

2011 SERMON: ROMANS#7 THE STRUGGLE WITH SIN

Romans 7:1-13

Director/actor Woody Allen is known for a lot of quotes.

But maybe his most famous quote is this one.

“Ninety percent of life is just showing up.”

The famous Woody Allen is famously wrong.

Ninety percent of life is what we do AFTER we show up.

Just “showing up” at your wedding might get you married,
but it doesn’t build a living, loving, fighting, mortgage paying,
children challenged, lifetime relationship.

Just “showing up” at the birth of your child might make you a “parent,”
but it does not make you a diaper changer, up-all-nighter, rain-soaked cheerleading,
Mom or Dad.

Just “showing up” at church every Sunday morning
might make you a member-in-good-standing,
but it does not automatically put feet on your faith.

G. K. Chesterton used to say that

“Just going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in your garage makes you a car.”

To be a Christian takes action;

It takes a day-to-day commitment to follow Jesus wherever he leads...

That is why WHEN the Apostle Paul demonstrated our connection to the law

He used marriage as his illustration.

He wanted the Jews to understand their new relationship to the law.

Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? Romans 7:1

The Jewish nation was married to their law.

The 613 laws they created over and above the 10 commandments were their bedmates.

They lived by them.

loved by them.

died by them.

Argued by them

And based their salvation on a perpetual obligation to them.

Every Jew knew the law that marriage was for life.

For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, Romans 7:2

Now if Apostle Paul was alive today,

He would have a hard time using commitment in marriage as an illustrations.

49% of all marriages end in divorce.

What more sad is that first marriages end up in divorces in the first 8 years.

Over a 40 year period,

67 % of first marriages terminate in a divorce

This year 1 million children were affected by divorce.
And what it is not just the young.

An elderly woman went into a lawyer's office. "I need your help in arranging a divorce."
The Lawyer says: "Tell me, how old are you?"
"I'm eighty-four."
"Eighty-four! And how old is your husband?"
"My husband is eighty-seven."
"My, and how long have you been married?"
"Next September will be sixty-two years."
"Married sixty-two years?! Why would you want a divorce now?"
"Because ... enough is enough."

Now we all may feel that way at times,
But Jesus said:
Only in their brokenness did Moses permit them to divorce,
And it was because of their hardness of heart.

"Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. Matthew 19:8

Maybe this is one indication that we're living in the end of times.
The Law said You couldn't divorce yourself from your marriage partner.
Just like you can't divorce yourself from the law.
If you obeyed another law,
Another religions rule and regulations,

So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. Romans 7:3

What is sad is that many people who have bad marriages have neat houses.
They put all their energy in order and neatness, and not in the relationship.
Thinking that it makes up for commitment.
The Pharisee had all these 613 laws neatly line up,
But they didn't have a good relationship with God.
That is still adultery.
Because it was stealing the time, affection, and focus of our love.

What is sad is that a coat of paint will increase the selling price of your home
Over new plumbing.

The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7

The Lord is more concerned about plumbing than about paint.

And when Jesus died
He took upon himself the offence of the law.
By dying he ended that relationship to God
through the law
And set up another relationship with God.
Through Grace.
Just like a a woman when her husband dies,

But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulterous, even though she marries another man. Romans 7:3

Paul was saying.

Through the Son of God.

the old is gone and the new has come.

So, my brothers, 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 to God. Romans 7:4

Not long ago a couple visited our church,
They had known each other in high school.
Even had dated, but for some reason, it didn't work out.
When her husband died,
She went back to their 30 year high school reunion
Met her old boyfriend, and the romance was on.
He had never married but had waited for her.
What a neat relationship they now had.

That same joy and excitement is our.

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. Romans 7:6

Not by Law, but by the Spirit.

We as Christians are so united to Christ,

Today we serve God not out of obligation of the law,

But out of the love of the Spirit.

God must be worshiped in spirit and truth."

The Apostle Paul in the rest of this chapter
Shift his focus to answer a common question of the early Christians.
If I have become a Christian
And I have been set free from the law of sin and death,
then why do I still battle with sin? And Sinful thoughts?
Shouldn't I be set from sin?

Don't we all deal with that question?
Just because a spouse has died,
Doesn't mean she doesn't exhibit an influence
On the new relationship?

One widowed man married meet and fell in love
And married a woman who had also lost her husband.
They had two homes.
They decided that they would combine the homes.
She would move into his house.
When she came to his house she discovered that
The closet was still full of all the clothes of his dead wife.
So when he was off to work,
She felt she would do him a service,
And she removed all the old clothes and put her own in its place.
When the NEW husband came home he as horrified.

Said what right have to do this?

Even though we may be free the old relationship with the law.
The OLD CAN still haunts us.
It shadow still affects us.

**The Apostle Paul was describing a state, to which believers may revert,
But not one in which he expect us to remain.**

Now for most people our
Experiences of the past should be memorable,
Bring to us a sense of warmth, happiness,
Even build up our self esteem and energy levels.

But the flip side is more true.
That memories can be painful, remorseful, even haunting
each time your mind recalls the events of our lives, our sins.
We can create our own hell.
As we rehash the mistakes we made.

**11For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and
through the commandment put me to death. Romans 7:11**

Satan is a deceiver.
Even when we have been set from from the old nature.
He keeps flashing it in front of us.
And we seem to keep submitting to it.
And getting weary over it.

**15I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.
Romans 7:15**

Here is the battle that only Christian can identify with.
This is the parallel theme going inside us that only Christian are aware of.
What I want to do I do not do.
What I hate, I do.

**18I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to
do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. Romans 7:18**

Carnal nature Vs. Spiritual nature
It's like we have lost control.

Someone said: I know the difference between right and wrong, but it hasn't held me back.

**20Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me
that does it. Romans 7:20**

It is sin has severed something deep down inside us.
Even when Christ sets us free from it
It still remains to afflict us.

**Joni Erickson Tada was only 15 when she was paralyzed from the neck down as the result
of a diving accident.** She was rushed to the hospital for x-rays to determine the extent of her
injury. As she lay unclothed on a hospital cart, the sheet covering her slipped to the side leaving
her partially exposed. In her modesty, this 15 year old Joni desperately wanted to cover herself.

But now, as much as she wanted to make her arms and hands move, they simply would not respond. Joni knew in her mind exactly what she wanted to do, but her body was totally unresponsive.

We can taste her panic, her despair in a small way,
 Because our body generally does what we ask it to do nowadays,
 although to my chagrin, it does it slower and not nearly as well.
 The fear is for us all that some day it won't respond at all.

What the Apostle Paul found out is that
 He could never keep the commandments.
 And because of them he was accursed.
 under condemnation.
 He lies naked and exposed.
 Struggling.
 And nothing would deliver him.
 Haven't we all struggled with the battle within?
 Haven't we all wondered if I'm a Christian why do I have this struggle.

We can all relate to Peter and his denial of Jesus,
 But this was an outward threat and approach of the maid in the court yard
 And the accusation—"You were with him?"

But Paul brings our denial internally.
 It is a war within.
 A war that did not exist until he became a Christian.
 Until he was converted.

Tommy Lasorda the former Los Angeles Dodgers manager describes his battle with bad habits:
 "I took a pack of cigarettes from my pocket, stared at it and said, "Who's stronger, you or me?"
 The answer was me. I stopped smoking.
 Then I took a vodka martini and said to it, "Who's stronger, you or me?"
 Again the answer was me. I quit drinking.
 Then I went on a diet. I looked at a big plate of linguine with clam sauce and said, "Who's stronger, you or me?" And a little clam looked up at me and answered, "I am." I can't beat linguine.

How many times have you resolve to do better,
 Even made a new years resolution to quit.
 Only to give in as soon as temptation comes!

So it is with us as Christian.
 The problem is not the law or the rules of the Christian
 But the problem of who I am as a carnal person.
 I am my own worst enemy.

19. The good that I would do I do not. Romans 7:19

With my whole being I seek to do God's will and obey God's law,
 I hate what is evil with a holy hatred.
 But I sin
 And when I sin,
 I sin against my mind, my will, my consent,

My whole tenor of my life.

My body betrays me.

No wonder I can relate to Paul when he says:

O wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Romans 7:24

Wretched because we have no power to deliver ourselves,

Wretches because were exhausted – which is the true meaning of the word.

But friend the awareness of my wretchedness
moves me to God.

Moves me under the protecting shadow of the cross.

Moves me from Legal obedience, rituals and rules,

To spiritual freedom in Christ.

Thanks be to God (it has been done) through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24-25

Christ has completed our salvation.

It has been done.

“Done” is a past tense word – meaning it has been carried out.

It’s over.

We have been set free in Christ.

Turn around,

Take your eyes off your miserable self,

Focus your eyes on his wonderful face.

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,

In the light of his glory and grace.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

He was a Catholic priest living in the Philippines. He had committed a grievous sin in seminary, and the burden of his sinful past haunted him deep in his heart. He had repented but had suffered years of remorse for the transgression, with no peace, or joy or sense of God's forgiveness. In his church was a spirit filled woman who claimed to have vision of Christ. And the Priest, skeptical of her claims, wanted to test her vision ask:

“The next time you speak with Christ and have one of those visions, I want you to ask Him:

“What sin did your priest commit while he was in seminary?”

The woman agreed and returned to the church a few days later, the priest asked,

"Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?" She replied, "Yes, He did."

"And did you ask Him what sin I committed in seminary?" "Yes, I asked Him."

"Well, what did He say?"

She said: "He said, 'I don't remember.'"

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Romans8:1