

We're in Romans 7. Romans 7 is very dear to my heart because this is the chapter that, when I saw this, my life can be divided into two places. About 1963, everything that came before and everything that came after. And it's Romans seven that stands as that spot in my life, so this is a - Every time I speak on this—and I know some of you in this room have heard me speak on this subject—but most of you have not, and this is really important to you. I made an incredible discovery in Romans 7. It was all mine. I'm gonna pass it on to you.

Romans 7 is every man's testimony who has ever been a Christian, if he has ever followed the Lord. There is a dual message here: one is to the Jew, and the other is to the Christian. We're gonna look at the Jewish message. And then we're gonna do a radical shift, and we're gonna take a look at the message to Christians that's hidden in this chapter.

Now, to our visitors over here. I'm trying—I'm not trying—I'm doing this. I'm succeeding brilliantly. Ah, we're casting the entire book of Romans into somewhat of a drama. What we started off with was a trial of the entire human race, divided as Jews and Gentiles. And the trial was Romans 1, 2, and 3. Abraham came and spoke to us and then gave an invitation to another way to be justified: justification by faith. And some responded. And we all went into an anti-room, those of us who got converted, because we really didn't want to - what... Ah, you don't remember? We did not want to come to the day of distress, and what? Wrath, and be faced there with a law we could not obey and with good deeds which we did not perform. So, we found the righteousness that is by a gift, not by works.

So, there were some questions asked in this little counseling room we're in—maybe it's a big one—and questions have been asked. Now a question has been asked about the law. It's come up several times by some of the Jewish believers in the room. They're having a real hard time juggling all of this. We have just found out in Romans six that a question was asked: Shall we sin more so that there might be more grace? Because we are received by the Lord on the basis of the fact that we were so utterly sinful, that He had no alternative but to take us, to accept us, to approve us on the basis of righteousness given to us because our state of sin was so great.

Well, if grace would be so abundant in such a high-water mark of sinfulness, why not more sin? Therefore, there'd be more grace. Paul answered that. But now he is going to continue, and he is going to talk about the law to the Jews here in this room. And he's going to free these Jews from their law. Now, here's what I simply want you to know: two or three things we start off with. Listen very carefully.

First, there's nothing wrong with the law. The problem is not the law. The law failed not because there's anything wrong with the law. The law failed because the guy who was reading it, the person who was seeking to obey the law, therein was the problem.

Here is the law. It is spiritual. It is wonderful. It is good. Wonderful thing. Ten commandments, all the other commandments—great, mighty things. But the one who walks up to it, reads it, and turns around and seeks to carry it out in his own life—he is the

problem. Let me put it in one simple sentence: The law is of itself intrinsically good and intrinsically perfect. Maybe the word perfect is too strong, but yes, it's perfect. You are intrinsically too weak to carry it out. It's that simple.

Now here's what the law did to you. The law exposed you to the knowledge of sin. You didn't even know sin was sin. You didn't even know it was bad. The law exposed you to the true knowledge of sin. Sin awoke when you discovered the law. Until then, sin was sleeping. You just plain flat weren't bothered. You walk down the hall—there are fifty doors on the long corridor you're walking down. You're not paying any attention to the doors. You have no interest in any of them. You don't care about any of those doors, until you come to a door that says: *PRIVATE - DO NOT ENTER*. You stop and look at that door. And something inside of you says, "Says You? What do you mean, I can't go in there? Private? Do not enter?" You are totally uninterested in all the other doors. But when the law was put on you - "private, you may not enter" - that was the door you wanted to go through. Sin was not a monster until you tried to do the goodness of the law.

So, you were exposed to sin and its sinfulness by the law. Secondly, the law showed you to be utterly weak. In fulfilling the law, you learned you were incredibly weak. All right, that's your second problem, it's the enormous discovery of your weakness. The third thing was that this monster seized the wonderful, wonderful law to bring you to death and slavery.

Now the question is asked toward the end of the chapter. The question is asked in our little anti-room here: Does that make the law sinful? Does it make it bad? Does it make it wrong? No. There is nothing wrong with the law. The law did not cause you to sin. Sin took your knowledge of the law and worked in you lust and craving to go through the door that said, "Private. Do not enter."

You were walking down the street—long, beautiful Broadway. Big beautiful store, full of furs and mannequins dressed in jewels and so on and so forth. You didn't care about any of that. You weren't wanting any of it, but as you walked down this long, long sidewalk by this lavish store with its beautiful windows, you cared nothing about anything, you lusted for nothing, you were not sinning, until one of the big windows had only this sign: "*DON'T THROW A BRICK THROUGH THIS GLASS WINDOW.*" And there, lo and behold, were a pile of bricks. And sin awakened through the law. There was nothing wrong with that sign. The law is not intrinsically evil. But you, weaker than sin and stirred by the law, sin used the law to attack your flesh. Not your soul, not your spirit, but came to where sin lives: in your body.

And you picked up that brick, and you said, "I've had a bad day. Everybody's been telling me what to do and what not to do, and doggone it, you're not going to tell me what to do." And that evening, you went to jail. Did the law put you in jail? No. Your actions put you in jail. And your actions put you there because you were weak in the presence of both the law and in the stirring up of sin, which utterly controls you. Now, brothers and sisters, it is with this background that Paul rushes in to save us from this law, so that we will no longer be stirred

up by it, we will no longer be exposed to the sinfulness of sin, no longer see our great weakness, and no longer see sin use the law to cause us to be disobedient.

And Paul uses an illustration, and it's so interesting up until and through chapter seven how much death is important here - how, what a friend we have in death. It was by death we were put away from sin - that's chapter 6. By death, we're going to be put away from the law. By death we will be freed from sin, and by death we were freed from the law. Do you remember chapter 6? Sin had a slave. Who was it? You. Then what happened? Do you remember? Christ died, and at the time He died, you were plunged into Him, immersed into Him, made one with Him. And sin turned around to find its slave and couldn't find it. All it could find was the tombstone: "Here lies me, dead." And from your viewpoint, when you rose from the dead, you found the tombstone, and it said: "Here lies sin."

But you're having problems with the law. And Paul comes back to this utensil - death - and says: Do you not know? All the problems you're having with death, do you not understand that there is one thing that can break a contract between two people, and that is death? In the same way it was with sin, so it is now with the law. And he gives an illustration, but I have looked at this passage, and I have looked at this passage, and I have tried to think about Paul writing it. And those of you who are listening to the recording now, don't lose your uppers. Paul was writing too fast. He left out a few words. He implies something that he does not say, because in fact, his illustration here falls apart.

I have just told you what he implied. Paul implies that death will break a contract between two people, no matter which one of them dies. But he switches around without realizing that. He is talking about the law being put to death, but without realizing it, when he ends his illustration, the law does not die. And he doesn't say that in this passage. Listen to him again—I'm in the opening of Romans 7: *"Do you not know, brothers, for I speak to men who know the law, that the law has authority over what? A man. Do you see? A man, only for as long as he lives."* Does that mean that if the man dies, then he is free from that law? Is that not true?

We talked the other night about Madame Mentonot, who was dug up fifty years after she had died and was beaten by a French crowd or French revolutionists who'd gone mad. By the way, I forgot to tell you—her body was perfectly preserved. But now they beat on her, hung her, hung her up by her neck. Didn't bother her a bit. Because she was dead. There is no corpse that has ever been in any way intimidated by law or sin. It just ends with death. So here, the law has authority over the man as long as he lives. But he switches and talks about a woman.

"For example, by law, a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive." So, we begin looking at this man, do we not? She's married to a man, and we're thinking he's gonna die, right? Yeah. He's gonna die. And she's gonna be free. And that's what he says: "But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage." You got it?

Now then, listen to that. There is a law, it's the marriage contract. If the husband dies, she's gonna be free from marriage. So then, if she marries another while her husband is alive, she is an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage - not an adulteress, she's just...here she could be a terrible, horrible, sinful human being, but if he dies, she goes, marries another man, they have physical union, there's no sin in it. It's wonderful. Married. Isn't that wonderful? What happened to Mary? She found a good man and married him. Mary is married to Joe, and she's living with John. Isn't that horrible? See the difference in what death does? Death takes something—that same act—and in one, makes it glorious, holy marriage. The same act makes it terrible adultery. Death is the difference. Okay, you got it?

But if her husband dies, she's released from the law and is not an adulteress. She's happily married to another man. Alright, so we're waiting for the man to die, are we not? Boy, I tell you, the greatest day I ever lived was when I found out who died. That husband's still alive, saints.

Starts off: "Do you not know that law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?" And I keep waiting for that man to die. He doesn't die. Now listen to this, very interesting, in the illustration. Who is the man? Who is the man? Who is the woman? Who's the man? No, no—oh, no one knows. Ah, this has been debated forever. I'm going to tell you what I think.

Our carnal nature? That's very possible. It's not sin, because sin's already been handled in Romans 6. To me, the husband is the law. And there is a union between the law and me, and I am married to the law. And I want him to die. And I will be free from him. Why was I born a Jew? I want to introduce to you now, please, and listen carefully - this dear woman. She was foolish in her young life and married what she thought was a wonderful man who would answer all her problems. I'm gonna tell you something. I'm gonna get to a parenthesis here.

I believe Paul is reflecting on his own past experience here. Let me give you what I have as a daydream about this. I think Paul is writing this, and he's reflecting back on when he was a little kid playing out there in the streets of Tarsus, doing anything he wanted to, saying anything he wanted to—just free, totally free in his conscience. Then he is thirteen years old, and he is at that age, by Jewish custom, he is put under the Hebrew law. He starts learning all the rules and regulations and laws, and more rules and more regulations and more laws, and more rules and more regulations and more laws.

And by the time he is persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem, there are two Pauls: the devout defender of the law, but someone who, when no one is looking, is crying out: "That which I would, I do not. And that which I would not, I do." He is in turmoil over the fact that he—probably the only Jew in the world—he cannot obey the law. He knows the rest of them are, because they always laud the law, praise the law, and defend the law, and seem to be perfectly happy with the law, and are able to obey it. And Paul is saying, "What I want to do, I never do. And what I don't want to do is what I do." I think Paul is giving his own

experience of his relationship to the standard of the law here. And he is also telling us of his own deliverance.

Okay, now, back to the story. This woman got married to this man. Very happy bride. So, after the wedding and the honeymoon, they move into their house. He says:

“Sweetheart, I want breakfast every morning at 6:30 a.m.” She’s so in love with him, and she says, “Yes, dear,” while she’s thinking, *“I’ve never been up at 6:30 in the morning in my life.”*

“I want two eggs. One sunny side up, one well done. I want some biscuits and gravy.” She thinks, *“How do you make sunny side up? And how do you make one hard? Biscuits? How do I do that?”*

“I want some fresh milk, fresh cow’s milk, oh, goat’s milk, fresh goat’s milk. I want it served on time, at 6:30 tomorrow morning, so that when I leave, I will have my breakfast. Darling, before I leave. I would like to know that our house is in perfectly clean order.”

So, the first morning, she gets up at 5:00 a.m. and tries to straighten up what she can. She goes into the kitchen, and she burns the eggs. She burns the toast, the biscuit, and she drops one on her foot and breaks her toe. The gravy is an absolute gooey mess. He comes in, he sits down, and he sees what has happened. There is the goat out there baaing because it hasn’t been milked. He sees what’s going on. He says:

“That’s all right, honey. You learn today, while I’m gone, and when I come back, when I get up in the morning, I’m sure you’ll have it done. By the way, tonight I want pot roast and potatoes. I want a really nice, lavish dinner when I come home. And of course, I want the house cleaned.”

And so, she tries to clean up the house, and she does fairly well at it. That night, she has burned roast. The potatoes are as hard as rock. The gravy is as bad as it was that morning. The bread didn’t have any yeast in it. It didn’t rise. It’s terrible. He is patient with her, and he says, “That’s all right, honey. I’m sure you’ll do better tomorrow.” The next morning, she wakes up - it is 6:15. She makes a mad dash to the kitchen. At 7:00 o’clock, she’s still making it. He is patiently waiting. He says:

“Sweetheart, I’m going to have to go. I’ve got to eat it.” She serves it to him, and it’s worse than yesterday’s. She cannot live up to his standard. This goes on for weeks and months. And then she notices someone living across the street. This old boy drives a jalopy that hasn’t been washed in a year. He hasn’t mowed his lawn in months. He wears blue jeans, and he sits around the house and reads books. His house is as big a mess as the house she used to live in. She thinks, *“I wish I’d have married a man like that.”*

Things, in the meantime, at home, are getting worse and worse. She is beginning to hate getting up in the morning. She despises gravy and biscuits, and she loathes goats. She has not yet successfully fixed a single meal. Things are getting worse. She’s getting haggard. The

house is a mess. She is a nervous wreck. One morning, when her husband walks out the door and gets in the car, she whispers to herself: *I wish you were dead*. And she just plain flat begins to lust and desire to be married to that other man, so much so, she's almost willing to risk the stigma, the stigma of adultery: leave her husband and go live with the other man, or divorce her husband and go marry that other man.

Her husband is in excellent health. In fact, you know what? He shall live until the consummation of the ages. The sun may pass away. The earth may dissolve. Creation itself may cease to be. That man is here to stay. In her desperation, she dies. And he takes her out and buries her, puts the dirt over her grave, and: "Here lies Mary. She's dead." And Mary is dead. And I want you to know something: *She is free from the law!*

Oh, happy condition! For the first time ever, she is free from the law.

Paul of Tarsus is giving his autobiography here. His own freedom, before, he knew the law so perfectly. The more he knew it, the worse his relationship was to it. And he found the law to die, or did it?

Now, this is the message to the Jews. And Paul is speaking in the anti-room, and he's telling the Jews: You are now free from the law by death. Isn't that wonderful? You're free from the law through death. Through death, you're free from the law and no longer have to go through this woe-begotten chapter that says:

"The law is spiritual, I'm not spiritual. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not. But what I hate, I do." And he says to them:

"Now the law has been obliterated by death. You literally are in two different realms. The law cannot touch you. You're free. Now the law can no longer expose the sinfulness of sin to you, can no longer expose your mighty and great weaknesses. And sin can no longer take advantage of the law to bring you into sin, because you are dead, and your relationship to law is gone forever."

About that time - is that good news? That's good news. About that time, someone in the back of the audience says:

"Brother Paul, this has been wonderful. You realize that we've come from the ends of the world for this court scene. We have been found innocent. We have received Jesus Christ through faith, and we have to go home. Please excuse us." And so, a group of people leaves this little counseling room, where Paul is preparing people for the Christian life. And they have learned that they are free from the law.

*Oh, happy condition!* Are you with me? Alright. We will not see these people again for ten years. This is a group of people who live over in Nicomedia. That's the town. I'm not pronouncing it right probably, but—Nicomedia. Alright, now then. It so happens that 10 years later, Paul of Tarsus comes to meet these people again. And he visits their little

assembly. They have been believers for how long? Are you following my story? I hope I'm not confusing anybody. If I am, would you stop me? Interrupt me?

Alright, he has walked into a group of the most well-begotten people who ever were.

Now I'm telling you the story, but now I'm no longer telling you Paul's testimony. I am giving you mine, and I'm casting it into a story. During these ten years, those brothers and sisters have forgotten what Paul told them. Or, if they have not forgotten, they have failed to see a relationship. Saints, I just read a passage of Scripture to you. If you've been in Christ for five years, it ought to ring a bell in your life:

"That which I would do, I do not. That which I would not do, I do." Does that ring a chord in you? Say "Amen" if it does. It does? It doesn't? It *does!*

Okay, I'm gonna do that again. Does it? All right, good enough. And I was told that I was supposed to go to church. "*Forsake not the assembling of yourselves, as is the manner of some of you.*" And I thought to myself, I want to forsake this assembling, like some of those backslidden people out there who don't go to church. One told me that Constantine invented the church building, and John Calvin invented the Sunday morning Protestant worship service.

Well, to me, that meant going down to a Baptist church and listening to some preacher drone on and on for ad infinitum. And then I went to church on Wednesday night, because that was a prayer meeting. We never prayed, but we went to prayer meeting. And it was followed by choir practice. And then I was told to tithe. And then I was told to keep a clear conscience. And then I was told to repent of my sins. And then I began to forget just what was on this list. And I couldn't keep it all in mind. I was then trying to be good to everybody, sweet and nice and kind.

So that when Paul of Tarsus arrived in my little town of Nicomedia, we were having a question and answer, I stuck my hand up and I said:

"Paul, I'm having a hard time. I know, I ain't the only Christian in the world - I'm having a hard time. Paul, all these things, these wonderful things that I'm supposed to do as a Christian, Paul, every time I go to do them, I can't. And in fact, I will go to do them, but before it's over, I have done the very opposite. And the things that I absolutely bow and rededicate my life—I will never do again as long as I live. When I'm going to pray, that's what I do." And Paul, I know nobody else in this room has ever made this statement to you:

"I believe in this book. I believe it's inspired. I believe it's divinely sent. I believe I should be reading it. Everybody that I've met breathing air on this planet has told me to get into the Word. And Paul, I know no other Christian's ever heard this, and I know everybody in this room is gonna be shocked, and if y'all want to excommunicate me, that's fine, but - *I'm tired of reading the Bible.*"

Oh, man. There's a gasp. You know. There's shock and horror and terror in the room. Brothers and sisters, you added something to your Christian life. Your Christian life was Jesus Christ. I am not, I'm just like Paul, I'm not saying any of these things are bad. They are good, and they are spiritual, and they are perfect, but they have become *a law* to you. And they are there, listed. And sin has done the same thing with them that sin did with the law. Sin will use the greatest thing there ever was to put you to death.

I believe that Romans 7 is the history of every believer. And I'm going to tell you something else: I'm not sure it ever really quits completely. I had an experience in 1963 that delivered me from the law of sin and death that worked in me as a personal experience. I'm not promoting this thing. I'm not telling you now that you, I'm not telling y'all to go out and speak in tongues or anything like that, or that you need the experience of sudden and total sanctification.

I'm telling you that I personally got delivered from something in nineteen hundred and sixty-three, when I understood that passage. My relationship to Scripture changed, my relationship to witnessing changed, my relationship to prayer utterly changed. My relationship to going to church ended. I quit. I super ..., what's that word? I superannuated. I did. And you can count on one or two hands how many times I have gone back and suffered the ordeal of a Sunday morning church service.

I'm going to retell this story. Paul said, maybe Paul would never say this, I'm going to put it in his mouth:

There was a woman married to a man, and the man was the Christian life, and the man said to his dear wife, "I want you to get up every morning and pray at 6:30. I want you to read your Bible at least thirty minutes after you prayed or before, but make sure you spend about thirty to forty minutes in prayer every morning. I want you to witness to the neighbors on the street and get involved in their lives. I want you to rejoice in pain and suffering. I want you to always rejoice in tribulation and thank God for the problems you have and rejoice that you've been counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake. I want you, honey, to go down to the WMU and get into the Women's Missionary Society. I want you to get involved in Sunday school and teach a Sunday school class. And I want you to save out of your cooking money that I give you 10% to put aside for a tithe to the church. I want you to go to church every Wednesday night, Sunday morning, and Sunday night, and also Sunday school, and in the evening, the program before church. Join the choir, darling. I want you to join the choir. And you must be a light and an example to the people in this community. Most of all, get into the Word, learn it, and memorize it. I want you to memorize three or four passages of Scripture every day and be a godly wife and a submissive wife."

And she tried that. And you tried that. And the first year, it was a cakewalk. And then it was a bluff. And then it was a rededication. And then you tried again. And you didn't want to submit. And you didn't want to go to WMU. And you got tired of choir practice. And you needed some free time. Then you had a baby. And it even got worse, didn't it, sisters?

Say amen. Alright. And so, you began to despise the victorious Christian life. You began to despise the Christian walk. You began to dislike being a light to the world. You did not like the Christian standard. And when no one was looking, you said, "Forget your gravy and biscuits. Forget your 6:30-in-the-morning breakfast. Forget me getting up and cleaning this house. That guy across the street - I like him. I just may go over and live with him. Forget you. I am tired of this. I like the word 'backslider.' It's beginning to appeal to me. I'm tired of roast beef, gravy, and baked potatoes, and of eating. I can't do it. The house looks like a mess. I'm tired, and I want to sleep late."

And the Christian life would not die. Oh, praise the Lord. Listen to me, saint. Listen and be delivered. Do you not know the Christian life did not die? Did you know that *you* died? No, I don't think you understand. I don't think you understand what grace is. I want you to listen to me and listen well. And you people out there on that recording, get this:

*Grace, grace, grace.* You do not belong to the Christian standard. You do not belong to living the Christian life. You belong to Christ. And you cannot fulfill the standard of the Christian life; it can't be done. You can't do it. And I can't either.

You people missed all that. I'm going to repeat it. By the way, I'm going to add something to it this time. We'll say it again. I will say it again:

*You cannot live the Christian life.*

I'm going to tell you something you're ashamed to admit. You are afraid to witness. In fact, you hate to witness. You'd rather for them to go to hell than to have to go through the agony of trying to witness to them. Say amen to that!

You get up and you read your Bible, and it doesn't make sense. And when it does, it just condemns you. Say amen. And when you get up early in the morning to pray, you go to sleep. And when you get up early in the morning to pray, you can't think of anything to pray. And you get mad at your husband. And you get mad at your wife. And you throw a living fit. And you know Christians are not supposed to do that. You don't like to pray. You don't like to witness. You don't like to read your Bible. You don't like to live a good life.

There are times you want to sin! Say amen.

If that's not true, you're not being honest with yourself. "Oh, Brother Gene, that's just shocking. Oh, you shouldn't say that; this is the most terrible thing in the world." But it's the truth. I am telling you that you, in the presence of the so-called Christian standard, are as weak as the Jew in the presence of the law. And you do not wish to cook biscuits at 6:30 in the morning, nor make up the bed or keep the house clean.

Umm... I'm sorry, Corrie. You're a Dutch sister. The Dutch, the Germans, and the Scandinavian women, I really feel sorry for you all. You are under the law of a clean house. It is true. I know it is true that it is the standard of the Nords that the house must be clean

enough to eat off of anything. And the women, literally, and the Swiss, literally kill themselves keeping their house inside and out immaculate. And I know there are Nordic women who just want to say, "Let it go to pot. Let the grass grow up and let the windows be unclean and let him eat crackers and cheese." There's too much pressure to conform. And it is the cry of the Christian heart, whether he will admit it or not:

"I don't like all these things Christians are supposed to do."

Do you not know that you, the believer, have died to all - all - and all standards? All of them. Every one of them, manmade, whatever is expected of you, is not expected of you. You live under grace. All law, all standards, all codes. All codes were crucified upon the cross of Christ. And so were you.

And that broke the chain. You are free from the Christian life. Say Praise the Lord.

And there you lay, deader than a doornail. Dead. Dead to the law. Dead to moral deeds. Dead to living a good life. Dead to the Christian standard. And Someone came and reached down into the grave and raised you up to a new life. And when you were raised, sin couldn't find you. The good deeds of the Greeks couldn't find you. The law of Moses and the law of the Jews could not find you.

*And the Christian standard also cannot find you.*

Sure enough, 5:00 a.m. came. You married the Lord. And this is so powerful here, saints. Look at what he does. Paul has you marrying in Jesus Christ. You're one with Him. You have been freed because of death. You rise from the dead. And you are now married, not to the Christian standard or living the Christian life; *you are married to the Lord Jesus Christ.*

5 o'clock comes, and the alarm goes off. You're now newly married to Jesus Christ. And what is going to happen? One of two things.

I will tell you what happens: the Lord gets out of bed, and He goes in, and He cooks the breakfast. About 6:25, He comes in and picks you up, Camille, and carries you into this lavishly set breakfast, which He has cooked. He puts you there, and He says, "Dear wife, here is your breakfast. Come and dine." And that evening, He comes in and He fixes the dinner. And He washes the windows. He does the lawn.

"Gene, that's extreme. That leaves me with nothing to do." Well, praise the Lord. I need a long vacation. You see, it is very difficult for you and me to understand that there are realms that are not physical and that there are life forms that exist that we cannot see. There are other forms of life. We have two visitors - I know they're going to think I'm a science fiction quack - but I want you to know there are life forms that exist that you have never seen. Higher forms of life than you are. Angels, for instance. And God, for instance. I do not like to say what is usually said at this point: "The Holy Spirit then comes into your life and enables you to live the Christian life." *Rain all over that.*

To me, that is just law over again. That the Holy Spirit comes in and enables. I didn't feel the Holy Spirit come in and enable me to live the Christian life. "But Gene, then you didn't get baptized in the Holy Ghost, did you?" Listen, friend, I have had every experience there is, and the Holy Spirit has not yet enabled me to live the Christian life.

I'll repeat this: *I don't enjoy living the Christian standard.* I like to sleep late. And it comes down to this:

*Either He's going to do it, or it's not going to get done.*

And if it is done in me by Him, it's going to have to be done as joy, or pleasantness, or at worst, neutral. I am not going back under anybody's law.

*I am not going to live the Christian life.*

Yeah, clap, do something.

*I am not going to live the Christian life.*

I was sitting in my backyard, and I said to the Lord: "I am through serving you, and I am through living the Christian life. If anything ever gets done again, you will do it. I will not." And I believe I have never broken that covenant. Since that day, I have done what has been comfortable to me as far as living the Christian life. I let go of living the Christian life.

And I recommend that you give up the bondage and law that is chasing you right now and find your liberty in Christ and Christ alone.

*Praise the Lord.* You have married another—the Lord Jesus Christ—and nothing else, and nobody else. If this is a radical gospel, you need to hear a radical gospel, because if you are like virtually all Christians, you have placed yourself under some sort of legalistic Christian law.

Sister, you really don't want to submit. Why don't you admit that? I'm not going to list all the other things, but I'm going to tell you something. I want you, if you got your Bible, we're going to close with this, I want you to listen to it.

Ready? I hope this helps. I am in verse 7:

*What shall we say then? Is the standard of the Christian life sin? Certainly not. But I would not have known what sin was, except for discovering what the Christian life was. For I would not have known that I, as a Christian, should not covet until I was told that the Christian life says, "Gene, you shall not covet."*

*Sin took the opportunity, afforded by the Christian standard, and produced in me every kind of covetous desire there was. For apart from the Christian life—apart from the Christian standard—sin is dead. Once I was alive, alive apart from the Christian life. But when the Christian standard came in, sin sprang up to life, and I died. I found that the very standard of Christian living that was intending to bring life to me actually brought death. Sin, seizing the*

*opportunity afforded by the Christian standard, deceived me, and through the standard of Christian living, put me to death. Yes, the Christian life is holy, and the Christian standard is holy; it is righteous, and it is good. Did that which is good, the Christian life, become death to me? No, but in order that sin might be recognized as how sinful it is, sin produced death in me through the goodness of the Christian life, so that through the Christian standard, sin was revealed to be utterly sinful.*

*Now I know the Christian life is spiritual. It's me that's not spiritual. I'm soul. I'm a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do and why I do it. For what I want to do as a Christian, I do not do. And what I despise to do as a believer, I do it. And if I do what I do not want to do, I have actually proved that the Christian life is good. That's proof of it.*

*As it is, it is no longer I who is doing these things wrong. It is sin that is literally living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me—that is, in my flesh and my sinful nature—for I have the desire to do what is good, but I just can't carry out the Christian standard.*

*For what I do is not the good that I want to do. No, the evil that I do not want to do—this is what I keep on doing again and again. Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it's not me who's doing it. It's sin living in me that does it.*

*So I have found as a principle working in me, when I want to do good, evil is standing right there by me. For in my inmost being, I delight to be a Christian. I want to be a Christian.*

*"Lord, I want to be a Christian when I die."*

*"Lord, I want to be a Christian when I die."*

*I want to be a Christian so bad. I want to live the Christian life so bad.*

*I CAN'T.*

*So, I see another principle working in the members of my body, waging war against the law—the concept, the principle—in my mind that I want to live up to. And it makes me a prisoner to the law and principle of sin, which works in my flesh.*

*I am wretched.*

*I am mixed up.*

*I am messed up.*

*I am confused.*

*I am in a state of wretchedness.*

*I am a wretched, wretched man.*

*I feel wretched.*

*I feel terrible.*

*I feel horrible.*

*I am living in the middle of Romans 7. I am a wretched man. Oh, wretched man that I am. Who!? Who will come and rescue me from this body of death? Hallelujah. I thank God I am delivered—not through the Christian life—*

*I am delivered through Jesus Christ, my Lord, and Him alone.* Praise the Lord. Thanks be unto God.

*In my mind, I am a slave to God's law—to the Christian life.*

*But in my sinful nature, I am a slave to the law of sin.* Strangest thing in the world.

Therefore, in the light of all that mess, I am having no condemnation. I got no condemnation. I don't want to pray. I don't want to read the Bible. I don't want to go to church. I don't want to tithe. I'd rather keep that money for myself. I got all these things I want to do. And the next thing I look up and I read, *Therefore, there is now no condemnation.* Praise God. Karen, *there is no condemnation.*

Isn't that wonderful? Praise the Lord, sister. Do you understand there is no condemnation? For all those feelings, there is no condemnation. None. No condemnation. Yes. I hope this gets in some way preserved. I don't know what to do with it. Okay. It's done.

All right, now I'll go ahead and read this. Therefore, in the light of all this mess and all of this truth that I'm finally willing to admit, there is no condemnation. Why? Because I am inside of Jesus Christ. You just try to reach me. Oh, fundamentalists try to reach me. You legalists out there, try to reach me. Put me under a pile. Go ahead and tell me all the things I ought to do that I cannot do. You will not find me. I have died to all law.

I am inside of Jesus Christ. Can't find me, Penny. And it can't find you. And since this is where the Christian life begins, it begins in this freedom. This is where you start. Actually, we don't start there. We start getting saved. Then we get under some kind of bondage from ourselves and our need to try to please God—that is so much a part of everyone. And then we come, and we must discover this moment that we are in Christ. There's no condemnation, and there are no expectations.

Listen, you don't get saved by grace and preserved by works. You get saved by grace, and you walk by grace. There is nothing that God expected that you could do to get saved. There is nothing God is expecting out of you to perform the Christian life in its essence. That is His business.

I want to refer you back to a message I hope most of you have heard. There is only one Christian. And it is not the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Father. And the Son said, *I can do nothing of myself. What I do, I do by means of my Father's life.* And I am in the same situation. There's nothing I can do as a Jew or a Christian to come to these high and holy things. It is His life alone that can live the Christian life. Therefore, there is no condemnation because I am in Christ Jesus. Because through Christ Jesus, the principle—the law of the Spirit of His life, His life, a higher form of life, the highest form of life, there is the divine life—God, this has freed me from the law of Moses and has freed me from the law of sin and death. It is His life which is spirit in me. For what the Christian life was powerless to do, in that it was weak by my nature, God did. Say it! God did. God has done it. God did it by sending His own Son in

the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so, He condemned sin in me in order that the righteous requirements of the Christian life might be fully met in me. Praise the Lord! *In order that the righteous requirements of the Christian life might be met in me.*

Now praise the Lord, by His Spirit, I don't live by my sinful nature. Explain that, Gene. I cannot explain that. I can tell you this: In nineteen hundred and sixty-three, I came to peace with the fact that I, Gene Edwards, could not live the Christian life. And that has run as a thread through my life. You don't know what that did to me until this very hour—what it did to me—but I found a new relationship to everything. And I'm not telling you I am any better off than I was that day in Texas when that happened to me, but I am telling you I am free from the law, and I am free from the Christian standard and all that is expected of me by other Christians and what I have put upon myself. And I know that I live according to the Spirit. There is a life in me, and I have made peace with that life. I expect the Lord Jesus Christ to live the Christian life. And I have come to peace with the fact that I cannot.

Brothers and sisters, this is the book of Romans. It is Romans 7. You're going to have a head-on collision with Romans 7 if you have not. At some time in your life, you're going to discover a wretched man that you are. You're going to discover the utter sinfulness of sin. You're going to discover your utter inability to be a Christian.

And when you do, I hope you discover Jesus Christ and nothing else. I don't even know what to say to you after that. I wouldn't even say, put your hope in that. I am just saying that you will discover Him. It's *free from the law*, oh happy condition; I wish it said *free from the Christian life*, oh happy condition.

What you do, you do under the impetus of His life. You do under the relaxed state of His doing it. I hate to say this. I'm going to get quoted, I'm sure—*if it's comfortable, do it*. I'm talking about being a Christian. If you can't handle it, then grow a little bit more in His life, and you may be able to handle it. I don't know what year I'm going to die, but I expect to meet Romans 7 in the last year I ever live. And I am going to find myself saying, *Oh, wretched man that I am*, but intend to find Romans 8 right after it. *Therefore, now, there is no condemnation to those who are inside of Jesus Christ*. And that's where I will begin my Christian life, right there. And there is no other place.

I beg of you to lay down your battle trying to live the Christian life because you're gonna lose. Lay it down, saint. It'll be the best day you have ever lived.