

Romans Session 87

Dead to the Law 4

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.*

As we move from verse 5 not to verse 6, we see the words "**But Now**" and these words introduces the heart of this brief passage, which presents a radical contrast to the description just given of the unregenerate man.

We, that is believers in Jesus Christ **have been released from** our old bondage to **the Law, having died to that by which we were** formerly **bound** in the flesh.

As Paul has just pointed out, "*the law has jurisdiction over a person [only] as long as he lives*" (v1)"

Therefore, when a person dies, he is discharged of all legal liabilities and penalties.

Because we, as believers, died in Jesus Christ when He paid our sin debt on Calvary, we were thereby **released from** our moral and spiritual liabilities and penalties under God's **Law**.

Galatians 3:13 (NASB)

¹³ *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—*

Paul has already declared as forcefully and unambiguously as possible that freedom from the law's bondage does not mean freedom to do what the law forbids

Freedom from the Law does not bring freedom to sin but just the opposite, freedom for the first time to do what is righteous, a freedom the unregenerate person does not and cannot have.

Paul's point is not simply that the redeemed person is able to do what is right but that he will do what is right.

In response to their faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, God releases men from their bondage to the law **so that** they will **serve**.

Many English renderings of *doouleo* (**serve**) are somewhat ambiguous and do not carry the full force of the Greek term. This verb does not describe the voluntary service of a hired worker, who is able to refuse an order and look for another employer if he so desires.

It refers exclusively to the service of a bond-slave, whose sole purpose for existence is to obey the will of his master.

Kenneth Wuest gives this accurate and beautiful rendering of verse 6

"but now, we were discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were constantly held down, inasmuch that we are rendering habitually a bondsman's obedience (Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1973], p. 117).

Service to the Lord in **newness of the Spirit** rather than in **oldness of the letter** is necessary fruit of redemption, not an option.

As already noted, a fruitless Christian is not a genuine Christian and has no part in God's kingdom.

John 15:1-2 (NASB)

¹ ***"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.***

² ***"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.***

The person who is justified by faith through the grace of Jesus Christ is secure (Romans 5), is holy (Romans 6), is free, fruitful and serving Christ (Romans 7)

And the last four of those characteristics of the true believer are no more optional, or conditional than the first. Although none of those divine marks of regeneration is ever perfect in its human manifestation, all of them are always present in the believer's life.

Now listen, the Law is still important to the Christian.

For the first time he is able to meet the law's demands for righteousness (which was God's desire when He gave it in the first place), because he has a new nature and God's own Holy Spirit to empower his obedience.

And although he is no longer under the law's bondage of penalty, he is more genuinely eager to live by its godly standards than is the most zealous legalist.

With full sincerity and joy, he can say with the psalmist,

Psalms 119:97 (NASB)

⁹⁷ ***O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.***

As believers we are dead to the law as far as its demands and condemnation are concerned, but because we now live in **newness of the Spirit**, we love and serve God's law with a full and joyous heart. And we know that to obey His law is to do His will and that to do His will is to give Him glory.

SIN AND THE LAW

Romans 7:7-13 (NASB)

⁷ ***What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."***

⁸ ***But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.***

⁹ ***I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;***

¹⁰ ***and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;***

¹¹ ***for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.***

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

¹³ *Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.*

Chapters 3-8 of Romans weave together in a remarkable way the various themes of faith, grace, sin, righteousness, and law.

Especially important for Paul's Jewish readers was his comprehensive treatment of the law and its role in a person's coming to Christ and then living for Christ.

Paul has established that the law cannot save, that it cannot sanctify, and that it can no longer condemn a believer. (7:1-6)

Now he establishes that the law can convict both unbelievers and believers of sin (7:7-13)

And next that it cannot deliver from sin, either before or after salvation (7:14-25), and that it can be fulfilled by believers in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (8:1-4)

By the New Testament times, Jewish rabbis had summed up scriptural law in 613 commandments, comprised of 248 mandates and 365 prohibitions.

The mandates related to such things as worship, the Temple, sacrifices, vows, rituals, donations, sabbaths, animals use for food, festivals, community affairs, war, social issues, family responsibilities, judicial matters. Legal rights and obligations, and slavery.

The prohibitions related to such things as idolatry, historical lessons, blasphemy, Temple worship, sacrifices, the priesthood, diet, vows agriculture, loans, business, slaves, justice, and personal relationships.

To those scriptural laws that rabbis had added countless adjuncts, conditions, and practical interpretations.

The attempt to fill all the laws and traditions became a consuming way of life for legalistic Jews such as the Pharisees.

At the Jerusalem Council, Peter described that extreme legalism as a yoke which neither our father nor we have been able to bear. (Acts 15:10)

As far as the divinely-revealed laws were concerned, it is clear why faithful Jews tried to keep them in every detail. Through Moses, God had declared;

Deuteronomy 27:26 (NASB)

²⁶ *'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'*

In the next chapter of Deuteronomy, we see that it specifies some of the severe consequences of disobedience, consequences that affect virtually every area of life:

Deuteronomy 28:15-22 (NASB)

¹⁵ *"But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:*

¹⁶ *"Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.*

¹⁷ *"Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.*

¹⁸ *"Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.*

¹⁹ *"Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.*

²⁰ *"The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me.*

²¹ *"The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it.*

²² *"The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish.*

As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul reiterated the truth that;

Galatians 3:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."*

James also declared;

James 2:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

Why, then, one wonders, did God give His people a law that was impossible for them to keep?

The answer is that God's purpose was not only to reveal the standard of righteousness by which the saved are to live but also to show them the impossibility of living it without His power and to show them the depth of their sinfulness when honestly measured against the law.

The law was not given to show men how good they could be but how good they could not be.

Following his quotation from Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul told the Galatians,

Galatians 3:11 (NASB)

¹¹ *Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident*

To substantiate that truth, that a man must live by faith, he quoted another Old Testament passage that declared that;

Habakkuk 2:4 (NASB)

⁴ *"Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.*

Hebrews 11 makes it clear that both before and after the giving of the Mosaic Law, those who became acceptable to God were those who trusted in His righteousness rather than their own.

Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their failure to understand that truth;

Luke 18:7-9 (NASB)

⁷ *now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?*

⁸ *"I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"*

⁹ And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

Paul had been one of them, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He had trusted in his own righteousness and only became aware of this great truth of trusting in the Righteousness of Christ rather than his own after his conversion.

It was only then that all the things he had trusted in he now counts but loss. Useless. He does this in order to gain Christ.

Philippians 3:7-9 (NASB)

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

As we go forward Paul give us four elements of the convicting work of God's law;

1. It reveals sin (v7b)
2. It arouses sin (v8)
3. It ruins the sinner (vv9-11)
4. It reflects the absolute sinfulness of sin (vv12-13)

We will get to these next time together.