

The Footsteps of Faith Series
Lesson # 12 “Righteousness includes freedom from the Law”
Part III

Romans 7:14-25

Scripture: Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

Introduction:

In the 1990’s I worked at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center in Taft, Oklahoma. This was a women’s prison. It was very sad to see the hopeless lives of people who had chosen to violate the law and who were being punished by it.

I don’t know what you understand about prisons but its not a good place to be and you should do everything within your power to avoid it.

In prison the Law controls your every waking second. It tells you when and where to eat and how much to eat. It dictates where you can and can’t go. In prison the Law even tells you when to sleep and when to get up.

On a daily basis I have watched Inmates senselessly stumbling through life just to get rid of time. I’ve watched them play games, work in the prison yard, get involved in great schemes and plots against each other just to pass the time of day.

In short life in prison is run by the Law, hope and desires fade away as the Law rules your life.

Once in a while a Inmate would fulfill her time and leave. I was always sad because of a word called “recidivism”. It describes the rate at which released prisoners come back to prison. The rate while I worked for the department of corrections was over 80%.

The fact is that many times prisoners become institutionalized. They like being told what to do and when to do it. Basically they like being slaves under the Law and when they are released they don’t know how to handle freedom and can’t function well in society and end up back in prison 82% of the time.

Transitional Statement:

Church, righteousness includes the desire of our hearts to be found pleasing and acceptable to God. His intention was never for mankind to camp out under the Law of Moses under the force of Law in regard to righteousness. Paul tells us in Gal. 5:13 that we are called to freedom

Read: Romans 7:14-25

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.”

Lesson:

I. First Paul talks about being sold into bondage to sin under the Law

Romans 7:14

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

- A. The Law is Spiritual.....that is, it is dominated by the Spirit
 - 1. i.e. spirit filled
- B. But folks living under it are not spirit filled
 - 1. They are of the “*flesh*”...
 - 2. That is they are temporal in nature
 - a. They are external as opposed to internal
 - 3. Another good word here is carnal
 - a. Not filled with the spirit
- C. You see, under the Law, they were sold into bondage to sin.
 - 1. In context, I think this means that they were helpless in regard to sin because they couldn't fully escape it under the Law of Moses
 - 2. So who sold them to sin?
 - a. For sure it wasn't God.

- b. And Satan can't sell what he doesn't own
 - c. That only leaves in my mind the idea that people under the Law of Moses with their choice to buy what they couldn't pay for ...i.e. "sin" sold themselves out.
3. They were entangled and held captive by sin because there was no full release from it.
- a. The Greek says they were sold into bondage "*under sin*"
 - b. i.e. Sin had control over them

-2 Peter 2:19 tells us that the things that overcome us enslave us.

-In-other-words, Sin was in the drivers seat.

4. Hebrews 10:4 tells us that all the blood sacrifices of bulls and goats at the temple couldn't take away sin.

-Even the day of atonement was merely a satisfaction of God's wrath till the blood of Jesus could be made available.

D. I think what Paul is saying is that the Old Covenant is no desirable place to hang out.

II. Under the Law sin dwelt in people

Romans 7:15-17

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

A. "*What I am doing...*"

- 1. The things going on in my life.
- 2. Specifically, the work or accomplishments that I have under the Law

B. "I don't understand..."

- 1. i.e. to what end I work, I don't know under the law
 - a. Because it is only a shadow of the reality Hebrews 10:1
- 2. Basically, I don't know where this is all going.

B. And, the things I want to do I can't seem to do.

- 1. The struggle seems to be that I can't fully satisfy the righteous demands of the Law...no matter how much I want to.

16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.

- A. If or more specifically when “I choose sin”
- B. I agree with the Law’s righteous judgment against it.
 - 1. And therefore stand condemned.
 - 2. Without hope !

17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

- A. This is not a ditching of responsibility
 - 1. He isn’t saying the devil made me do it.
- B. But, under the Law sin takes up residence within a man...as opposed to new testament God dwelling in us, under the Law sin dwells in us.
- C. So sin was in control

III. And Under the Law Sin took control of people.

Romans 7:18-20

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh;

- A. Under the Law of Moses, without the spirit of God living in me....there was nothing good in me.
 - 1. Without God dwelling in us
 - 2. Evil moves in Matt 12:45

for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

- A. I had the desire for good but couldn’t seem to carry through with it.
 - 1. Tossed back and forth violently by the waves of sin.
 - 2. i.e. the struggle in regard to sin was under the Law was overwhelming

20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

- A. So here sin becomes like the bit for a horses mouth. Once it is inside the horses mouth it takes control over the whole animal.
 - 1. Make no mistake sin took charge under the Law.
 - 2. Like a ventriloquist people became like puppets on a string.

IV. Wretched under the Law

Romans 7:21-24

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

- A. Under the Law evil was camped out in their hearts
- B. And true righteousness before God is impossible with evil residing in us.

22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

- A. I know what God wants in my mind and I joyful agree
- B. But my fleshly, external temporal self fights desperately against it.

- 1. i.e. the war is on !

24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

- A. “Wretched” here describes a battle worn soldier who has spent every last ounce of his effort and come up short.
 - 1. Used to describe the final condition of a person under the Law.
 - 2. Hopeless !

Conclusion:

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Righteousness doesn't come through the restraints of the Law....but through the desire of the heart in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Church, we can also become institutionalized like the prisoners I spoke of earlier, loving restraint more than freedom.

Galatians 5:1

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”