

Romans Session 85

Dead to the Law 2

Romans 7:1-6 (NASB)

¹ *Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?*

² *For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.*

³ *So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.*

⁴ *Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.*

⁵ *For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.*

⁶ *But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*

When we stopped last time we were talking about the what the Mosaic Law was seen by the Old Testament folks, and it had become almost an idol to some.

And as Paul is teaching the Saints and Rome, he is running into the Jews who still held the law as a need and a must in their lives even though, they said they trusted in Christ as Lord.

He is trying to help them understand the believers relationship to the law once under Grace.

And He wants them to know the Law had been perfectly kept by Christ and thus He fulfilled the law and we now. then have come to be dead to sin, and now alive to Christ. Dead to the law and married to another to Christ.

By the time of Christ, many Jews considered obedience to God's law to be not only the demonstration of salvation's godliness that God intended it to be but also the means of salvation, which God never intended.

Faithfulness to the Law came to supersede faith in the God who had given the law.

As illustrated throughout the gospel accounts, such Jews often accused Jesus of contradicting and disobeying the law.

Paul was vehemently criticized by his unbelieving Jewish opponents for supposedly disregarding the Mosaic law.

When Paul returned from his third missionary journey, the elders in Jerusalem church advised him to join in a group of four other Jewish men in a, Nasserite, purification ceremony in the Temple.

By doing so they believed it would demonstrate his respect for the law and perhaps; defuse some of the false criticism.

Also by participating in this act would not in any way compromise the gospel, as so Paul willingly agreed.

Acts 21:20-26 (NASB)

²⁰ *And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;*

²¹ *and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.*

²² *"What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.*

²³ *"Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;*

²⁴ *take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk*

orderly, keeping the Law.

²⁵ *"But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."*

²⁶ *Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.*

As it turned out however, his actions were misinterpreted and misrepresented, and Jewish opposition against Paul was hardened still further.

Acts 21:27-30 (NASB)

²⁷ *When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him,*

²⁸ *crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."*

²⁹ *For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.*

³⁰ *Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.*

Nevertheless, the incident clearly demonstrates the intense Jewish reverence for at least the external and ceremonial aspects of the law.

Before his conversion, Paul (then known as Saul) was the epitome of Jewish legalism.

In his letter to the Philippian church he testifies to the trust he once had in his own human observance of the law.

Philippians 3:4-6 (NASB)

⁴ *although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:*

⁵ *circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;*

⁶ *as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.*

The opposite view of the Old Testament law was also a problem during Jesus ministry and in the early church.

As in every age, many people were looking for way to be religious without being hampered by a lot of restrictions.

To them the way of salvation by grace through faith alone apart from the law seemed like a perfect way to have their cake and eat it too.

They would simply "Trust God" and then do as they pleased.

To make clear His own high regard for the divine law given Moses, Jesus declared early in His ministry,

Matthew 5:17-19 (NASB)

¹⁷ *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

¹⁸ *"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*

¹⁹ *"Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Paul testifies that; the Jews were favored;

Romans 3:2 (NASB)

² *Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.*

Acts 7:38 (NASB)

³⁸ *"This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.*

Hebrews 2:2 (NASB)

² *For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,*

Acts 7:53 (NASB)

⁵³ *you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it."*

Romans 3:31 (NASB)

³¹ *Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.*

Romans 7:12 (NASB)

¹² *So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*

1 Timothy 1:8 (NASB)

⁸ *But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,*

But remember Paul also said;

Romans 3:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ *Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;*

²⁰ *because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

Romans 5:20 (NASB)

²⁰ *The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,*

Romans 6:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

Knowing that his readers, especially Jewish believers, would still have a great many questions about the law in relationship to their faith in Christ, Paul continues in the present passage to explain that critical relationship.

In the last part of Romans 6, he expounds the first truth of verse 14, namely, that believers are no longer under the law regarding its power to condemn.

In chapter 7 he expounds the second truth in that verse, that believers are now under grace. Yet in doing so, he refers to the law twenty-three times in this chapter, eight times in the first six verses.

In his explanation he presents an axiom

1. An analogy (vv. 2-3)
2. An application (vv. 4-5)
3. And an affirmation (v. 6)

THE AXIOM

Romans 7:1 (NASB)

¹ *Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?*

The tactful and rhetorical question **Do you not know?** Indicates the apostle is once again using a self-evident truth as the foundation of his argument.

The term **brethren**, refers to Paul's Jewish brethren (**those who know the law**).

He may be emphasizing this term to assure Jewish believers of his sensitivity to their deep concern about his seeming denigration of the Mosaic **law**.

His primary point here, however, relates to any **law**, as indicated by the anarthrous construction (the absence of a definite article before a noun, in this case **law**) in the Greek text.

The literal translation is simply, "to those who know law".

It should be obvious, he was saying, that any **law**, whether Roman, Greek, or even God-given biblical law **has jurisdiction over a person only as long as he lives**.

If some criminal dies, he is no longer subject to prosecution and punishment, no matter how numerous and heinous his crimes may have been.

Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, was never brought to trial for that act because he himself was assassinated before his trial began. Law is binding only on the living.

When we begin next week, we will take on the first of the Axiom, The Analogy.