

(Through the Bible) Romans 7

by Chuck Smith

We are free from the law and can now live a life of bearing fruit, but we must learn to have no confidence in our flesh and rely on the Spirit.

Duration: 42:47

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-22, Romans 7:6-7, Romans 7:24-25, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:4, Galatians 5:19-21

Topics: "Through The Bible"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on their personal journey of trying to improve themselves through self-help methods and ultimately reaching a point of despair. They come to the realization that they cannot rely on their own strength and abilities, but instead need to surrender to Jesus Christ. Through this surrender, they experience victory and a closer relationship with God. The speaker acknowledges their own weaknesses and emphasizes the importance of relying on Jesus for deliverance and the capacity to do what is right.

Transcript

Romans chapter 7, Know ye not brethren, for I speak to them that know the law. In other words, I'm talking now to the Jews. How that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he lives.

Don't you realize, Paul said, you that know the law, that the law has dominion over you as long as you live. I have one example out of the law that he brings to show the point. For the woman which has a husband is bound by the law to the husband as long as he is living.

But if the husband is dead, she is freed from the law of the husband. So then if while her husband is living, she be married to another man, she be called an adulteress. But if her husband is dead, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

He's using this particular example out of the law to show that the law has power over a person as long as they are living. Wherefore, my brethren, you have become dead to the law by the body of Jesus Christ. Now Paul has just told us in the sixth chapter that we were crucified with Christ.

Know ye not that the old man was crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be put out of business. So that I have been crucified with Christ, the law no longer has any effect upon me. I am now freed from the law through my death with Christ.

It has ended my relationship with the law as a means for a righteous standing before God. So we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ that we should be married to another. Even to him who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

So it isn't that I have been freed from the law that I might live any kind of way that I might want to live after my flesh, fulfilling the desires of my flesh. That's not what he's talking about at all. I have been freed from the law because it could never make me righteous anyhow.

I have been freed from the law only to be married to another, even unto Jesus Christ, to be joined unto Him. And the life that I now live is a life of bearing fruit. But the fruit of the believer's life is actually in many cases living by a stricter standard than even the law would require.

For the love of Christ constrains me, Paul said. For the love of Christ, I would not do that which would cause a weaker brother to stumble. For Christ's sake, married to Christ, joined now unto Christ in this new relationship with God in the new covenant through Jesus Christ, does not mean that I am free to indulge in my flesh.

Far from it. It means that I am bound now by even a greater law, the law of love. The law of love for Jesus Christ.

And now my life is producing fruits or fruit for Him. Whereas I once was under the law as far as a standard of my righteousness or my standing before God, which could never really give me a consistent standing before God. And those who are under law are under the works of the law.

But those who are in Christ are bearing fruit unto righteousness or the fruit of the righteous life. And that fruit is the proof of my relationship with Him. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall bring forth much fruit.

If your life isn't bringing forth fruit, then it is saying that you're not abiding in Him and His word isn't abiding in you. Because fruit is the natural consequence of relationship. Now, the works could never give me a righteous standing before God.

Jesus gave me a righteous standing before God. But because of that, because I am now married unto Him and I have this new relationship with God through Christ, my life is bringing forth righteous fruit. Love with its characteristics of joy and peace and longsuffering and gentleness and goodness and temperance.

Now, these things do not make me righteous, but they are the effect of my righteousness that I now have through my faith in Jesus Christ. I trust you can see the difference. Once I was trying to do these things so I could be righteous before God.

And I was struggling as I was trying to do these things. But when I came to this new relationship with God, dead to the law, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, those things that I was struggling so hard to do under the law and failing to do, I now do as just the natural consequence of my abiding in Him and His life, His love, His fruit coming forth from me. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. Galatians chapter 5, and Paul gives us that listing. And when we were in the flesh, we had the fruit of the fleshly life.

Murder, strife, debate, seditions, adultery, fornication, all of these works of the flesh which are unto death. But now we are delivered from the law that being dead wherein we were held, we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter of the law. So I serve God not legally, but I serve God in the spirit now.

And rather than a legal relationship with God, I have a loving relationship with God, serving Him in the spirit in the newness of life in Christ. What should we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. No.

I had not known what sin was, but by the law. The law is not sin itself. It reveals what sin is.

The law is good if we understand the purpose of the law. The law is not good for what people are seeking to derive from the law. People are seeking to derive a righteous standing before God from the law.

You can't do that. Obedience to the law will not give you a righteous standing before God. It will only show you where you have failed to stand before God.

By the law is the knowledge of sin. God never intended the law to make a man righteous. If righteousness could come by the law, then Christ died in vain.

He wouldn't have to have died if a man could be righteous by keeping laws. So the law came to show us our bankrupt spiritual state, causing us to realize that I cannot keep the standards of the law, and thus forcing me to cast myself upon the grace of God that He has offered to me through Jesus Christ. So the law was intended by God to force me to come to Jesus Christ.

And the law properly understood will do that. Now, as the law is misinterpreted, as man is so capable of doing, misinterpreting God's Word, people have then taken the law and used it as a standard of righteousness and have become extremely self-righteous as they seek to obey the law, bending it wherever it doesn't fit their particular circumstance. You know, I can interpret then that law so that I am under the... you know, I'm on the good side of it.

But we have that tendency of taking the law and using it as a standard for holiness or righteousness, and, well, I feel like I'm more righteous than you because, you know, I am not doing those things that you are doing. Or I am doing things that you're not doing that make me more holy. But my righteousness before God is not predicated upon my keeping of the law.

The law was to reveal what sin is. And so Paul said, I had not known sin except by the law. For I had not known to lust or to covet was sin.

I didn't know that that was a sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. I didn't know to have this strong desire was a sin. You see, as a Pharisee, Paul only thought that the fulfilling of the strong desire was sin.

You could have a strong sexual attraction to someone. Desire a sexual relationship with them. And Paul felt that that wasn't sin.

It was only sin if I entered in and had the sexual relationship with them. Nothing wrong with the desire. That's not sin.

Until one day, the Spirit spoke to Paul's heart concerning the law and it said, Thou shalt not covet. Thou shalt not have the strong desire. Whoops! Rather than now feeling self-righteous because I've never had

relationships sexually with another woman, I feel guilty because I have had a strong desire.

Remember, Jesus said, You've heard that it hath been said by those of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart. In other words, Jesus is pointing out that the law is spiritual.

Paul didn't know that as a Pharisee. But in his smug self-righteousness as a Pharisee, he felt that he was obedient to the law of God. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

I've never done it. I'm innocent. Thou shalt not have a strong desire for thy neighbor's wife.

Uh oh! And so suddenly he realizes that the law itself dealt with a spiritual issue. That strong desire that is there. So, I had not known that to have this strong desire was a sin except the law should say, Thou shalt not have the strong desire or covet.

And then sin taking occasion by the commandment, sin capitalizing on this, I discovered that I had all kinds of strong desires. It wrought in me all manner of strong desires or lust. Translated there, concupiscence, which is an ardent desire and usually for sex.

Now, Paul didn't know that was wrong except the law said, Thou shalt not have the strong desire or covet. So, he said, I was alive without the law once. But when the commandment came, sin revived and I was dead.

What is he saying? As a Pharisee, I thought that I had a standing before God. I thought that I was righteous. Lived to God once, I thought, as a Pharisee.

In fact, Paul as he is writing to the Philippians, he said, if any man has whereof to boast in the flesh, I have more than anybody else. Hey, I'm a Jew. A Hebrew of the Hebrews.

Tribe of Benjamin. I was circumcised the eighth day. I was a Pharisee.

And concerning the righteousness which is of the law, I was blameless. He was one of those that Jesus was constantly referring to when he was talking about the Pharisees. Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees.

And that was Paul. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Going around in his long robes.

Saying his prayers on the street corners. Sounding the trumpet before his giving of his offering unto God. That was Paul.

Hey, I was blameless. But, when I realized that the law was spiritual, which thing Jesus sought to point out in Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount, those five contrasts that he gave with the way the Pharisees were interpreting the law and the way God intended the law. The Pharisees interpreting the law in a physical way.

God intending the law in a spiritual way. When Paul came to the realization that the law was spiritual, and it was dealing really with the attitudes more than the actions of a man. The attitudes from which the actions spring.

Hey, wait a minute. I've never clubbed my brother to death, but I sure would have loved to. You know, I was so mad I could have killed him.

And so, he suddenly realized that that anger that was in him, that hatred that was there, was a violation of the law of God. That strong desire that he had was a violation of the law of God. And so, when the commandment came, hey, sin was there.

It was alive. And I was dead because the law condemned me to death. The law was now my judge and it had condemned me to death because I have violated the law spiritually in my heart, in my mind.

I'm guilty. And thus the law condemned me to death. And the commandment which was intended to life, ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

The law from which I thought I was alive unto God was really a thing that condemned me unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and it slew me. The law can do nothing but condemn each of you to death.

It cannot make you righteous before God, cannot give you a righteous standing before God. You can never become righteous before God by your works or by your efforts. All that the law can do, the rules and regulations that you might seek to follow, all they can do is condemn you to death because you have failed to keep them.

Now, Paul acknowledges that the law is holy, the commandment is holy and just and good. Nothing wrong with the commandment, thou shalt not covet. Nothing wrong with the commandment, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal.

Nothing wrong with the commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. There's nothing wrong with the commandment. It's holy.

It's just. It's right. It's good.

That's the way I should live. I know I should live that way. It's not the commandment that is at fault.

It's me that's at fault. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, it wasn't the law that killed me, but my sin that killed me.

Actually, the law just declared it. Nothing wrong with the law, but it's my sin that has brought me to death. For the wages of sin is death.

The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. So, the commandment, it isn't in the commandment, it's in sin in me. The violation of the commandment that brought death.

But sin that it might appear sinful, working death in me by that which is good. That is the law. That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Again, the law was intended by God to make the whole world guilty before God so that the whole world would seek that righteousness which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. That righteousness that God has provided. To cause man to once and forever desist from trying to have his own righteous standing before God by his own efforts and works.

For we know that the law is spiritual. Paul didn't always know that, you see. But now he does.

The law is spiritual, but I am carnal. That's where the rub comes in. Nothing wrong with the law, wholly just and good.

But I'm carnal. And my sin brought death. For that which I do, I really don't want to do.

For what I would, that I do not do. But what I hate, that I'm doing. Now Paul is talking about the struggle in his own life when he came to the realization that the law was spiritual, that he was carnal.

Consenting to the law that it is good. Recognizing that this is the right way to live and I should be living this way. The good that I would, I do not.

That which I do, I allow not. I really am doing things that I don't in my own mind allow. And those things that I am hating, I'm doing.

Trying to please God in the flesh has to be one of the most frustrating experiences in the world. Trying to attain a righteous standing before God by my works has to be one of the most frustrating things in the world. Because I have found with Paul that I do not always do what I know I should do.

It's so easy for me to not do the things that I should. I've seen people in distress on the freeway, parked on the side, problems. And as I drove by, the Spirit prompted me, help them.

I said, you can't be serious, you know how busy I am and I've got an appointment, you know, I can't stop. And the good that I would, I don't. And that which I would not, I do.

Someone lays a hot fudge sundae before me and I know I shouldn't, but I do it. And that hot fudge sundae can be many things. I know I shouldn't, but I do it anyhow.

That which I hate, I do. Now, if then, I am doing those things that I don't want to do and I am consenting to the law that it is good, then it is no more I that am doing it, but the sin that is dwelling in me. I find that there is a dual nature.

The flesh and the Spirit. And these two are warring against each other. And there are times when I yield to the flesh and I hate myself for yielding to the flesh because my spirit wants to live after God and please God.

And when I yield to the flesh, I feel miserable, I hate myself for doing what I have done. The real me, after the Spirit, wants to please God. There is another part of me, the flesh, that wants to please the flesh.

There is that sinful part of me, that fleshly part of me, that oftentimes leads me to do those things I don't want to do. If you really get down to the basic part of the issue, I want to live to please God. I consent to the law it is good.

I want to live a righteous life. I want to live a life that would be pleasing unto the Father. Now, if I am doing those things that I don't want to do, it really isn't me, it's the sinful flesh or the sinful nature that is in me.

For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. Our problem is we don't believe that yet. For man, it seems, is inveterately trying to reform his flesh and improve his flesh, improve my fleshly performance.

It seems that man constantly is looking for some good in the flesh, some redeeming characteristic, trying in the flesh to give God some cause to love me so that I can boast a little bit in myself and say, well, God loves me because, you see, I'm so sweet because I never lose my temper, because I always react in such a kind, generous way. So, God loves me because I am so kind and generous. Too bad you're not kind and generous so that God can love you as much as He loves me, you see.

We haven't yet come to the full acknowledgement of the truth that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. I need to come to that truth so that I will learn to have absolutely no confidence in my flesh. And I have found in the years of walking with the Lord, every area where I had confidence in my flesh, God has allowed me to fall to show me that I don't have the strength, the ability, the power, the capacity that I thought I had.

I used to say, Chuck the Rock, and I was stupid enough to believe it. But I'll tell you, He fractured me. And now it's Chuck the Sand.

I mean, He crushed me. And I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. For there's nothing wrong with my will, my desire.

It's present with me. The desire to do the right thing, the desire to live for God, the desire to serve the Lord, the desire to pray, the desire to read His Word, the desire to draw closer, that's all there. But taking the desire and putting it into actuality, that's the rub.

That's the problem. How to perform that which I would, I don't know. I don't do.

My, if I could just be all that I desired to be for God. What a spiritual giant I would be. The desire is there, but how to perform it I just can't find.

For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I am doing that which I would not, it is no more me that do it, but sin that dwells in me. He is repeating this point for emphasis.

He's already made it in verses 16 and 17. But for emphasis, He's repeating it. I find then there is a law, Murphy's, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

My desire to do something good for God, evil is there. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. In my heart, in my spirit, I delight in God's law, but I see another law in my body that is warring against the law of my mind.

And it brings me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my body, in the members of my body. Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of sin? The body of death. And so, Paul's cry.

And I have come to that same point in my life where I cried out as Paul cried out, realizing the weakness of my flesh and the failure in my flesh, the inability to perform that good which I would for God and that nagging weakness and doing those things that I didn't want. I came with Paul to this point of despair. Oh, wretched man that I am! Now, unfortunately, when I first came to that point of despair, I didn't ask the question that Paul asked.

I came to the point of despair and said, Oh, wretched man that I am! How can I deliver myself from this miserable state? And I was open to another scheme, another try. If I'll just count ten. If I'll just stop first and

think, what would Jesus do? And we have all of these self-help methods of improvement for myself.

How to live a successfully carnal Christian life in five easy lessons. Oh, wretched man that I am! One day I came with Paul to the point of despair once more. But this time it was total despair.

And with Paul I cried, Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me? Because I had given up in trying to do it myself. And I found out that that place of defeat where I ceased from trying to do it myself and turned it over completely to Jesus Christ was the place of the initial victory in my life. When it was no longer I, but Christ now in me.

And as I began to yield to those forces of God's Spirit that He had made available to me, now the net effect and result is that as I have now entered into this glorious victory in Jesus Christ and this glorious relationship with God through Christ, I cannot stand here and brag to you of all that I did and all of my efforts or all that I am doing. The hours that I put in serving the Lord and the sacrifices that I've made. Sad! God forbid that I should boast save in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Therein is my victory. Because I couldn't deliver myself and I didn't deliver myself, but God by His Spirit delivered me from the bondage of the life after the flesh. And He set me free by His Spirit to serve Him.

Now, He allowed me to come to the point of total despair where I ceased trying in myself to do it, so that as the victory came I would not be taking credit for the victory, but I could only give glory unto God who has caused me to always triumph through Jesus Christ. And unfortunately, it seems that God has to let us sink to the bottom and to total despair in ourselves, lest we should boast in what we have become because of learning some secret whereby I was able to bring my flesh into an acceptable position before God. O wretched man that I am! Whom shall deliver me from the body of death? And in the very question, the fact that He is questioning who, indicates the answer, there is one outside of me who can do for me what I can never do for myself.

The capacity to do what I should do. The capacity not to do what I shouldn't do. And so Paul concludes, I thank God.

This is the answer to the question, who shall deliver me? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has delivered me. Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So then, with my mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin. My mind, my heart, is what God is looking at. And with my mind and heart, I serve the law of God.

Though I'm still in this body, yet there is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. So here I am. Don't, don't, don't think that I'm trying to stand up here before you and tell you I've arrived and I'm now perfect.

God help me if I made that impression, because I'll stumble right before your eyes to prove that I'm not. God will allow me to do that. No, I'm not perfect.

I'm still in a body of flesh. And as I am still in this body of flesh, I'm going to have the motions of the flesh and sin. Thank God I don't have to yield to them anymore.

Thank God I can have victory and power over it. And thank God if I do, there is no condemnation because I am in Christ Jesus. It doesn't mean then, well, because there's no condemnation, I just go out and

willfully live after the flesh.

God forbid. But if I stumble, I don't fall. The Lord picks me up.

The Lord sustains me. From my mind, my heart, I desire God and God's best for my life. And I desire to serve Him with all that I have and with all that I am.

And so I have this new relationship, this relationship with God after the Spirit. And we'll get into that in chapter 8, which is really the answer to Paul to chapter 7. As he has been brought to the despair of his self-efforts, he is now brought to the glorious work of God's Spirit within his life and that victory through the Spirit. So next Sunday night, Romans chapter 8. And I'm glad that we'll be able to take a full evening in chapter 8 because even that will not be enough, but we'll just do what we can.

May the Lord be with you and bless you this way. May you experience the power of God's Spirit in your life. Doing for you what you couldn't do for yourself.

Bringing you to that place that God would have you to walk in the Spirit after the things of the Spirit. In Jesus' name.

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