

Romans Study
Session 10 - Romans 7:1-6

This is the third and final section of Romans dealing with the complete severance from sin and the law that believer's experience after coming to Christ. In the first section detailing our new identity, Paul said that we are now dead to sin but alive to Christ. In the second section of this truth, Paul said that we used to be slaves to sin but now those chains have been broken and we are free from our bondage to sin but are now in bondage to Christ and His righteousness. Now in this last section of this truth on how our relationship with sin and the law is totally different than before we came to Christ, we are going to see that we were once married to the law but that now we are married to Christ and what that means for our relationship to the law.

Before we dive in, we need to review a few things that will be important to our discussion.

Q: What is the Mosaic law? What was it's purpose? *(The law is God's commandments for holy living given at Mount Sinai to Moses and describe how God wanted His people to live under the old covenant. The law points out sin but does not cancel it or empower people to live righteously.)*

Q: Could a person find salvation through keeping the law? *(No. Romans 3:19-20)*

Q: According to our previous studies in Romans, what was the outcome of the law? *(It lead to more sin. Romans 5:20.)*

Q: What are the wages of sin? *(death. Romans 6:23)*

Q: How long was a person in the old covenant under the law? Was there ever a release from the law? *(There was never a release. They lived under for their entire lives.)*

Q: So what would be the problem with spending your entire life under the law? *(It would lead to more and more sin, thus more and more separation from God. The law lacked the power to take away sin or forgive it, only to point it out leading to guilt, shame and death.)*

So the take away is that if one is bound to the law, then one is also bound to sin, which brings guilt, shame and death to the party.

[Romans 7:1-3]

Q: According to v.1, how long does the law have authority over a person? *(as long as he's alive)*

Paul uses the analogy of marriage to make point concerning our relationship to the law.

Q: According to v.2 - how long is a wife bound to her husband? *(as long as her husband is alive)*

The word for “wife” in v.2 is a unique word. This is the only place in the New Testament where it’s used. It means “woman under submission or in subjection to her husband”. The focus of the word is not so much her status as a wife but that she is a person under the subjection to her husband. Remember, Paul is talking about our former relationship to the law. In this case, the woman is bound to her husband by law. As long as the husband is living, she is bound in this relationship, under his authority. During this time, she is not permitted to seek another attachment. However, if her husband dies, then she is released from her former relationship to her husband and is free to seek another attachment.

In Jewish life, this was the actual legal status of a wife. She could not divorce her husband. Divorce was a privilege granted only to the man. In v.2 the phrase “released from the law” could be translated “released from the law of marriage”. This is because if her husband died, she was released from the obligation of the marriage law. The word “released” means discharged, like discharged from the military.

Q: What is the wife called if she joins herself to another man while her husband is still living?
(v.3 - *an adulteress*)

Q: According to v.3, what is the only way a wife could be free to join herself to a second man without becoming an adulteress? (*by her husband dying*)

The subjection to the husband was for the duration of his life. As long as he lived, she was married to him, thus, under his rules and ways.

[Romans 7:4-6]

Before digging any deeper, we need to see the full illustration revealed.

- 1) A woman is married to a man
- 2) the man dies
- 3) the woman is free to marry another man

So, for the believer, this means

- 1) All people were “married” or in a binding relationship to the law
- 2) Believers have died to the law through Christ
- 3) These believers are now free to be joined to Christ and thus are completely free from the law

Q: Is a believer bound to the law? (*no*)

Q: What does this mean, in practical terms, for believers? (*many answers*)

So, it is an error for a believer to attempt to live by the law or under it. If Christ has set us free from the law, then if we attempt to live under the law, after Christ has set us free and we have become “married” to Him, then we are living a spiritual adulteresses. A Christian’s freedom does not allow him to continue living under the law.

There is an important note to make before we get into the details and that is that the law did not die. Notice v.4 - we were made to die to the law. In fact, this verb is in the aorist tense and when you see this tense coupled with Christ and His followers, it deals with our identity in Him. It's also passive which means it is something God did to and for us. He made us dead to the law so that we can now be brought under the authority of Christ, bound to Him.

Q: How did we die to the law? *(v.4 - through the body of Christ)*

So, through the physical death of Christ on the cross we were made to die to the law and through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we were joined to Him and His everlasting life. Death with Christ brought an end to the sway of the law over all those who are in Him. Christ made us dead to the law in order to allow us to be joined to another - Himself. This shows us that we were co-crucified and co-buried and co-resurrected with Christ. We participated, by faith, in all three of these so that we are now dead to the law and its power and effects on us. This is the first time in the New Testament believers are described as wed to Christ.

[Ephesians 5:32-3]

Q: Why do people get married? *(many answers)*

Q: How would you define marriage? *(It is a unique, exclusive relationship between a man and a woman. It is based on a covenant and provides companionship and intimacy for both the husband and wife as well as it is God's way of bringing the next generation into the world.)*

Marriage is really the only true human relationship that is compared to our relationship with God. Like a marriage, it is to be based on a covenant of mutual love and respect which provides companionship and intimacy between us and the Lord Jesus. There is an explicit aspect of the covenant of exclusivity whereby intimacy is limited to the those in the marriage covenant. Thus, to worship another god is to commit spiritual adultery.

Q: What purpose were we joined to Jesus? *(v.4 - to bear fruit for God)*

Paul switches back to the agricultural illustration he used back in chapter 6. We are to bear fruit for God. Again the marriage illustration reflects this deeper spiritual truth.

[Genesis 1:26-28]

Q: What was God's very first commandment to mankind? *(v.28 - be fruitful and multiply)*

Notice that now those of us who are married to Christ are to be fruitful for the kingdom of God.

Q: What does "fruit for God" mean? *(It means anything that brings glory to God, honors Him and/or expands His kingdom. It includes leading people to Christ who become saved as well as displaying the fruits of the Spirit or living by the Spirit and God's wisdom and so much more.)*

An important side note here is that the law never led to bearing fruit for God, only fruit for death. The law also could not produce service acceptable to God. This is because the law is based upon our performance and we cannot produce anything other than sin, apart from Christ. But once we are in Christ, we no longer produce fruit for death but instead we produce fruit for God and His kingdom. Release from the law sets us into the service of God because the Holy Spirit now indwells believers.

[II Corinthians 3:5-6]

The word “flesh” in v.5 means the physical body. It is not the usual way Paul uses this word. We know this because he links with the phrase “members of our body” later in the verse. Our physical body is subject to sin. Remember the law aroused sinful passions within us. It’s the telling a kid not to do something because it makes us want to do what is forbidden. That’s part of the human nature. The law aroused these sinful passions which led to sin which led to us bearing fruit for death.

Q: In v.6 Paul says we now serve in the newness of the Spirit as opposed to the oldness of the letter. What does that mean? *(The oldness of the letter is self-performance and self-righteousness deeds done in an attempt to keep the law. It bore no fruit and produced no useful service in God’s kingdom as it was not done by faith in Christ. The newness of the Spirit is the life and freedom of the Spirit moving and empowering the believer to bear fruit for God.)*

This section shows us that our identity in Christ is that we are dead to the law. Christ is the One to whom we are spiritually bound. Since He will never die, our life and relationship with Him will be eternal.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?