

“Reborn with Purpose...”

- Romans 7:1-6 -

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Romans 7:1-6 *Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 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.*

John 12:24-26 *“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels — a plentiful harvest of new lives. Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.”*

Certainly we can see that Jesus in this passage from the gospel of John was firstly referring to Himself, His pending crucifixion and his subsequent resurrection. For His death has indeed produced a harvest that has “fed the world” for centuries! Yet we know also that one of the great principles of the New Testament is that we are to be like Him! Therefore we are to seek a life of overt humility and simple living...one focused upon furthering the kingdom of God...embracing His attitudes, character, priorities, obedience and passions.

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5 NIV).

“For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (Rom 8:29 NLT).

T. G. Ragland says: “If we refuse to be corns of wheat—falling into the ground, and dying; if we will neither sacrifice prospects, nor risk character, and property, and health; nor, when we are called, relinquish home, and break family ties, for Christ’s sake; then we shall abide alone. But if we wish to be fruitful, we must follow our Blessed Lord Himself, by becoming a corn of wheat, and dying, then we shall bring forth much fruit.”

Now we need to understand that despite our best intentions, this lifestyle does not happen overnight. Paul says, *“God wants us to grow up...like Christ in everything.”* (Eph 4:15 MESSAGE). It takes time to grow up. It is a **process** not an **event**. Unfortunately however, some Christians grow older but never seem to grow up. The Bible is clear saying, *“We go through exactly what Christ goes through...”* (Rom. 8:17 MESSAGE). We can learn to become like Jesus as we go through similar kinds of life experiences. But frankly many of us fail to so learn.

Notice how Jesus responded to trouble: *“Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet, I want your will, not mine!”* (Mark 14:36). If we are going to become like Jesus, this is the first lesson we need to learn: **trust God to control our lives and destiny**. Now know that it is alright

to say to God, "God I don't like this! Can you take it away?" But we also need to be like Christ when He said, "However...**your will be done.**" We need to say to God, "I want whatever fulfills your purpose in my life."

And the beginning, the middle, and the end of this faith journey is our 'dying to self.'

Rom 6:11a (KJV) *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead...*

Luke 9:23-24 (NIV) *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."*

The picture of the man carrying his cross is that of a man, already condemned, required to **carry the beam of his own cross to the place of his execution.** Disciples from Galilee knew what this picture meant, for they had witnessed hundreds of men who had walked that path to ultimately be executed by such means.

Gal 5:24 (ASV) "You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires."

A.W. Tozer commented on such saying: "Among the plastic saints of our times, Jesus has to do all the dying, and all we want to hear is another sermon about his dying."

T. Austin-Sparks also chimed in saying: "We have not to die; we **are** dead. What we have to do is to accept our death... [In] baptism... we simply step in there and say, 'That position which God has settled with reference to me is the one which I now accept, and I testify here in this way to the fact that I have accepted God's position for me, namely, that in the Cross I have been brought to an end. The unalterable basis of an open heaven is a grave, and a crisis at which you come to an end of your own self-life. It is the crisis of real experiential identification with Christ in His death.'"

You know, there is a very sure characteristic that accompanies death: *It is permanent.* That's why Christ and the scriptures use that emphatic word "die" when describing this commitment level. Of course we, those of us who are reborn, will arise to live eternally with God. Rom 6:5-7 "If we have, as it were, shared his death, we shall also share in his resurrection." But there is another truth in play here also; when you and I are dead in this world, we aren't coming back. If you do...you weren't really dead at all. So speaking concerning the "old man" and the flesh; *when that man truly dies, it's permanent.* We are never called to fix up the old life, but rather we must have a new one...

Christ says 'Give me all.' "I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: **I want You.**" "I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it." "No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to cut the whole tree down." "I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out." "Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked--the whole outfit." "I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you **myself:** My own will shall become yours..."

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you know that those jobs really needed doing and so you're not surprised. But then later he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts terribly and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? In time it becomes obvious that He is building quite a different house from the one you imagined--throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. And why not? *He intends to come and live in it Himself!*

This is salvation. So I ask you today: *Are you saved?*

Re 3:11 *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*

Lu 6:47-49 *“Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”*

Ac 20:24 *“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*

Now continuing here in chapter 7 of Romans, Paul, mirroring the teaching style of Christ Himself when he taught on earth, now paints us a picture. One given to us in illustration and analogy. Paul was diligently trying to create a vivid depiction of the gospel in the practical manifest of our lives. *What does this salvation thing look like and how does the law...all the Old Testament rules and reg's, play out in this new life we are being given?* Paul was not willing to leave this issue and move on with anything short of absolute understanding and clarity. So he proceeds herein to create a portrait that all his readers throughout time would understand.

Paul wants us to clearly understand that we are unable to live out our faith via a set of rules and regulations and **also** be joined with Christ. That's not an *improbability*, it is an *impossibility*, for the two are contrary to each other. For the laws of Moses...and for that matter all the “Jesus-plus” regulations that the modern church attempts to add to the cross, cannot save us, nor can they establish us in any way positionally with our Creator. The law that was established by God was never given for such, but is rather to articulate the holy standard of God in our minds, and to clearly present an impossible scenario for us to follow to get to Him.

He did all of this not to tease us in some unmerciful fashion, but to clearly establish the fact...in our own minds and experiences, that we cannot, under any effort and works of our own, gain entrance to God's presence. God will indeed let us try! Some of us try for a lifetime and what a mess it is! What God was and is seeking is a surrender to this inevitability and for us to fall at His feet in the utter capitulation to Him. And as Paul vividly demonstrates, the only way to accomplish this in us...is through our own gnosko experiential understanding.

We can be told a thousand times that we cannot achieve standing with God through our own works, but unless we come to that truth ourselves, it seems we will never believe it! Such is the arrogance we acquired there so long ago in the Garden! It seems we are doomed to experientially come to that epiphany that acknowledges His standard for us cannot be earned, but rather the only answer is *death!* To die to this world and to die to ourselves. To surrender. Paul's point here is that the Law is indeed the standard of God, but the law only has authority over the living. You cannot arrest a dead man for breaking the law.

In Romans 6:14, Paul told us that *“sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”* He now goes on to explain just how that freedom practically takes place. This relationship we have with the law is presented here through the picture of a marriage. The woman who is married is bound *by law* to her husband. In Paul's time...such a woman had no recourse, she was a captive. She had no escape. None, unless “the old man” died! If her husband dies, she's a free woman. She is released *from the law* of her husband. She is free...

Make no mistake! If we try to “wed another” while still married to our first, we're in trouble! Attempting this will only make us adulterers! We can't just “add another husband” to the mix! Many will try this, but will only make things worse! We must decide which we will be married to...which will be our rescuer, for there can be only one. This is why so often in Scripture the issue of “spiritual adultery” is spoken of. When Jesus died on

that cross, he not only brought us salvation, forgiveness, and justification, but He brought us release from our “marriage” to rules and regulations. He *literally* died and we are to follow Him through that door spiritually. We spiritually join Him in that death through the act of salvation and the symbolic act of baptism into His death. He opened the gate and we passed through. In this death of the “old man” spirit, we are set free.

If all of this sounds like an incredible and “mind-boggling” plan to bring men redemption, it is! But if you are like so many who have come to understand this, and received this gift, you might be asking yourself *why?* Why would He do all of this? *Oh yes*, love was the strong motivator! But come on! He *died* after all! Verse four tells us the answer! He did all of this so “*we should bear fruit unto God.*”

Being reborn is about more than just eternal life in heaven one day. While the gift of salvation is an awesome thing, to stop there would be missing out on half of the story. Paul tells us that we were saved for a purpose; *to “bear fruit.”* What is this “fruit” spoken of here and throughout the Scriptures? It is a concept we must get our hands around because it is anything but a small issue to God!

Phil 1:9-11 “*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*”

Gal 5:22-23 “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*”

The fruit that God seeks from us is the production of the “good stuff” of our growing now in Christ. This fruit is both *from* God and is to be *offered to* God. We are to plant kernels and reap a crop. It is all the sweet good stuff that grows after planting, watering, nurturing and harvesting. Yes...that’s right, we’re talking about some work and sweat here! But God, and Paul for that matter, could have used any number of analogies. We could have been told to produce vegetables. And vegy’s are fine and are good for you, but let’s face it...they lack that sweet pleasing we get from a fresh Georgia peach and a straight from the vine strawberry, right? He could have asked us to produce trees and firewood...and that has its purpose because we can stay warm, but that too lacks that certain majestic attribute, as say blackberries or raspberries. The fruit God wants from us has a natural sweetness that makes us stand in awe of God.

Outside of God, all we ever produce is *the fruit of death*. The Law had not and *has not* ceased to “be”. We are delivered “*from...it,*” but it’s not gone. *It’s* still alive, but are *we*? For the Law did not die, *we* do! Now that we have been set free from the Law, we are called to bear the *new* fruit of a *new* life. The fruit of freedom and grace! Before, when we were “married” to the Law, we just had a relationship based on rules. But now, with our new “husband”, we have a relationship based on love! And what a motivator that is! Now we no longer just move to meet the “minimum” standard of the Law. Rather, we act in love, and that action produces fruit abundant!

Jesus asked Peter that day on the beach, “Peter, do you *love* me?” No longer do I serve because I “*ought to,*” but because “*I delight to.*” Now we “serve in the newness of the Spirit.” For the Holy Spirit of God is now *with* us, and will indeed indwell “*in*” us if we desire such union in our new “marriage.” But let us firmly and deeply grasp that we were “delivered from the Law” and “died to what once held us”, so that we might **serve**.

While we embrace the wonder and blessings of this redemption, let us not miss this desired *result* of that price paid upon the cross! We are being called to “*present (our) bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God...* because let’s face it, *such is (simply our) reasonable service...*” Romans 12:1