

Sexual Integrity for Men - Spring 2009

Session 3 – Transforming Grace

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Romans 7 - background

- Romans 1-3 - total depravity
- Romans 4 - Abraham was justified by faith
- Romans 5 - We are justified by faith too
- Romans 6-8 - what are the effects of justification?

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" (Romans 6:1) "May it never be!" - no way!

Paul gives us his reasons in Romans 6

"our old self was crucified with Him" "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."" (Galatians 3:13) "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man," (Romans 8:3)

"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection." (Romans 6:4-5)

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"because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him." (Romans 6:7-8)

"In the same way, consider yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:11)

Justification means two things: Our sins are forgiven, taken out of the picture between us and God, and our "old self" has died at the cross.

There is a fundamental change in our nature. We have the impartation of Christ's righteousness - 2 Cor. 5:21

"Our only hope of progress in gradual sanctification (growing in likeness to Jesus) is that we already have a right standing with God by faith alone. By this justification we are accepted into God's favor and enjoy a reconciled position. This right standing establishes the very relationship in which we find the help and power to make progress in love." – John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ*

"Jean Valjean, my brother: you belong no longer to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I am buying for you. I withdraw it from dark thoughts and from the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God." *Les Miserables*, Victor Hugo

There are two sections of the next chapter that are important to us: Rom 7:7-13 and Rom 7:14-25. Let's look at them in turn:

"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. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death." (Romans 7:7-10)

"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." (Romans 7:11-13)

"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, but what I hate I do. And 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. 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. (Rom. 7:14-20)

"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." (Romans 7:21-25)

Ulysses and Orpheus

Those who have read the classics are probably familiar with the story of Ulysses. During his travels, this ancient adventurer heard stories of the island of the sirens - deadly enchantresses who made such beautiful music that any sailors passing by would turn their ships toward shore and be dashed upon the rocks. No one had ever heard the song of these sirens and lived. This sounded like a worthy challenge to a daring man like Ulysses. He decided to become the first to hear this music and survive.

In order to achieve his goal, Ulysses put wax in the ears of his crew and instructed his men to tie him securely to the ship's mast. As they rowed past the island of the sirens, the seductive music began. Ulysses began to strain against the ropes, struggling to get loose so he could swim to shore. He cursed at his sailors to turn the boat toward the rocks, but the wax prevented them from hearing his cries. Ulysses continued to fight against his bonds until the ship moved out of range and into safety. Ulysses had heard the song of the sirens and lived - yet ever after he was haunted by the memory of the beguiling music.

Greek myths also tell of another ship that passed this island and yet survived. As its crew was being drawn by the deadly melody to disaster on the shoals, a gifted man on board named Orpheus grabbed a lyre and began to play. The music of Orpheus so far surpassed that of the sirens that the men turned away from the rocks and sailed to safety, enraptured by these new, exquisite melodies that gave life.

“When we face the pull of temptation, most of us can relate to either Ulysses or Orpheus. For some, the siren song of the world has an almost irresistible attraction. They find themselves bound in place by the law, yet struggling against the rules when enticed by the power of the flesh. Their only hope is in the law that holds them back.”

The joy of oneness in Christ far surpasses anything the world or the flesh can offer. But there are those who have heard a new song - the music of heaven in their hearts. They discover that the love of Jesus Christ is so strong and satisfying that, although the world is still attractive, they gladly leave it behind so they may be powerfully drawn into His beautiful presence. They don't have to be tied or bound. They aren't struggling against restricting ropes. They have discovered the glory of walking with God in intimate fellowship.”

Chuck Smith, *Why Grace Changes Everything*

“The troubled conscience, in view of God’s judgment, has no remedy against desperation and eternal death, unless it takes hold of the forgiveness of sins by grace, freely offered in Christ Jesus, which if it can apprehend, it may then be at rest...Then it can boldly say: I seek not the active or working righteousness, for if I had it, I could not trust it, neither dare I set it against the judgment of God. Then I abandon myself from all active righteousness, both of my own and of God’s law, and embrace only that passive righteousness, which is the righteousness of grace, mercy, and forgiveness of sins. I rest only upon that righteousness, which is the righteousness of Christ and of the Holy Ghost...”

The highest wisdom of Christians is not to know the law and to be ignorant of works, especially when the conscience is wrestling with God... Unless the Christian is ignorant of the law and is assuredly persuaded in his heart that there is now no law, nor wrath of God, but only grace and mercy for Christ's sake, he cannot be saved; for by the law comes the knowledge of sin."

Martin Luther - commentary on Galatians

"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so," (Romans 8:6-7)

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Galatians 2:20)

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:1-4)

"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."
(Rom. 7:4)

Homework

- Romans 7 self-study
- Martin Luther reading