

Not Under Law but Under Grace

Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace."

Romans 7:1-6: "Are ye ignorant, brethren, (for I speak to those knowing law,) that law rules over a man as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband so long as he is alive; but if the husband should die, she is clear from the law of the husband: so then, the husband being alive, she shall be called an adulteress if she be to another man; but if the husband should die, she is free from the law, so as not to be an adulteress, though she be to another man. So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ, to be to another, who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

For when we were in the flesh the passions of sins, which were by the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit to death; but now we are clear from the law, having died in that in which we were held, so that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter."

Shall we pray:

"Lord, we come to You again, so thankful this morning to be with the brothers and sisters to join this glorious worship in the heavens, this on-going, this endless adoration and exaltation. How we pray today that we would continue in that same heavenly Spirit. We are grateful that You gathered us together. We are grateful we could remember our blessed Lord Jesus until He comes. We are grateful for this day. We ask You to take these words that no man can explain. Only the Holy Spirit can interpret to us what they really mean. Only You have the words of eternal life. There is no one else we can go to. We are asking You, Lord, to breathe upon those words and make them live, and may the Holy Spirit give us ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. This we ask in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Introduction

Good morning, I am so grateful to be here with you brothers and sisters. Isn't it a delight to remember the Lord! Just think about the way we start our week. On the first day of the week it says that they gathered to break bread and remember the Lord. What a beginning! How precious that is! We should treasure it. We should long for it. We should come with hearts overflowing to give Him all the glory, all the honor, all the worship, all the adoration that He alone deserves.

My subject today is from Romans 7, and we are only going to look at six verses. I had a brother say to me, "How long is it going to take to do Romans 7 since you are only doing six verses? I told him it would be twice, and he was wondering how we were going to do 7 to 25 in the remainder, but we will do it, I promise you.

Today, let's look at these first six verses. We said before that we are looking at sanctification when it comes to chapter 6, 7 and 8 in Romans. There is a major change in Paul's epistle to the Romans. You need to understand the first five chapters are wholly to do with man's condition and justification. These three that we are in now have to do with sanctification.

If you look first at sanctification, it is our living in Christ. We are living in Christ; we have been made holy. We are no longer in bondage; we have been set free. We have been given a resource, an unexplainable and marvelous resource to be able to allow the Holy Spirit to do that sanctifying work in us. It is a marvelous thing as we go into sanctification. Justification is our standing in Christ; you have to understand this. It is not our own righteousness. God sees us in Christ, and He declares that we are righteous. Righteousness is not your own, and you will begin to understand that the same principle applies to sanctification as we go further in these three chapters.

In Romans 6:4, you will see that it is to walk in newness of life. That is what it means. We are now able somehow, due to the mighty provision of God, to walk in newness of life. Before it was impossible, but now it is made possible. Sanctification in chapter 6:18 says, "... , having got your freedom from sin, ..." That is the first freedom we see. Now when we come to chapter 7, we begin to see a second freedom, freedom from the law. You have to understand the importance of this because this is Paul's whole point. What he is bringing to you is that you need to be free from sin, but you have to be free from something else, and that is the law because living by rules, even divine rules, is not the Christian life. You cannot live by rules; you will never arrive. You will never achieve, you will never be sanctified. You have to understand this. So this whole chapter deals with being made free from the law.

Now I know the longer part from verses 7-25 is a very animated section, and you have to read it. You will see that Paul is in agony. It is the terror of living under the law. Now if you do not think it is a terror to live under the law, you should read verses 7-25 and meditate on them. Paul said, "And the commandment, ..., and by it slew me." It could not be any more graphic. You remember how he ends that chapter: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" He said, "I wanted to do the right thing, but I found in me that I could not do the right thing. I tried to live by this law. I tried to come into holiness and sanctification, and I found it was not only impossible, but it was also fruitless." So that is just a little bit of what is in that chapter later, and may the Lord help us.

One thing I like that William Newell said which is very clear when you look at this whole chapter and particularly the first six verses. He said, "The great lesson (Always pay attention when someone that really understood a book says that.) whether Jew or Gentile, because you may think the law has nothing to do with me because I am a Gentile, but it is not so here. Whether Jew or Gentile it is that we are not under law as a principle but under grace." Then he went on to define this grace. He said, "How marvelous it is; full of accomplished divine favor." That is his definition of grace, full accomplished divine favor. And he went on to say, "That favor is shown by God to Christ." Now I had to go back and read that several times because I thought he meant, "Shown by God in Christ." No, brothers and sisters, this grace is so great, this favor is so tremendous, it is the favor God has shown to His beloved Son, and that favor has been transferred to us who are to be the sanctified ones. I think that is so marvelous! This is the principle as we look at these chapters.

Now there are a few things I want us to look at: "Bound Under Law." We have to see the depth of bondage that the law is if we ever going to be free. Verses 1-6 come before 7-25 and Paul discovered a freedom finally where he could walk in the Lord, in union with the Lord, with the Lord's life, not based upon rules. I would call this first part, "Bound Under Law".

The second thing you need to understand is the miracle of being “Dead to the Law.” This whole thing is about dying, someone must die for you to be free from the law.

The third part, the most glorious part, is “Married to Another.” That is God’s answer. That is how we come out from the bondage of law.

Finally, the last few verses are “Cleared from the Law.” There is a complete clean break. There is a new beginning. We are no longer under the law. We cannot live by the law. And Paul makes it abundantly clear that we are cleared of the law. How wonderful that is.

Bound Under Law

The first thing you see in these verses is the unyielding bondage of the law. Now I used that adjective on purpose. It is unyielding. The law has a vice grip on us that is utter and absolute bondage. You cannot live by it; you can never satisfy it. You can never do it. It is impossible. And there must be another way, and there is another way, and that other way is grace. All the grace of God makes it possible. The reason Paul wrote this specifically, of course, was his experience. This is the most detailed intimate explanation of his experience in dealing with the law. But there were many Jews in the church in Rome that he had never visited. And not only were there many Jews in the church of Rome, there were many proselytes. Now a proselyte means “somebody that is a Gentile that believes in and takes on the law for their way of knowing God.” That is why he wrote what he did. They were not Jews, so they were not technically under the law. The law was not given to them, but yet they took it on as a proselyte to believe and be the way that they followed God. This is the error that Paul is dealing with.

Verse 1: “Are ye ignorant, ...?” Now you know why he said that. He did not like calling people stupid. I have a person that I know quite well, who is not a believer, and she is always telling me, “They are stupid. They are stupid, they are stupid.” I thought of telling her, “Please do not call everybody stupid; that includes all of us.”

But Paul said, “Are ye ignorant, (At least ignorance is not necessarily stupidity; you can be ill informed.) “brethren, (for I speak to those knowing law,) that law rules over a man ...?” Listen to this phrase, he was explicit, “rules over a man as long as he lives?” This phrase literally means, “rules over a man,” and it means, “had dominion, complete control.” You are under its vice; you are in its vice; you are under its bondage. That was the point that he made.

Married to the Law

He used the illustration of marriage. Now in a moment I think you will appreciate why, out of all the ways Paul could have taught on being not under law but under grace, he used the illustration of marriage. Why did he do it? It was very deliberate, and in the end it is very precious because we see how enormous His grace is through this single illustration of marriage.

Martin Luther, not Martin Luther King; young people sometimes have never heard of Martin Luther, who was a German monk. He said something about marriage: “There is no more lovely, friendly, charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage.” That is a pretty strong statement, don’t you think? I think it is very clear.

Paul was talking about a bad marriage in the law and a good marriage in Christ. And what we need to see is how bad the bad marriage is, and then we need to see by revelation and by the grace of God how good the good marriage is. It is communion; it is lovely; it is wonderful. Now we are not just talking about a human marriage; I hope you get that; we are talking about something much more fantastic than that, a divine marriage, a divine union where every grace is provided.

When one talks about the bondage that the law has over a person as long as he lives, I remember what Handley Moule, H. G. Moule, Bishop Moule said. I would suggest you read some of his writings; I think they are fantastic. But when he described it, he said, "Prove Him living, prove her his." Now do you understand what that means? That means that woman is totally subject to this husband, and Paul made the point, "as long as he lives." And he brings up the only hope for this woman under the bondage of law is that her husband would die." I do not know how many of you wives are praying for that. I would not suggest it, being a husband that is. But you understand that was what he said. He said, "She is under his domination which is an illustration of the law until he dies. That is the only relief she will ever have. How strong those words are when you think about it. How vastly strong! You can see that the law is a ruthless husband.

But you understand that the law is ruthless. The law is domineering; the law is overbearing, the law tells you what to do and gives you no excuses when you fail. It utterly condemns, and it never sets you free. That is the bondage of the law, such supreme bondage. You have to see it. It is an overbearing and tyrannical husband. Now how would you like to be married to someone like that? "Get this; get that; do this. You did not do it right." Throws your food in the floor, and says, "Do it again, maybe you will get it right sooner or later." That is the law. That is being married to the law. Do you want that? I do not want that. That is what he is talking about.

When Peter talked about the council in Jerusalem, and the whole issue of the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15, it was to determine: "Are the Gentiles, once they are saved, subject to keeping the law?" Do they have to keep the law? Is it a requirement that they keep the law? And the conclusion of that council in Jerusalem is so tremendous that Peter, a devout Jew, said this when he stood up: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, (listen to what he said) which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" That is the bondage of the law; that is how extreme it is. In this illustration of marriage that Paul used, the wife is the believer; she is the Christian. Do not get them reversed. The husband is the law. That is what he is trying to portray, that this woman is under his absolute and tyrannical control until he dies. How bleak the story starts out! I hope your marriage is not like that, just to make a point. The law is a yoke of bondage. That is what it says in Galatians: "Be not entangled again in this yoke of bondage." That is what the law is.

In the previous chapters of Romans, Paul talked about the shortcomings of the law in regard to justification. He made it very clear.

Now let me give you a few examples so you may remember or you may not. In Romans 3:20-22: "Wherefore by works of law no flesh shall be justified before him; for by law is knowledge of sin. But now without law righteousness of God is manifested, borne witness to by the law and

the prophets; righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe: for there is no difference.”

Romans 4:13-15: “For it was not by law that the promise was to Abraham, or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world, but by righteousness of faith. ... For law works wrath; but where no law is neither is there transgression.”

Let me give you another example so you will appreciate why Paul calls this bondage. In Romans 5:20a it says, “But law came in, in order that the offense might abound.” What does that mean? I always wondered what that meant. Why was the law such bondage? Did not God Himself write the law with His finger on those tablets that was cast down from the mountain by Moses? And Brother Darby makes such a wonderful explanation: “It came in as a side path.” That is what it literally means. It came in as a side path. Law and grace are totally opposite. They only diverge; they never converge. They are totally opposite in character, in nature and enabling. The law is not the way we should go, but this side way was to prove to the children of Israel and the whole world that it was impossible for us to live under the law. If you understand Galatians, it was a hard school master, a tough teacher. Have any of you had tough teachers? I often think of all these comedians who made a life time out of talking about going to a Catholic School and being under hard school masters. The law is much harder. How impossible it is! This is what the Apostle Paul is trying to get us to see. This is the shortcoming of the law; we can never be justified by it.

But brothers and sisters, there is something else we need to see, that you can never be sanctified by it. Justification is the beginning; sanctification is the process of being made holy and walking in newness of life until you are with the Lord, and just as it was impossible through the law to be justified, the Word of God clearly teaches, it is impossible to be sanctified. That is a relief. That is a blessing. That is grace. That is what the whole Word of God tries to prove. As a matter of fact, there is a verse in Isaiah that tells us about God talking to the children of Israel, and He is saying, “I am the holy God, your righteousness.” He is everything. There is nothing that He does not do. This is what Paul wants us to see

He died for us, He was made sin for us, He took away the penalty of sin. He reckoned us righteous in Another. That is justification. This is the grace by which you were saved. Now we turn to see more fully the grace by which you are sanctified. And do not ever think, “I am saved, now it is possible for me to live the Christian life.” That was what Paul was illustrating in those verses so graphically in verses 7-25. If anybody could live to God’s standard, this Pharisee of Pharisees could do it. And he tells you the absolute terror of it. He brings you to that point. Grace is the secret of justification and grace is the secret of sanctification, and how we need to understand it.

You remember when John wrote his gospel and that wonderful part of the first chapter in John 1:16-17: “for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace.” I love the way he wrote that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It was not that we just received grace, we have received, as one brother put it, “Grace piled on grace, piled on grace, an enormous mountain of grace.” And he said something else. He said, “For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ.”

I hope you get it. You can try to live the Christian life by the law, you will discover that you will never be able to do it. Romans 7:11 later in this chapter says, “for sin, getting a point of attack by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” How strong were those words and how we need to understand that.

In verse 3 Paul explains in this marriage situation the bondage of the law. “So then, the husband being alive, she shall be called an adulteress if she be to another man; but if the husband should die, she is free from the law, so as not to be an adulteress, though she be to another man.”

She wants to be free of this very thing. This wife wants to be free; it condemns her. Even if she desires that freedom and she would think of another man, it accuses her of being an adulteress, and it condemns her. The very thing she seeks liberty from, she cannot get liberty from. You should read these first few verses and wonder how deep this bondage is. There is no hope for this woman; it appears hopeless. It appears utterly hopeless. But we find out something marvelous when we discover the full grace of God. What a predicament she is in! You remember that woman in John 8:3-11 who was caught in adultery. She was rightly condemned, although you may think she was wrongly condemned. She was not wrongly condemned. By the law she was rightly condemned. And those Pharisees and Sadducees brought her before the Lord and said, “According to Moses’ law she should be stoned to death.” They were poised with their stones in hand ready to execute what they thought was the righteous judgment of the law upon this woman. And the Lord knelt down and He began to write in the sand. I would love to know what He wrote in the sand. I would love to know what the Lord wrote in the sand. Then He lifted Himself up, and He looked upon these ones, and He said, “Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her.” What brilliance! Because you see the law condemns everyone equally. (It is a wonderful story, please read it.) And from the oldest to the youngest, those guys dropped their stones and went away because they knew they should be stoned. Do you get it? The woman was in shock and disbelief. Her accusers were gone; there was only the Lord standing there, and He said to her, “Woman, where are those who are thine accusers?” And she was mystified. She knew it was the right judgment; she knew she should die, and then they were gone. And He said, “Woman, there is no one here to accuse you; go and sin no more.” How beautiful a story that is! How clear it is. How the law condemns us all, and we should all be stoned to death if we live according to the law. Not one of us is innocent. I hope you understand it. What a dire situation!

Now let us look at the marvelous grace of God. Something happens, remember? Remember what Paul said in his illustration that he purposely chose for a reason. He said, “Well, that husband must die.” That seems like a possible solution. Maybe she married an old guy, and he will kick the bucket, then she will be free. But the husband, remember is the law; this is not a human thing. The law can never die.

Matthew said in the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5:18: “One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” You can think this is just an Old Testament thing. You can think back to that exhortation in Leviticus chapter 11:45, and it says, “... ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” That is a command of the Old Testament under the law. Can you imagine, “Be ye holy as I am holy,” says the Lord? You can say, “Oh, I am so glad that I did not live in that period under Moses’ law, but when you come to Peter’s first epistle in 1:16, he quotes that same thing: “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” The law can never die. It can never die. It can

never be put away in that sense. It is of God. It was to show a righteous requirement of God and to convince us of our need of another way, and not that way. That is what it tells us if you look at it.

It even says in I Thessalonians 4:7: “For God has not called us to uncleanness, but in sanctification.” And it says in Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which (or without sanctification, the dual word) no one shall see the Lord.” This is marvelous. It reveals that supreme bondage, and it indicates the way out is death—the only way. Now when you look at this, you will begin to understand what is happening.

Dead to the Law

Romans 7:4: “So that, my brethren, *ye* also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ, to be to another, (they are important words) who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God”

In other words, in this illustration of the first three verses, it is followed by application in the fourth verse, and the verse reveals that it is not the husband who dies, he cannot die, it is the wife who died. I know it seems like bait and switch a little bit to you, but this is God’s wisdom in grace. The husband cannot die. We are hopeless; there is no way out. There is no rescue from the bondage of the law, but something happened, the wife died.

Now when did the wife die? That is what Romans 6 is all about: “Do you not know that when Christ was crucified, you were crucified with Christ? You were identified in death with Christ.” This was your way out. Don’t think this is so depressing. Think of this as the good news of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the thing that had to happen, happened. One died, but it was not the man; it was the woman. He died in Christ; that is what Romans 6:3 says, that is what Romans 6:6 says, “You died in Christ, and now because you died in Christ, you are free from the law.” The law has no more hold on you. You can stop praying that your husband would die. You are free. How marvelous this solution of grace is! It is the only solution. We have not only died in Christ, but the wonder of Romans 6 is that we have been raised in newness of life. He did not just leave us in the grave. We were raised in newness of life so we now have this miracle of grace if we died. How do I tell my family that I died? It is a fact that you died. It is not something that is made up. The word says, “Just as Christ died on the cross, all of Adam’s race was put into Christ and in that federal Head they all died.” And those that believe in the Lord, and those who come to the Lord, and those who know the Lord, now experience a second miracle; they are raised in newness of life, and now they can walk in newness of life. This is what chapter 7 is talking about.

Verse 4a: “So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ.” This was the miracle of justification. This is the miracle of sanctification, and this is the marvel that is extended to us. We, like that married woman, were married to this man that we could never please, and we, like that married woman in Christ, were able to get our liberty from that law of bondage. I hope you understand that. If you do not understand that, you cannot understand the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot understand the marvelous ways of God. Why couldn’t He just come to the earth and say, “None of you are subject to the law. None of you have any responsibility to the law.” He never said that. The law will never pass away, not

one jot or tittle until it was fulfilled, and it was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Himself. And it is not that it is put away from us; it is that we died to it. That is the miracle. Well, I hope that makes some sense when you look at it.

It says in Romans 6:5: “For if we have been planted together (planted together means “united together.”) in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:”

How marvelous! Death was not our end; death was our liberty, and life is our end—life in Another, life through Another, life by Another, and not by the law. How wonderful!

One brother said it this way, and I love what he said, “In chapter 6 we have set forth union with Christ, whereby the Christian has become dead to sin and made alive to God.”

In 6:14b: “for ye are not under the law but under grace.” We had the method of His holy life. This is the method. This is God’s way of liberating us, and the secret of sin having no dominion over us. You have died with Christ, and you have been made alive in Christ. That is the great secret that we read in these verses. How beautiful! What a marvel this is! This is not a metaphor. I think some people read things like this and think that it is a metaphor, it is a simile, it is like something. But it is not like something; this is absolute truth; this happened to you, and this is the way you were delivered from the bondage of the law.

Married to Another

But the best news comes in what follows: we are married to another. Look at verse 3b again: “she shall be called an adulteress if she be to another man; ...” The law condemns her. And at the end of that verse it says, “so as not to be an adulteress, though she be to another man.” You must notice that phrase, “be to another man is the secret of grace.” Then if you look at verse 4, it says, “So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ, to be to another, who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.”

How beautiful this is! Brothers and sisters, you know I am a fan of Darby, and I have been reading to you from Darby, but I do not like Darby in these verses. I will never admit that I said that in public unless you can produce the tape. But I much prefer the King James Version here. It does not say, “be to Another,” it says in verse 3, “... she be married to another man.” How beautiful! It says in the end of verse 3: “though she be married to another man.” It says in verse 4: “... ye should be married to another.” This is God’s way. Brothers and sisters, we are married to Christ. Do you understand that? Do you understand union with Christ? I hear a lot of people say, “Union with Christ,” “Union with Christ.” And I wonder, “What do you mean by union with Christ?” Union with Christ is the highest union that is possible. We are married to this other One. We have been set free from the bondage of the law, and now we are married to Christ. You know, that is the whole story of the Bible?

I will never forget years ago when Brother Lance Lambert spoke, and we were all just novices; we hardly understood the Word. Many of us were newly saved, and Lance told this, and I will never forget it. He stood before us and he said, “The Bible is all about marriage.” I never forgot it. In his wonderful Queen’s English he would make it so clear that in the beginning of the Bible in

the opening scene, it is all about marriage. Adam and Eve were created. Adam was put to sleep; by the way, that is an illustration of the death on the cross when our Lord was put to sleep. And out of Him something came; His side was pierced by that lance, and out of His side flowed blood and water, and out of that the church was born.

Now the greatest news that I can leave for you today is that we are married to Christ. Can you imagine that? I do not understand such grace. He did not just save us. The only understanding of some Christians in their Christian life is: "I have been forgiven of my sins, and I have been saved, and now I am waiting to be with Him in all eternity." That is not Paul's definition. Paul's definition is that God did something extraordinary. He made us an eternal helpmate, an eternal companion for the beloved Christ. I often think when God thought in His counsels: "What do I give My beloved Son?" He always thinks that way because He is Son-centric. And the Father thought of several things, but in the end, and it dominates the Scriptures, He thought, "I will give My Son a bride," therefore, we are married to Christ.

Now don't you think that marriage is different than marriage under the law? What a difference! In Christ everything is provided. In Christ everything is made available. In Christ He is our portion. In Christ He is our life. In Christ He is mercy and grace. In Christ everything is made available. This is the glory of this story. Now you know why Paul chose this single application to explain Romans 7. That is the solution. You are joined to Christ. You are married to Christ. Whether you are single or not you are married to Christ. There could not be a higher union. There could not be greater grace. There could not be more that God could do when He joins you for eternity with His Son.

You see it in Isaiah 54:5a when the Lord was speaking to the children of Israel, and He said to them: "For thy Maker is thy husband: Jehovah of hosts is his name."

Again, in Isaiah 62:4b: "thou shalt be called, My delight is in her, and thy land, Married." That is what He said to the children of Israel. As a matter of fact, I like the way He says it in the King James Version, "thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: ..." like our dear sister over here, whose name is Beulah. Now Beulah in Hebrew means "married," married to a husband. This is the Word of God.

And then in the great conclusion I will never forget those stories; they are burned, etched in my memory. Lance Lambert said, "When you come to the close of the Bible, we see the ultimate wedding." In Revelation 19:7b, we see that the wedding feast has come. "For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready." This is the thousand year wedding celebration. I have never seen anything like that. A thousand years! I know that among the Jews they used to have weddings that went on for days. I think that was the problem at Cana of Galilee where that first miracle was done. They got into a little ways into the days, and suddenly, the wine ran out. What a disaster in a Jewish wedding! Usually, the Jewish people bring out the worse wine later because they figure if you have celebrated at this wedding for a few days, at that point you may be a little bit tipsy, and you will not be able to tell the difference between the good wine and the bad wine. And then the mother of Jesus came to Him and intervenes. She says, "They are out of wine." What a disaster! And after they take those water pots to Him and He turns the water

into wine, the feast-master dips in the water pot and drinks it. He said, "You have saved the best wine until the end."

Brothers and sisters, God has saved the best for us. We are the bride of Christ. Do you think there is a reason the Lord did this first sign, the first miracle at a wedding? Do you think there was a reason? It goes along with that wonderful broad picture from Genesis to Revelation that everything is about a wedding. That is what it is all about. You have been joined to another Man. That is the secret of the Christian life. That is the secret of grace.

In Ephesians 1:7 when Paul is talking about our salvation and forgiveness of sins, he uses the phrase, "the riches of his grace;" but when he talks about it in Ephesians 2:7, he talks about eternity. He talks about the surpassing riches of His grace which He will display in us for all eternity as His one and only bride. Oh, I hope you see God's solution of grace. It is tremendous.

Cleared from the Law

Now let me end with this "Cleared from the Law." It is not that the law was put away; you are dead to it. If you have been made alive in Christ you are now legally married to another. The law has no hold on you. The law will not hold you any longer. Romans 7:5-6: "For when we were in the flesh the passions of sins, which were by the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit to death; but now we are clear from the law, having died in that in which we were held, so that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter."

What a glorious answer grace is! What a glorious solution grace is! You who were under that so extreme bondage have been set free when you died in Christ, and you were raised in newness of life. You, who had no chance of becoming holy in yourself, have been joined to another in marriage. This One takes all the responsibility of sanctifying you and sends the indwelling Holy Spirit to conform you to the very image of the Lord Jesus. How beautiful! What grace is that! We have a whole new beginning. We are clear; we are set free. We are now wedded to this One who takes the responsibility of doing everything we could not do.

H. A. Ironside said, "Therefore, we died not only to sin but we died to the rule of law, and now we are married to another." This is ultimate grace. I hope you understand that. This plan of God is so divinely brilliant that we should be shut up to Christ and wedded to Christ, and in Him everything made available that not only are we justified to be saved, but we can be sanctified. He will sanctify us by the washing of the water by the Word (Ephesians 5). He will cleanse us and He will remove every spot or wrinkle or any of such things, and at the end He will present us to Himself a bride, glorious, no spot or wrinkle, no blemish. How marvelous this grace is that He has made available to us.

We no longer serve in oldness of letter, the verses tell us but we serve in newness of spirit. Oldness of letter is the law. Newness of spirit is by the indwelling Spirit of God where He can do that sanctifying process.

II Corinthians 3:5-6: "Not that we are competent of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God; (that is grace) who has also made us competent, as

ministers of the new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens.”

Conclusion

How marvelous! If you read the rest of chapter 7 and chapter 8 you will begin to understand that there are two tremendous contrasts. There is one who is trying to live under the law in the flesh and failing terribly. Then there is one that begins in chapter 8 to live under the control of the Spirit, and they become sons of God, and in the end they are glorified. There is only two paths.

Which path will you choose? What way will you go? I had rather go the way of grace. I had rather be free, and thank God, I am free, free at last from the bondage of the law to live by His grace. What a discovery this is! I think of that old hymn, “Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.” It ends in verse 4, which tells the measure of this grace. It says, “Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace.” Can you get any higher than that? This is what it means, you are no longer under law but you are under grace. You are not just under some grace; you are under marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, “freely bestowed on all that believe.” Free grace, the highest grace, absolutely free. “You that are longing to see His face, will you this moment His grace receive?” This is a marvel of verses 1-6. This is grace upon grace. This is unspeakable grace. This is grace that can deliver you from the utter bondage and complete tyranny of the law, and in the end this is grace that can make you wholly sanctified and blameless because you are married to the One who is doing that work. May the Lord help us.

Lord, we confess that it is difficult to explain these things. I ask the blood to cleanse us from not being able to do it adequately, but Lord, we just pray in the name of Jesus that you would open our eyes to see the greatness of grace. Lord, how long have we suffered under performance? How long have we suffered under bondage thinking this is what we have to do, and You had another whole other plan, a plan that is way beyond what we could ask or even imagine. Your plan was that we would be joined to Yourself, and You would do all that we cannot do. Thank You for great grace. Thank You for that phrase in Acts, “and great grace was upon the early church.” May we this day understand great grace. In Your precious name. Amen.