

SERMON STUDY SUMMARY

Romans Part 15: A New Me – Understanding the Role of the Law

INTRODUCTION

Pastor Henry tells of a young Christian who shared about his struggle to believe that God accepted him, because he was still falling short in certain areas of his life. This young person felt terrible because in his view he was disappointing God. Many of us can identify with him.

The reality is, however, that when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, He joins Himself with our spirit, loves us unconditionally, is alive in us, and we in Him. God, through the righteousness of Christ, places all our sins on His Son, making us perfect, forever, in the unseen, eternal spiritual realm. This is 'justification'. However, as we live in the earthly realm, we still wrestle with sin and temptation and are 'being made holy' and becoming more like Christ. This is 'sanctification'.

Living in the earthly realm, what do we do with all the laws and commands God gives in the Bible? Can we please Him through obeying the Law? In Romans Chapter 7, Paul addresses questions about God's moral Law, which is best summarized by the 10 commandments.

When the 'Law' is our master, it's like a spouse who is good and faithful, BUT also a hyper-perfectionist, fanatical about doing everything 'according to the Law of right and wrong'. Though you do your best, you never receive affirmation, just criticism and demands, resulting in your feeling like a total failure. Jesus doesn't want this kind of relationship with us. To be free in Jesus, we must understand first, the purpose for God-given Laws; and second, that since we're alive in Christ, the Law is no longer our master. The purpose of the Law is to: (a) Define sin, showing us right and wrong; (b) expose sin within us; (c) reveal who is Lord of our lives; and (d) lead us to Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Our rebellious spirit loathes the Law because we want full control of our lives. We're deceived into thinking we can be our own 'gods', free to do as we wish. However, the Law merely defines 'sin'; it cannot save us. When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, we die to the mastering power of Law and Sin in our lives; although still tempted by sin, we now have the power to say 'NO'!

Is the Law your master or your servant? Nobody can keep all the Law. If we struggle with a critical spirit, believe that God only accepts us based on our performance, accept others based on their performance, or are burdened/crushed emotionally with discouragement in our Christian life, these are indicators that the Law may still be our master.

However, when we fall in love with, and are 'married to' Jesus, our relationship with the Law also changes. The Law is no longer our master but our servant. We want to obey God's Laws, which are important to Him, not because we have to, but because we want to. We love Him, and choose to please and honour Him. We are 'free' in Christ and fear no condemnation.

That's the kind of relationship Jesus wants to have with us, where we choose to know Him, be close to Him and follow Him. True life is only found in Jesus Christ, and He wants us to love Him by dwelling in Him, abiding in Him, enjoying Him, surrendering ourselves to Him and following Him wherever He leads. May we never settle for anything else!

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What is the best marriage advice you would give someone, or what is an attribute of a healthy marriage you have observed?
2. If someone points out a traffic law to you, do you embrace it, resent it, look at it skeptically, seek a loophole, ignore it, etc.? Do you see it more of a burden or a support?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Romans 7:1-7

3. Read Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24-25. Pastor Henry said, "The law isn't the problem. It is our confusion over the purpose of the law that is." From the above Scriptures, how would you explain the purpose of the Law?
4. Romans 6:14 said that 'sin shall not be your master'. By way of the marriage illustration, Romans 7 says that the 'law is no longer your master'. Discuss how this is so and the implications. What is the 'new way of the Spirit', and how does it differ from the 'letter of the law' (Rom 7:6)?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Do you find that you prefer to live by your own standards or by God's? What are the benefits and problems of each, and how do you reconcile your choices? How may the Law be a witness to yourself or others that one needs a Savior?
6. At the end of this sermon Pastor Henry asks, 'What is God saying to you?' When you consider the teaching, what emotions arise in you? What does this tell you about your relationship with the Law?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Pastor Henry asked "What is your relationship with the Law? Is it as a master or a servant?" Do you have a critical spirit toward others, or feel you have disappointed God, feel defeated or joyless in your Christian walk? If so, the law may still be your master. Pray that the Holy Spirit would show you the freedom and joy He is leading you to live in through Christ.

THE WORD (NIV)

Romans 7:1-7

Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? 2 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 that binds her to him. 3 So then, if she has sexual relations with 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 if she marries another man.

4 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 for God. 5 For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. 6 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.

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Romans 3:20

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Galatians 3:24-25

So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.