

Crushed by the Law

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] We took a break from Romans last week, and we're back into it again, and we're going to be looking at all of Romans 7.

It's something that's hard to break up, so we're going to be mad and try and gobble it all down in one go. So Romans 7, we have two readers.

Kirsty is going to read from verses 1 to 13, and then Ross is going to read from verses 14 through to 25. I haven't got a page number.

Somebody does? 1133. If you've got a church Bible. So in Romans 7, chapter 7, verses 1 to 13.

Do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to men who know the law, that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive.

[1 : 11] But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress.

But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law, so that we serve in the new way of the spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not. Indeed, I would not have known what sin was, except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was, if the law had not said, do not covet.

But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died.

[2 : 36] I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means. But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me, through what was good, so that through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.

We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. For what I hate, I do. But if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.

[3 : 44] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing.

Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work.

When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being, I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I myself, in my mind, am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature, a slave to the law of sin.

Thanks very much for reading. I'm sure by listening to that, it's a fairly jam-packed passage, difficult to work through.

[4 : 56] Some people read this chapter and say it describes the person before they become a Christian. So this is the kind of struggles they go through.

Some people say this is describing somebody who is a Christian, and they're struggling with the battles that they have inside. Well, we're going to take a different route through all of this, and you can have a chat to me afterwards whether you think this is what the Bible is actually saying. Let's talk to God and ask for his help as we pray. Father, thank you for your word. We pray that you would bring clarity to it, to our minds, that we would have understanding, that you would give us your Holy Spirit to interpret what is being said, but not just that it would give us better understanding in our minds, but that it would change our life.

It would transform us and help us to see that we are people who desperately need Jesus, not just to bring us to life, but as we walk through life, we need him every day.

So please help us in Jesus' name. Amen. But when you go home, I want you to all try out an experiment.

[6 : 23] I want you to climb up on a wall, a high wall. If you haven't got a high wall near your house, you can climb up onto the top of your car or even onto the top of your house.

And I want you to put your hands out in Superman or Superwoman style, like this, okay? And I want you to repeat the words, I'm going to fly.

And then slowly and carefully push yourself off. Well, I don't think any of you are going to try it, are you?

One word why we're not going to try it? Gravity. We mightn't understand the maths and the physics behind it, but we've all got enough stuff up here in our heads to know that we are somehow stuck on this earth.

There's a force all around us that pulls us and keeps us from floating off into space. And there's nobody, to my knowledge, that can defy the laws of gravity.

[7 : 37] Strangely, however, there were a bunch of religious people in this church in Rome that thought they could defy the laws of sin. They thought that if you added on lots of rules, they would never struggle or battle with sin again.

They would be able to fly through the Christian life. But Paul's response to this is, that's absolute nonsense. Look at verse 21.

He says, Just as we can't shake off the laws of gravity and go flying whenever we want to, so we can't shake off the law of sin and be perfect whenever we want.

As it says there in verse 21, Whenever I want to do good, evil is right there with me. And I think we can all identify with that.

There's a force. There's a pull that's going on in our lives. In fact, the reality of this sin is like an ongoing battle, as he says in verse 23.

[9 : 14] It's a war waging against our minds. We can't break it and we can't shake it. It's as real as gravity.

Yes, the penalty of sin has been paid for and dealt with. We saw that back in chapter 6. But the presence of sin is going to be a daily reality in our lives until the day that we die.

Now, if that is true, if sin is going to be a daily reality no matter who we are, how are we going to deal with it? How do we actually battle against it?

Well, as we've said, there are those in the church who think that by slapping on more rules, it's going to make us better people. If you can better perform in your life and do things better to please God, then you're going to get rid of sin.

Well, that seems to be the big issue that's confronted us, confronted here in chapter 7. But as we will see, rules or the law are powerless to change us or to save us.

[10 : 24] By putting more rules in place, we only find that we have more rules to break. In fact, if we use the law in the wrong way, it's only going to destroy us and it's going to break us.

So, we are to stay away from trying to get better through the law. So, how then do we deal with the ongoing reality of sin in our lives?

Well, the first thing that we must do is remember that we have a new relationship. A new relationship has begun. To put it in terms like this, we've broken up with the law, we've ended that relationship, and we are now married to Christ.

Look at verse 4 of chapter 7. So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

He's saying to them, I want you to know that your relationship to the law is over. It's finished. It's ended. And you now have a new relationship with Christ, and I want you to enjoy that.

[11 : 44] And that's illustrated for us in verse 2. He gives an example. He says, for example, by law, a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive.

But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress.

But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So he's using a practical illustration from life.

He says, the only way you can get married again in life is, or to have another husband, is if there is a death. Death ends one relationship, and it allows you to start another one.

And he's saying that's exactly what has happened to you if you are a Christian. A death has taken place. In Christ, you have died to the law, so that you can start again a new life, a new relationship with Christ.

[12 : 58] So this old relationship is over, it's finished. In fact, this old relationship with law was a really bad thing.

It was just like being involved in an abusive relationship. Look at verse 5. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

The law was like a bad husband, who constantly controlled and piled on unrealistic expectations, demands that were impossible for us to meet.

And all it did was bring out the worst in us. We would react to it and fight against us. It would never make us better people. Thankfully, though, we have a new husband.

A new husband in Christ, who enables us and equips us to live a different kind of life, a life of beauty. Look at verse 6. So living with the law, a relationship with the law is going to break you.

[14 : 25] Whereas living with Christ is going to renew you. Now our problem is, we are always tempted to go back to our old relationships.

So second, we need to make sure we stay clear of our old relationship. Many people who've been in a very controlling or domineering relationship, it may seem strange to us, will end up going back to their old husband or their old partner.

In some ways, maybe it's a way of security. And I'm not sure all the reasons for that, but it happens. And as Christians, we can do exactly the same thing.

We can drift back into our old relationship with the law. And we say to ourselves, it couldn't have been that bad. We did have some good times together, didn't we?

Me and the law. We got unwell together. But we've got to remember what it was really like. Look at verse 7.

[15 : 38] What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not. The law in itself is not bad. In fact, look at verse 12.

The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good. Now we're going to come back to it, because it sounds like there's a contradiction here. You're telling me it's bad, but here it's telling me that it's good.

We'll come back to that in a minute. Let me explain why it is bad. Why being married to the law is not good for us, or drifting back into that relationship, is terribly unhelpful.

First, it shows our desperate condition. Look at the rest of verse 7. He says, Indeed, Indeed, I would not have known what sin was, except through the law.

For I would not have known what coveting really was, if the law had not said, Do not covet. If I pick up a learner's driving manual, it's going to show me how I should drive.

[16 : 42] It's going to show me what the rules are, and what I should be doing. But in showing me how I should drive, it's also going to show up, or expose, all the places where I fail to drive properly.

And that's exactly the same with God's law. It shows us how we are to live. So, for example, here in verse 7, it says we're not to covet. We're not to want what everybody else has.

But in showing us how we are to live, it exposes all the areas in my life that I actually do covet. And that's what being married to the law will do.

It will show you up for who you really are. Every day, it's in our face, telling us what we should do, and what we shouldn't do. But the problem is, it's crushing, because all it's doing is showing us all our failures all the time.

And we can't live up to it. So that's why being married to the law is a bad thing. It's just going to show you you're a failure. And show you what a desperate condition we're in.

[17 : 49] The second reason why it's bad to be married to the law or involved with the law is it shows our desire to rebel. Look at verse 9.

He says, Once I was alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life, and I died.

You see, in some ways, a life without the law is easy. If there are no rules, you can do whatever you like.

He says, I was alive apart from the law. There's no constraints. There's nobody to put me in my place. But then he says, it's like God showed up, revealing his law, his good and holy perfect law, which commands loyalty and obedience.

But he says, as soon as that law was shown to me, as soon as that happened, in verse 9, he says, sin sprang to life, and I died. You see, being involved with law, being married to law, doesn't make you a better person.

[19 : 01] All the law, and all the rules will do, is awaken your desire to rebel. All it will do, is help you be a bad person. It makes demands on us, that we don't like.

So the law will say, don't covet. And inside I'm saying, no I do want to covet. I do want that, what that person has. And it interferes with our life.

And rather than submit to the law, we begin to fight against it. And rather than obey it, we disobey it. So verse 10, he says, I found that the very commandment, that was intended to bring life, actually, brought death.

You see, being in a relationship with law, is really bad news. It can't make you live a good life, it only tells you, how you should live, and it reminds you all the time, of how you fail, not only how you do fail, but how you want to rebel against it.

So being involved with the law, will only crush you, and defeat you. We've got to stay clear, of our old relationship.

[20 : 15] And in case, you think, well, it can't be that bad, we must know, how crushing, a law relationship, actually is.

Now, Paul could speak, with great experience, on this. He was a person, who for many years, had tried to get right, with God, by performance.

He was top of his class, in all his Old Testament studies. He was, one of the, best Pharisees, in terms of keeping the law, and keeping all the regulations.

He had done it all. But rather than, make him better, as he reflected, on that kind of life, he says, he says it crushed him, and defeated him.

And to make this very real, to us, he personalizes, what a relationship, to law, actually does to us. He says, it's a battle.

[21 : 16] Look at verse 15. And I think we can identify, with these verses. I do not understand, what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do.

But what I hate to do. Verse 19. For what I do, is not the good I want to do, no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing.

Now can we see, the intensity, of the battle here. What he wants, is the good. He wants to do the good thing. He wants to obey. He wants to follow the law.

But what he does, in reality, is the evil, the wrong thing. He fights against it. He disobeys it. And you've got these things, in conflict, what he wants, and what he does.

They're battling against each other. He knows what the law says. It makes good sense. But he says, I just can't do it.

[22 : 18] And why can't he do it? Look at verse 17. He gives us his answer. As it is, it is no longer I myself, who do it, but it is sin, living, in me.

Now he's not taking a cop out here, and saying, ah, it's nothing to do with me. You see, it's sin in me, and it's not my fault, it's sin's fault. That's not what he's saying. He's owning up. He's admitting, to the harsh reality, that sin, lives within him, and controls him, and consumes him. Verse 18.

He says, I know, that nothing good, lives in me. That is, within my sinful nature. Now of course, the response, of the religious crowd, is to come down heavy, on somebody like this, who says, I'm trying to be good, but you know what, I just keep doing the wrong thing. I try to be such a good person, but these things, keep coming out of my mouth, and my actions, well I just can't help it. And their response is, well you've got to try harder.

[23 : 30] You've got to do better, in your Christian life. You've got to have more, you've got to be, much better than this. Why don't you try, reading your Bible, a little bit more. Or why don't you go, to the prayer meeting, more often, and start with prayer, in the morning, pray in the afternoon, pray in the evening, and go to church.

You only go to church, once on a Sunday. Caroline Baptist, thought to have two services, on a Sunday. Go and find another church, where there's two churches, that will make you better. And so, pile on more and more rules.

But the reality is, as Paul's experience here is, no matter what rules, you put in place, no matter how hard, we try, we can't defeat sin, by our own good performance.

There will be a continuous, ongoing battle, and by piling on more and more rules, it's just going to intensify the battle, more and more.

In fact, the battle, has only one conclusion. It's going to be crushing. Living with the law, is going to defeat you, every single time.

[24 : 46] Look at verse 22. He says, in my inner being, I delight in God. So, I see that it's good, but I see this other law, this other thing going on, inside of my life.

Waging war, against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner, of the law of sin, that is at work, within my own life. Trying harder, is not going to win the battle.

Getting into a relationship, with the law, going back to it, and piling on laws, and trying to live it out, by your performance, is not going to make you, a better person. In fact, it will beat you up.

It will condemn you, and make you a prisoner. Or, to use the imagery, of somebody, who's moved away, from an abusive relationship, to go back, into that relationship.

You're only going back, into trouble. Why would we ever, want to live like this? Why would we want, to go back, to this kind of life?

[25 : 57] Look what it says, in chapter 6, verse 14. He says, sin shall not be, your master, because you are not, under law, but under grace.

You're not to go back, under law, and start living under it, because it's only, going to beat you up. It's going to crush you. You are under grace. You are to live, in your new relationship.

And so, if we are going, to deal with sin, and to deal, with the ongoing battle, that is a reality, for every one of us, we've got, to understand, what it is, to enjoy, our new, marriage relationship.

Someone, who lives, in a harsh, and abusive relationship, will quickly, come to see, that they, desperately need, help.

That they need, out of it. They need, a better husband. And that's, the only good, to come from, a relationship, with law.

[27 : 06] That's why, it says, in verse 12, that the law is holy. The commandment, is righteous, and it's good. It's good, because it shows us, that we need, out.

That we can't, live up to its standards. That we need, some kind of help. We need, a better husband. We need, Christ. Verse 24.

Here is his conclusion, as he tries to live, by a life, of performance. What a wretched, person, I am. Who is going, to rescue me, from this body, of death. Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

You see, the solution, to dealing, with this ongoing, problem of sin, in our life, is not a system, not a set of rules, but a person.

[28 : 10] A person, is the answer. Jesus Christ. We need, a relationship, with our rescuer, not a relationship, with rules.

You see, in Christ, we come to one, who kept the law, perfectly, for us. When Christ, came, into this world, he lived, the perfect life, that we could never live.

Of all the laws, that God has, he obeyed, every single one, he followed, every single one, where we disobeyed, he did obey. He lived the life, the perfect life, that we could never live, for us.

But not only that, in Christ, we find one, who took the penalty, of the law for us. He took the punishment, that was our punishment. He died the death, that we should die.

The blame, that was accounted to us, for all the times, that we have done things wrong, Christ took the blame. He paid the penalty, of the law for us.

[29 : 18] Now Christ, has achieved, this perfect life, for us, and he says, because I've lived it for you, because I've died, it for you, I want you to live, in that relationship, now, today.

And I want you to enjoy, that relationship, with me today. You have a new relationship, you've left the law behind, you've broken off, that relationship, the engagement is gone, and now, you are married, to Christ.

And it is to be, a present experience, for you today, and you are to live in it, and to enjoy it. Because when we come, to Christ, and Christ is not, someone we come to, just to get us, into salvation, just to kind of, tip us into heaven, we are to live with him, every single day.

We are to enjoy, the relationship, that he has come to give us. One who restores us, rather than breaks us. One who heals, rather than crushes.

each day, we need to run, to our true lover, and find the safety, and the security, of the one, who will enable us, and equip us, to live, for him.

[30 : 36] You see, when we come to Christ, he doesn't say, here's a bunch, more rules, and I want you, to do this better, and I want you, to try harder, and I want you, to stop doing, those things.

Instead, he points us, to what he has done. He says, I have died for you, I have lived for you, I have rescued you, from trying to live, a life of performance, and I want you now, to live, with me, in that relationship, today.

I will not break you, but I will restore you. I will heal you, I will not crush you. And he will fill us, as we will see next week, with the power, of his Holy Spirit, to enable us, and equip us, to live, a life, for him.

So let's not drift back, to old relationships, let's stay, with our new relationship, with Christ, and be warned, how crushing it is, to pile on laws, and rules, upon things, that we can never do, or achieve. Christ has set us free, to live a new way, with him. Let's pray, together. Amen. Our Father God, we thank you, that Christ, has come, he has put to death, an old relationship, so that we can, start a new one.

[32 : 23] Help us to live, in the joy, of that relationship, each and every day. Coming to Christ, Christ, who will renew us, and restore us, coming to Christ, who pours out his grace, and his mercy on us, who forgives us, of all of our sin, who equips us, and enables us, to live the life, that he has called us, to live.

Help us, not to go backwards, but help us, to go walking forwards, with Christ, and our new marriage, with him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, we're going to sing together, What Grace Is Mine, because... ..

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