

The Patio Pulpit for Wednesday, June 10, 2020
A Series About the Ten Commandments/the Law of Moses
How God Designed Our New Life In Christ: Part Two
(*Warning! You may not like it.)

“I can’t stop sinning!”

You probably remember that quote from my first installment of this series about the ten commandments. “I can’t stop sinning.” That’s one of the facts of life every child of God must come fact-to-face with after coming to faith in Jesus. We literally can’t stop sinning. I wish it weren’t true, but it is. And who am I to argue with God and His will for His children? Read this from the apostle Paul in his letter to the saints in Rome: ²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. (Rom. 7:24-25 NAU).*

When I think of the apostle Paul, I subconsciously think of a man who was perfect, a saint who never sinned and never struggled with sin and temptation. I think of God’s hand-picked preacher and evangelist and theologian. I think of a God-called man who was encountered by the risen and glorified Jesus Himself and then taught all he knew about Jesus by Jesus. And except for the sinless part, it’s all true. And, believe it or not, we can imitate him.

Now, it’s important that you note the verb tenses in these verses, meaning are they present tense, past tense or future tense? If we miss that we will misread and misapply what the apostle was communicating to the church. And those verb tenses are part of the context of these two verses in chapter 7. These two verses and a few others in Paul’s letters have been used by many deceived preachers to teach sinless perfection, the 18th century preacher, Charles Finney, being one of them. You wanna talk about a bunch of miserable people?

I hope you have your Bible open to Romans 7:24-25. Paul begins with his present state by using only three words, “wretched man I.”

That's emphatic. **Wretched man I.** The Greek word translated wretched is **ταλαίπωρος**, *talaiporos*, and it means "feeling inwardly or outwardly tormented *miserable, wretched, distressed*. And it includes the idea of having to bear an almost unbearable weight and burden. The late Dr. Kenneth Wuest, who taught for many years at Moody Bible Institute, defined it like this, "exhausted from hard labor." Chapter 7 can picture a slave laboring in the fields all day only to end the day without being able to get the rest he or she needs. It reminds me of men and women I know who work three jobs and are constantly tired and never seem to get ahead. That's the picture the word wretched paints.

Then he cries out for deliverance by using the future tense, "who **will** set me free?" Paul at this point, isn't saying he has been delivered but that he desperately wants to be delivered. "Who **will** set me free,?" "who will deliver me?" and better in our context, "who will **rescue** me?" The Greek verb literally means "rescue." **ρύσεται**

I don't watch these particular tv shows, 9-1-1, and Chicago Fire, but they depict people who need to be rescued from all kinds of dilemmas like fires and car wrecks and gunshot wounds and toxic waste kind of emergencies. That's why I prefer the word "rescue." Each of the other translations are good and right, rescue just sends a more intense idea of what needs to be done.

Then he tells us what made him so wretched and precisely what he wanted rescued from, "*the body of this death.*" You probably have "this body of death," in your translation but the literal translation is "the body of this death." If you're using the KJV or the NASB, that's what you have. And frankly, the NIV misses it entirely.

You should be asking right about now, "what in the world does what you're saying, pastor, have to do with the ten commandments, the law of Moses?" I like the way you think. Here's what all of the above has to do with the law.

How did sin and death get introduced into the world? Through Adam and Eve's disobeying **one commandment**, "you shall not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And that did it. And the rest is history.

There was within Adam and Eve, as they were created, the propensity to disobey God. They were not perfect creatures as we have mistakenly believed. Perfection does not allow for imperfection. All it took to bring them down was one negative commandment. And oddly enough, what kept them from sinless perfection was creaturely free will. They were sinless only in the sense that they never sinned until they did. The ability to sin was always in them. And all it took for them to commit that first sin was the first and only commandment given before Mt. Sinai coupled with the negative ingredient of free will and a clever serpent. Can you tell I'm not a big fan of free will?

The only human being who was perfect, sinless and yet possessed true free will was Jesus. No amount of temptations presented to the Lord Jesus by either the devil or fallen man could entice Him into disobeying the law of God. ¹⁷ *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

¹⁸ *"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matt. 5:17-18 NAU) And what were the Lord's last words from the cross? "It is finished."*

⁵ *This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 Jn. 1:5 NAU) Jesus is God the Son and He couldn't sin.*

¹⁵ *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Heb. 4:15 NAU) χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας. (Heb. 4:15 BYZ) It's important to note that those two words "without sin," mean just that, Jesus was sinless, He lived without sin, He lived apart from the sin nature that the rest of us live with. It isn't saying He lived "without sinning," which of course He most certainly did, but rather without having one single sin in His life. Sin here is a noun and not a verb. Literally, "without a sin." It wasn't in Jesus to disobey His Father. Jesus was and still is God-incarnate. Jesus was the sinless, perfect God-Man. It*

was in Adam and Eve to disobey God. It was in them, it took the devil and that one law to bring it out (1 Cor. 15:56).

I must address Hebrews 4:15 because many people have questioned how Jesus could face temptations just like we do if He was unable to sin, which I believe. If Jesus couldn't sin, then how could He have been *tempted in all things as we are*? When we're tempted by something that has genuine pull on our souls, we are pretty likely to give in and sin. Jesus wasn't and Jesus didn't. Here's how.

The temptations Jesus faced were genuine temptations, they just found no weakness in Him. Sins and temptations found no home in the Lord's soul. His temptations were just a genuine as the ones we face, they just had no power with Him. And what is a temptation anyway but an opportunity presented to someone to sin. The opportunity to sin and disobey the Father was staring Jesus in the face, but being God-in-the-flesh, He had no compulsion to gratify them.

God saw His creatures, man and woman, and commented about them that they were good. It was the fact that they were mere humans, created beings, made of dust and flesh (and not "little gods") that left them imperfect... good, but imperfect.

So much for the benefit of free will. Look where it got Adam and Eve. Free will was a part of life for Adam and Eve... before they used it by freely choosing to disobey God. After since then, no one has had true free will. Apart from Christ we are all slaves to sin and the flesh. We are free to pick and choose what groceries to buy or what kind of car to buy or what movie to watch or what university to attend. But apart from Jesus, we can do nothing about our spiritual condition. Free will is limited by one's spiritual environment.

That one act of disobedience to that one commandment made it necessary for God to issue the ten commandments and the entire body of the ordinances that followed. Remember this? ¹⁹ *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, (Gal. 3:19 NAU)*, the first transgression was that one in the garden.

I'll remind you as I close, of something I said last week, if anyone tells you that you **must** tithe or worship on Sabbath, Saturday, flee. If you keep one law, you are obligated to keep them all. If you break one, you are guilty of all. ¹⁰ *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.* (Jas. 2:10 NAU)

Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (that “yoke of slavery” being the burden of the law)

² *Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, (and by implication, tithing and Sabbath keeping) Christ will be of no benefit to you.*

³ *And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.*

⁴ *You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

(Gal. 5:1-4 NAU)

Those who are in Christ are not under the law, we are free, we have been rescued, we have been liberated. We acknowledge that the law of Moses is good and just and holy and right. And solely because of the grace of God and the finished work of Christ on the cross we are free from the burden of the law. And ^{NAU} *Romans 8:1* *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* (Rom. 8:1 NAU)

Next week on The Patio Pulpit, “The Spirit and the Law.”

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Recently I pointed out to my Wednesday evening Bible study class at my church a fact that sounded really far-fetched when it first hit their ears. This is it, “Nothing God has ever done since man’s fall in the garden was intended or designed to end sin on Earth.” Think about it.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed their Friend and took a bite from the forbidden tree’s fruit, God merely kicked them out of the garden. Sin and death that entered Adam and Eve and then all their descendants

Being born of the Spirit, made alive by the Spirit, doesn’t end our sinfulness. The new life didn’t put the brakes to our desires to sin.

²⁴ *Wretched man that I am!* Or, “*wretched man I.*” Keep in mind that this chapter is the apostle’s personal testimony where he bares his soul concerning his losing struggle between his love of the law of Moses and his disgust with his sinfulness. If the law isn’t the answer, what, pray tell, is?

He can plainly see that his former attempts at justification by keeping the law had fallen flat on their face. Life is more complicated than his simplistic former theology had led him to believe. And not only his former theology but his humanity was as well. The solution is certainly simplistic, trust God, but there’s more to one’s relationship with God than at first meets the eye. And the vain attempts at justification by keeping the law was a dead-end street.

Who will set me free from the body of this death? The correct translation of this verse, by the way. *τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;* (Rom. 7:24 BYZ) This may be one of those Capt. Obvious moments, but notice that Paul asks “who” will set me free from the body of this death? Why would he even consider the notion that it’s going to take someone other than himself to deliver him from his wretchedness? Why not some Greek philosophical thought? Why not some ancient self-help teaching that was popular among the ancients?

²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Who will? God will, and He will do it for all who trust in the Lord Jesus by the resurrection *So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving*

the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. (Rom. 7:24-25 NAU)

Now that we've settled that matter, let's deal with what logically follows our latest act of sin, a guilty conscience.

I wish I could sin with impunity. I wish I could sin without the agony of a guilty conscience. But there it is, every time. I just can't enjoy my sin afterward.

¹² *Therefore, just as through one man, Adam, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, 'the wages of sin is death,' and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—sin and death and the law go hand in hand*

¹³ *for until the Law, sin (and death) was in the world, **but sin is not imputed when there is no law.** Which is consistent with 4:3-8.*

¹⁴ *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of **Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.***

¹⁵ *But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.*

¹⁶ *The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.*

¹⁷ *For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

¹⁸ *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*

¹⁹ *For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

²⁰ *The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,*

²¹ *so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

^{NAU} **Romans 6:1** *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?*

² *May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*

³ *Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?*

⁴ *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

(Rom. 5:12-6:4 NAU)

*“...those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of **Adam.**”*

After Adam sinned death and sin became a part of life, everyone sinned, and everyone died simply because that was the way it was, and still is, of course. Adam's offense was his disobedience of the one commandment God had given him and Eve. Before Moses was given the law and the ordinances, there was only one commandment given and that was the commandment given to Abraham to circumcise every first born male as a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham.