



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Romans

Lesson 10: Romans 7:1-12

In Romans chapter six Paul reminded the Roman Christians of their common past; how they were all buried with Christ in baptism and arose to walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:3-4). As we continue on in chapter seven Paul shares with his readers how the law has been fulfilled, and yet continues to serve a purpose. In fact, we will get a brief glimpse into Paul's own journey of faith, and the purpose the law served in his own life.

Before You Begin: Read Romans 7:1-12 and mark any key words. Note that "law" is found 14 times in these 12 verses, "sin" is found seven times, and "died" eight times.

Read Romans 7:1-3

In this section Paul is continuing his discussion on the law. In chapter five he focused on the vital role of faith in justification from the very beginning. In chapter six Paul reminded the Romans that they had died to sin to become slaves of righteousness. Now, in chapter seven, he is going to begin bringing all of these ideas together and demonstrating how everything God had done was culminated in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As we begin chapter seven, we once again see Paul chastising his readers with the phrase, "Or do you not know." He's once again saying, "Come on guys! You know

better!" Yet in this instance he specifies that the chastisement is specifically for his Jewish readers when he says, "for I am speaking to those who know the law," referring to the Torah.

Then Paul gives a specific, real world example of what he is talking about. This is not meant to be a treatise on marriage, divorce and remarriage, but rather an appeal to his reader's common sense. His point is that everyone knows and understands that law is no longer binding after death. If a woman is married and her husband dies, that woman is no longer legally bound to her husband. While marriage is the example used this logic would apply to any legal situation: a dead person is not required to renew their driver's license or pay taxes, the very idea is ridiculous.

Read Romans 7:4-6

Just as the idea of a woman still being legally bound to a dead husband is ridiculous, it is ludicrous to say that one who has died to his life of sin through baptism is still bound by the old law. In fact, this death is two-fold. Not only have the Christians died to their old lives, but when Jesus died he freed his bride, the church, from the law as well (Hebrews 8:7-13). Paul is telling his readers that they died to their first spouse (the old law) and



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now belong to another (Jesus) so that they can bear fruit for God.

Verse six is absolutely beautiful. In being released from the law as Christians, because of God's grace we are released from the punishment we deserve for violating God's laws. Also, the phrase, "in the new way," is a reference back to 6:4 where Paul says that we rise to walk in newness of life. We are no longer held captive by fear and hopelessness, we are free to walk anew and serve God in peace!

While we were not raised as Jews under the Law of Moses, what might we have been bound by before we were baptized into Christ that we need to die to? What might hold us captive (verse 6)?

How can we do a better job of helping new Christians die to their old lives and bear fruit for God?

Read Romans 7:7-12

Here Paul begins answering the inevitable question, "If the law could only produce sin, then does that mean that the law was bad? Was the law, itself, sin?" His resounding answer is, "Absolutely not!" Although the law was only able to condemn, not save, it still served a vital purpose in God's plan. Paul

explains this purpose by once again using an example: the idea of coveting. His point is that he would not have known it was wrong to covet if God had not told him, through the law, that it was wrong.

We must remember that the law serves the same purpose for us today. When you hear Leviticus, or Deuteronomy, what is your natural reaction? For many of us it's an almost subconscious groan of dread. Please don't make me study those books! Anything but those books! (Except perhaps for Numbers.) If we are honest, we must admit that in many ways reading through the Law of Moses is just plain boring. It's repetitive, it's redundant, it's superfluous for the 21st century Christian. Except that it's not.

We learn who God is and what he expects through the law. We learn right and wrong through the law. In the New American Standard Version Galatians 3:24 refers to the old law as our "tutor" until the coming of Christ. In Malachi 3:6 God tells us that he does not change, and Hebrews 13:8 tells us that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. If we truly want to understand who God is we must spend time with our tutor, the Old Testament.

Do we give the Old Testament the time and attention it deserves as our tutor?



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What are some things that we learn about the nature of God from the old law?

Continuing on in the text Paul describes the other side of the law, the fact that Satan has been able to use the law to throw gas on the fire of our temptations. If we are honest, how many of us have been in a situation where we didn't really want something until we were told we couldn't have it, then all of a sudden, we had to have it! That is exactly what Paul is talking about here. Without the knowledge of wrongdoing sin would not have been nearly so tempting for us.

Then in verses 9-10 Paul gets personal and tells us about his own journey to obedience. These verses are so important because I believe they are a description of what we now refer to as, "the age of accountability." Paul begins in verse nine describing a time that he was alive apart from the law. The phrase, "was once alive," in the original language refers to being without sin. How could Paul have been without sin? Because he didn't yet understand what sin was.

He continues, "but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died." When Paul very first understood God's commands, he died spiritually because he violated those commands. The commands promised life, they described how to be pleasing to God, yet they proved to be death

because Paul was incapable of keeping them perfectly.

My children are currently 19, 15, 12 and 10. We have experienced our oldest moving 10 hours away to college and entering into a courtship to prepare for marriage. As a homeschool mom I have not only potty trained my children and taught them to eat with utensils, I have also taught them to read and write and been fully responsible for their education. I have experienced hundreds of sleepless nights, fevers, boo-boos, and even a few stitches and broken bones with them. Yet the hands-down single most difficult, terrifying thing about parenting these four precious souls is the idea of the age of accountability.

I believe this is a unique struggle for those of us who were blessed to come to Christ in time to raise our children in the Lord's church. Our kiddos grow up hearing that they need to be baptized from the time they are in the womb and learn to quote Scriptures such as Acts 2:38 in elementary school. As parents the temptation is to get them in the water as soon as they can verbalize to us a desire to be baptized. Yet moms, I urge caution. The most terrifying, yet truthful thought I have ever had as a mother is this, "In order to be saved, one must first be lost."

In order for my children to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38) they must first actually be guilty of sin. And according to Paul in verse nine before one can be guilty of sin, they must first know and



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understand what sin is. Sisters I believe we do an excellent job of teaching our children about the need for baptism, but so often we neglect to teach them about sin. As we saw in chapter six baptism is so much more than just a one-and-done ritual: it's a death, a burial, a cleansing and a new beginning. Those who are still alive, who are not yet dead from sin, have no need to be buried.

Before we baptize our children at their first mention of the word, as horrifying and gut-wrenching as it is, they need to be allowed to get dirty. They need to understand why they need to be cleansed, they need to feel the pain of understanding sin, and that their sin has separated them from the God who knows the number of their hairs and loves them. As tempting as it is to rush our children into the water so that we feel like they are safe, we must make sure they are mentally and emotionally mature enough to understand what it means to be spiritually dead because of their sin.

How can we do a better job as both congregations and parents of making sure our children are accountable before they are baptized?

As Paul continues in verses 11-12, he states plainly that, in spite of the temptation Satan has brought because of it, the law is holy, righteous and good. Although we are tempted because of the law, ultimately, we

allow ourselves to be deceived and killed by sin. In teaching us about sin, the law also teaches us about righteousness. It teaches us what is right and wrong, yet it is still up to us which we choose.

Spend some time studying the Law of Moses, specifically looking for what it teaches us about the nature of God.
