

Romans 7

Sunday 11/23/2008

If you have your Bibles this morning, we are about to enter into Romans chapter 7. We are moving through Romans here. I remember years ago when J. Vernon McGee taught through the Bible on the radio. He was a great Bible teacher. He wasn't much for doctrine, but from a practical application of just the Bible, he was a great Bible teacher. He's been dead many, many years. I remember on his radio program, he went through the books of the Bible. For every book of the Bible, he had a little thing for it. When you got to Romans, it was "roaming through Romans." Every book of the Bible, he had a little phrase like that, "thumbing through Thessalonians" or something like that. We have been roaming through Romans, and we certainly haven't been rushing through it, but we want to learn it.

Remember, I told you when we started that probably the two books in the New Testament that really go hand in hand, the two books in the New Testament that if you're ever going to really get in life and really grasp a hold of in your own Christian life to make any difference, you're going to have to learn the book of Romans, and you're going to have to learn the book of Acts. We are going through the book of Acts in Institute right now, and at some point, probably in church, we'll come through the book of Acts. We decided to go through the book of Romans because of its importance, of how it lays out, and it's really the key of why we believe what we believe as a church. There's a lot of heresy floating around today and a lot of bad teaching, and most of it's because God's people today aren't grounded in the book of Romans. I always want this church to be grounded in not what I teach, but what the Bible says. What I believe or what I teach is immaterial to what the Bible says. I try to train you and show you not to think like I think, but to think for yourself and to look at the Bible. I may point you in the right direction, but ultimately you have to be the one that gets in there and puts it all together.

I showed you how, to me, every book of the Bible has a breakdown. I think that's a natural way that God breaks it down, which makes it easier for us to study. I took about eight or nine years of my life and went through each book and found the breakdown of each book. I gave you Romans when we started, and I showed you that Romans really breaks down into four sections. Any book in the Bible, when you want to start to learn it, you've got to find out that breakdown because otherwise, sometimes it all runs together and you get confused. Maybe one section will run into another section, and you won't see the break there, and it gets confusing.

I. The Fourfold Structure of Romans

Romans is a book that follows basically a four-section breakdown.

1. The first section brings you through a historical section. That will be Romans 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.
2. The second section will be the doctrinal section, and that will be the section that really lays out the teachings for you and for me in the church. That will be Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8. Romans 5 is a bridge chapter; it usually goes both ways.

3. Then we have what we call the prophetic section. That will be the section that deals with the nation of Israel, and God teaches us how we are to deal with it. That will run you up through Romans 9, 10, and 11.
4. Then the last section is called the great practical section. That would be the rest of the book, and that would bring you up through Romans 13 right up to the end of the book.

In those particular sections, you really, really, really get a practical understanding of how to deal with life on planet Earth. Where the doctrinal section teaches us what we believe, the practical section shows it in action in everyday life. If you'll just take that little outline and put that into your Bible, you'll find out a lot about the book of Romans. That's the format, by the way, that I'm coming through and trying to lay it out because I think that's the easiest way to grasp it.

II. Romans 6-8: The Great Death Chapters

We are focused on Romans 6, 7, and 8 right now. We're in the doctrinal section, about to start chapter 7. I told you when we started that Romans 6, 7, and 8, as a section, are called the great death chapters. Maybe not in the way that you think of death, but in reality, they teach us this: they show us in these three great chapters how Christ's death on the cross, when it's applied to your life and my life at the time of salvation, means that because we're saved, we are dead to all the issues, all the issues that would keep us from a relationship with Christ. Hence, they're called the death chapters.

Remember in Romans 6, we talked about Christ's death on the cross in relationship to you and me being dead in the flesh. We talked about it for many, many weeks, how that now that you and I are saved, we are to reckon ourselves dead. Why? Because Christ's death on the cross made us dead to our flesh. It's the key that we've talked about many, many times to our victorious Christian life and everything that we try to accomplish and everything that we do. You're going to find that Romans 6, which deals with death in relationship to our flesh, builds into Romans 7, and Romans 7 then builds into Romans 8, kind of like a progression. We're going to start Romans 7 today, and Romans 7 deals with Christ's death on the cross and how through His death, we are now dead to the law.

This is a very important chapter. This puts a lot of things in perspective for you because it shows you not only the main difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, but it shows us how the law, how the Old Testament law, affects us now that we are saved, or how it doesn't affect us.

I want to begin reading in Romans 7:1-6. It starts out with a great illustration. When I come to a tough passage in the Bible that if I just gave it to you and plowed into it, I'm afraid I'd lose many of you young Christians. So what I usually do in a situation like this is read the text, go back and break down and give you all of the background material so you can form a foundation, and then move into the answer and then put it all together for you. Don't take offense to that. It's not an insult to your intelligence that I think you're not smart enough to grasp it, but this is the way I had to do it. I'm not the brightest light bulb in the box when it came to the Bible. I had to break things down in a very basic understanding way. For me, a lot of times, the way to understand a

tough passage in the Bible is to go back and get all the background material formed up first, which kind of sets a foundation, and then put it back into perspective as we go on from there. So that's what we're going to do.

I want to begin reading today, Romans 7, and we're going to read the first six verses here. It says this:

Romans 7:1-6

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Now Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We ask you now, Lord, today to bless us as we come to your word. Those people, Lord, have made the trip today. Some of them come a long way. Some of them come, Lord, to hear your word and to be edified by it. Some of them, Lord, are visiting today, and some of them are checking out our church to scope it out to see if this is where they want to invest their lives. Lord, I pray today that you'll take the Word of God, that you'll help us to see and grasp all the great truths. We love you. We thank you, Father, for what you have for us and what you give to us. We pray now today that you'll take this time. Allow me to break this down and help them to understand it. For those that are trying to break down the book of Romans and get it into their Bible, may I, Lord, be able to dissect it all out and make it clear and plain to them. Spirit of God, it all depends on you. I yield myself to you now, Lord, and I ask everyone in this room in their own heart right now to yield themselves to your Spirit that you may give them what you have for them. We'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

This story here, if you would just read this on your own if you're coming through Romans 7, again, the way Paul writes these things, it's like a legal document. Much of the confusion on Romans is simply the way he writes it and us not being familiar with the style by which he writes the book of Romans. We talked about when we started Romans how this country has a constitution. I don't know if they still do it in school, but in the civics class when I was in school,

you had to memorize the Declaration of Independence. Thank God you didn't have to memorize the Constitution, but you had to memorize the Declaration of Independence, and in some cases, the Bill of Rights. Anyone who's ever read it understands at a glance how tough it is because of the way it's written. Those legal things that bind this country together are written in such a fashion that even today we have scores and scores of lawyers. When an issue comes up, they fight over the interpretation of that Constitution or the Declaration of Independence or whatever it is, and they fight over what exactly the founding fathers meant. Even they are hung up on the language. Of course, the book of Romans, as I said when we started, is the Constitution of Christianity. That's why it's written the way that it's written. It's definitely written in a legal format because it is a binding contract between God and between you and I as His children. So some of the things, the way that he says them, if you just look at them at face value, it can become intimidating and confusing. But we're going to break it down today as best we can.

Here's how we look at this. This story here is a great illustration of what really happened at the time you got saved. Many times, people, Christians, pastors make the mistake of taking Romans 7 and using that along with the passage that they're quoting here in the Old Testament out of Deuteronomy 24 and also Matthew 19. So what you have here is most churches that don't understand what he's doing in Romans, they take this passage along with the Old Testament passages, and they try to set this up as the teaching to the church on the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Many, many times, many good people are hurt by some bad teaching that gets put out because people don't really understand the concept from the New Testament anyhow on divorce, remarriage, and marriage in general. Most Baptist churches today, if you're a divorced person, you're on the brink of going to hell for all of eternity and never ever getting your life turned around. Most churches today, Baptist churches anyhow, they take the position, and the reason why they do is because they don't understand the book of Romans. So what they do is they see this passage, and they go back and read the same passage basically in Deuteronomy 24, where he's quoting it from. So they come up with the idea that if you've ever been divorced, you can't ever, ever, ever be remarried again unless your spouse is dead. Basically, until that spouse dies, you can't ever be remarried. So you've got to live in a state of, you know, no eharmony.com for you, you're in trouble. You just go on through life and have to put up with the flesh all through your life. As far as ministry is concerned, you could never do anything.

I never forget one time, I was talking to a couple of guys who were going to another church, and this church, for the life of me, I don't know why people put up with it. People put up with some of the most heretical teachings that do nothing but hurt them and beat them up. I don't know why people put up with that kind of stuff. But anyway, I was talking to a couple of guys, and they were going to a church, and these were two of the nicest guys who probably had more potential to serve God than most people that you meet. They were just really, really, really good guys, and they really loved God. They really wanted to learn the Bible, and they really wanted to do something with their life. But because they had both been divorced, it was the unpardonable sin in the church; they could never do anything in the church. Of course, the pastor's stand was that if you're divorced, you're an anathema; you can't ever do anything. I was kidding them, trying to make a good point, and I was saying to them because they were down in the dumps, and

sometimes you want to bring a point through humor to try to get it through their head. I said, "Okay, so now your church teaches the fact that if you've been divorced, here's what you can't do: you can't ever teach a Sunday school class." "Oh, no, we couldn't do that." "All right. You can't ever be a deacon or be in a place of leadership." "Oh, no, we don't ever do that." "Oh, you can't ever, if God ever calls you to preach, you can't ever pastor." "Oh, no, we can never pastor." "Okay. You can't ever serve on an evangelism team." "Oh, no, we can't do that." I said, "Okay, thank you very much. Let's see now. Let's see what your church will let you do. Let's go back again. You can't be a deacon. You can'