

Christians Are Free from the Requirements of the Law

Romans 7:1-6

Romans 7:1-6 - *“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? 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. ⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”*

Background Notes

The first five chapters of Romans were all about the justification of the believer -- God's great plan of salvation in which He declares the believer righteous. That's what it means to be justified – to be declared righteous. Now how is God able to do declare that the believer is righteous? He doesn't do it by lowering His standards or by turning a blind eye to sin. No, He can do it because the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Now God can *“be just and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus.”* Look back at Romans 3:26 - *“to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”* Through justification the believer is free from the penalty of sin, and Romans 1-5 covers that subject.

But now, what about the **power** of sin? Even in the life of a believer, the power of sin can be active. The process of overcoming the power of sin in our lives is called sanctification, and that's what Romans 6-8 is all about. So Romans 1-5 is the good news for the sinner – justification, and Romans 6-8 is the good news for the saint – sanctification. Sanctification means “to be made holy,” and the sanctification process is going on all the time in the believer's life. Philippians 1:6 says, *“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...”*

In Romans 6, we learn about the great truth of our union with Christ. Because we have accepted Christ as our Savior, God now sees us “in Christ.” This is our spiritual position. God's sees us as so identified with Christ that He sees us as having died with Christ and having risen with Christ! We've died to sin and now we have new life in Christ. When we realize this truth and really reckon it to be true in our lives, and as a result we yield our bodies to the service of the Lord in righteousness, then we really can be free from the power of sin. But we must **yield to righteousness!** We can't set

aside certain hours of the day for sin, and then certain hours for righteous living -- we will never, ever have victory over sin in that way! We must starve the sinful nature. We must be careful not to watch things or do things that lead to sinful thoughts and actions. We overcome these temptations by staying involved and active in activities that are pleasing to God. This is the key to freedom from the power of sin. Now comes an important question: where does the Law -- the Mosaic Law, God's Law -- where does the Law fit into all of this? That's a good and logical question, and the Apostle Paul anticipated that question.

Doctrinal Points

1. The believer has died with Christ, and is therefore free from the law.

Verse 1 says, *"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?"* The subject of the believer's relationship to the Law began back in Romans 6:14: *"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."* Verses 15-23 are like a parenthesis to answer the question we might ask: "Well, if we're not under law, but under grace then why should I be concerned about sin in my life?" So that question was answered in chapter 6, and now we are back to the question of the Law.

What does it mean that we're "not under the Law"? Does that mean that we're lawless? No! Does it mean that we can do whatever we want? No! Does it mean that we throw the Ten Commandments out the window? No! The point that Paul is driving at here is that in Christ, the law is not the rule of life for the believer. Under grace, the rule of life for the believer is **not law, but love**. Even though the law is good and was given by God, the rule of life for the believer is not to try to keep the law, but rather to serve the Lord in love, and as a result bear fruit to God. Verse 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."* The phrase *"dead to the law through the body of Christ"* means dead to the law through the death of Christ on the cross.

In order to prove his point that the believer is not under the law, and that the law should not be the rule of life for the believer, Paul proceeded to give three reasons here in Romans 7. The first reason is found here in verses 1-6: death has separated us from the law. Question: Does the Lord Jesus Christ have to keep the Law today? Answer: Of course not! The Lord Jesus died to the Law. When Christ died He met all the righteous claims of the Law, and therefore is free from the Law. And we, too, are free from the Law because we died with Christ and we've been raised with Christ. This is our spiritual position -- Christ is our representative. We're in Christ, so we are free from the Law.

The apostle Paul used marriage as an illustration in verses 2-3: *"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."* Do you see the illustration? Before we were saved, we were "married to the Law" (so to speak). The Law had claims on us; we were bound to the Law. But death has

come in and broken that tie to the Law. Now notice, the Law has not died. The believer has died in Christ, and therefore we are free from the Law. We are now “married to Christ,” so we can serve God because we love Him – not by rules and regulations, but in love.

2. The believer has risen with Christ, and is therefore free to serve in love.

Verse 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.”* And verse 6: *“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”*

Here’s an illustration. Does the phrase “indentured servants” ring a bell? Back in Colonial times, in order to get the funds to make the trip to America, many immigrants to this country would agree to become servants (virtually slaves) for a set period of time, perhaps 4-7 years. As servants, they had to perform certain duties and keep certain rules. When their time of service was up, many of them stayed on as servants in the household where they had been indentured, as they had become almost a part of the family. Even though their period of indenture was completed, they did the same duties and kept the same rules -- but now they served freely, as a part of the family. They served, not because they were required to but (as verse 4 says), *“in newness of spirit, not in oldness of the letter”!* Do you see the illustration? Verse 6: *“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”* Our “indenture” to the Law is over, and this is possible because we have new life in Christ powered by the Holy Spirit. The believer has risen with Christ and is therefore free to serve in love.

Practical Application

Don't try to keep the Law!

Don't try to keep the Law? That sounds heretical! The point, as we've seen here, is not that we are lawless, or we throw the Ten Commandments out the window and do whatever we please. No, the point here is that we don't make keeping the Law our **aim** and **goal** in life! As believers, our focus and our goal is to serve the Lord in love and bear fruit to God. We are the Bride of Christ, and our focus in life should not be striving to keep the Law, but living in love for our Savior.

If we try to keep the Law in our own strength, we will fail just as we did when we were unbelievers and tried as hard as we could to do what is right. You see, it's like trying to pick yourself up off the floor by pulling up on your own shoelaces. Have you ever tried that? It doesn't work, right? The flesh can't pick up the flesh. The sinful nature can't raise up the sinful nature, even in the Christian's life. Once again, verse 5: *“For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”* Now while that specifically refers to our lives before we became

Christians, the same is true in the Christian life. If we try to please God in our own strength, or in the strength of “the flesh,” we can’t do it! It won’t work.

Here’s an illustration: A girl is riding her bicycle along the sidewalk past a large well-landscaped estate, and there’s a sign on the lawn: “Keep off the grass.” She pauses and then she does what we all probably would have done as kids. The sinful nature was aroused, and she rode on the grass -- just a little bit, just to show that she could do it! That’s “the Law” at work! But there’s more to the illustration. The little girl grows up and falls in love with the son of the family who owns the estate owner. They get married, and now she lives in the estate as part of the family. Now she doesn’t have to keep off the grass because of the “Law,” but out of love for her husband and home, she automatically wants to keep the rules of the estate.

Do you see it? As Christians we serve out of love. Love, not Law, is our focus! We don’t try to keep the Law -- we are free from the Law. We obey God because we love Him! Don’t try to keep the Law!