

# The Introduction

Licentiousness - I am not going to use this word too often because mostly I cannot say it well enough to use it often.

Paul, under the lordship, guidance, inspired, command of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, battles legalism in Romans chapters 2 to 4. And if you think Paul is too hard on legalism, he is simply taking his cues from the ministry of Christ in the gospel. Christ called you twice the son of hell for weighing down people with unnecessary burdens that didn't bring people closer to God. Legalism is brutal and it kills by crushing those who try to earn the favor of the Lord.

It will kill you and it doesn't work.

When we get to chapter 5, after Paul lets you know where you are at in Christ and who gets credit for your salvation (hint: it's not you), Paul must answer the flip side of the coin of righteousness and holiness and salvation. We can call it the flip side, the ditch on the other side of the narrow path through the narrow gate: licentiousness.

License. Amoral. Immoral. Depravity. What it is straight up is sin. Wickedness. Evilness. Treasonous acts against the only Holy One of God.

And isn't that the titanic grip of sin on our lives? It has a crushing grasp of our hearts and minds to the point where you will start believing the snares and traps of the enemy:

"That sin isn't so bad--no one is getting hurt."

"At least you aren't as bad as that guy."

"I mean, really, is it a sin? I don't see it in the Bible. Did God really say that?" (Never mind the fact you don't read your Bible--that is a whole other sermon for another time.)

"I see that God forbids it but because I want to do it, I am going to say that the author is wrong, the translators are wrong, and they don't have today's context."

Paul has taken some sweet time dissecting and disproving those hell-bound lies in chapter 6. We are made alive to Christ because we are dead to sin! We were dead in our trespasses but God.

Paul goes on in chapter 6 is that once we were slaves to sin and fear but we are now slaves to God. We are no longer prisoners of war--we have been set free because the only true life and the only true freedom can only be found in the God who rightfully proclaims that he only is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can get to the Father but through Christ.

You wanna be a Christian but you wanna keep sinning. Sorry, you can't have both. One or the other. Choose on this day whom you will serve.

And are not quite done. Paul has one more comparison and for those of you who have been through the loss of a spouse--whether by death or by divorce, which is nearly the same thing--this might be the hardest one to hear yet.

# The Text

Romans 7:1–6 (CSB)

<sup>1</sup> Since I am speaking to those who know the law, brothers and sisters, don't you know that the law rules over someone as long as he lives?

<sup>2</sup> For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law regarding the husband.

<sup>3</sup> So then, if she is married to another man while her husband is living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. Then, if she is married to another man, she is not an adulteress.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another. You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.

<sup>5</sup> For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death.

<sup>6</sup> But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

## The Support

Mark 10:1–12 (CSB) He set out from there and went to the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Then crowds converged on him again, and as was his custom he taught them again. Some Pharisees came to test him, asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He replied to them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses permitted us to write divorce papers and send her away.” But Jesus told them, “He wrote this command for you because of the hardness of your hearts. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” When they were in the house again, the disciples questioned him about this matter. He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. Also, if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Where do you see God in the text? What does the text say about God?

## God

The law of God examines over us for as long as we live

Romans 7:1–6 (CSB)

<sup>1</sup> Since I am speaking to those who know the law, brothers and sisters, don't you know that the law rules over someone as long as he lives?

You might fire back and say, "Didn't God do away with the law." Jesus specifically says, "I have not done away with the law."

Matthew 5:17-20 (CSB) "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

You think Jesus fulfilling the law of God gives us the right to ignore God? What kind of religion do you think this is?

Christ fulfills the law so that you now can obey the law because you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you.

That is what sin does: it fools us in thinking that if I commit this sin but I work extra hard on "good things" of God, then God will be happy with me.

No.

You must give your life over to him so you can be made clean, be made righteous, be holy, in order to actually obey God.

Ezekiel 36:25-28 (CSB) I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

Look at Noah in Genesis 6. What happened first? Was Noah righteous first or did God give grace and favor first? Look up the order. God doesn't do things out of order--so why would he save us out of order?

Go back to Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:18-20 (CSB) For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

Only Christ can do that. Now, pay careful attention on why Christ fulfilling the law doesn't mean we don't have to obey God:

19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

And again, how can you obey God?

20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

You are going to need a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees. There isn't a person on the earth with that kind of righteousness. I don't care how you grew up. I don't care what Church of Christ church you belong to. You are not ever going to get the level of the Pharisee.

And guess what? They fell way short of the glory of God.

If you want to get to God, you are going to have get God. In other words, if you go to God, pray to God, ask God for God, God is going to give you God.

We were bound to sin before--

<sup>2</sup> For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law regarding the husband.

<sup>3</sup> So then, if she is married to another man while her husband is living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. Then, if she is married to another man, she is not an adulteress.

If you are looking at this passage and thinking this is about all the rules of marriage and divorce, then you are missing the point.

You were once married, intertwined, submission to, held captive, imprisoned to sin. But you say you believe and trust and hope and obey in the Lord. What did we read in Romans 6? If you believe, what happens to your sin?

It dies.

Guess what. You are free to marry. Guess what. You are the Bride of Christ. You are his precious love that he clothes you in righteousness and your dress is ordained with the righteous acts of the Bride that God has set out for us to do.

The flip side of that is also true. If sin is alive in you and you don't want to let go of it--or you want both your sin and God. Guess what? You are not free to marry--you are still married to sin. You can't have God when you have sin.

Why are there so many passages in the Bible speaking about God cleanses us from sin and making us new in him? That is not an option. It is big facts. God has to cleanse you in order for you to be with him.

And if you have made up your little mind that something that God clearly called sin and you judge it not a sin, listen, I am not the one you should be debating with. I am not God. You have judged what was right in your own eyes. You need to take that up with God. He said it in his world. Sexual immorality. Slander. Gossip. Lying. Stealing. Anger and Rage. What else you got? Those don't get you the kingdom of heaven. God does.

# The Gospel

But God kills our sin

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in relation to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another. You belong to him who was raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Let me give a spoiler alert and jump ahead to Romans 8:

Romans 8:9-11 (CSB) You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. 10 Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.

Want something that will give you life? Dwell, meditate, and memorize verse 11--heck, Romans 8 will sustain you during your darkest days. But if you need one verse to put on a plaque or on your coffee mug or scribble in your journal, write down that one.

Here's another one:

Galatians 2:17-21 (CSB) But if we ourselves are also found to be “sinners” while seeking to be justified by Christ, is Christ then a promoter of sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild those things that I tore down, I show myself to be a lawbreaker. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.



# Our Responsibility

<sup>5</sup> For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions aroused through the law were working in us to bear fruit for death.

<sup>6</sup> But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

## Pray

MY CRUCIFIED SAVIOR

Kill my sins. Kill my masters.

Give me life!

Amen.

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