

Romans: The Crown Jewel of Salvation

25 - Avoiding Legalism by Living in the Spirit

Romans 7:1-6

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / March 2, 2014

“Legalism is seeking to ACHIEVE forgiveness **from** God and ACCEPTANCE **by** God through OBEDIENCE **to** God. In other words, a legalist is anyone who behaves as if they can earn God’s approval and forgiveness through PERSONAL PERFORMANCE.” –Pastor C.J. Mahaney

I. Stay Focused on Your New Love for Christ –

You have a Husband Now!

At the heart of Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If you don’t have that you just might now have the real thing because Jesus didn’t come to start a religion; He came to give us a relationship – life!

II. Stay Mindful of Your New Power to Change –

You Have the Power of the Holy Spirit

Romans 7:6 “But now we have been **delivered from** the law, having **died** to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

The law HELD us hostage to guilt, condemnation, and shame. That was the purpose of the law – so that every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty before God!

Romans 3:19-20 “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

If you try to use the law to produce fruit and godly behavior, the most you can hope for is to produce some of the counterfeit fruits of self-righteousness that rot and stink and wither so quickly.

Romans 7:4 “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, *that we should bear fruit to God.*”

As Christians now, we bear fruit from our connection and living relationship to a risen, all-powerful, all-satisfying, all-glorious Savior LIVING IN US, not the law breathing DOWN ON US.

Romans 7:6 “... so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit...”

Freedom from the law doesn’t cause us to run wild! This freedom makes godly servants and lovers of Christ.

Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”

If you know Christ, then He’s set you free to LIVE UNDER grace, to BREATHE IN grace, to THROW BACK the curtains of the law and to DRINK IN the warm sunshine of God’s glorious and unending grace.

Malachi 4:2 “But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and leap like calves released from the stall.”

If you try to keep wearing the 'yoke' of the law you won't leap very HIGH or very LONG. You can't. It's too heavy! You might creep through life, but you won't leap.

The Spirit of God and the grace of Christ are your greatest resource. Throw down the law and lift up your hands for grace!

Romans 8:12-17 "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if *by the Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, these are the sons of God."

The law kills; it condemns; it exposes, but it can never give you the power to overcome sin.

Galatians 5:16-18, 24-25 "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh... but if you are led by the Spirit, you are *not under the law*... and those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk (keep in step with) in the Spirit."

If you try to use the law as your means of pleasing God you'll stay frustrated, because the law just stirs up more sin in us.

Romans 7:5 "For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death."

Philippians 3:3 *NLT* "We put no confidence in human effort. Instead, we boast about what Christ Jesus has done for us."

All confidence in the flesh has to die. We have to come face to face with the reality that we're horrible, helpless sinners – not just decent people who've gotten a little off track and need a little rehab.

Philippians 3:7-14 *ESV* "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:8-9 *The Message* "I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—God's righteousness. I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience His resurrection power, be a partner in His suffering, and go all the way with Him to death itself."

Paul says your confidence has to be in your relationship with Christ now!

"Though lip service is paid to the gospel of grace, many Christians live as if it is only personal discipline and self-denial that will mold the perfect me. The emphasis is on what I do rather than what God is doing. In this curious process God is a benign old spectator in the bleachers who cheers when I show up for morning quiet time... Sooner or later we are confronted with the painful truth of our inadequacy and insufficiency. Our security is shattered and our bootstraps are cut... Something is radically wrong. Our huffing and puffing to impress God, our scrambling for brownie points, our thrashing about trying to fix ourselves while hiding our pettiness and wallowing in guilt are nauseating to God and are a flat denial of the gospel of grace. Our approach to the Christian life is like the enthusiastic young man who had just received his plumber's license and was taken to

see Niagara Falls. He studied it for a minute and then said, 'I think I can fix this.' *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Brennan Manning, p. 15-16

We're saved by grace. We're kept by grace. And our only hope for living the Christian life is in the Spirit, putting to death sin by His grace. Don't go back to the law.