

Married to Another
Romans 7

Galatians 3
Hebrews 3:1-14
Responsive Psalm 25:1-7

This morning we are going to be starting out in chapter 7. In AD 1227 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton introduced the idea of having chapter and verse divisions in scripture and the Wycliffe English bible that was printed over a hundred years later in 1382 using these divisions has become the standard that we now have today. Though the chapter and verse brings with it great convenience when looking for specifics in scripture, it also arbitrarily breaks up continual thought patterns of the original author. What we have here in the beginning of chapter 7 is one of those improper divisions. It would seem that these first 7 verses or so should have been included in chapter 6 as they are the conclusion of the thought that Paul is addressing in chapter 6, which is a continuation of his argument in chapter 5, in which he argues that our identity as believers is in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is more that happened there than Jesus merely dying so that we may be saved from our sin, rather as Paul argues that the sins of Gods people have been nailed with Christ on the cross and we likewise share in his death having our sins being put to death in him so that they no longer live within us, but instead it is Christ through the spirit alive within us.

Showing that all of mankind is dead to God in Adam, that is, the very nature of our existence upon conception is a fallen sinful nature inherit in us through the curse of Adam in the fall. It is inescapable, and inherent in who we are as human beings on this planet. Through Adam all of mankind is cursed by this sinful nature, God warned Adam, in the day that you eat of that fruit of the tree of which he was forbidden is the day he will surely die. The curse of that sinful rebellion against God is a spiritual death and separation from God. Adam and Eve were cast out of the paradise that God created for them, to a land of toil, and hardship no longer having the communion with God as they once had. And it is in this state that all of mankind is born, lost, in sin and rebellion for it is our very nature of who we are. Therefore it was necessary that Christ would become one like us, born into this world, lived a life walking amongst us, sharing in our experiences, being tempted in every way that we are tempted, yet not having our fallen nature but one of perfect holiness was never pulled into temptation or sin, remaining both fully human, and fully righteous God so that he may be the just and holy, spotless lamb without blemish to die in the place of his people. Now that he has come, for all of those who are his children and who believe upon him for salvation, their nature has been changed having the old crucified with Christ on the cross, we have been given a new nature having re-established peace between God and his people.

When meditating upon this concept, of the fall of Adam, the subsequent curse put upon mankind, and the reconciliation through Christ I imagine it in a sort of sense of connection, or tiers of separation between man and God. I had mentioned it a bit last week when talking about the final separation, that is death and the judgment, for all those who die in their sins, scripture says that will be cast into outer darkness, this is the final step, or tier of separation from God. In the beginning we have Adam and Eve, he enjoyed a direct communion with God, who would come and walk in the garden with them, a direct, personal, visual connection but in their sin they were cast out, a level of separation came between them, no longer enjoying the very presence of God, and it is this separation that is amended in the death of Christ on the cross, reestablishing a communion with God so that we have a direct and person connection, which is not exactly like which was before with Adam, for there is still a layer of separation brought about by our sin, which before the fall was not there.

There is a common idea among some religions of a state of limbo, that is a state between life and death where we who die await judgment, some see it has existence of ghosts walking this land and others see it as a sort of holding place of the dead. I tend to reject this idea for there doesn't seem to be any biblical evidences of it, in fact we have the opposite with accounts such as the thief on the cross who Christ said, Today you will be with me in paradise. I bring this up though, because it is sort of how understand mankind in its separation from God, we in this life, on earth are in a sort of state of limbo, a sort of holding state, having a layer of separation from God no longer having communion with him as Adam and Eve once had, we see God not as they once did before their sin, but we see God as Paul wrote to the Corinthians through a glass darkly, having our remaining depravity, still creating a sort separation from God so that we can't yet have that communion that Adam once shared in this life. So we are in a sort of limbo in this life, having a layer of separation between God and man, that even those of us who are justified by his death can only see darkly, for we are in a state of being already justified through Christ, having a connection with him re-established, but it is not the final stage, it is not yet completed. Upon our death, the shedding of this body corrupted by sin, all those who are in Christ will one day share in being reunited into his very presence, the communion which once was between Adam and God will be re-established, and indeed will be even greater. There will be no wall of separation between us and God, yet the opposite is true for those who die in their sins. For them what awaits is a further tier of separation from God, a total and complete separation, from which there is no return.

This famous quote by Randy Alcorn I think describes this state of limbo of the human life perfectly, he said, "The best of life on earth is a glimpse of heaven; the worst of life is a glimpse of hell. For the Christian, this present life is the closest they will come to hell. For the unbeliever it is the closest they will come to heaven." For upon the death of the believer we will be brought closer to God, for the unbeliever that separation will be complete and infinite. And I think that this is what Paul was getting at in chapter 6 when he says, reckon yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ. The truth of the matter is, we who have been saved from our sinful nature, though the culmination of being reunited with God is yet to come, we have a connection with him now through the spirit. The part of us that is yet stained by sin, has been washed and covered by the blood of the one who came and died so that we may be saved from the wrath of God upon sin. Therefore as Paul says, reckon yourselves dead to your old nature, and alive in Christ having been given a new nature which is been given both a willingness, and ability to do the things which are pleasing to him, as we live in this interim state awaiting the culmination of Gods promises, that all of those who are of the Seed of Abraham shall be justified and will inherit the promised land, this is a sure promise for if God was to go back on his promises, he would not be God.

This also gets into Jim's series on worship, I think that is another aspect that Paul is getting at here when he says reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive in Christ. How should we, who are the recipients of such a gift react? How shall we who still carry about the baggage of sin in the flesh react when we meditate upon the fact that Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins, knowing that we are forgiven and that our sins are forgotten and not held against us. This knowledge when we recognize our condition before God that we have been rescued from and understanding that through Christ we are inheritors of an ever lasting life of peace in the very presence of the one who loved us that he sacrificed his own son for us should produce worship within our hearts and minds. So, the reality is that we, as believers having this supernatural peace live our lives looking to the positives that God has given us, worshipping and praising him through not only our words, but our actions and deeds as we strive to love the one who first loved us.

I touched on this a few weeks back, that there are a few groups calling themselves Christian who believe that they must suffer physical pain and punishment for their sins, but nowhere is that found in scripture, we have been made alive and should not be those who morosely focus upon our failures and sin, but rather be joyous and rejoice in the God who forgives and forgets, therefore we strive, or in Paul's analogy, we run the race, seeking to do good, seeking to love one another, sharing the gospel and this hope not out of duty, or to gain merit, but simply out of worship because we love him who has reconciled us, forgiven us, and draws us to himself. We who were once far off, have been drawn near by his grace and mercy so that we may be free of this bondage of sin and live as those who have been redeemed, in the freedom of the spirit, through the grace and mercy of God not needing a law or regulations to keep us in check, for the law was given to expose, and suppress the sinful nature, but we who are in Christ, that nature was put to death on the cross and we have been born again into a new nature. And this new nature, produces fruit which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and as Paul says in Galatians, Against such there is no law for those who have Christ have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires. Which brings us to our verses this morning as Paul explains the mechanism of this reality.

(chapter 7:1) let us go ahead and go back to verse 19 of chapter 6 to read this in context since the chapter division here messes up the flow of thought. (read 6:19-7-6) Paul uses the marriage analogy here, a very human experience to explain our relationship with God, and the necessity of dying to one, so that we may live to another. The law that was given, though it pointed to a perfect, and holy, just righteousness it set a standard that is unreachable by mankind therefore as Paul says in verse 10 here of this chapter, "the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death, for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and it killed me." The law is holy, it is just, but for mankind it condemns. Israel stands as a testament that mankind is incapable of keeping God's law, throughout scripture God likens them to a harlot, bound to him through law and promise, yet they forsake him, and seek after another. Mankind in our natural state, are bound to this law, that is the law which is just and holy exposes our sinful nature, and all the more so in Christ's teaching on it, showing that the law isn't just about the outward physical action, but the inward desire and intents of the heart. Paul here in chapter 7 describes this law relationship like that of a marriage, that even if it was possible for us to break out from underneath it, doing so would be adultery. This gets at what Isaiah was saying, that even our good works are as filthy rags, the dire state of humanity is that even when confronted by God's holy law, and our own attempt to keep it produces within us death. The example of the pharisee's and Israel's religious leaders at the time of Jesus, he chastised them for their pride and their arrogance, being puffed up for their attempts at law keeping produced not a true righteousness but only a self righteousness, yet again producing sinfulness within, for the very nature of mankind is so tainted that even in striving it can produce sin.

Therefore it was necessary that we have died with him, so that we are no longer married to one, but can be married to another. There is an aspect that we gentiles were never married to the law, the law was given to Israel, and we were outcasts without God. But this does not change the reality that all of mankind is under the curse of Adam, and God's just and holy law that was given points to his nature, our our failure. So though, we as gentiles may have never been bound by the law, it gives us a glimpse of our own natural state and inability. And one could even say, that we in our natural state are bound to the law of Satan, that is using the analogy of Paul here it is like a marriage relationship which we can not simply walk away from but must first die to, so that we may be free to marry another.

Though Paul is speaking to believing Jews here, as is noted in the first verse when he says “for I speak to those who know the law.” in many ways it still applies to us today, yes even us Gentiles for there is a temptation that Paul in all of his letters fought against, and we see in our churches today which is for believers to put themselves under the law. Having this idea that now that we have been saved, we have been given the ability to keep God's law, and that the law is some rule and guide for the believer. Let me ask you this, if we who are married to Christ, put ourselves under the law..what are we doing?.....in light of what Paul is saying here in chapter 7. (see if anyone answers) If we, as those who have been saved by grace, through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, turn to the law for righteousness, it is no small matter, but rather according to what Paul is saying here in chapter 7, it is akin to adultery. Look at verse 4, “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.” If a Jew, who grew up under the law covenant, is no longer under law through Christ, how much more so those of us who are gentiles who were never under the law to begin with? For the Jew to return to the old ways after having been freed through the death of Christ would be a sort of rejection of the grace and mercy that was given, likewise more-so for us Gentiles.

The message of Paul in the book of Roman's to the Jewish believers in Rome, is the same message given to the Gentiles in Galatia, for the temptation, and may I say, deception to look upon anything other than Christ for righteousness is a very real and dangerous reality. Paul calls this a different gospel in verse 6 of Galatians 1, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Jesus Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another but are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” The idea of being put again under the law, according to Paul, is a perversion of the gospel, a deception We read it this morning in Galatians, “O Foolish Galatians, who have bewitched you, who deceived you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you crucified.” To look to the law, to turn to the old covenant, even as a rule and guide is to be bewitched, deceived, a rejection of the truth, and a following of a different gospel. This is no small matter! Either, your righteousness is found in Christ, having nailed your old nature, and sins on the cross, or if you return, or put yourself under the law for righteousness it is an attempt to create in yourself righteousness. This is Paul's point in Galatians, Did you receive the spirit by the works of the law? Or by the hearing of faith? And his point to the Roman's you are dead to the law, free from its bind, no longer bound to its observance, or punishment, and are now married to Christ, who through his grace and mercy sees you already as his righteous and holy bride. Do you see the difference? Do you see how this has a stark and drastic effect upon your Christian walk?

The law was given as a tutor, as a placeholder, as a guard to keep sin in check, and the very real and necessary outcome is that the law never produced righteousness, but only conviction and points to mankind's weakness and inability. So now that one greater has come, who has fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law, and has imputed his own righteousness to your account, to return to it, is a rejection of that grace and mercy. It is a form of adultery, for the law minded individual, Christ is not enough, what Christ has done to accomplish righteousness, is not enough but the law minded individual feels they must go seek righteousness in another. Now please, do not mistake what I am saying, I am not saying that all law minded individuals are unbelievers, Paul does not call them such in Roman's or in Galatians, but rather he says they are deceived into following a perverted version of the gospel. It is a denial of the spirit's power within you to seek righteousness in something other than what Christ has already accomplished for you.

Now, on this side of the cross, having the Spirit given to us, we no longer need a law telling us what is pleasing, or forbidden by God, for the spirit works within you to will and to do, it convicts, it ministers, and works in you the righteousness in which you have been established through Christ. Look at verse 4 again, in Roman's because this point can not be stated enough, Therefore my brethren, yo also have become dead tot he law through he body of Christ, get it, dead, to, the, law..no longer bound to it, no longer need it, dead to it, so that you may be bound to him who was raised from the dead, verse 5, “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.”

In the previous chapter Paul said, you are dead to your sins, reckon yourself dead, live as those who have been made alive in Christ, that old nature, those sins no longer have control or power over you, and then he continues and says, also that law by which you look to as a guide, yea, you are dead to that as well, for the law produced condemnation of this sins, of which you are now dead. Therefore, you are likewise dead to the law having been made alive in Christ. You, have now been married to Christ, and to return to the law, to find justification, or righteousness in anything other then what Christ has given you through the spirit is a deception, and a perverse gospel, which encourages you to not look to the one to whom you are married, but to seek solace in another. Though I know most of us here today understand this already, we all have friends and family who are deceived into looking for righteousness not resting in the righteousness which has already been established in Christ, but looking to work out their own through the adherence of law. I hope the words of Paul hold fast in your hearts today, we are no longer slaves of our old nature, and we no longer stand condemned before God if we have been reconciled through Christ. But we may stand with Christ, in righteousness which he has established for us, through faith, apart from the law having also put to death its requirements upon all those who are under grace. This gospel call is simple, it is merely to repent and believe, reckon yourself dead to sin, and live in the newness of live given through Christ Jesus. If today, you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, but turn and repent, believe and find rest in him who has died so that we may be found righteous, and holy before God.