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Amazing Grace

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

monthly (interim) schedule

*** 1st Tuesday of the month ***

TUESDAY, 4TH OF AUGUST

12 NOON in 123 CAP

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Studies are held the *first* Tuesday of each month at 12 Noon, in accord with the Public Service Commission devotional at 9:55am. The *monthly* Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. We are currently studying the book of Romans, chapter-by-chapter, and verse-by-verse.

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I labor to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.

— Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study

is
Tuesday, 4 August 2015

Romans 7 – “Amazing Grace”

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.” If the United States had a national folk hymn, it would likely be the oft-sung and well-loved hymn written by John Newton. The author of the hymn lived a reckless life at sea, and, as a result, Newton became an abandoned and godless sailor. When converted to Christ, he often contemplated the “astonishing instance” of divine grace and mercy. The hymn continues to be a resolute assurance and declaration of the grace of God working in all our lives.

“Just As I Am” is another popular hymn, which was written a generation subsequent to Newton by a young woman – Charlotte Elliott – who inquired how she could gain God’s favor. Elliott found God’s acceptance by placing her faith and trust in Christ Jesus. Elliott sang,

Just as I am, poor wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind;
Yes, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

How wonderful to know that God receives all those who come to Him by grace through faith, and thereafter “He always lives to make intercession” for his people (Heb 7:25). The one who trusts in God has the promise of God’s favor and peace, and with those blessings is God’s enablement to live by his grace and for his glory.

In Romans 7:24, the Apostle Paul declared, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” What is it that causes people to be aware of their own wretchedness? The answer is the amazing grace that one finds in Christ Jesus.

The dictionary defines the noun form of “wretch” as a “despicable person” and a “miserable creature.” The verb form, “to wretch,” is even worse in definition, and the imagination is sufficient to contemplate its meaning. The adjective, “wretched,” attributes the qualities of being “miserable,” “unhappy,” and “worthless” to a person, place, or thing.

What caused the hymn writers and the Apostle Paul to regard themselves as a “wretch” who were found by God’s grace? The inner sense of wretchedness is the awareness of the utter sinfulness of sin, which is a characteristic of spiritual maturity, just as the denial of sin’s pervasiveness is an indication of immaturity. Understanding the righteousness of God produces a conflict between the natural and the spiritual, and this conflict rages within the heart of every maturing believer.

Romans 7 explains how the power of the gospel frees the believer from the conflict that the law and sin produce. The mature believer is not one who never struggles to obey God; rather, he or she is one who has been freed from the law’s condemnation and made free to serve its requirements by God’s grace through faith. Where the law of God condemns, the believer can trade that slavery to “the law of sin” for freedom in Christ Jesus (v. 25; 8:1-2).

Do you ever find yourself thinking, “For what I am doing, I do not understand” (7:15)? Are you willing to do what is good, yet doing the very thing that you do not want (v. 18)? Romans 7 answers those questions by depicting how victory arises from conflict.

LEGISLATIVE JURISDICTION

(Rom 7:1-6) Romans 6:14 affirmed the principle that believers “are not under law but under grace.” Verses 15-23 of Romans 6 denied that this truth means believers can continue sinning without limitation. Having addressed misunderstanding with regard to God’s grace (6:15-23), the true purpose for releasing the believer from the law is explained (7:1-6). The reason that the believer is not “under law but under grace” is not to free him or her to sin; rather, the intent is so that believers are free to serve the Lord God.

Romans 7:1-6 illustrates the truth of 6:14, which is that believers “are not under law but under grace.” The example is developed from domestic law, and refers to the legal obligations of a “married woman . . . to her husband.” The conjunction, “or,” which begins



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1st Tuesdays (monthly) @ 12 Noon - 12:45 pm, 123 CAP
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chapter 7 is the assertion that the Law is binding upon a person while he or she is living. The illustration of verses 2-3, which answers the question of verse 1, is explained in verses 4-6.

The question of verse 1 demonstrates the common knowledge that a law has “jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives.” Similarly, as long as one’s spouse is alive, the other person is not free to marry anyone else. However, when one’s other half dies, that person is free to remarry, because the law that bound them to their first spouse no longer has jurisdiction. The primary application of the illustration is made evident in verse 6: believers are those who are “released from the Law.”

Prior to salvation, the old life is characterized by “sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law” (v. 5). Having been freed from the Law, the believer now lives for God in the power of the Holy Spirit “and not in oldness of the letter” (v. 6). One final query is necessary to clarify – “What shall we say then?” – in 7:7-25 (prior to the exact nature of this divine power being described in Rom 8).

LEGISLATIVE VALUE

(Rom 7:7-13) Romans 6 defends the nature of God’s grace (vv. 1, 15). With all the emphasis upon divine favor and being freed from that which bound us, one may wrongly conclude that there is no value to the Law. Romans 7 defends the value of God’s Law (vv. 7, 13). While it is “oldness of the letter” (v. 6), the Law is not sinful and not the cause of sin, and should not be discounted because of the “newness of the Spirit.”

GOD’S LAW IS VALUABLE...

Verses 7-13 describe the effects that the Law can have in the life of one who has not received God’s salvation. Initially, someone can be unaware that God’s Law is binding upon his or her life, and that he or she is a sinner. Once the Law is proclaimed, it reveals sin and demonstrates the need for a Savior. Consequently, the Law is not sin; rather, it is holy, just, and good.

God’s Law is valuable because it reveals sin, yet it also may provoke it because the mere suggestion of something forbidden, entices people to indulge themselves (v. 8). Moreover, the Law condemns sin. Once the holy Word of God confronts one’s sin, the Law will condemn, resulting in death (vv. 9, 11; cf. Isa 6:5). Verse 13 emphasizes that the Law is not to be blamed. Sin used the Law to effect “death through that which is good.”

LEGISLATIVE CONFLICT

(Rom 7:14-25) With verse 14, the verb tense changes to the present, thus indicating the conflict and inner tension that one experiences as a believer. The description of the conflict resulting from the Law is presented in three cycles: (1) vv. 14-17; (2) vv. 18-20; and, (3) vv. 21-25. Each cycle adheres to the same format: a conditional

statement, additional explanation of that assertion, and a conclusion to be understood. In each instance, the cause of difficulty is determined as indwelling sin, which resides within oneself as an awfully unwelcome guest.

Each of the three cycles presents an account of defeat: a conflict that never culminates in victory. The life of the believer is never without conflict, yet it is always realizing victory in the midst of intense discord. For the moment, the tone of victory is noticeably lacking from Romans 7, and the reason is the result of the monotonous regularity of the pronoun *I*.

Romans 7 conveys a vital truth. Having been justified by God’s grace through faith in Christ does not mean that one can then perform a service for the Lord. The victorious Christian life is based upon the same principle that results in salvation, which is faith in the provision of Christ the Lord (Rom 8:1-2). Just as works cannot justify (save) anyone, neither can service for the Lord (sanctification) be achieved by one’s sole efforts. God’s Law does not contain the power necessary to produce holiness (sanctification) because it also has no ability to create righteousness.

For the immediate end of the commandments never was that men should succeed in obeying them, but that, finding they could not do that which yet must be done, finding the more they tried the more was required of them, they should be driven to the source of life and law—of their life and his law—to seek from him such reinforcement of life as should make the fulfillment of the law as possible, yea, as natural, as necessary [George MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons* (1867-89; reprint, New York: Cosimo, 2007) 129].

Romans 8:2 – For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Defeat is not God’s desire for his children. The victory depicted in Romans 8 is the Lord’s longing for believers. We do well to remember the victory that God desires for us, and to pursue that not with a frenzy of activity in which we seek to please the Lord. The life of victory is serving God with the mind (7:25), and also with our actions (Rom 8) through the provisions He grants through faith.

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the nobility to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastors-missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. The Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through verse-by-verse Bible teaching. In the Bible, we see God’s love for the world, especially those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four primary areas of discipleship: (1) *evangelize* those who have not known saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.