

Two Laws

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[0 : 00] In our study of pursuing holiness in an unholy world, we were introduced last week to a topic that really needs no introduction.

! We began looking at indwelling sin in the life of every believer.! We will continue that study today, and we'll hit on it a few more days.

A few more weeks to come. Today we're going to expand our study on the law of sin, which we were introduced to last time.

Romans chapter 7 is Paul's great work on indwelling sin in the life of the believer. We read this passage last week, Romans 7 verses 20 and 21.

Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

[1 : 14] And we'll be considering that passage again this week, but our focus will be on a few related passages in the same chapter.

In fact, the next two verses, 22 and 23. Again, Paul, for I delight in the law of God in my inner being. But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Now the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author of Scripture, describes sin as a law. He does that because sin is both powerful and efficacious.

And by efficacious we mean that sin has the power that is adequate to produce the purpose intended. Law can be described as a rule that has been established to impact our lives.

[2 : 24] That's what a law is. And it's easy to understand the powerful effect that sin has for an unbeliever who is void of the indwelling Spirit of God, doesn't even know perhaps the existence of the Spirit of God.

It gets more difficult to understand the powerful effect such sins have on a believer, considering the fact that the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in that person.

But it becomes clear to us when we come to grips with the fact that even though saved, we dwell in this earthly tent of fallen flesh.

Our fleshly bodies have not yet been redeemed, although that day is approaching. And I'm looking forward to it. But we have a war going on.

And it's going on inside us. The reformers came up with a term for this in Latin. We've used this before, not only in this block, but in our previous study.

[3 : 36] Simul justus et peccator, translated simultaneously or at the same time, we are just and sinful.

True believers are at the same time justified, yet sinful. If you experience frustration as a believer over sin in your life, all I can say is welcome to the club.

Just welcome to the club. You're not alone. This is not some isolated fact. Every believer that has ever or will ever live is a member of that club.

The number one member was the Apostle Paul, who described this part of his life as producing in him misery and wretchedness.

You can read about that in Romans 7.24. So what is this law of sin? The Puritan John Owen said it was made up of two parts.

[4 : 44] He called them properties in the language of the Puritans of the 17th century. Property number one, he called dominion. Property number two, he referred to as sanctions.

And we're going to examine dominion first. Romans 7, chapter 1. 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.

Now, obviously, I use the King James Version, which is what Dr. Owen would have used in his day. In more modern translations, we find the word dominion substituted with words such as the word jurisdiction, that's the New American Standard, or binding, and that's the English Standard Version, ESV.

So we read this in the English Standard Version. Or do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to those who know the law, that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives.

There is a truth contained in this passage which can be quite debilitating if we don't come to an understanding of it. The verse tells us that as long as a person lives, he or she is going to be dominated or bound by the law of sin.

[6 : 30] It's a fact of life. And remember, we're talking about this law which is called the law of sin. And we'll get back to that later. But Dr. Owen spoke of two types of dominion over a man.

First, there is a moral, authoritative dominion over a man, and you find that in the law of God, where the law is moral and authoritative.

It came from God. Second, Owen said, there's a real, effective dominion over a man, and we find that in the law of sin.

The law of sin has complete dominion over a lost man. Now, as I've said before, that does not mean a lost person is incapable of doing any good in the world.

But a lost person is dominated by sin and over time shuts out even a belief in God to the extent that is possible.

[7 : 33] And I personally believe it's very difficult to not believe in God in some form or fashion. You particularly see that when someone's hurt or in danger and they're crying out.

So he's always there. But the law of sin loses its total dominion of a man when God saves him. It's no longer the dominating force. Sin, though, is still a law in the redeemed person, and it will exercise some dominion.

But it no longer has the right to rule over the believer. No longer is the ruling authority, which is Satan is behind that.

Well, now we have the Holy Spirit. If that sounds confusing or contradictory, let me explain it this way. The sin nature remains in the life of a believer, but it has been weakened due to the presence of the Spirit of God working in the Christian.

[8 : 49] So it's weakened. But as believers, we need to be very aware of this danger. Sin is still a law. It is still in us, and it's still powerful.

Sin would love to regain all of its power, but it finds out it cannot do that. It simply cannot do that. So Owen used the word dominion to describe this law.

He also used the word sanctions. Now, why would he do that? A law has something accompanying it. It has a system of rewards and punishments.

That's why it is called both powerful and efficacious. In the life of an unbeliever, what is the reward for submitting to the law of sin?

It is pleasure, albeit temporary pleasure, followed by an eternity of punishment. That's the unbeliever's life. That's their destiny.

[9 : 58] And it is the worst kind of punishment. It is separation from God. It's separation from God. What are the punishments attached to following the law of sin?

For the unbeliever, losing one's soul, being cast into an eternal hell, the unsaved will forfeit his soul to obtain such pleasure? I've had people tell me, and I mean, guys I worked with, police officers, and say, well, I know I'm going to hell, but I'll be in good company.

No, you're not. You're going to be all alone. I don't think you're going to see or hear anybody. I think the only thing you're going to hear reverberating in your ears is Jesus when He said, I never knew you'd depart from me.

How do you like to listen to that for 400 billion years, and you haven't reduced by one second the amount of time you have to stay there? Frightening. The believer is different, yet he or she will experience the war being waged within.

But we're on a different level. Every believer will experience this, but at varying levels. Moses was no stranger to this fact.

[11 : 21] By faith, this is in Hebrews 11, that's the, we call it the hall of faith, or the, it's the role of the faithful. By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Remember, they had to tell him who, we want to know who the boys are. They wanted to kill all the boys. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith, he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith, he kept the Passover, and sprinkled the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. Moses experienced this great contest with his mind and with his heart. The contest was between the law of sin and the law of grace. It was a contest between choosing sin or obedience. Moses, having been raised in the house of Pharaoh, could have had unlimited pleasures in his life.

[13:01] He could have had as many women as he desired. He could have had opulent palaces throughout the land. He could have dined on the very best food. Everywhere he went in Egypt, people would have bowed down low to the ground to honor him.

Instead, Moses chose to suffer obedience to God in this life rather than the enjoyment of temporary pleasures.

Why would he do that? Well, we learned that also in Hebrews 11. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

That's really what we are. Our citizenship's in heaven. It's not even on earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But as it is, they desire a better country. That is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.

[14:19] A city of God. Augustine wrote about that. That's where we're heading. All believers are heading there. And you know, I agree with Dr. MacArthur. The lure of being there is not diamonds and pearly gates.

It's a place of no sin. Can you imagine that? There's no sin there. Amazing. Moses knew there was something awaiting him and it was much more desirable than anything Egypt could offer.

Anything at all. Now, to have any hope of grasping this, we need to go all the way back to Adam and Eve, to our first parents.

verse 1, the Lord created Adam out of dirt, dust. The Lord had given Adam great freedoms within the Garden of Eden.

but there was also one prohibition attached to those freedoms. The Lord had provided many beautiful trees in the garden from which Adam and later, and I don't think it was very long, his wife could eat the fruit.

[15:39] And you know it had to taste good. But here was the prohibition. The Lord God commanded the man saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat from it you will certainly die.

Now, we probably don't need to be reminded of this fact, but that information was provided to Adam before Eve was even created. She wasn't around yet.

Most likely, Eve received the knowledge of this prohibition from her husband, although it is possible God could have told her, and that conversation did not end up in Holy Scripture.

In the garden, Adam and Eve came into contact with another being described as a serpent. The serpent was indwelt by Satan and was able to communicate in human language.

Keep your wives and girlfriends away from talking serpents. Nothing good could come of that. Here is that account in the third chapter of Genesis.

[17:03] Now, the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, this is the serpent talking, this is Satan speaking through the serpent, did God actually say, that's the beginning of all attacks on the truthfulness of God.

Can he be trusted? Is he truthful? Did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it lest you die.

By the way, no record that God ever said that touching part. She's now ad-libbing. But the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and it was a delight to the eyes and the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

I usually try to skip over this part when I'm reading it to my wife, but she makes me read it. And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

[18 : 34] Why did he stop her? He should have stepped in. I told Diane one time, I wish I would have been there. She said, we'd be worse off. She was pretty clear on that.

The eyes of both of them were suddenly opened. And the best we could say, they'd been shrouded in a glory cloud. They were just their own shekinah, I suppose.

But now their eyes are open and they knew they were naked. And they were embarrassed. And they went out and sewed fig leaves together and made for themselves loincloths.

That's called the creation of the first human religion. It was an effort on their part to exercise a religion to get them back to God. Human religion.

They were going to work their way back. and they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

[19 : 43] I've never figured out where you can go to hide from God. I even consulted Jonah and he didn't have the answer. Here we have the first sin committed by the human family.

It was not the first sin ever committed in the universe. Satan did that when he was the angel Lucifer and declared his throne would be higher in heaven than was God's.

But what is going on there in the garden of Eden? This is actually a contest in the minds of Adam and Eve with Satan.

The contest was between the law of sin and the law of grace. which is what we're talking about tonight. The law of sin proposed a series of rewards that were very attractive to our first parents. And may I suggest it would have been attractive to any of us, including the apostle Paul. The serpent assured our parents that they would not die.

[20 : 56] Disregard what God told you, you're not going to die. he told them that their eyes would be opened. He told them they would be like God and there was an additional advantage, they would know good and evil.

They'd have a knowledge of good and evil. Our first parents in coming to terms of this temptation noted that as they're trying to decide, what do we do?

Well, the tree was good for food. The tree was delightful to look at. And we don't know what kind of fruit it was.

The poor apple's been accused for decades, but whatever it was, it was good for food, it was a delight to look at. And the tree was desirable because it would make our parents wise, even on the level of God.

So the law of sin proposed a reward that Adam and Eve should and could have the present enjoyment of sin.

[22 : 10] They could enjoy sin presently in their life. And that's the way of all sin, isn't it? This instant gratification. When reward for sin, mark this thought down guys, when the rewards for sin, the gratification or whatever it is, outweighs in the mind of a sinner obedience to God, sin wins out.

Sin wins out. And that's certainly true in the life of the unbeliever. But in all honesty, we must admit this is also true many times in the life of the true believer living in a fallen world inside fallen and as yet unredeemed human flesh.

We're not what we used to be, but we're not what we're going to be. When the law of sin wins out over the law of grace, there is a wage that is due.

What are the wages of sin? Death. Romans 6 23, the very first part of that verse, seven words, for the wages of sin is death.

I'm going to tell you something that is probably rather confusing, startling. You may disagree. God said in the day you eat, you're going to die. I suggest that Adam and Eve died immediately when we apply the definition of death being separation from God.

[23 : 48] Because he's going to boot them out of the garden. And the garden either was destroyed, taken to heaven, or it's so hidden no one's ever found it over there around the Iraq and Iranian

border area.

They think it's actually in Mosul. That's been in a lot of news with the Iraq wars. But I think they died through separation. They hid themselves because they were too overpowered by their personal sin to face the Lord.

They died ultimately in old age, having been driven from the garden, a physical death. But let me cheer you up a little bit also.

Let's read the second half of Romans 6.23 because for the wage of sin is death. There's a comma there, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Aren't we happy? There's a free gift. It's eternal life in Christ Jesus. There are miserable rewards attached to sin and they keep the world of disobedient lost people obedient to the commands of the law of sin.

[25 : 04] They will follow the law of sin. In this world, most lost men live at sin's disposal. When the pleasures of sin are dangled before them, they grab that brass ring.

The vast majority of people in the world live under the dominion of sin. You hear me? The vast majority. Guys, what we do here, we're the minority. Globally, even in our country, we're the minority, but globally, we're the minority.

But what about the life of those who have been born again, born from above? What about those individuals where the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in them? Even with these great truths, sin remains in the soul and we are at war with it.

It's a very real war with very real victims. Sadly, in this life, sin is never absent. Listen to Paul.

Romans 7, 18, For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. That's Paul.

[26 : 26] I mean, I'd say the greatest Christian that ever lived. He said, Nothing good dwells in me in my flesh, for I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

Those words were written ultimately by the Spirit of God. That's true truth. That's true truth. Romans 7, 23, I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

The sad truth is that sin remains in our souls, is never absent in this life. It's lurking somewhere, maybe in the shadows, maybe repressed, but it's there.

We have seen passages that verify this. The Puritans spoke about this in an almost poetic manner.

They would say that if sin was an occasional visitor, we might succeed in keeping it out.

If it would just occasionally drop by the house, then we would be better able to deal with it.

Whatever we find ourselves doing, the law of sin is always there.

[27 : 53] Men rarely consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them. We don't think of it that way, and unbelievers don't think of it that way.

We find indwelling sin when we are in the company of other men. We find sin when we're home alone. We find sin living in us by day and at night.

It is like a living coal that burns or smolders within us and it's a threat. It loves to destroy. It's set by the destroyer himself.

And we've got to be on guard for this internal enemy. And sadly, and these are the words of Owen, sadly, our watchfulness rarely matches the dangers of our condition.

The law of sin is always ready to act. When are we most at risk? Paul reveals that to us. And we've already read this passage a few weeks ago too, but it's good to do so again.

[29 : 04] So I find it to be a law. I find it to be a law. When does law pounce? It pounces, Paul says, when I want to do right.

evil lies close at hand. And Paul says, for I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

And that's when he cries out, wretched and miserable man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death.

Indwelling sin is powerful and effectual bringing, being, because it is indwelling. It's inside. That's what makes it powerful and effectual.

It is always with us in this life because it is indwelling. But as believers, are we stressing this too much? Are we beating a dead horse?

[30 : 21] Well, to the contrary, since this sin lives inside us, it is our duty to know everything about it.

It's in there. We hope in the shadows, don't we? Repressed. But it's in there, so we need to know about it. John Owen said, the more we understand the power of sin, the less power it will have over us.

Well, I like that. I really like that. The more we know about it, the less power it will have over us. The more we know about it, the better we'll be able to defeat it, to repress it.

We should understand that the power of the law of sin within us should increase the intensity of our prayers and our watchfulness. By knowledge, we seek supplies of grace to combat it, and we do that with the leading of the Holy Spirit within us.

All of that happens from awareness. We can't be the ostrich and put our head in the sand. It's there. John Owen did give us a very intense warning that was good for his generation.

[31 : 44] That's the 17th century and more so in the 21st century. I fear there are few whose diligence in recognizing indwelling sin in the life of a true believer matches the dangers of indwelling sin in his life.

He said, we just are not sufficiently aware of it, which puts us in grave danger. And we've already read this agonizing question from the Apostle Paul, who will deliver me from this body of death? He's crying out. He wants deliverance. Who will deliver me from this body of death? Well, let me say this, brothers.

We will not deliver ourselves. can't do it. And may I confide in you? I've tried early on, even before I was a believer.

I tried. Can't deliver it from ourselves. That's certain. But you know what? There is a deliverer.

[32 : 59] Let me read you this verse. We'll close with this. Got in 34 minutes almost. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul speaking, so then I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. You sense his frustration?

that closes Romans 7. But aren't you glad there's a Romans 8? Because the first verse says this, and I'll paraphrase the first part, I know Paul, you serve the law of sin.

Your flesh is corrupted, I know that. and then he inspiredly said this, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

No condemnation. How can that be? It's called grace. Undeserved, unearned, merit of God. It's the merit of God.

[34 : 13] God.