

Romans 7:1-6 Answers
Free From The Law — Oh, Happy Condition!

Introduction: Today's truth (Ro 7) is that Christians are free from the law. An old hymn reads, "Free from the law – oh, happy condition! Jesus has died and there is remission! Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all."

The purpose of Romans 7 is to explain and expand upon what Paul wrote in Romans 6:14.

ESV Romans 6:14 . . . sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

1. The first issue Paul dealt with in Romans 7 is: **How is it that Christians are no longer under the law?** (The answer is in 7:1-4).
2. The second issue Paul dealt with in Romans 7 is: **Why is freedom from sin's dominion impossible for those still under the law?** (The answer is in 7:5-25). (Leiter, p. 147).

******How long is the law binding on a person (7:1-3)?** The law has jurisdiction over a person only so long as he is alive.

Word Study: "Binding" (7:1) is from *kurieuo* and means to be lord over, to rule over, to have dominion over, to have power over (Thayer #2961).

According to 7:1, to whom was Paul speaking when he asked this? This question was asked to those who knew the law.

1. **What did Paul mean by "those who know the law" (7:1)? Who was that?** *Compare 2:14.* Paul already clearly made the point that pagan Gentiles of his day were those who "do not have the law" (2:14). Thus this is primarily a reference to the Jewish Christians in the church at Rome. (Of course those few Gentiles who had converted to Judaism before becoming Christians would also have known the law, but they are not Paul's focus here).

The law is binding only so long as a person lives (7:1); in context, what first century persons were known for living under the law? The only people who were known for being under the Law of Moses were the Jews. Of course every Roman citizen was under Roman law, but the law Paul spoke of here is the Law of Moses.

2. **What had Paul written previously that would prompt him to even ask this question (7:1)?** *See 6:14.* Paul had already clearly stated that those in Christ are under grace, not law, and that we died in and with Christ's death.

ESV Romans 6:14 . . . sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

According to 7:2-3, when is a wife released from the law of marriage? She is released from her husband when he dies. Then she is free to remarry.

Teacher's Note: These two verses on marriage are not intended to be an exhaustive treatise on remarriage. Certainly it is true as far as it goes, but there is much more to remarriage than is dealt with here. These two verses are merely illustrative of something else.

3. What truth does this marriage scenario illustrate (7:2-3)? This passage is about bondage to the law and freedom from the law. The marriage scenario illustrates the truth that if those under the law die, the law is no longer binding on them. They are released from the law. They free to marry another (Christ).

Word Study: "Released" (7:2) is from *katargeo* (*kata* means down and *argeo* means to idle, so to idle down). It primarily means to make idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative and to deprive of force, influence or power. Its secondary meaning to cause something to cease, put an end to, to away with, annul, abolish (Thayer # 2673).

Word Study: "Free" (7:3) is from *eleutheros* and means exempt, not bound by obligation (Thayer #1658). It is the opposite of being a slave.

Clear Truth: The law is no longer binding (7:1) on those in who are in Christ. They are no longer bound (7:2). They are in Christ are released (7:2) from the law. They are free (7:3) from the law.

Problem: Many Christians will read what Paul wrote here and conclude that we are only released from the penalty of the law, but otherwise we are still under it. Others say we are only free from the ceremonial law, but still under the rest of it. Others say we are not under the law with respect to salvation, but must still keep the law in order to be sanctified. The fact is we are not under the law of Moses in any way, shape, form or fashion!

ESV **Galatians 3:23-25** . . . before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian . . .

ESV **Galatians 5:18** . . . if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

How did Paul describe the relationship to the law of unbelieving Jews, pagan Gentiles and Christians in 1 Corinthians 9:20-21? In 1 Corinthians 9:20-21, Paul described the unbelieving Jews as those "under the law" (*hupo numos*, 9:20), though Paul himself was not under the law (9:20). Paul then described the unbelieving Gentiles as those outside the law (*anomos*, 9:21). Significantly, Paul next referred to himself as under Christ's law (*ennomous christou*, 9:21). Thus, the believer is neither under the law nor without the law, but rather is in-lawed to Christ.

Hebrews 7:11-12 declares there going from the Levitical priesthood to the Melchizedek priesthood necessitated a “change of law” (from Moses to Christ). Then, in **7:18-19** the law has been “set aside” and is declared to be weak and useless with respect to giving people righteousness.

Galatians 4:21-31 was written to those tempted to go back under the law (read passage). They are told to cast out slavery to the law since we are now free from it.

*****Why are Christians able to serve God in the new way of the Spirit and not the old way of the written code (7:4-6)?** Christians can serve in the new way of the Spirit since in Christ they died to the law and were thus released from the law and now belong to another. Specifically Paul meant Jewish Christians who had been under the Law of Moses, but it would also refer to any Gentile who was familiar with the law.

4. According to 7:4, what makes a person dead to the law? Just as we sinned in Adam’s sin (Romans 5) so to we died in Christ’s death. All those who are in Christ died with Christ and so also died to the law through the body of Christ.

Those who are in Christ have died to both sin (Romans 6) and the law (Romans 7).

Romans 6 states that in Christ we have **died** to sin (6:2, 11), have been **set free** from sin (6:7, 22) and sin no longer has **dominion** over us (6:14) with the result that we can bring forth **fruit** unto sanctification (6:21-22).

Romans 7 states that in Christ was have **died** to the law (7:4), are **free** from the law (7:3) and the law no longer is **binding** on us (7:1) with the result that we can bring forth **fruit** for God (7:4).

5. Based on 7:4, what does dying to law release people to do? The purpose of being freed from the law was **1)** “so that” we may belong to another (Christ) **2)** “in order that” we may bear fruit for God.

ESV Romans 6:14 . . . sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Grace gives us power).

6. Why might Paul have described Jesus as Him who has been raised from the dead (7:4)? *See back to 6:4.* Paul may have described Jesus this way as a reminder that just as our old man was crucified with Christ, so too we are resurrected along with Christ to live a new lifestyle.

ESV Romans 6:4 . . . just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

7. What does it mean to bear fruit for God (7:4)? See back to 6:22. One fruit is sanctification (obedience to God).

ESV **Romans 6:22** . . . now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

ESV **John 15:8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

According to 7:5, what type of fruit comes from living in the flesh? See 6:21. Living in the flesh bears fruit for death, just as slavery to sin ends in death (6:21).

ESV **Romans 6:21** But what fruit were you getting . . . from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death.

8. What does it mean to live in the flesh (7:5)? See *Romans 8:5-9*. In this context it means to be lost! It is a condition whereby sin's sinful passions reign in one's mortal body. It is to be dominated by sinful passions.

Word Study: "Flesh" (7:5) is from *sarx* (as in sarcophagus) and literally refers to our physical bodies. Metaphorically it refers to human nature apart from divine influence (prone to sin and opposed to God, Thayer #4561). It is that within man that is opposed to the Holy Spirit. The NIV renders this as "sin nature" rather than flesh.

ESV **Romans 8:5-9** . . . those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh . . . To set the mind on the flesh is death . . . the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

According to 7:5, what is it that aroused sinful passions? See 5:20, *1 Corinthians 15:56*. It was God's law (of all things!) that aroused sinful passions. There is a definite relationship between the law and sin.

ESV **1 Corinthians 15:56** . . . the power of sin is the law.

Example: In *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan wrote of a large undisturbed room full of settled dust. The impact of the coming of the law is like a man entering the room with a broom and beginning to sweep. Dust flies everywhere! The law stirs sin up. Paul will write more about how the law arouses sinful passions in 7:7-12.

This idea of the law increasing sin reaches back to:

ESV **Romans 5:20** . . . the law came in to increase the trespass . . .

We & Our: It is important to note that in context “we” and “our” (7:5) refer to those who “know the law”, i.e., the Jews.

9. What indication is there whether Paul was in 7:5 describing his readers in their present condition in Christ or their past condition before Christ? See 7:6, 8:9 and *Galatians 5:24*. Paul was describing his readers before conversion (Cranfield, p 337). This is evident in that he wrote “while we were living in the flesh” and because he wrote of sinful passions that “were at work in our members”. Also notice the transition “but now” in 7:6. Verse 6 was back then, verse 6 is now.

ESV Romans 8:9 You . . . are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

ESV Galatians 5:24 . . . those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Based on the overall context leading up to this point, he is here describing *Jewish* non-Christians (those who knew the law) before they became Christians (back when they were still living in the flesh). He is about to describe what it was like to be an elect Jew living under the law before coming to faith in Christ (7:7-25). It explains why sin dominates people under the law before grace came.

Only two types of people: It is critical to understand that here Paul writes in terms of only two types of people: the saints and the ain'ts. The Bible calls us saints for a reason. In Christ we are saints, not sinners. There are those who are under law, under sin and in the flesh and there are those who have died sin, died to the law and are under grace and in the Spirit (Leiter, p. 148). Verse 5 all the way to the end of chapter 7 (7:5-25) deals with why is it impossible for those under the law to be free from sin's dominion. It describes those who are under the law, not those who are freed from it.

Verse 6 begins with “But now”. But now what? Now in Christ Jewish believers are released from the law, have died to the law and can now serve God in the way of the Spirit. They are no longer captive. (Of course this is also true for Gentiles who knew the law before coming to faith).

Word Study: Released (7:6) is from *katargeo*, the same Greek word used in 7:2-3.

Word Study: “Died” is from *apothnesko*, literally to die off. Here it means to be alienated from something, to be freed from all connection to it (Thayer #599).

10. What does it mean to serve in the new way of the Spirit (7:6)? See back to 6:4.

ESV Romans 6:4 . . . just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too . . . walk in newness of life.

11. What is the old way of the written code (7:6)? The old way is trying in one's own power to keep the written code (i.e., the Law of Moses).

Word Study: "Written" (7:6) is from *gramma* (basis for grammar) and can refer to an actual letter of the alphabet or to any writing or document (Thayer #1121)

So What?

22. Why is no Christian under the Law of Moses?

23. What is the practical significance of being released from the law? We are now under grace, married to Christ and can now bear fruit for God. We serve God in the new way of the Spirit.

24. What valuable ministry does the law play in the lives of unbelievers?

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
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