three words. And we have to keep this in mind as we press forward through the text. I’m going to go a little further. But are there any questions or thoughts you want to kind of wrestle with this morning before we move on? No? All right.

Now here’s a question, an honest question. And this is the one Paul asks; this is from last week. “*Did that which is good then bring death to me?*” And remember, we talked about this, because it sure does feel like death came to me through the law.

Remember the example that I gave to you. The example was that we were in a cage with a sleeping bear. The sleeping bear is the law, right? And sin comes through the door of the cage and starts yelling and hollering. And all of a sudden the law wakes up. And the law just starts tearing away at us, right? And why? Because the law is finding us and pointing out the failures in us. And we’re saying, “Stop; please save me!” And the law says, “I don’t know how to save you? I only know how to point out your failures because you don’t measure up.”

Do you ever remember reading *Pilgrim’s Progress* when Faithful talks about having run into Adam’s daughters? Do you remember this? Well, Ted, you and I can talk later. (*Laughter*) So the question is: “*Did that which was good then bring death to me?*”

And his answer is: no, it didn’t. But sin did; sin acted sinfully. Sin acted deceptively. Sin seized the opportunity through the law, and I died. That is to say that sin used the law deceitfully—deceptively—and brought death to me. Okay?

And so how did we live? And this brings us to the conclusion we all know: that Jesus lived a righteous life. He came to die in my place. Death couldn’t hold him because death is the penalty for disobedience; Jesus rose. Therefore in Jesus’ death I died; in Jesus’ life I live, as I am united to Him. So that’s the idea. And that moves us into the next section of text. But does that make sense? Yes, Ted?

Ted: But I’m reading here in Luke, and I’m just lost at some point here.

Jeff: Is that the story of the rich young ruler?

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Ted: Yes, I think it is. And He says, *“Do this, and you will live.”* And that’s what the law says.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: And we look at that bear that antagonizes us. And we say, “How can I escape?” And he said, “Just keep doing it. You have to do more; you have to do better. Do this, and you will live.”

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted: That’s what the law promises. And natural man has no ability to think any differently. He has no route of escape.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: Except to say that the law is evil, and I can create my own law. (*Unclear*)

Jeff: Yes. Let me show you something, just to pick up on something Ted said here. So you have Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. And it’s Sunday. All right, so think about the Sabbath day and how it was set up for Adam, and how it was set up in the Old Testament. And in the Old Testament what do you have? You have “Do this, and live.”

So from Sunday to Friday you work. You do and then you live. That’s an encapsulation of the law and what it pointed to for Adam.

I want you to think about that. Had Adam done and lived that would have been great, right? He would have received the promise of life.

But think about it. As he approaches Saturday every week, can you imagine? I mean, you know, Scripture doesn’t invite us into these kinds of moments. But you have to think to yourself, for instance, that every time Peter heard a cock crow, for the rest of his life he would have remembered his denial. But now hopefully he would have remembered the grace of God as well. But I’m sure there were mornings in Peter’s life where the denial weighed heavily upon him.

Can you imagine Adam as he approached Saturday? Every Saturday was the promise of life had he obeyed. And it wasn’t any different from any other day God sends, right? Well, that’s the Old Covenant: Do this and live.

But in Christ where does the Sabbath fall? It’s rest, live, and then work. And there’s a shift. The Sabbath shift is to illustrate the shift in terms of the covenant of works: Do this and live. And now it’s rest and then live, because of what the second Adam has done for us. And so that’s a fantastic way to think about it. And as we approach Easter, it’s a fantastic way to answer the question. Why did the Lord’s Day shift to Sunday? Why wasn’t there a continued emphasis on Saturday as the Sabbath day of rest? And it’s because there is a shift in the covenant. Ted?

Ted: “Come to Me, all you that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” That’s where it starts.

Jeff: Yeah. Now as he said, let’s go back and think about the rich young ruler for just a second. Is the offer to do this and live, is that an evangelistic technique, if I can say it that way, that the Lord is using, or is it a genuine offer? In other words, is Jesus really saying to him that you have the ability to do this and live? Or is He driving the young ruler to realize that he can’t do this and live?

Now I think it’s the latter, and I think you do too, Ted. But just to be clear, when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus he says, *“What good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?”* And remember, Jesus looks at the young man and loves him. And I think we talked about this. I said to you that John Gerstner said, “Do you know why He loved him?” Gerstner said that he was stupid. So anyway the young man says, “All of the things that You say that I need to do from the law I’ve done since my youth.”

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And so Jesus says, “Okay. All right; you’ve done it. Let Me tell you, dear friend, you’re dense. So now go and sell all you have and give to the poor—i.e., love your neighbor. And then come follow Me—i.e., if you love God. And then,” He says, “you’ll have treasure in heaven.”

And see, I think He’s pressing him. “You have not, nor can you do this and so live.” That’s the idea.

So in one sense the law does promise life in Christ because it’s Christ who is the second Adam who does and lives. Okay, anything else before we go on? Yes?

Brave Man: I don’t disagree with what you said.

Jeff: Okay.

Brave Man: But I have to sort these things down the road. I think Jesus actually meant what He said to the guy and wasn’t being disingenuous in any way, shape or form.

Jeff: Okay.

Brave Man: Because it’s not like no one had in fact fulfilled the law. The Lord did in fact promise life. And Jesus in fact did fulfill the law. And it earned Him that righteousness at the cross.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Brave Man: Which is what is given to us through His death and His righteousness, and His ability to earn the righteousness which we could not.

Jeff: Right.

Brave Man: He says that we have always chosen to earn our own. And I’m saying that anyone who would ever want to do so is obviously someone who has inherited Adam’s sinfulness.

Jeff: Sure.

Brave Man: (*Unclear*)

Jeff: I see what you’re saying. So what you’re saying, if I can articulate it back to you this way, is that He’s saying, look, there was a promise of life in the first Adam under the condition of obedience—perfect obedience. And there is a sense in which that would still stand with someone who would be able to do that, right? And so the promise of life is obedience.

Brave Man: He certainly knew that the rich young ruler would not avoid that obedience.

Jeff: No; that’s a good adjustment. Yeah, that’s good.

Gary Craig: I heard a teaching that says that Jesus was basically saying, “Okay, you’re saying that you obeyed the law all your life.” And He was actually pointing out the First Commandment: to have no other gods and nothing before Him. He says, “Sell all and follow Me.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Gary: And He was actually showing him that he broke the First Commandment.

Jeff: Sure.

Gary: So just from that very basis he was falling short.

Jeff: Sure.

Brave Man: I don’t think Jesus was saying to that man in particular that he had a shot at earning eternal life. (*Unclear*)

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: But He also wasn’t denying the reality that life did come from the law, because He did do that.

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Jeff: Yeah. And I actually think that stands behind what Paul is saying when he says in verse 10 of chapter 7 that the law promised life, because it’s not Adam that he mentions there. The promise, it seems to me, is offered to him, right? And that would be the same sort of thing. But there is this promise of life held out for obedience, right?

Jordan Obaker: Doesn’t David say in the Psalms, though, that he was sinful?

Jeff: At the time of his conception?

Jordan: Yes. As if he never even had a shot to be perfectly obedient.

Jeff: Yes, and that’s kind of where I was coming from, constructing it as I did with Jesus showing this guy he doesn’t have it. But yes, you’re right. But the promise is still there. Anybody else? Yes?

David Miller: Yes. I want to think of the spiritual man that has the gift of righteousness. It’s a real person, the real eternal person that he is. He’s always praising God, and yet his life shows that he can’t live up to that.

Jeff: Yeah; we’re getting there. *(Laughter)*

Ted: But he acknowledges that Christ in us always agrees with God. That’s my comfort.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah. You guys are getting ahead of us here. *(Laughter)* Yes?

Ted: The only thing I was going to say is that this has been my experience; maybe it’s not been that of others.

Jeff: Mm-hmm.

Ted: But as I get older it’s interesting, because when you’re younger you’re so busy with family, work, all kinds of other things. You don’t have a lot of time to reflect.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: But as you get older you have more time as things slow down. And you get to reflect on your past. And you don’t feel better about yourself; you feel worse about yourself outside of Christ. And it just brings all this inability home. I mean, we kind of theoretically say, “Yes, I’m not able.” But here your life begins to reflect back. “You’re not such a bad guy.” But then you live your life, and you begin to think about the details that you didn’t have time to think about before. And you say, “Uh-oh; I’m a mess!”

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: I just thought I would leave you on a happy note.

Brave Man: Thank you.

Ted: And thank you. *(Laughter)* Wait till you get old, Jeff. You’ll look forward to it.

Jeff: I’ve accumulated enough woes in my life. *(Laughter)* So when you think about that I have three points for you to consider. The first is the recognition of myself in light of the law. There are two descriptive statements that he makes at this point that I think get us in to what these guys were talking about. And the first is that *“the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly.”*

Now that’s really interesting when you move into that, because when he says that the law is spiritual I don’t think he means sort of what we mean when we talk about spirituality—an ambiguous sort of thing. I think that what he means is “of the Spirit,” right? It’s sort of like when we talk about our spiritual union with Christ. We don’t mean mystical; we mean of the Spirit. And so the law is of the Spirit, but I am of the flesh. And so I think those are the descriptive statements that he makes that help us to understand what it means to look into the law which is of the Spirit, and yet to know myself being fleshly.

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Now the question is—and I posed this to you earlier—is this. Is he talking about himself as a nonbeliever, or is he talking about himself as a believer? And there are some people with some really strong views about this.

I mentioned Alexander White the last time we were together. I told you that he had a standing order with his publisher to send him anything on Romans. What he would do is, he would go to Romans 7, read what the author had to say, and he would decide on the basis of that whether or not he wanted to keep the book.

He once preached in Romans and told his congregation, “We’re never going to get out of Romans 7.” Now he didn’t mean that they were never going to leave Romans 7. But what he meant was that we’re Romans 7 Christians—that is to say, Paul’s experience here is our experience. Or to put it another way, when the Westminster Confession talks about “*an irreconcilable war*” within the believer, this is the chapter that will describe it—the Romans 7 chapter.

So again I’m going to put my cards on the table and say that I think he’s talking here about what it means to be a believer. Now some people may say, “Now wait a second! He’s calling himself fleshly.”

And so I want us to think about another passage that may help us to think about this in context. So I want us to go to 1 Corinthians for just a minute. And in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 we find something that might help us. In 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14 it says: “*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him. And he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person, by contrast, judges all things,*” and so on.

Now think about that. The natural person is not able to judge spiritual things. The fleshly person is not able to judge spiritual things. I think I read to you the wrong text; that’s not proving my point. No, I’m just kidding; I’ve read the right text. Jump down now to 3:1. “*But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.*” In other words, yes; a Christian may be fleshly. But to me “fleshly” is to be an infant in Christ because really, when you think about it, all struggle with sin is really an indication of infancy in us. And so is this a believer or an unbeliever?

Well, some people will say that he’s described as fleshly, and therefore he must be an unbeliever. But no; when you get to 1 Corinthians Paul says, “Look, I need to talk to you believers who are fleshly as infants in Christ at this point because of the way you’re conducting yourselves.” In other words, can we put it this way? If the law has three uses, and if the third use is a guide for Christian behavior, “if I put the law up to your behavior, you Corinthians, then your lives are pretty crooked at this point. You’re not righteous; your lives are not holy, and you’re not a benefit to anyone,” right?—if we can use the threefold description that he uses in chapter 7.

And so I think that just because there’s a description of fleshly, that doesn’t indicate that he’s talking about a nonbeliever. I think that Paul is hard on himself at this point. He’s saying, “I am fleshly. There are times when I’m infantile in Christ in the way I conduct myself.” I think that’s the idea here.

Now the roles can reverse at any given moment. And what I mean by that is, just go with me to Galatians 6:1 for a second. In Galatians 6:1 look at what he says; it’s very fascinating. He says: “*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourselves, lest you be tempted.*” In other words, keep watch on yourselves because you could be tempted by the sin that you’re helping your

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brother out of. And so you could be fleshly at that point rather than spiritual. So the ideas of spiritual and fleshly are fluid terms. Anyway—

Ted: No!

Jeff: No, right. I just thought I would pick up on a cultural mess. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I see that. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I assumed it.

Ted: *(Unclear. Laughter)* I’m drowning in sarcasm.

Jeff: I’m getting a rebuke here, a well-deserved rebuke. *(Laughter)*

Gary: So he identifies as spiritual. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I didn’t mean that. I’m not natural. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: With Paul the distinction there in 1 Corinthians 2 and 3 is between the natural man and the fleshly man.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: And the natural man is the *psuchikos* man, the soulish man. And I’m a big believer in the three parts—spirit, soul and body.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: That’s fine; okay. But the soulish man doesn’t get any further with the soul. That’s the depth of him right there; that’s all he can see.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: That’s different from a Christian who is the spiritual man, but he can be fleshly; he can be *sarx*.

So I thought I was following you, but I don’t think I am. Can you say that again?

Ted: I mean that if I’m in Christ I still have the capacity, as in Galatians, to be fleshly.

Jeff: Right.

Ted: But I am never natural.

Jeff: Oh yes; got you.

Ted: And that’s a critical distinction, because the natural man does not welcome, except in grace, the things of the Spirit. That’s how we know we’re Christians.

Jeff: Yeah. Or if you can put it this way, in my mental state as a believer, at my lowest point—my absolutely lowest point—I’m never at my highest point as an unbeliever; that kind of thing. I’m not the natural man anymore.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: I’m a Christian who may be fleshly.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: But I’m never a natural man.

Ted: If you believe in the perseverance of the saints, you can say he will never go back to that.

Jeff: Yeah, that’s right. So the roles can reverse. But the fact of the matter is that Paul is saying that when we sin we act as slaves. And this takes us back to chapter 6 verse 14; remember that? Let me start in 15. *“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey—either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness.”*

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And so what he is basically saying there is, he’s basically saying that when we sin we act as slaves. And therefore you have the ability to sin, but you have the ability not to sin. Remember that fourfold state that we talked about. And so don’t offer your bodies as instruments of sin; don’t offer yourselves as slaves to it.

Instead, what you need to do is this. And we do recognize this. We recognize that there’s an expansion of the conflict. In other words, have you ever talked to the person to whom maybe you are evangelizing on the street? And they’ll say something to you that you might read from the Sermon on the Mount. You say, “Do you know the commandment not to kill?”

And he says, “Of course I know the commandment not to kill. I’ve never killed anyone.”

And then you bring Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount to bear upon that. “Yes; that means that if you’ve called your brother a fool—“

“Well, that’s not killing.”

“Well, it’s of the same species.”

“Well, that’s not killing. I’ve never killed anyone,” right? But there’s a really narrow conflict in the natural man. In other words sin has shrunken; it’s in a shrunken state. He’s able to keep the law. He’s sort of like the Pharisee; he has redefined so as to keep it.

But when you become a Christian, all of a sudden sin expands and enlarges. And you realize and you understand that to not kill entails not calling one’s brother a fool, right? And so all of a sudden you now see just how sinful you actually are.

So, you know, you’ve gotten into that disagreement with your wife. You said something to her you shouldn’t have. You talk to your kids in ways that you shouldn’t have. All of a sudden you realize, oh man, I’m a sinner; this sin has proliferated.

It’s sort of like this. Have you ever killed a spider, and there was a sack of bees underneath the spider? Have the rest of you seen the video? That is terrifying, right? What in the world? And that’s what it’s like when we’re unbelievers; it’s just a little spider crawling across the floor. But when you become a believer, you step on it. You realize how sinful you actually are. That’s what happens with Paul when he talks about all of this multiplying; he sees it that way.

I already talked to you about that. But let me say this. So the nature of the law, we have to understand now, is unchanged. However our relation to the law has changed. That is to say, the nature of the law is the same in that it points out sin in me. It’s right to do that, and it exposes sin in me. And so in that sense the law doesn’t change.

However, whereas before I died as a result of that because I stood guilty before that on my own, now my relation to the law has changed so that I’m in Christ, and He died in my place for my breach of the law. And I live in Him now; that’s the difference. So we should never think that now that I’m in Christ I’m free from the law in the sense that I am free from its nature, its ability to point out sin in me. That’s not the way in which we’re free from the law. We’re free from the law in our relation to the law. Does that make sense? It seems to me that it would be a good thing for us to talk about if it doesn’t.

David: This is how I would understand you saying that. Whenever an unbeliever hears that I’m a Christian, he tends to say, “You’re wasting your time because you’re as prone to sin as I am. He is saying that I’m righteous in my own eyes. But if you say the same thing to a believer, the more typical response is: “You’re doing it in faith, because I need to be ministered to.”

Jeff: Yes, that’s very true.

Ted: And Jeff, it’s not only that Christ died for us. What did you just say? I’m glad that you tied some of that in about Christ’s death.

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Jeff: So His death is our death in the sense that He takes on the penalty for our sin. But because He is the righteous Substitute He lives. And so we have been—

Ted: I don't want to say that it's more than that; what you just said was fine. But it's also that I died with Him; I was buried with Him; I was raised with Him.

Jeff: That's right.

Ted: I've been made to sit with Him in the heavenlies.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: I think that a lot of times in evangelistic preaching your focus is on Jesus dying for your sins. It's kind of like Jesus is here and you're here, and you're here to get the benefit from it.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: It's what He did for you versus Him being formed into you. It's a great, unbelievable mystery. It's what Paul talks about when he talks about husbands and wives. It's a great mystery that the two shall become one.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: He says, *“But I am speaking about Christ and the church.”*

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: But that to me *“So therefore the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,”* and so on. I live in Christ who lives in me. My life is hidden with God in Christ. I mean, these are tremendous, unbelievable statements.

Jeff: Yeah. Yes, absolutely.

Ted: So it's not just that Jesus died for me; that's actually the truth. It's that when He died, I died.

Jeff: Yes. And it's more about our union with Him and the depth of life than it is about something that He did apart from me that I can take to myself and polarize. My life is in Him.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: And so, for instance, the benefits that He earned for Himself—His being Mediator in Psalm 2 and then at the baptism, His justification that we read about in 1 Timothy 3, His sanctification that we read about in John 17 and Hebrews—those things are His. They are things that we think of when we think of salvation. But they are ours in terms of our union with Him and the Spirit taking what is His and giving it to us.

So for instance, to say that I'm justified in Christ is true. But when we say, “I'm justified by the righteousness of Christ,” what we're saying is that in Christ, through His righteousness, I'm justified.”

Ted: That's the truth.

Brave Man: I think that's the great hope, that being His life. Let me finish; don't misunderstand. I'm not trying to minimize His death.

Jeff: Sure.

Brave Man: But we all will go through that. The law is still active in that our disobedience has rightly, righteously, brought us death. And we will go through that. But because of faith in Him we are part of His resurrection. And there will be a resurrection for all of us, I mean all humanity—some to righteousness and some to eternal condemnation. But because of His life, and that righteousness He earned, imputed to us by faith, we then have hope. But the law is still active for everyone on earth.

Jeff: Yes.

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Brave Man: It’s in the already and not yet sense. The focus is not so much on His death as it is His life.

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: Because today is not the focus; Sunday is the focus, right? Death could not hold Him because He earned His righteousness in having the power over death.

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: And the real enemy in the Garden that came into the world was death.

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: That’s what everyone fears. We barely fear sin; the unbelievers certainly don’t fear sin.

Ted: Yeah.

Brave Man: But with this death thing that we’re all gonna go through, our hope is Christ and He’s the only hope.

Jeff: Yes. You know, if you just stop a minute and think about the implications of this, there are significant implications, because you’re right. The law is an important feature. I mean, think about our world, right? The law is not a righteous standard as what you can create for your own benefit, right? We know that in terms of the culture. I mean, we’re not in sniffing distance of natural law anymore, right? But in the church it’s not much better with the idea that we’d rather be spiritual than righteous, right? Righteousness seems so legalistic. The idea that the law must be kept because it’s the Christian’s guide, it’s sort of that we’re to distance ourselves from that.

And yet you’re absolutely right. Not only does the law condemn the unbeliever, but it provides for us a guide for life. And that’s righteousness. And so when you think about that, that has implications for the way in which you raise your kids, right?

Think about it. You want your children to know that they’re sinners; you want that to be the case. But you do want to avoid a home that is just legalism so that they can create loopholes so they can be little Pharisees. They can create loopholes to give the appearance that they have kept the law, right?

But think about it. A home can be a lot like an Old Testament Jewish community. Okay, there are 619 commandments in the Old Testament. But there are another thousand that you create to flesh out the 619. But in fleshing them out you nullify the 619, right? Which is why, when you think about what it means to bring the law to bear upon inheriting it, it has some huge implications for the way in which you parent.

Ted: Yeah.

David: I think that a lot of the Jewish rabbinical teaching of the law is about finding loopholes.

Jeff: Sure. It’s about how we can give the appearance of keeping it.

Ted: But we’re the same as the Jews; we do the exact same thing.

Jeff: Yeah, that’s right. Take the example of parenting. In parenting you have to be very careful about how you parent, using the law. You need to use the law. But how do you use it? How do you bring it to bear upon your family?—that sort of thing.

Ted: Especially when you lay down the law to your wife. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Right. I was doing premarital counseling—

Ted: Capital punishment follows that.

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Jeff: I was doing premarital counseling about 25 years ago. And I said to this guy and to the couple,--they were so much fun; they were new to the church,--and I said, “So how are you guys going to settle disputes? Have you thought about that?”

And he goes, “When the hand of justice falls, that’s when the dust will settle.” (*Laughter*) So we’ll pick up with the characteristics of the extended conflict next time we get together. But let me pray and close this out for now.

Gracious Father in heaven, we give You thanks for the day You’ve provided, and for giving us room to think about these things. Lord, we recognize that these topics are vital for our own Christian well-being—Lord, for our health, for our spiritual health, for our walk with You. We pray that You’ll bless these things to our thinking, but again not just for us, but for those with whom we have to do. Lord, we pray that You’ll bless us throughout the day, for we ask it in Christ’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.