

Romans

Romans Chapter Seven

Romans 7:2-3

June 6, 2010

This is lesson number **43** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: “The Law of the Husband”

Let’s quickly review the main points from Romans 7:1.

Romans 7 is a commentary on Romans 6:14

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Then compare 7:1

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?

Paul employs a rhetorical question to state a universal truth, he assumes the believer will know this: “Or do you not know, brethren....?”

What is it that the believer should know?

That the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives.

You may apply that rule in any context of a law principle.

Dominion of the law means to “lord it over,” or “to rule over.”

The law, as Paul uses the phrase here, is not only the law given by God through Moses to the children of Israel. It is the **law principle**, i.e. any system of law.

This law principle includes the natural law written on the heart {Romans 2:14-15}; and it certainly includes the law given by Moses.

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The Jew was under the law given to Israel through Moses; the Gentile who may have never heard of Moses, was under the natural law in his conscience; the citizen of any realm of government; the natural man who has no spiritual discernment of God's word; everyone is under law.

It is the law principle and it has dominion over everyone who is not justified by faith; everyone who is still under condemnation; everyone who is not in Christ.

Romans 7 is about **true holiness** or **sanctification**; growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In order to have true holiness, Paul wants the believer to understand what law has to do with the Christian?

Paul is going to prove that sanctification by the deeds of the law is as impossible as being justified by the deeds of the law.

Not only that, law will hinder true sanctification, because while under law the motive to obey is from fear and duty, to be self-righteous, not out of love for God. Cf. John 17:17-19

Justification and sanctification only come through the Lord Jesus Christ!

Chapter 7 will free you from the law principle if you can receive what it is teaching. **The believer is dead to the law - all law!**

Be careful, because it does not say that the law is dead to the believer; any more than sin is dead to the believer.

The believer can now resist sin and the believer sees the law as holy, just, and good and not as a burden.

Verses 1-6 state **the fact** of the believer's freedom from the law.

Verses 1-6 are a **general statement** of the relationship of the believer to the law.

Verse 4 is absolutely essential for two reasons:

- 1) That we **be dead** to the law in order to grow in Christ.
- 2) That we should **bear fruit** unto God.

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As long as you are under law you are married to the law and you can never bring forth fruit unto God. You must be married to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's where we pick up Paul's argument; that the believer must be dead to the law in order that he be married to another.

1 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?

Then he continues with an example:

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.

Several things need to be said about this example of marriage that Paul gives us.

First it is not meant to be a passage for marriage counseling, Paul is using the principle of marriage as God instituted it in the beginning.

One man and one woman for life.

This example is not intended to accommodate feminism and living together arrangements that are clearly opposed to the Word of God.

Neither does it address divorce as a dissolution of a marriage.

Jesus said that divorce was allowed because of the hardness of the heart and to give a measure of protection to a woman.

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All I intend to do in this exposition is to use the example in the way the Apostle does, as the law principle involved in a marriage.

In the second place, we should not make verses 2-3 an allegory in which every detail stands for something. That is never a proper way to interpret an allegory. Allegories and parables usually try to make a single point. Here, Paul is simply giving an example from the law to make the point that the believer is free from the law due to a death. As long as a person is under law they cannot submit to Christ.

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.

It is clear that the woman here in the example is free to marry another man upon the death of her husband. But a death is necessary.

The “law of her husband” is the law concerning marriage.

The main thought is that death dissolves the legal obligation of the woman to the law of her husband. That’s it, death frees the woman to marry another.

The law lords it over a man as long as he is alive to the law.

That is the way Paul uses this example of marriage. Try to forget what marriage has become in the third millennium after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is not addressing a group of postmodern religious hypocrites, he is writing to people who want to know the truth.

The comparison then is to the unbeliever who is under law and under its dominion as long as he lives in an unregenerate state.

The law of the husband was that he ruled over the woman as long as he lived.

As long as the husband is alive the woman is under the power and authority and control of her husband. **Genesis 3:16**

To the woman He said:

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;

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In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule {have dominion }over you."

Ephesians 5:22-23

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

This is the order of the Scripture. It is not the fault of the Bible that men have abused their headship position in the family and not loved their wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

It is not the fault of the Bible that the modern feminist movement tries to remove every distinction between men and women.

The universal law is that the law lords it over a man as long as he lives, just as the husband rules over the woman as long as he is alive.

But there is a wonderful encouragement here.

There is the possibility of a new relationship other than the dominion of law.

The slave to sin may, by God's grace, become a slave of righteousness.
The man who is under law may be placed under grace.

The death of either party in a marriage frees the one who remains to enter into a new relationship; to be married to another.

The principle is that as long as her husband lives, and she marries another, she will be called an adulteress. If she takes up with another man while her husband is alive, she is not free from the first husband, she is an adulteress.

But if her husband dies, she is free {loosed} from the law of her husband and even if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

This word "loosed" means to be "done away with" as in 6:6, "destroyed," "to be rendered inoperative."

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So when the husband dies the woman is loosed in every way from her husband and she is free to marry another and she will not be an adulteress.

So it is possible to pass from one spiritual relationship to God to another.

From being under law to being under grace.

Another reason that this example is appropriate is again taken from the beginning.

Gen 1: 27-28

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply**; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

"Be fruitful and multiply; bear fruit unto God.

While we are married to the law we can never bring forth fruit unto God.

There must be a legal break between the law and the unbeliever and it can only be established by death. If a relationship is attempted when there is no death it will be an adulterous relationship.

Remember **Rom 3:26-31**

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 **Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.**

Do you see that when God justifies the ungodly, and we are placed into Christ Jesus by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the washing of regeneration by the Word, that it is an entirely just and legal transaction by God and the law is completely satisfied. ... **we establish the law.**

Now listen because this is what I meant when I said that you cannot take an analogy and press every point to mean something.

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In the example the husband represents the law and the husband dies so that the woman is free to marry another. If you strictly hold to the analogy it would be the law that dies. But it is not the law that dies. Paul will vindicate the law and show its purpose later in this chapter.

The law is very much alive.

The point of the analogy is that it takes a death to break the law of marriage. In a marriage it does not matter which one of the partners dies, the relationship is over.

Verse 4 says: Therefore, my brethren, **you also have become dead to the law** through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another--

The law has not died; the law is still alive and is doing its intended work.

There are those who teach that not only are the civil and ceremonial law done away with, but the moral code embodied in the Ten Commandments is completely abolished. All we need, they say, is the Sermon on the Mount and the other words of Jesus. You don't even need an Old Testament they say. And they are very wrong!

In earlier messages I have reminded you that Moses wrote of Christ:

John 5:45-47

45 Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

Jesus did not come to do away with the law but to fulfill it in every jot and tittle.

Matthew 5:17-20

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

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How are we to have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees? We have a perfect righteousness in Christ, but we must be growing in grace and true holiness. We must be perfect in our motive to obey from love and not from duty and fear.

The Christian is dead to the law because Jesus has met every requirement of the law, the moral code, civil and ceremonial, and even natural law that is in the heart of every man. **Romans 10:4**

For Christ is the end of the law **for righteousness** to everyone who believes.

So the believer does not strive under law as did the scribes and the Pharisees to attain righteousness, the believer's righteousness is Christ.

And the believer is a slave of righteousness and he loves the law.

That truth frees us from the severity of the law and its demands.

That in no way gives us license to sin willfully.

When we are married to Christ a new principle of conduct is present in our mind.

We are no longer under law striving to gain acceptance with God by our deeds.

We want rules, but the New Testament tells us, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We must learn to think like our Lord.

The WWJD [What Would Jesus Do?] fad was not all wrong.

My objection to that bit of merchandising in the gospel was that most of the promoters and the wearers of the bracelets and pins did not have a clue about what the Bible says Jesus would do.

A better slogan would be WDJD [What Did Jesus Do?]

We have looked at this text before and will come up again and again.

The Book of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah in speaking to the new relationship the believer has with God. **Hebrews 8: 8-12**

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He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

This “new” covenant is not new in respect to chronology or time. God did not need to come up with a new way to deal with sin because the old way failed.

The “new covenant” is God’s grace from before the foundation of the world in Christ Jesus.

It is “new” when the man who is under sin and under law, dies to sin and dies to law. The man so married to Christ is not seeking to be justified by deeds of the law, he is justified by the blood of Christ. He is under a new covenant that was in the mind of God before the universe was created.

And it **does matter** how the believer lives his life.
He is not licentious as is the antinomian.

He is not interested in a list of rules as is the legalist.

A prisoner wrote about legalism: “Legalism is a work that is never finished.”

The believer looks into the mirror of the Word of God and sees himself and does not turn away and forget what manner of man he is.

James 1:21-25

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

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The believer can be warned and instructed and corrected by God's Word because he loves God and delights in being a slave of righteousness.

Now he can strive to love God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength; and his neighbor as himself.

He can deal with personal sin and perceived offenses from other people because the Word of God instructs his mind and heart.

There is an illustration that I recall from years ago.

A woman worked as a housekeeper for a man. The man would make out lists of things for her to do. Wash the clothes. Mop the floor. Do the shopping. Cook the food. She resented the lists of jobs and resented the man. She did what she had to do, but she was not at all happy.

But in the course of time the man, who was unmarried, took an interest in the woman, and after courting her affections, she fell in love with the man and he married her.

She then discovered that she did not need a list of jobs to do. She continued to wash the clothes. Mop the floor. Do the shopping. Cook the food. But she delighted in doing these things because she loved her husband.

This illustration is not perfect, but it at least shows how a change in a relationship can change our entire outlook. She no longer did her work out of duty, but out of love for her husband.

The Scripture says we will love God and that His commandments are not burdensome to us.

Since I have been studying Romans and the law this past year I have grown in my appreciation for the New Testament. When I read the epistles of Paul, James, John and Peter, I don't look for rules, but principles that will serve me in all kinds of situations. We should read our Bibles, not seeking rules, but instructions and principles to guide our decisions and actions.

So beware of antinomianism and shun legalism and look to that perfect law of liberty that you may grow thereby.

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This truth is liberating.

Christian, you are not under law but under grace.

Christian, you are dead to the law and married to Christ.

Are you a Christian?