

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. We come now to chapter 7 in our survey of the book of Romans.
2. Let me invite you to join me as we look tonight at this chapter.
3. Chapter 6 begins this section on sanctification.
4. If you remember we said last time that Paul is now demonstrating the practical ramifications of salvation on those who have been justified.<sup>1</sup>
5. He does that by addressing an objection that has been raised from 5:20.
6. His objectors said that if “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,” then we should go on sinning so that we can have more grace.
7. But Paul dismissed that thought and stated that we have “died to sin” so “how shall we [then] still live in it?” (6:3).
8. It was repulsive to him to think that God’s grace gave us a license to sin.
9. We have been delivered from the power of sin.

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<sup>1</sup> John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997).

10. He says in verse 21, “What benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed?”
11. The answer is there is no benefit derived from sin.
12. All it did was enslave us but now because of the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us, we are “slaves of righteousness” (v.18).
13. “Therefore do you let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts” (v.12).
14. “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v.11).
15. So Paul addresses his objectors with two rhetorical questions in verse 1 and verse 15 in response to their claim.
16. Now as we move into chapter 7 he continues the idea of the Christian being “dead” but now applies it to the Law.
17. Because we are now under grace and not the law, the law no longer has jurisdiction over us.
18. Paul begins with *an illustration* in verses 1-3.

**I. The Illustration (vv.1-3)**

He says in verse 1...

A. The Law Only Applies to Those Who Are Living (v.1)

It has “nothing to say to a dead man.”<sup>2</sup>

“Law” here refers to *any* law not just the Mosaic Law.

So whether it was Roman, Greek, or even God-given biblical law, it has jurisdiction over a person only as long as he lives.

If a criminal dies, he is no longer subject to prosecution and punishment, no matter how numerous and heinous his crimes may have been.<sup>3</sup>

So to continue his *illustration* of the jurisdiction of the law, Paul now speaks of marriage law in verses 2-3.

He says...

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<sup>2</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 359.

B. Marriage Law Binds a Wife to Her Husband (and vice versa) (vv.2-3)

He says in verse 2, “For a 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” (v.2).

1. As long as her husband is alive she is bound by the marriage law to him

It is important to note that this passage has absolutely nothing to say about divorce and cannot legitimately be used as an argument from silence to teach that divorce is never justified for a Christian and, consequently, that only the death of a spouse gives the right to remarry.<sup>4</sup>

2. Paul’s point is that marriage laws are only binding as long as both partners are alive

He says in verse 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.”

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<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 360.

In other words, being joined to another man while her husband is alive makes a woman an adulteress, an offender against the law.

But to be joined in marriage to another man after her husband dies is perfectly legal and acceptable.

A widow is absolutely free from the law that bound her to her former husband.

Paul, in fact, encouraged young widows to remarry.

As long as they were joined to a believer (see 1 Cor. 7:39), such widows, he says, should “get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach” (1 Tim. 5:14).<sup>5</sup>

Paul now applies what he has just said to the believer by giving...

## **II. The Principle (vv.4-6)**

### **A. Believers Died to the Law (v.4a)**

1. He marks his transition from the illustration to the principle by the use of the word “therefore”

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<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 360.

2. It is now at this point that Paul begins his teaching on a believer's death to the law and his union with Jesus Christ

3. Remember chapters 1-6 give us our context.

In chapters 1-3 we are condemned by the law because we are dead in trespasses and sins.

In chapters 3-5 Paul reveals that we are justified or declared righteous by God solely because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sin and our trust in Him alone for salvation.

Now in chapters 6-8 he shows us that since we have been justified we are now dead to sin and dead to the law.

4. He says in verse 4, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law."

The phrase "were made to die" translates the aorist tense of *thanatoō*, which emphasizes the completeness and finality of death.

You are not partially dead. You are completely and finally dead to the law.

This is not temporary. It is permanent.

Salvation brings a complete change of spiritual relationship, just as remarriage after the death of a

spouse brings a complete change of marital relationship.

Believers are no longer married to the law but are now married to Jesus Christ, the divine Bridegroom of His church.<sup>6</sup>

Notice also that Paul uses the passive voice to indicate that believers do not die naturally or put themselves to death but have been made to die by the divine act of God in response to faith in His Son.<sup>7</sup>

So at the new birth the believer is declared righteous by God and he dies to the sin and the law.

So verses 1-4 reveal that just as death breaks the marriage relationship, so the death of the believer with Christ breaks the jurisdiction of the law over him.

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<sup>6</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 361.

<sup>7</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 360.

Keep in mind that Paul does *not* say that the law is dead. The law still has a valid ministry in producing conviction of sin.<sup>8</sup>

He will address that later in the chapter.

Notice now in verse 4 how a believer is dead to the law.

He says...

B. Believers Died to the Law Through the Body of Christ (v.4b)

1. “Through the Body of Christ” refers to Jesus giving up His body in death

In the Lord’s Supper, Paul said in **1 Corinthians 10:16 (NASB)** Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

**Hebrews 10:10 (NASB)** By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

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<sup>8</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).



**1 Peter 2:24 (NASB)** and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

2. “Through the Body of Christ,” Jesus suffered the penalty of death on their behalf

Following Paul’s analogy, he is saying that believers are freed from their relationship to the law, just as a widow is freed from her relationship to her former husband.

And like that widow, believers are free to be joined to another husband, as it were, to Jesus Christ.

Paul describes Jesus as “Him who was raised from the dead.”

3. Through “the Body of Christ” we are joined to Him

The “Church” is the “bride” of Christ.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,<sup>26</sup> so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,<sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

**Revelation 19:7 (NASB)** "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride has made herself ready.**"

**Revelation 21:9 (NASB)** Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you **the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**"

He concludes in verse 4 by stating that...

C. Believers Died to the Law In Order to Bear Fruit to God (vv.4-6)

He says, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law...in order that we might bear fruit for God."

1. The purpose of being joined to Christ is that we might bear fruit to God

**Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**

**Galatians 2:19-20 (NASB)** <sup>19</sup> "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup> "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the

*life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Justification brings about a total transformation and the transformed life will bear fruit for God.

Charles Hodge said, “As far as we are concerned, redemption is in order to [produce] holiness. We are delivered from the law, that we may be united to Christ; and we are united to Christ, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. ... As deliverance from the penalty of the law is in order to [produce] holiness, it is vain to expect that deliverance, except with a view to the end for which it is granted” (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.], p. 220).<sup>9</sup>

2. Bearing fruit is manifested by our attitudes and actions

Attitude fruit is seen in what Paul says in **Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)** <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

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<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 361.

Action fruit is like what **Hebrews 13:15 (NASB)** Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, *the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*

In verses 6-7 Paul addresses the kind of fruit we bore before we were justified.

He says...

3. Before dying to the Law we bore fruit for death (v.5)

**Romans 7:5 (NASB)** 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.

“In the flesh” refers to our unredeemed, unregenerate state.

**Romans 8:8-9 (NASB)** <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Paul says that while in this state, “the sinful passions” were “aroused by the Law.”

He previously said in Romans 3:20 that “through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”

By naming and forbidding the sinful passions, the Law stirred up the strong desire to do them.

These sinful passions found expression in our physical members, and when we yielded to temptation we produced poison fruit that results in death.

Elsewhere the apostle speaks of this fruit as the works of the flesh: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries” (Gal. 5:19–21).<sup>10</sup>

So, verse 5 describes the preconversion days of the believers at Rome when they were “controlled by the sinful nature.”<sup>71</sup>

Verse 6 moves ahead to the time when they were no longer in bondage to the law.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001). 162.

In other words...

4. Now being released from the Law we serve in newness of the Spirit (v.6)

“But” introduces a contrast between the old and the new.

“But now we have been released from the Law.”

This is not freedom to do what God’s law forbids (6:1, 15; 8:4; cf. 3:31), but freedom from the spiritual liabilities and penalties of God’s law.

Because we died in Christ when He died (*see note on 6:2*), the law with its condemnation and penalties no longer has jurisdiction over us (vv. 1–3).<sup>12</sup>

We have “died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” or as the ESV reads, “so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of written code.”

William MacDonald says, “Our service is motivated by love, not fear; it is a service of

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<sup>12</sup> John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997).

freedom, not bondage. It is no longer a question of slavishly adhering to minute details of forms and ceremonies but of the joyful outpouring of ourselves for the glory of God and the blessing of others.”<sup>13</sup>

John MacArthur says, “Service to the Lord **in newness of the Spirit** rather than **in oldness of the letter** is the necessary fruit of redemption, not an option.”<sup>14</sup>

Believer’s bear fruit.

**John 15:5 (NASB)** "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

In the parable of the soils, **Matthew 13:23 (NASB)** "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and

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<sup>13</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 364.

brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

William Barclay says it this way: "When a man rules his life by union with Christ he rules it not by obedience to a written code of law which may actually awaken the desire to sin but by an allegiance to Jesus Christ within his spirit and his heart. Not law, but love, is the motive of his life; and the inspiration of love can make him able to do what the restraint of law was powerless to help him do."<sup>15</sup>

As believers who have the love of God "poured out within our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (5:5), we do not need a law to restrain love.

You don't want to restrain love but you do want to restrain sin.

The purpose of the law is not only to bring about the knowledge of sin but also to restrain it.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000). 93–94.



This is where the Law is “holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (v.12).

Think about this for a moment:

If I love my wife, I don’t need a sign telling me “Don’t beat your wife!”

If I love my kids I don’t need a sign that says “Don’t beat your kids with a baseball bat!”

If I love them I’m not going to hurt them or violate the Law.

If I love them, there is nothing to restrain.

John MacArthur says, “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 or 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, “O how I love Thy law!” (Ps. 119:97).”<sup>16</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

1. So Paul gives the *illustration* (vv.1-3) and the *principle* (vv.4-6).
2. In our next time together, we will look at the *perfection* (vv.7-13) and the *conflict* (vv.14-25).
3. Let’s pray.

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<sup>16</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). 364.