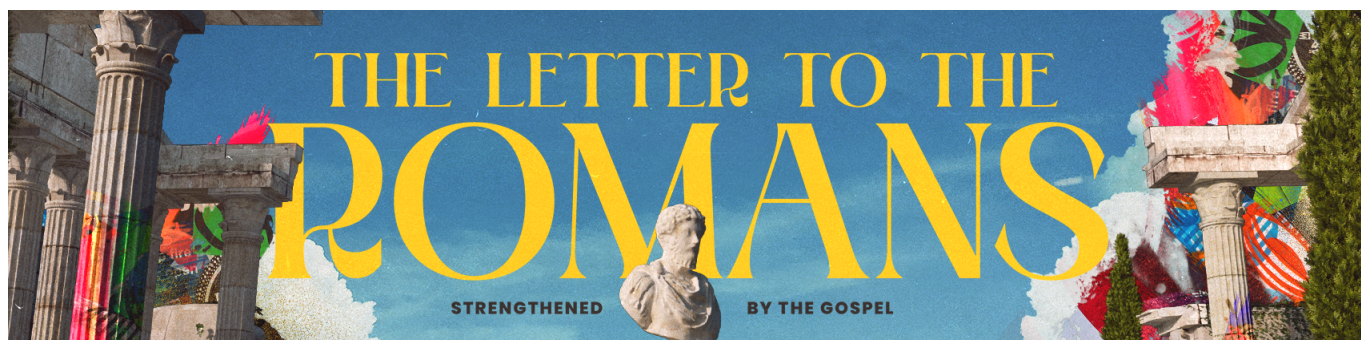




Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 10/18) The Law and Sin

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *Try to identify one practical outworking of what it means for you this week to be in Christ.*

Warm-Up

1. Do any parts of the Bible ever leave you a bit confused? How do you feel about that?
2. What do you do when you don't understand a part of God's Word?

Read Romans 7:1-13

3. How many times does Paul mention the 'law' in this chapter? What does he mean by it?
4. What is Paul's main point about the limits of the law? What example (from life) does he use?
5. In verse 7, what question does Paul anticipate people asking, and how does he answer it?
6. If death breaks the bound of the law, how does Jesus' death change our relationship to it?
7. Given everything Paul has already said about the law in chapters 1-6 (it discloses sin, cannot save, brings wrath), why might early believers have concluded the law itself was bad or "sinful"?
8. What does Paul mean when he says sin "seized the opportunity" through the commandment (vv.8-11)? How is the law more like an X-ray rather than a cure?
9. What's the difference between saying "the law is bad" and saying "our relationship to the law has changed"? Does this mean we have a *license* to do whatever we want? *Why or why not?*
10. Where in your life have you ever treated your relationship with God more like a legalistic checklist rather than a relationship that has been secured by Christ's sacrifice?
11. According to verse 4, to whom do we now belong, and for what purpose? *What does that mean for you?*
12. Why do you think Paul uses the image of marriage — rather than some other relationship — to describe our bond to Christ? What then is our obedience an expression of?
13. What would it look like this week to obey out of love and gratitude rather than duty or fear?

Read Romans 7:14-25

14. List the struggles Paul names in these verses. What pattern keeps repeating? *Do you identify with this?*
15. What does Paul cry out? Why is this expression of helplessness actually a good thing?
16. How is crying out to God in sorrow and dependence also a good thing for us? Do you ever do it?
17. Why might growing closer to God make us more aware of our sin rather than less?
18. Almost as soon as Paul cries out, who does he then rejoice in? How can this security in God's love and salvation equip us to live God's way with a certainty of what is ahead?

Apply *Where in your relationship with God are you relying on rule-keeping rather than resting in the fact that you already belong to Christ? What would it look like this week to obey out of love rather than obligation?*

Pray *Gracious Father, thank you that you have set us free from the law of sin and death. Please help us to delight in your ways and live in light of your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 10/18) The Law and Sin

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

What aspect of your frontlines requires patience right now? Ask a friend to pray for the situation.

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (Sermon):* “The War Between Your Selves” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/war-between-your-selves-part-1/>
- *Listen (Sermon):* “Discharged from The Law” by David Turner:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=50350&show_file=55685
- *Listen (sermon):* “A New Freedom” by Vaughan Roberts:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/a-new-freedom/#sermons>
- *Read (article):* “Romans 7 is About Christians... Sort of” by Matthew Payne:
<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/romans-7-christians-sort/>

Series Resources

- *Read:* “Strengthened by the Gospel” by Brian Rosner. 
- *Read:* “The Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans” by Michael Bird.
- *Read:* “Into the Heart of Romans” by N. T. Wright. 
- *Read:* “Epistle of Paul to the Romans” by F. F. Bruce. 
- *Read:* “The Message of Romans” by John Stott. 
- *Read:* “The Epistle to the Romans” by Leon Morris. 
- *Watch:* “Romans” by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-romans/>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

ROMANS (STRENGTHENED BY THE GOSPEL)

Week 10/18 “The Law and Sin”

by the Rev'd Adam Lowe (19/07/2026, Toowoomba)

율법과 죄 | Löŋ ku Awäac | 律法与罪 | சட்டமும் பாவமும்

Bible Passage: Romans 7

Heart of Sermon: *As we trust in Jesus Christ, the bond of the Law is broken,
and we are set free to live a new way for him by the power of the Spirit.*

*Gracious Father, thank you that you have set us free from the law of sin and death.
Please help us to delight in your ways and live in light of your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

As we recommence our series in Paul's letter to the Romans,
we arrive at *probably* the most hotly contested part of the *entire* letter: *chapter 7*.

Mike Bird makes the point that this is kind of like the moment when you're on a plane and you hear the pilot say: “*fasten your seat belts — we're expecting some turbulence ahead.*” / I'm a nervous flyer because I do not like turbulence. My brother tells me that's his favourite part about flying and that it's a bit boring without it. Well, give me a boring flight anyway!

- Maybe you can feel a *little apprehensive about some of the seemingly bumpy parts of this letter*.
But today, as we consider our relationship with God's Law, *we have nothing to fear.* //
- Paul has already had much to say about the law. His *case* has been *consistent* and *clear*.
The law discloses sin but does not solve it (cf. 3:9, 20) .
The law cannot be the basis for salvation (cf. 3:21-30).
The law is not the means by which God's people are made righteous (cf. 6:14-23).
The law brings wrath, increases sin, results in death (cf. 4:15; 5:20).
- But through Jesus, a new way of grace, *which brings life*, has been ushered in. /
Sin is no longer our master, for we've died with Christ, and rise to serve him by grace. /
- That's what we've heard so far. /
- Yet it might leave you wondering, well what does that mean for the law?
Is it bad? Was it a mistake? A detour? A distraction? Does it oppose the Gospel?

*They're the types of questions that would have been on the minds of many.
And they're precisely the types of questions that Paul sets about addressing here.*

- Paul mentions the 'law' 27 times in this chapter!
- And when he speaks of the law,
he's not making distinctions between *moral*, *civil*, and *ceremonial* law — *like we might* —
but he's talking about the whole Torah — the first five books of our Bible,
as God's covenant framework for how his people are to live in relationship with him.
- If we are not under the law, but under grace, what does that *now* mean for us?
- It's a critical question,
because if we get our approach to the law wrong,
it means that we haven't truly understood grace.

So that's our task for today. /

Paul wants us to understand three things:

- **The Limited Bound of the Law;**
The Forever Belonging to Christ;
The Ongoing Battle we Experience.

THE LIMITED BOUND OF THE LAW | VERSES 1-4, 7-13

율법의 한계 | Kǎ yě Lǒng cōk Lǎāw yic | 律法管辖的局限 | சட்டத்தின் வரையறுக்கப்பட்ட எல்லை

First, we recognise the **limited bound of the law**. *Verse 1...*

¹ 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.

In many ways, this entire section is Paul's defence of the Torah, *of God's law*.

- With the revelation of grace, it's a bit like God's law is now on trial.
It's like some are making the accusation against the law:
That it's no good. Even, that it is sinful.
- Note that's the precise question that Paul responds to in verse 7:
"what shall we say then, is the law sinful?"
- To which his immediate and resounding response is: *Certainly not!*
- *See the point is not that the law is bad and therefore we can toss it in the trash,*
but that we need to understand how we *now* relate to the law because of Jesus.
- It's not that the law *was good* and *is now bad*, that it was *holy* but now *sinful*,
but that we *WERE bound to the law* but *now are bound to Christ*.
- The Law hasn't changed *but our relationship with it has*.

That *'binding'* is the key to understanding this.

- And whether Paul is speaking about being bound to the *law*, or to a *spouse*, or to *Christ*, we're meant to understand that this isn't just a casual relationship or a loose affiliation, But that this is a **settled** and **binding tie** which defines you in some way.
- Culturally, that can be a bit hard for us to understand.
Sometimes the best RSVP you hear from someone is 'maybe'.
And severing a connection with someone you follow on social media is just a click of a button.
These can be tenuous, tentative, and even temporary connections.
- It's the very opposite of the type of bond that Paul is describing here, and that God's people knew in relation to the law.
- That's why Paul uses the example of marriage.
Legally, it was settled — it was binding.
It wasn't always treated that way in the ancient world — especially by men,
and in the Jewish context, a woman could not divorce the husband. Or at least it was very difficult.
- *So it's no mistake that Paul uses the example of a married woman as being bound to her husband.*
- It was a permanent arrangement. They're *bound*. / Yet, Paul makes the obvious point:
that if the woman's husband dies,
she is released from the law that binds her to him.
- She is *rightly* free to marry someone else.

- Can you hear what Paul is saying?
The law has a limited binding, because it's broken by death.
It's not forever. It has an expiration clause.
- That's the way that it has always been.
- Therefore as you put your trust in Jesus and die with him, a death has taken place, the law is no longer your master.
- We're not released from the law by our efforts, but we're released from the law by Christ's death.
- That word, 'released' is supercharged theologically.
It means that a decisive event — Jesus' death, has nullified the law's binding and discharged us from its hold.

That means that you can't possibly approach the law **legalistically**.

As a long list of things that you must fulfil to be right and proper with God.

But it also means that you can't take it as a **license** to do whatever you please.

- Just think about what the purpose of the law was.
- The law reveals sin: *I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.*
- So a bit like an X-Ray it can show you the problem, it's diagnostic which is good.
- But it can't fix you. //

Two years ago when I whacked my head hiking in New Zealand, I had to go and have an MRI to see if there was anything wrong. Can you imagine if I said to the radiologist after they looked at the imaging I said, great so is that all fixed now? They'd say no, it's only revealed the problem.

- The issue, Paul explains, is sin.
Sin seizes the opportunity afforded by the commandment and provokes us.
You know, it's a bit like when you're told that you can't have something, or not do something,
then all you can think about is having that thing or doing that which you're not allowed to.
- It seems for Paul, there was a real moment the weight and conviction of that sunk in.
There's all sorts of theories of when that may have been, but the point is that it did.
There was a point in which he recognised the depth of his sin,
perhaps even that things which gave him his greatest sense of pride and righteousness,
and realised just how broken and helpless he was. /
- The more he longed for perfection, the more he lacked in performance.
- The law is holy, righteous, good, and spiritual.
But it can't lead us to life.
- And when we see that with clarity,
it pushes us towards the one who does bring us life.
- Christians are not *just released from the law*, but are bound to another.

THE FOREVER BELONGING TO CHRIST | VERSES 4-6

그리스도께 영원히 속함 | Bäk yä ka kē Kritho athēr | 永远归属于基督 | என்றென்றும் கிறிஸ்துவுக்குச் சொந்தமாவது

We forever belong to Christ. That's our second point. Verse 4...

⁴So, 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. ⁵For 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. ⁶But 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.

As we're released from the law by Christ's death,
it's not a mystery to whom we now belong! *You don't have to be left wondering if you do.*
If you trust in Jesus, it's to Jesus you belong.

- He is the one who was raised from the dead forever! Death has no hold on him.
So that means that our binding to him is forever, too.
- We no longer belong to the thing that brings death,
But belong to the one who defeats death and brings life!
- We can't earn that bond. Nothing can break that bond.
- Jesus is the source of salvation, security, comfort, and joy. /
It's not just a beautiful image, it's a beautiful reality that we can know.

- But it also means that we must *bear fruit for God*.

That's not meant to be a point of *pressure*.

This is not some sort of *performative* requirement now placed on us.

It's like Paul is saying, what else could make sense?

- When he was bound to the law, it kept provoking him.
It was impossible in his own strength to escape the cycle of law, sin, and death.
- But now through Christ, he's caught up in a new reality, of *grace, righteousness, and life*.
- Not a righteousness and life of his own doing,
but a righteousness and life imparted to him through Christ.
- The Christian life is not one of obligation to an external code,
but a daily response to Christ's love with the very help of the Spirit.
- That takes some working out sometimes. / It takes wisdom and discernment.
- As the early church discerned how to apply the Law
in the light of the new covenant,
some of it looked exactly the same;
some of it was intensified;
some of it — like some of the ceremonial laws — didn't apply in the same way.
- But their longing for obedience was no less diminished.
- The motivation was different.

- It's not "do this and you'll live" but "you live, so do this!".
- We want to live in the ways of God,
not because the Law is our master,
but because Christ is our husband.

Imagine if the way a husband and wife related to each other was by trying to fulfil a long list of rules posted on their fridge. Every day they got up and gave it a go, every night there was a bit of an evaluation to see how it went. / Sounds fun right? It would be exhausting. It would be crushing. You'd only ever be relating to one another on the basis of a code when what we should be doing is relating on the basis of love.

I love that one of the most famous diary entries of all time, was written by Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist, when he was just 22 years, read:

"I've fallen in love or imagine that I have; went to a party and lost my head.
Bought a horse which I don't need at all."

- Love causes us to do all sorts of things, not because we *need* to,
but because no other response makes sense.
- I don't mean in a sentimental and silly way but love compels us — even in our weakness and frailty, to want to live differently, especially in honour and delight of the one who perfectly loves us, is the source of our salvation, and *the* object of our affection.

THE ONGOING BATTLE WE EXPERIENCE | VERSES 14-25

우리에게 계속되는 영적 싸움 | Tōō thēr ku, a yō ku Yōk | 我们持续的争战 | விசுவாசி அனுபவிக்கும் தொடர்ச்சியான போராட்டம்

Yet, there is still an **ongoing battle we experience**. Verse 14...

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

The main point of contention of this entire chapter is *who Paul is talking about these verses*.

- **Is it the “pre-Christian self”** — that is Paul is looking back to what and who he was.
- **Or is it Paul’s current experience as a follower of Jesus?** /
- It’s really clear which parts earlier in chapter 7 are about the experience pre conversion. And chapter 8 very clearly speaks to the experience post conversion. But we just can’t be totally sure about these verses at the tailend of chapter 7.
- Many faithful scholars have made good cases for one perspective or the other.
- But I think it is with a confidence that we can say, *that whatever Paul was referring to, it cannot exclude the reality of the struggle with sin, of a divided will Christians experience*.
- It’s kind of like, the closer we get in our relationship with God,
the more we see with clarity the beauty and holiness of God,
the more the depth of our brokenness and the struggle with sin also comes into focus.

- We kind of think of people along a normal curve.
You know at one end you have all of the spiritual giants who live godly lives.
There’s books written about them, hospitals named after them, you know that sort of thing.’
- And then at the other end there’s the really bad ones who do all sorts of evil. (cf. Keller)
- But the rest of us, for most of us, well we’re just in the middle.
- *Yet the Bible says whilst we’re all created in the image of God, and are also broken and sinful, there’s a wickedness that pervades.*
- When you become a Christian, you are forgiven.
Sin will not have the ultimate victory over you, but that wrestle is still real.

I mean, listen to Paul’s words again.

- v.15: *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*
- v.18: *...I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*
- v.19: *For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.*
- // Do you recognise that? //
- In a big sense — in the ultimate sense — we’ve been released from the law of sin and death, but until Christ returns — or death takes us home — there’s still a taking off of the old self.

Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* tells the story of Willy Wonka opening up his factory to some children who have won a golden ticket. Wonka is not just doing it out of the goodness of his heart, but in order to find a successor for his confectionary empire. But one-by-one, as each of the children can't resist various temptations connected with their vices, it gives way to all sorts of strife (along with a smuggish oompa-loompa anthem). / When they enter the room with a chocolate river, one of the boys, Augustus Gloop, cannot resist gorging himself! // And the narrator says:

"Despite the pleas of both his parents, he sneaks down to the edge of the river, scooping hot melted chocolate as fast as he could, but "August was **deaf** to everything except the call of his enormous stomach."

You're probably not kneeling at the banks of a chocolate river to slurp as much as you can. Our temptations are likely *more subtle and out of sight*. But they are no less real.

- Tim Keller put it like this: "*When you become a Christian, you don't move from warfare to peace. You move from a 'battle you cannot win' to 'a battle you cannot lose'.*"
- How do we approach that?
- Next week, as we come to Romans 8, we'll spend quite a bit of time exploring how God's gift of the Spirit empowers us to throw off sin and live his ways.
- But before we get to that, Paul gives us two clues of where we start.

First note, his cry: "Oh what a wretched man I am!"

- Paul hasn't given up — he's not devastated in a despairing sort of way.

- He's recognising he's helpless in his own strength.
- That's what we need to do.
Sometimes we fail to recognise the situation we're in.
Sometimes we resist acknowledging what we're doing *or want* is wrong.
Sometimes we refuse to admit we're helpless on our own.
- But when we're willing to lay it bare.
With an honest and sorrow — like Paul has here.
When we're willing to admit that we are helpless on our own,
we're in the best possible position to rely on the one who truly saves.
- Look at what Paul declares without even coming up from breath: Verse 24...

²⁴ Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

- Don't let conviction of sin lead down a path of self-condemnation.
It should be a catalyst to *immediately* look up and rejoice in the one who has saved us.
And look to him for help to live in light of his love.
- As we await our future glorification, *we don't need to pretend we've got it altogether*,
but keep running *and rejoice in* the one who does.
- Who resisted every temptation. Who obediently went to the cross.
Not merely as an example *to us*, but *for us*.