

Romans 7:1-13

It's the fourth Sunday of the month so we will be taking a look at one of our texts.

Our epistle lesson is from Romans 7, a monumentally important chapter for the Christian life. Why do we still struggle with sin? Does it mean we are doomed?

Let's see:

1-3: Do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to those who know the law – that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Paul uses marriage as an image to teach us something about the law of God. He points out that marriage is not “for time and eternity,” it is, “til death do us part.” It is a lifetime contract. Now you hopeless romantics out there – don't fear. You will still know your spouse in heaven and the resurrection, and you will still love them uniquely and even more than you do now! But the contract itself is binding for life. The law, Paul says, is the same. So if you are under the law, claimed by it, well, you have to do what it says or else. Don't break those marriage vows, and don't

break those commandments! And while it is true we will finally be free from sin on the day we die, Paul goes on to say that the weight of punishment of the law for those times we break it – well it might not have to wait until we die.

4: Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

Did you hear that? What tense was that? “You will die to the law?” No. “You have died to the law.” How? Through the body of Christ. So his death is your death!

How? We have to flip back one chapter in Romans. Chapter 6:3 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” So don’t you see? Your marriage contract with the law is done.

“Til death do us part,” is fulfilled because you have died, with Jesus. So you can “marry” anyone else now. You can be united with another, the head of the Church, the Bridegroom, the Savior, Jesus. He is ours now and the weight of the law is off our shoulders. Does that mean we can do whatever we want? No, just wait – Paul will get there. But it means we need not live in the *fear* of our sins anymore, we are

no longer bound to the law's contracts, we are bound to the One who has fulfilled them all for us. So, in the sight of God, we who have died with Christ through faith, through baptism, are pure and undefiled. He is not mad at you, he loves you and has given his life and vows to you. Vows are just promises, and the Savior has a few promises for you – forgiveness and eternal life, to name two of them.

Verse 5 and 6 continue this point: “For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

The law which “arouses us to sin” - why are rules made? “To be broken,” right? We like sinning, admit it. But that relationship is dead, that marriage is over. Stop texting them, stop flirting with them, stop going to the clubs and hanging around sin - that is not who we belong to anymore – fight against it. Because we belong to God and His Spirit gives us life anew that does works not just because of compulsion or they earn us something, but because they are good for us and our neighbor. Look what Paul says next:

7-8: What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law, sin lies dead.

So what’s bad, the law of God, or sin that seeks to usurp it? Sin is the bad thing here. It is us and our sin who are at fault, not God’s law. God’s law is for our good, so husband and wife honor each other, don’t steal because no one likes being robbed, don’t hurt, prejudice, murder, slander. These aren’t God not wanting us to have any fun, this is his goodness for us. But, oh, how these laws prove us inadequate and poor, miserable, sinners. It did the same to Paul too.

9: I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.

When he saw the law of God and his inability to keep it – he knew what he deserved: Death. As do we. Might seem a bit harsh, of God, no? The death penalty for things we’ve done, we are “pretty good people” right? Tell that to the King, see if your brow doesn’t start sweating before the Holy and Blameless God. We cannot

stand up against and under the law! We will die. Thanks be to God we have been united in another death – the death of Jesus!

10: The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

“Do this and you will live,” the law says. But it can never be done. Not by us, we aren’t strong enough, Paul *an apostle* wasn’t strong enough! What chance do you think you have? But the Gospel says, “it has all been done already.” Done by our Lord Jesus who makes us his own. Praise God. But the point still stands: the problem is not with God’s Law, it is with us. Paul says as much in verse 12.

12: So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

So why did God make that law known, would sin have never existed if God’s law wasn’t made? No, good will always be good and evil always evil.

13: Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

Sin is always there, since the Fall, at least. The law functions then (one of the functions) to make us aware of the sin in us. That we might know we are sinful beyond measure. Not super uplifting, quite the guilt trip, indeed. But is it accurate that Paul and we are sinful beyond measure? Can you keep a tally of your sins or have you lost count? It's accurate.

And that's it, that's the reading. Have a nice day! Kind of a low note to end the reading on, right? Chapter seven goes on, and Paul laments his own struggles with sin. It culminates in a plea – “who will save me from this body of death!?” But there is a Gospel, good news, answer: “Thanks be to God through Christ our Lord.”

Sin clings to us so closely and how exhausting it is to keep fighting it. But we know the end of the story! We know the verdict of the King! The King who has done what needed to be done, who has done what we cannot, and he has died for us and brought us with him through his death to his new life and will, one day, see us

to life anew and eternal. So we keep fighting because the law and will of God is good. There is right and wrong, there is good and evil in this world and we know which our Lord would have us seek after. And we can keep chasing after it with confidence because we know that we have died to the consequences of the law – he is not going to send us to hell, he suffered it in our place and his death is our death, that price is paid in full already. We need only stand fast and wait for the celebration of the marriage feast of the Lamb!